

Jeff Kwintner, hero of Powys publishing and devotee of JCP, died on 1st July, aged 78, in Cheltenham. His Village Press imprint, and his legendary bookshop in London, brought discovery and delight to us all. More in the November Newsletter: meanwhile from the Powys Society, admiration and thanks, Jeff.

Editorial

On our cover is a portrait by Gustave Doré of one of the principal characters in Rabelais, the cutlass-wielding wise-cracking monk Friar John, often invoked by his namesake John Cowper Powys. JCP's *Rabelais*, celebrating his favorite author, was written during the War and published in 1948 while *Porius* was on its way. The French translation of JCP's book by Catherine Lieutenant appeared in 1990. Her long and lively introduction gives an interestingly different view of JCP and his Rabelais; excerpts from this are translated here with the complete text scheduled for next year's Journal. Other Powys/Rabelais-related pieces include the 1927 review by Llewelyn Powys of a new edition of *Rabelais*.

The Conference at Street, 10th-12th August (earlier than usual), is provocatively named 'A wild activity of thoughts'. Walks in Glastonbury are planned. For once, a possibility of combining with the Llewelyn Birthday walk on August 13th (meeting at a nearby pub as well as the usual 'Sailor's Return'). A meeting with Catherine Shakespeare Lane casts light on friends of JCP in his old age, with interesting connections. Kevin Taylor explores papers from the Pollinger archive. A report on the Powys Collection at Exeter. A new book from Jeremy Hooker. Wolfeton House near Dorchester, used as background by Hardy and by JCP in Ducdame, is threatened by building development. Jacqueline Peltier describes discoveries made in Weymouth Sands.

And more obituaries and tributes: for John Powys, grandson of TFP; Ian Hughes, Peter Mayer of Overlook Press, publisher of JCP, and from the family of Chris Wilkinson. We have also just heard that Michael Everest, a long-term Powys supporter, has died. And see above.

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Chairman's Report 2017-8

'*The State Totters...*' As our most active members of the Powys Society have become older, some of their apprehensions have been realised over the past twelve months. We've kept going, by the skin of our teeth. After decades of devoted labour Louise de Bruin has retired from her role as the Production Manager of our publications; in the forthcoming issue of *The Powys Journal*, Charles Lock pays tribute to her unrivalled acuity and attention to detail. This means we now depend on Jerry Bird for production, and urgently need new volunteers to come forward, especially those with skills of type-setting and proof-reading. Please, if you think you can help, do make contact soon with Chris Thomas — contact details are on the inside front cover of the Newsletter.

Nevertheless I very much enjoyed leading the London discussion last December on JCP's *Religion of a Sceptic*, before going into hospital for open-heart surgery a few days later; our vice-chair, David Goodway, joined Chris in keeping the Society on the road. By the end of April I was back, and able to participate at Ely in the lively cut-and-thrust around the figures of John and Cordelia Geard in *A Glastonbury Romance*, ably led by Kevin Taylor. As on previous occasions, Sonia Lewis had set us up perfectly at The Old Fire Station, and our President, Glen Cavaliero, was once again a sturdy presence throughout the day. Despite the recent deaths of several key people, among them Gilfrid Powys and John Powys, as well as JCP's Overlook Press publisher Peter Mayer (see obituaries and tributes printed here), our membership remains stable at about 250, and new subscriptions are coming in from USA and Europe as well as from Britain.

Copies of previously unpublished Powys material have been discovered in the Pollinger archive by Kevin Taylor; he has joined the Society's committee, and is making a strong case for e-book publication of John Cowper's major novels. He was one of the four of us meeting Catherine Shakespeare Lane (see the report in this newsletter) who told us about her mother's correspondence with JCP and how, as a child, she visited John Cowper with her parents in 1959. Many lines of research still lie open: your Secretary and I have both been following in the footsteps of a Californian film-maker and architectural historian, John Crosse, to investigate Rudolf Schindler and his circle in Los Angeles in the early 1920s. Schindler was a modernist architect and anarchist sympathiser who designed the sets for a production of *The Idiot* in JCP's adaptation starring Boris Karloff in the late 1920s. There is other work to do regarding JCP in California such as publication of the collection of letters to Charles Erskine Scott Wood at the Huntington Library in San Marino and the letters to Sara Bixby Smith at Rancho Los Cerritos – projects waiting for an enterprising independent scholar or graduate student.

I'm looking forward to the conference and AGM at Glastonbury/Street this August, once again prepared by Anna Rosic and Louise de Bruin. We still have so much to learn!

Timothy Hyman

Committee Nominations 2018-2019

The following **Honorary Officers** have been nominated and have agreed to stand:

	<i>Nomination</i>	<i>Proposer</i>	<i>Second</i>
Chairman	Timothy Hyman	Peter Lazare	Tony Head
Vice-Chairman	David Goodway	Jacqueline Peltier	Peter Lazare
Treasurer	Robin Hickey	Anna Rosic	Sonia Lewis
Secretary	Chris Thomas	Tony Head	Marcella Henderson Peal

For the **committee** the following have been nominated and have agreed to stand

<i>Nomination</i>	<i>Proposer</i>	<i>Second</i>
Kate Kavanagh (<i>Newsletter editor</i>)	Sonia Lewis	Kevin Taylor
Dawn Collins	Anna Rosic	Jacqueline Peltier

If these nominations are approved by members at the AGM, the committee, from August 2018, will consist of those above as well as **John Hodgson**, **Michael Kowalewski** (*Collection Liaison Officer*) and **Kevin Taylor** who have 2 years left to run of their three year term of office; and **Louise de Bruin** (*Conference organiser*) who has two years to run of her term. **Jacqueline Peltier** serves as an honorary committee member. **Charles Lock** (editor, *Powys Journal*) serves as *ex-officio* member. **Anna Rosic** is a co-opted member of the committee.

There is one vacancy for a member to serve on the committee for a three-year period.

AGM 2018

The Annual General Meeting of the Powys Society will be held at the **Wessex Hotel, Street, nr Glastonbury, at 11.00am, on Sunday 12 August 2018**. All paid up members of the Powys Society are welcome to attend and participate in the AGM whether or not they are attending the 2018 conference.

Agenda

- 1 Minutes of AGM 2017 as published in *Newsletter 92* November 2017, and matters arising
- 2 Nomination of Honorary Officers and Members of the Powys Society Committee for the year 2018-2019
- 3 Hon. Treasurer's Report and presentation of annual accounts for year ended 31 December 2017
- 4 Collection Liaison Manager's Report
- 5 Hon. Secretary's Report
- 6 Powys Society, Facebook, and social media
- 7 Chairman's Report as published in *Newsletter 94*, July 2018
- 8 Date and venue of conference 2019
- 9 AOB

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

Treasurer's Report

These are the figures for the year ending December, 2017. There was a deficit in 2017 of £1,910.50, compared to an increase in 2016 of £432.44. The balances in the three accounts at the end of December were:

Community Account: £ 1,755.14, Everyday Saver Account: £971.20, Business premium Account: £10,185.06. Over the year the Society has needed approximately £16,403.46 covering the cost of the conference, printing expenses, the new computer and committee expenses.

Robin Hickey, Hon. Treasurer

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 2017

INCOME	2017	2016
Subscriptions	4559.90	5382.45
Bank interest	3.26	14.10
Books	525.93	1588.43
Conference	8649.63	7083.00
Gift Aid	404.24	428.47
Donations	350.00	382.00
TOTAL	£14,492.96	14878.45

EXPENDITURE

Printing	4130.22	4043.59
Alliance of Lit Societies	15.00	15.00
committee Expenses	3162.73	2812.62
conference Expenses	8472.51	7068.82
Conference refund	320.00	90.00
Accountants	120.00	120.00
venue for meeting	183.00	95.98
TOTAL	£16,403.45	£14,246.01

EXCESS OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME	excess of income
£1,910.50	£432.44

New Members

We are very pleased to welcome four new members to the Powys Society, located in Solihull, Bristol, Surrey and Kings Langley, who have joined the Society since the last announcement published in newsletter 93. March 2018. This brings the current total membership to 249, including Honorary members, and allowing for other members who are deceased, or who have either resigned or not renewed their membership. Full details will be presented in the Hon. Secretary's report at the AGM.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

The Powys Society Conference, 2018

The Wessex Hotel, Street, nr Glastonbury

Friday 10th to Sunday 12th August

‘A wild activity of thoughts’

Programme

Friday 10th August

- 16.00 Arrival
- 17.30 Reception
- 18.30 Dinner
- 20.00 **Charles Lock:** ‘What happens when we read JCP?’

Saturday 11th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Anthony O’Hear:** ‘Solent Solipsist – an interpretation of *Wolf Solent*’
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.15 **Nicholas Birns:** ‘Close-Reading the Powyses’
- 13.00 Lunch
- Afternoon free – optional guided walks to places associated with *A Glastonbury Romance*
- 19.00 Dinner
- 20.30 A **panel discussion** of *A Glastonbury Romance*, chaired by Timothy Hyman, with Paul Cheshire, John Hodgson and Anthony O’Hear, and the participation of members

Sunday 12th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Taliesin Gore:** ‘Pan-psychism in *Wolf Solent* and *A Glastonbury Romance*’
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.00 AGM
- 12.00 **Giles Dawson:** ‘Introduction to the art of Patricia Dawson and the inspiration of JCP’
- 13.00 Lunch
- 15.00 Departure

For details of speakers and presentations please see Newsletter 93, March 2018, pages 8-9.

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The 2018 conference
Two walks around Glastonbury
Saturday 11th August

Walk One: Ray Cox has arranged a guided walk around the town of Glastonbury, visiting places and buildings associated with *A Glastonbury Romance* including optional visits to Chalice Well, the Tor or the Abbey. The walk commences, no later than 2.45 on Saturday, from the Market Place bus stop in Glastonbury, opposite the Town Hall. There will be an opportunity to hear readings from relevant parts of *A Glastonbury Romance* at various stages of the walk. The walk is mostly on level road surfaces with one gentle hill climb at Bove Town. The distance of the walk is approximately 2½ miles. To get to the starting point members may wish to either take a bus from a stop close to the Wessex Hotel or drive to the Abbey car park. A map and full itinerary of this walk including details of readings will be available at the registration desk.

Walk Two: Alternatively members may wish to join a guided walk led by a local resident of Glastonbury, Johanna van Fessem, who knows the topography and landscape of the area very well. This walk will commence from the old vicarage on Lambrook Street, the residence of Matt and Sam Dekker, cross Splott's moor to Whitelake river and the location of Whitelake cottage. The walk will follow the route taken by Matt and Sam Dekker at the beginning of Chapter 5 of *A Glastonbury Romance*. There will be an opportunity to hear readings from relevant parts of *A Glastonbury Romance* at each stage where a place in the novel is mentioned. Johanna says *this is a very lovely walk, which hasn't changed much since the 1930s. We walk on footpaths, a little tarmac, tracks and grassy fields.* All along the way members will be able to enjoy dramatic views of Glastonbury and the Tor. Members can reach Lambrook Street by car using the car park at Silver Street. On the return journey we will arrange a car share to transfer walkers back to Silver Street car park. This walk can also be combined with the previous walk which members will need to leave at the halfway stage.

If members do not wish to join the whole of this walk they can travel by car on the A361 out of Glastonbury towards the village of Pennard and turn up into a lane that leads to Redlake farm from where it is a short walking distance to Whitelake river and the site of Whitelake cottage. A local map of the route of this walk will be available at the registration desk of the conference.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

Discussion meeting, Hampstead

The Friends' Meeting House, 120 Heath Street, London NW3

Saturday December 1st 2018 at 2pm

Tea and refreshments will be provided.

David Goodway, Vice-Chairman of the Powys Society will introduce and lead a discussion of *The Meaning of Culture* by John Cowper Powys, first published in USA by W.W. Norton in September 1929 and in UK by Jonathan Cape in March 1930. In the introduction to the English edition (a different one to that used in the American edition) JCP refers to culture as an *evasive thing* and then proceeds to attempt to dissect his own method for attaining *self-culture*, enjoyment of life and spontaneity of mind. JCP called *The Meaning of Culture* one of his *little tracts* or *a sermon for the young*. It is indeed a sort of polemic or a manifesto for achieving a state of Homeric happiness.

The book proved a great success, went through numerous editions, remained in print for a number of years and was one of his most popular works. He noted in his diary in 1938 that *The Meaning of Culture is our only book that brings a constant income*. JCP summarised the purpose of the book and said *What is aimed at here is to find in the instinctive and rationalised habits of human culture itself a sort of working substitute for the simpler religious faith of the past*.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

The Powys Society Collection, Exeter

In June Michael Kowalewski (Powys Society Collection Liaison Officer) and I travelled to Exeter to visit the Collection. We met Christine Fauch who told us she had been promoted to interim Head of Library at Exeter University but will still continue in her role as Head of Special Collections. Christine explained new procedures for making additional deposits in the Collection and showed us the new public interface of Special Collections on the Exeter University website. This includes a brief description of the contents of the Powys Society Collection. Christine also explained that it will take approximately two years to commence work on integrating the Collection inventory with the main library catalogue. In the meantime the inventory can be consulted on the Powys Society web-site.

Christine said that funding has been provided to help establish a new database which will enable writers represented in the Special Collections archive to be linked by theme, subject and name. Initially the database will focus on the Ronald Duncan archive at Exeter University and link writers in his circle. A new programme offering

graduate students and independent scholars a stipend to help them cover the costs of research in the South West literary archive at Exeter will continue next year. Details of how to apply for a stipend will be posted on the web-site of Exeter University in due course. Christine also told us about plans under development to organise another seminar, hosted jointly by the Centre for Literature and Archives and Special Collections, on a theme yet to be decided. The aim of the seminar is to encourage wider use of original material in the writer's archives by students and researchers. Christine has invited the Powys Society to participate in the seminar and provide a presentation on a Powys related subject. All members of the Society are welcome to attend the event scheduled for June 2019. More details will follow in the March 2019 Newsletter.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

Obituary

Chris Wilkinson, actor and playwright

Published in The Yorkshire Post, Saturday 3 February 2018

Chris Wilkinson, who has died aged 76, had once seemed set for fame as a radical playwright. Instead he led a Sheffield education project from which such 1980s musicians as Heaven 17 and the Human League emerged.

The actor Ian Reddington and the founder of Compass Theatre, Neil Sissons, were also graduates of the Meatwhistle project which Mr Wilkinson and his artist wife, Veronica Thirlaway, set up in Holly Street in 1972, when the school leaving age was raised to 16. Deborah Egan, director of the arts and performing venue, DINA, in Sheffield's Cambridge Street, was another alumnus. She said her old mentor had 'helped us become what we are', adding, 'his influence is with me every day.'

Martin Fry, of Heaven 17, recalled a couple of years ago: 'I wouldn't have made it as a musician without Meatwhistle.'

Mr Wilkinson had joined Sheffield Playhouse in 1962, acting in scores of productions, including Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*. His first self-penned production for the stage was *Strip Jack Naked* in 1970, whose stellar cast included Alun Armstrong and Nigel Hawthorne. It recalled *The Birthday Party* with a guilt-ridden recluse tortured, humiliated and eventually murdered, but it was more overtly brutal. A Sunday evening production without décor followed at London's Royal Court Theatre. The Playhouse staged *I Was Hitler's Maid* in 1971. *Plays For Rubber Go-Go Girls* was produced by the Portable Theatre.

Chris's writing could be ferocious but in person he was recognised for his kindness,

enthusiasm and capacity to instil confidence in others. His acting was memorably vivid, and he appeared as four different characters in Coronation Street, as well as co-founding the Sheffield-based cooperative actor's agency, OTTO.

His marriage to Veronica ended in divorce. He is survived by daughter Alys and his second wife Margaret.

Tributes

From Bridget Johnstone:

I remember Christopher as my big brother five years older than me who was always so kind and interested and enthusiastic, but also rather adventurous artistically – sometimes to my mind a bit shocking and outrageous but which opened my eyes to the real world.

When I was growing up he was of course away at school a lot of the time but in the holidays he would always be keen to know if I was doing anything interesting and would share whatever he was interested in at the time. One time – it was probably the Easter holidays – he took me several times up to the Icknield Way which was close to our home and taught me all the names of the wild flowers growing there. Other times he showed me his latest way of painting – sticking on seeds or flour or other things to give different textures, and another time using coloured inks and another time making everything angular. I also remember him chopping up horse chestnut leaves to make tobacco which made a strange smell when he smoked it. He never minded me being in his room watching whatever he was doing at the time.

Many of my later memories are seeing him in plays, which I always really enjoyed, and seeing him before or after when he always managed to be enthusiastic about something – a particular piece in the play, the wallpaper in the pub, the colour of someone's dress, someone he had recently met ... anything and everything seemed to interest him.

It was so special to have him as a brother.

Robert Johnstone adds memories of Christopher at Lancing College

...As a senior boy he endured his last year there by taking refuge in the art studio which had been formed in the crypt of the school chapel that soared prominently on the hillside above the Adur meandering to Shoreham harbour, and there he was fortunate in working with the gifted art master (Mr Collier). In the ordinary way, his seniority would have been enough for him to become a house captain (house prefect), but his housemaster withheld that promotion and its petty privileges, because, so Christopher told me, he had been seen entering the Sussex Pad pub, near the end of the school drive opposite Shoreham Airport. There is no reason to suppose this inflicted any lasting damage on his chosen career.

From Paul Roberts, past Chairman, Powys Society:

Chris was a fine actor (I last saw him appear in an Alan Ayckbourn play at Harrogate) but he was an even finer man: he was always so kind, so lacking in ego and more interested in others than himself, characteristics he shared with Oliver. I am proud to have known him and valued the opportunities I had to spend time with him.

On September 21st 1955 JCP wrote to Louis Wilkinson about his grandson Chris, who was then 14 years old, and had just visited Blaenau Ffestiniog with his father Oliver and his mother Margaret:

...Phyllis & I both feel very strongly – do please tell both his parents that – that your grandson Christopher is the boy with the nicest natural instinctive good manners we have either of us ever seen, Why, he devoted himself entirely, and absolutely succeeded too – by sheer wisdom and charm and his power of throwing himself into another’s mind and realizing exactly what that other would like most – in amusing & entertaining and keeping entirely absorbed (with no toys either but boxes of matches!) his little brother of 1 or 2 or 2½ or 1½, Roly Barnabas, so that I could talk to his Dad, & Phyllis could talk to his Mother & his sisters, in complete ease and quiet. They all made a deep dent on our mind, and it would have all been utterly spoilt if not for the tact and charm of Christopher.

(from Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson, Macdonald, 1958, pp.326-327)

For other tributes to Chris Wilkinson and a notice, *In Memoriam*, please see *Newsletter 93*, March 2018.

Obituary

Ian Hughes (1947- 2016)

Ian Hughes edited the new edition of JCP’s novel *Maiden Castle*, incorporating many passages which had been deleted from previous editions. Ian’s authoritative edition of *Maiden Castle* was first published by the University of Wales Press in 1990. Ian published an account of the textual history of *Maiden Castle* in the *Powys Review* 12, 1982/1983 and an article ‘The Beginnings of *Maiden Castle*’ in the *Powys Review* 15, 1984/1985. Other articles by Ian include: ‘Allusion, Illusion and Reality, fact and fiction in *Wolf Solent*’ in the *Powys Review* 7, Winter 1980 (reprinted in *Critical Studies of Wolf Solent*, edited by Belinda Humfrey, 1990); ‘The Genre of JCP’s Major Novels’, in the *Powys Review* 18, 1986; ‘The Collapse of the Philosophical Romance: Male Posturings and Female Submission in *Maiden Castle*’, in the *Powys Journal*, Vol.XI, 2001 (this article is the text of the lecture Ian presented at the Powys Society Conference at Kingston Maurward, Dorchester in 2000).

CT

Pamela Hughes writes: David Ian Hughes, always known as Ian, was born on 15/03/1947 in Bethesda, a slate quarrying village in North Wales. He went to Friars Grammar school in Bangor and from there, at the age of 17 in 1964, to Leeds University, first reading Chinese but switching after one year to Sociology and graduating in 1967. He completed a PGCE at Leicester University School of Education and returned to Leeds initially to teach history but soon switching to English.

I met him in his first year of teaching and his first Christmas gift to me was a copy of *Wolf Solent*. When I went to University in 1970, he found a teaching job close by in Ipswich and had the opportunity to teach A-level English Literature and decided that he wished to return to University to study English once we had the means and opportunity. He chose Bangor University for a number of reasons; the English course suited his interests and he was able to take philosophy and classical Greek as subsidiary subjects, it gave him the opportunity to improve his spoken and written Welsh and, not least, the chance to go walking in the mountains. He was an active member of the English society and was encouraged by the creative writing fellow at the University to submit his own poetry for publication and produced a collection *Slate* which was deeply rooted in his native area.

He gained a first class degree in English from Bangor in 1978 and went on to complete a Masters (on *Wolf Solent*) and a PhD (the critical edition of *Maiden Castle*). He had always been puzzled by the inconsistencies in *Maiden Castle* and was able to look at the original material in the collection of Mr E.E.Bissell and so was able to solve the mystery.

He chose to return to teaching, becoming Head of English at Syr Hugh Owen in Caernarfon and then gained a post in the English department at Coleg Normal, Bangor, a Higher Education college, specialising in training Welsh Medium teachers, but also catering for English medium education and a number of specialist Welsh medium degrees. He became Head of English there and later became heavily involved in the administration of the college. He continued at Coleg Normal, which merged with Bangor University in 1996, until his retirement in December 2009.

JCP was just one of his many interests. I would say what marked him out was the breadth and depth of his knowledge of history, literature and philosophy, plus he was a gifted teacher at both school and college level. He was also a passionate gardener and very practically minded, turning his hand to decorating, joinery, plumbing, cars and electricals as required.

Sadly, he was limited by health problems in the last few years of his life and unable to enjoy his retirement as fully as he could wish, but he continued to read as widely as ever.

In memoriam Peter Mayer (1936-2018)

Peter Mayer, doyen of publishers, died in New York, on May 11 2018. At the Overlook Press, in the 1980s and 1990s, Peter Mayer published modern editions of JCP's major novels: *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Weymouth Sands*, *Maiden Castle*, *Owen Glendower* and *Porius* as well as *Autobiography* making these books available to a new generation of readers. The publication in 2007 of *Porius* in a fully restored and unabridged version, edited by Morine Krissdottir and Judith Bond, was a notable achievement.

CT

Tribute

From Christopher Sinclair-Stevenson (agent for the copyright-holder of the JCP estate): Peter Mayer was probably one of the most dynamic and influential publishers of his generation. He transformed Penguin into a hugely successful global operation; contended with the upheaval caused by the Fatwa handed down after the publication of Salmon Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*; resurrected the moribund firm of Duckworth; developed the small but distinguished company Overlook in America, in which he was able to exercise his passion for the works of John Cowper Powys.

As a person, he was a weird mixture. He claimed that his door was always open, but he was usually flying hither and thither. He was, supremely, a marketing genius, but was an omnivorous reader in a number of languages. He was extremely untidy in his appearance, and had almost to be dressed by his personal assistant. It was said that he had six ideas every day, of which three were hopeless, two possible, and one brilliant. The problem was identifying which the brilliant idea was.

Charismatic, infuriating, hugely energetic in spite of serious health problems, a cigarette permanently between his lips, bouncing around like Tigger but prone to sudden bouts of sleep. No one could claim Peter was dull or conventional. To claim, as some people have, that he was a genius is no doubt excessive. But there is no doubt whatsoever that he was unlike anyone else in publishing.

John Powys and Peter Mayer A Tribute

From Morine Krissdóttir:

The recent deaths of John Powys and Peter Mayer have brought back many memories. I got out my old box files and as I worked my way through letters, documents, contracts, it was apparent that in some ways their contributions to reviving the fortunes of at least one Powys writer were intertwined.

John Francis Cowper Powys (1940-2018)

I first met John and his wife Mandy when I was at Restfield visiting John's parents, Sally and Francis Powys. Although John could appear to a stranger rather reserved and a little under the shadow of, shall we say, the Powys legacy, as I got to know him better I became aware that he was very much his own person. By profession a reference librarian, he was also a dedicated local historian, archaeologist and photographer. He loved steam engines, tractors, railways – and cats. His letters to me usually included a drawing of his favourite cat and its latest antics. However, it was as a devotee of the writings of the Powyses that I knew him best.

Let me go back a little. Sally had asked me to edit a selection of JCP's diaries. Sadly she died before *Petrushka and the Dancer* was published but Francis, although shattered by his wife's death and in ill health, continued his support. We had many frank conversations about the problems of keeping the writings of Theodore and John Cowper alive, and he looked to his son John to carry on his battle. Francis was the literary executor and copyright holder of the Estates of John Cowper Powys, Theodore Powys, Philippa Powys and Phyllis Playter. In August 1995 he assigned these to John.

John and Mandy were determined to breathe new life into the reputations of JCP and Theodore but, as the saying goes, families (not to mention agents and Powys aficionados) are funny things, and it took a great deal of determination and courage to straighten out the very tangled past. Francis had made me his literary advisor, as subsequently did John, and in the next few years we worked closely together.

The first step was to get the works back into print. In 1996 Overlook Press published a hardback and softback edition of *A Glastonbury Romance* in America and imported it into the UK in 1998. I remember turning on the breakfast news one morning and to my amazement heard that the novel had had stunning reviews in America and was creating quite a stir in England. More than once in the past the Powys Society had cheered the heralding of a new dawn which never happened. However, John and Mandy felt that now was the time to find a new literary agent to kick-start a publication programme.

By this time Laurence Pollinger Limited had been the literary agent for the JCP, Theodore and Llewelyn for 50 years. However, as early as 1989 Gerald Pollinger, in letters to me, was expressing a wish to "get someone else to look after the Powyses." Zack Kwinter and Rota showed mild interest but nothing came of it. In the meantime, several senior members of the Powys Society were voicing concern about the representation of the Powys Estates by Pollinger. There was even a suggestion that if necessary, the Society should take over.

At this point the very reputable literary agent, Christopher Sinclair-Stevenson expressed interest. John and I met with him and were impressed by his ideas. However, Gerald Pollinger decided that after all he did not intend to retire and in the many months that

followed, John and Mandy had to deal with solicitors, relatives and a very angry Pollinger.

Over the years the novels of JCP and Theodore had been contracted, offset, optioned, reprinted, sub-contracted to an incredible number of different publishers, large and small. Sorting out who had rights to what took many months of patient work. We all felt that the best approach to the works of JCP would be to find a publisher who would publish all of his major novels in fairly quick succession to build up the momentum created by *Glastonbury*. Sinclair-Stevenson had worked with Tony Lacy, publishing director at Penguin, and he expressed great interest but said rather sadly that such a large project would not get past the bottom line of Penguin's accountants. We tried several other publishers who quailed at the thought of publishing JCP in bulk, so to speak. At that point Sinclair-Stevenson got in touch with Peter Mayer.

Peter Mayer (1936-2018)

Peter died in May of this year and there have been many tributes to Peter from friends, colleagues, authors and agents. Mayer was Chairman and CEO of Penguin from 1978 to 1996, when he oversaw the UK as well as US operations, reinvigorated the company, and famously published Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. After leaving Penguin, Mayer returned to his own firm, The Overlook Press, which he had been developing in his free time over the past few decades. His label aimed to be "a home for distinguished books that had been 'overlooked' by larger houses". It was at the Overlook offices that I first met him.

By then, negotiations with Overlook had been hanging fire for some time. I finally decided to go to New York myself with the proposal that Overlook publish the major novels of John Cowper Powys. I met with Peter several times over the next few days. He was everything his friends and colleagues have said about him in recent tributes – vibrant, driven, charismatic and very astute. Overlook had published international sensations like Susan Hill and Penny Vincenzi, and modern masters such as P.G.Wodehouse, Mervyn Peake, Joseph Roth. Some of his coups had sold in hundreds of thousands of copies. At one point I asked him why he would even consider the JCP project and he replied that by finding and selling best sellers, he could afford to carry authors he admired but probably would not sell particularly well. It was a rather round-about compliment to John Cowper but I was not arguing. In the end he published and, most importantly, kept in print both paperback and hardback editions of *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Weymouth Sands*, *Maiden Castle*, *Owen Glendower*, the complete *Porius* and my biography of John Cowper, *Descents of Memory*.

The Powys Society and all lovers of John Cowper are sure to be grateful to John Powys and Peter Mayer who, in their different ways, kept alive the reputation of this great novelist.

Ely, 28th April
Aspects of A Glastonbury Romance

Our group just attained double figures, including our President Glen (who reminded us about the valuable work on Powyses of Kenneth Hopkins). Kevin Taylor directed the traffic, expanding the suggestions in the last *Newsletter* on the ‘clue’ Chapter 15, ‘Mark’s Court’, and the complex character of Mr Geard.

Geard, like Merlin to come, is ‘a possessor of magical power’, in contact with the unearthly, his charisma operating with those he comes across, but also *earthed*, unfazed by anything from the company of aristocrats to a disembodied voice from a legendary past. He knows how to deal with fear. Like Merlin too, he relates to animals: Merlin *passim*, Geard to his hired horse.

We see Geard reinventing Christianity as personal mythology: in an Easter Communion with bread from his kitchen and wine from his sideboard, invoking Christ’s blood as both supernatural suffering and shared humanity. The lower levels in Geard’s multilayered nature are his constant and all-pervading conviction of the presence of Christ. On the upper levels he is confident with people and in contact with his own body, in several scenes undressing as if ritually, including in this chapter (to sleep), and for his final drowning (to the scandal of worldly Philp Crow).

The ‘ordeal’ in the upper room at Mark’s Court comes across, seen through Geard, as less than totally terrifying or even spooky. He soon disposes of the spectral voice from the fireplace, answering it with an even louder cry, as real life from the room below emanates from the floorboards. He relates to the moon and the cosmos through his belief in something beyond it. He sees the Grail as a messenger from that other dimension, created by the thoughts from human minds. With its help, his mission is to transform Glastonbury and the world.

His summons by Rachel (*pace* Freud) can have held no fears for a man with two daughters.

This led on to Geard’s elder daughter Cordelia, the awkward sister, the wise one, destined to be childless, a Cranach (JCP’s preferred type) rather than a Renoir like her sister Crummie (though both end unfulfilled). Cordelia’s “exorcism” of Evans’s sadistic obsession delays their prevention of the murder, though the murder achieves the exorcism. She bypasses the visionary side of her father and admires his leadership.

Note (via Wikipedia): According to Sir John Rhys the great 19th-century scholar (others disagree) Creiddylad of the Welsh legends is traditionally identified as the prototype of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s pseudo-historical Queen Cordeilla, who is the source of Shakespeare’s heroine Cordelia, the youngest daughter of King Lear. ‘The legends surrounding Creiddylad and Cordelia show a high degree of variability.’ As a girl’s name it derives (like Imogen) from Shakespeare.

Kate Kavanagh

News and Notes

From Neil Lee-Atkin

I have been notified that the Sailor's Return in East Chaldon is now closed for business on Monday & Tuesday each week - and this year's **Llewelyn Birthday Walk** is scheduled for MONDAY August 13th!

I have been in touch with the landlord, Tom Brachi who will kindly afford us the use of the pub garden, complete with tables, chairs and parasols -- and suggests that we meet at the Red Lion at Winfrith, which is open all day and serves a decent lunch, at 12 noon for the annual toast to Llewelyn's memory, and then again at the Sailor's Return for 1.30pm which we will use as a base for the walk. So in effect the venue & time for the annual meeting and lunch will be **12 noon on Monday, 13th August, at the Red Lion at Winfrith, followed by the Birthday Walk which will leave from the Sailor's Return at 2pm: everyone to meet there at 1.30pm.**

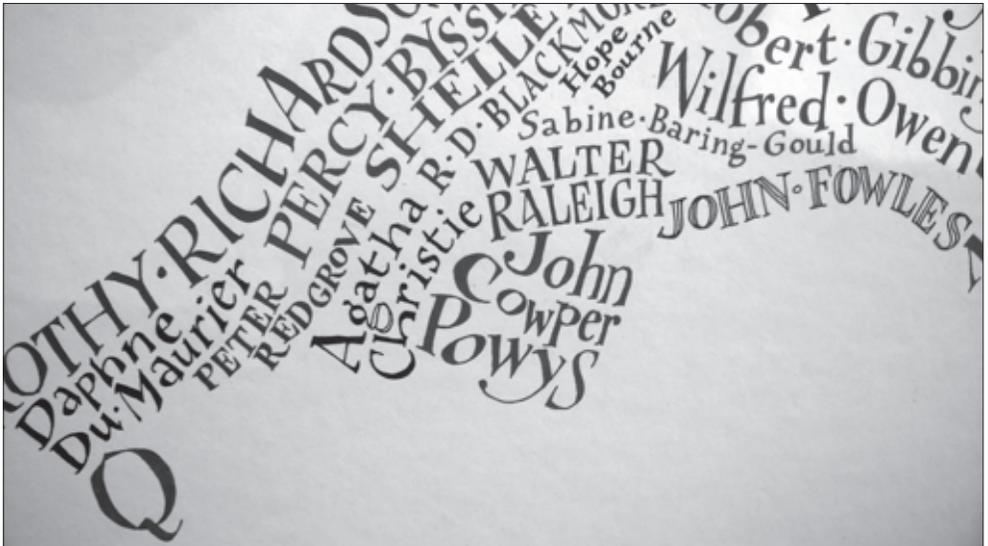
From Kevin Taylor:

Literary map of Britain

I was delighted to come across a map of the British Isles manufactured by the Literary Gift Company (<https://www.theliterarygiftcompany.com/>) and to find John Cowper Powys in pride of place forming part of the south-west coast of the country.

From Simon Brighton:

I have posted the video of Colin Wilson's talk at the Powys Society Conference, Millfield School, Somerset, August 16th 2002, on the Colin Wilson Facebook page



literary map

at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/6283484403/>. There is also a link to the video on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmAA54MvVxc&authuser=0>

From Kate La Trobe-Bateman:

In 2015 I wrote an MA dissertation entitled *The Mystical and the Mundane in the work of John Cowper Powys*. I have now decided to publish the essay in the hope of encouraging fellow Powys-appreciators to read and analyse these incredible works. The dissertation can be ordered on Amazon. [Kate's book is reviewed by Michael Kowalewski]

From Felix Taylor:

Felix Taylor is a DPhil candidate in English at St Hugh's College, University of Oxford, and informs us he is in the first year of his dissertation researching mythology, folklore, and landscape in 20th century British fiction. He says that John Cowper Powys is a major component of his research.

Chris Thomas

A Walk to Poynings

In *Autobiography* JCP tantalises the reader by mentioning one of Alfred de Kantzow's poems called 'A Walk to Poynings', written, says JCP, before he met de Kantzow. The poem does not appear in either of de Kantzow's collections, *Ultima Verba* or *Noctis Susurri*. I had always assumed this work was lost. However I have now located a previously unrecorded printed version of the poem in the archives of the East Sussex Record Office.

'A Walk to Poynings' was published in 1907 by W.J.Towner, in a leaflet called *Faggots from an Old Tree*, which also includes three other poems by de Kantzow: 'The Sage', 'The Priest and the Creed', and 'Ancillon sur l'immortalité de l'âme', which had appeared in *Noctis Susurri*, and 'Leo XIII', which was not included by JCP in either of de Kantzow's collections. *Faggots from an Old Tree* was reviewed by the *Brighton Gazette*, 17 January 1907. 'A Walk to Poynings' is a good descriptive example of the kind of wanderings de Kantzow and JCP embarked on together to places around the South Downs, which he refers to in the Southwick chapter of *Autobiography*. If anyone would like to see a copy of 'A Walk to Poynings' please let me know and I will gladly share this with you.

Birthday celebrations, 1922

The important relationship between JCP and **Colonel Charles Erskine Scott Wood** (1852-1944), soldier, poet, Californian attorney and advocate of civil liberties, has been mentioned several times in past Newsletters. In *Autobiography* JCP refers to Wood as one of his intimate American friends. However the wonderful collection of letters between Wood and JCP (at the Huntington library in San Marino, California)

remains untranscribed and unpublished. The letters certainly deserve the attention of an enterprising scholar. In the meantime useful information about the relationship between Wood and Powys can be found in the oral history interviews with Wood's wife Sara Bard Field (*Poet and Suffragist*, 1979, available online; and see *Newsletter* 48, April 2003 pp10-17); and in Robert Hamburger's biography of Wood, *Two Rooms*, 1998.

Relevant passages from Hamburger's biography are cited by David Goodway in his *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow* (2006/2011). One of these references is worth quoting in full for the lively picture it gives of JCP at a social occasion. In this case the event described is Wood's 70th birthday on 22 February 1922: 'John Cowper Powys delivered a poem gorged with hyperbolic praise. Then he lifted his cup and improvised a toast: *A man is more than his work; else his work is but a small thing. And you, my dear lord, who paint life and the old sweet look upon the face of life, you who sing of death, and the old strange look upon the face of death, are more than these things; more than the best of these things.*'

REVIEWS

Kate Kavanagh

Jeremy Hooker: Under the Quarry Woods

(Pottery Press pamphlet no.3, 2018)

Jeremy Hooker's latest book is of 'New prose poems ... quarried from journals written at his home in a Welsh former pit village... A meditation on a place and its people, an industrially-scarred landscape with a deep history, its harshness illuminated by glimpses of natural beauty and possibilities of regeneration for the land and its fractured communities'.

'Quarried' and 'deep' ... Beneath the woods with their owls, goldfinches, dashing streams, butterflies, gossamer and toadstools, are the ruins of mines with unseen ghosts tramping the tunnels and cavities, or brought up as corpses by the great wheels taking cages up and down the pit – a sight recalled by a friend from Hooker's younger days, of the 1913 disaster in which 439 died. In 1894 it was 290 men and boys, 123 horses ... The graveyards so crowded, no space to walk between. 'We were all one family.'

Always aware of this underworld, this past, Hooker describes the lichened blocks of stone, relics of the quarries, leaning like ancient cromlechs, and the new 'greening' attempts to rebuild the landscape with lakes and parks; and above all the ever-changing over-world of clouds, wind and relentless Welsh rain. But what can replace those communities, that family?

These ‘poems’ follow closely on Hooker’s book of essays *Ditch Vision* (Awen, 2017), digging deeply into poetry and nature; also connecting with his previous journal ‘quarryings’ from Europe and North America, as well as his Hampshire childhood. His preoccupations are always with ways of seeing, inner and outer contacts with reality, ways to ‘prize open the shell of self to reveal the dance of energies we are part of’. Words are not enough: ‘we are lost in our sea of language’; and for him, who notices everything, imaginative ‘empathy’ not enough either. He is always a stranger, a sojourner. But good company.

Michael Kowalewski

***Kala Trobe: The Mystical and the Mundane in the Works of
John Cowper Powys***

(Parashakti Press, 2018)

He did not believe in God – at least not in a god any Christian would recognise as such. He did not believe in an immortal soul (introduction to *Wolf Solent*). He wrote a book in praise of ‘sensuality’ and venerated Rabelais all his life. He was friends with a leading Catholic theologian but was never tempted by Rome. Like all his brothers he rejected the orthodox Christianity of his father, the Reverend Charles Powys, vicar of Montacute. When he wrote about religion it was always of the pagan, heretical or unorthodox kind. Yet the religious quality of John Cowper Powys’s writing strikes every reader and there have been many studies of what he believed in recently which begin with an assumption of the mystical quality of his cosmic vision.

The idea of the mystical begins in western culture with the ‘Mystical Theology’ of Dionysos the Areopagite in the 6th Century. He used the term apophatic theology consisting of a series of negations to attain intellectual union with a divine essence beyond being and non-being. A translation by the Irish monk John Scottus Eriugena entered western Christianity and proved very influential up to 1453 when other Greek mystical neoplatonic texts became available in the West following the fall of Constantinople. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries ‘the mystical’ was used as a term for the religious essence apart from sectarian, dogmatic and confessional attachments by writers such as von Hugel, William James, Evelyn Underhill and Rudolf Otto seeking a solution to the crisis of faith overwhelming orthodox Christianity.

Powys therefore was right in the centre of this intellectual current yet with an absolutely unique perspective, which has been closely explored by Kala Trobe in this illuminating book. She has provided a fresh view, contrasting and comparing the mystical with the ‘mundane’ which as she explains in the introduction is not just

the ordinary and humdrum, but the spectrum of earthly longings and imaginings, fantasies and sensual pleasures which most mystics reject but which were central to Powys's 'Saturnian Quest'.

Along with the development of mysticism there was an increased interest in myth and magic, and the book *From Ritual to Romance* by Jessie Weston was seminal both for JCP and T.S.Eliot. (It is an irony of modernism that Eliot's East Coker and Powys's Montacute are within walking distance.) It was thus a heady brew of mysticism, myth and magic that inspired Powys to fuse the romance tradition and the modern novel into his unique brand of visionary writing. As Kala Trobe says, he regarded himself as a magician, perhaps in competition with the inventor of 'Magick', Aleistair Crowley, about which Trobe has written several books.

The antithesis to the mystical and sacred of JCP was certainly not the sensual or mundane but the modern world, symbolised by the Wookey Hole owner Philip Crow, whose real-life prototype sued and ruined JCP in an outrageous libel case. Perhaps a better title would have been mystical and erotic, as Kala Trobe looks principally at the two Wessex novels *Wolf Solent* and *A Glastonbury Romance* where it is the sexual nerve that Powys pursues with forensic examination of human, vegetable and animal consciousness.

Kala Trobe's book is short, under 80 pages of double-spacing but extremely dense and very well referenced, so each assertion is backed by a reference to a Powys writing. She deals with all the aspects of JCP's mysticism – the double-natured, partly malicious first cause, the inalienable self-consciousness, the mysterious potency of everyday things, the projection of consciousness into space, persons and things, the erotic nerve and its consanguinity to cruelty and the numerous other tropes that make the mystical Powys's own, unorthodox mélange. If she comes to no conclusion other than Powys's own 'Never, or Always', nor did Powys himself. However her discussion is never less than illuminating of the corners of his endlessly rich psyche which soars into heaven and crashes fully to earth, often in the same act.

Trobe compares Powys's fusion of magic and mysticism to Tantra, and that is indeed perhaps the closest current to Powys. Tantra, the mysticism of Tibet, incorporates sacred places, magic formulae and sexuality in the service of enlightenment and Powys was certainly aware of many of its teachings which were becoming available at the time and incorporated them into his characters.

JCP's mythic universe begins in *Wolf Solent* with the famous train journey in which he slips into his 'mythology' an acute state of mental absorption in a battle of god and evil as titanic as any religious narrative. However, this myth is his own and although various characters and places in the story are included in his myth, it remains private to him. By the time of *A Glastonbury Romance* the myth has entered into several minds and embraced the actual world so it is enacted in the quotidian world as well

as the individual mind. Powys thus reclaims the late mediaeval romance tradition of the Grail for the modern naturalistic novel and enriches it immeasurably. The grail tradition fused the sexual and fertile with mystic and sacred, giving the perfect matrix into which Powys could cast his rag-bag of impulse, insight and intuitions which he never concluded because all of them are always alive.

Kala Trobe is a relative newcomer to Powys who lives in Glastonbury so she has an intimate and refreshing insight into his work. The issues she raises are at the heart of Powys studies and we would welcome a further book, perhaps concentrating on *Porius* where the mythical, mystical and worldly are even more intimately fused.

Michael Kowalewski

**John Cowper Powys, *Jugements Réservés (Suspended Judgments)*
trans. Jacqueline Peltier**

(Penn Maen 2016, €17.00)

Why should an Anglophone reader of John Cowper Powys read a French translation of his work? Actually, there are many good reasons. Even in this narrow time, we should be aware of how international, and particularly European, JCP was. Not simply because he knew all the European works of literature, Homer, Dante, Goethe, Rabelais, but because his reception outside anglophonia was notable. Powys's reception in France has been both explored and disseminated by the tireless labours of Jacqueline Peltier, and the French translation of *Suspended Judgments* we owe to her. As a bonus there is a fine preface by Marcella Henderson-Peal.

JCP the critic preceded the novelist by decades – *Suspended Judgments* appeared in 1916. We know he spent 30 years on the US lecture circuit expounding in a state of shamanic possession the great writers. His critical books certainly have something of that flavour but are much more ‘suspended’ than his lectures seem to have been. They are after all ‘judgements’ and Powys mixes critical analysis of text with an engagement with the entire biography – shall we say ‘life-illusion’ of the writer.

It is as well to remind ourselves of the unique quality of JCP's criticism. A great writer discoursing on other great writers, whose equal he was and could therefore consider not dispassionately or academically but as part of a life- and mind-enhancement programme that is unique in critical literature. Before starting on his own creative leap, Powys had to measure himself against ‘the tradition’, which he did with far more skill than many eminent author critics – compare him to purse-lipped Eliot for example, a sour trickle to a majestic flow.

More than half the writers discussed in *Suspended Judgments* were French. It was midway through the Great War and Powys clearly was supporting a British

ally – no Germans are mentioned. Because of that it is good to see how Powys appears to French readers and to have proper original language citations from French sources. However, the main interest for an English reader is the Preface by Marcella Henderson-Peal which covers so many aspects of JCP, including his religious and metaphysical positions that purchasing the volume would be worth it for that alone. The Village Press edition, which is the one most of us have, has no preface and the French one is excellent in relating this particular book to JCP's career and whole oeuvre. It provides an intellectual portrait of JCP and the context of his work that cannot be bettered. On top of that, the book is beautifully and lovingly produced with a cover of portraits of mentioned writers and is a pleasure to behold. It would be a worthy addition to any Powys library.

JCP's Rabelais

JCP's addiction to Rabelais is credited to Bernard O'Neill, the older friend and mentor to all the family, first met in 1896. TFP (to his brother's envy) went with O'Neill on an excursion to Rabelais's birthplace, in 1903. In 1908 JCP gave a lecture on Rabelais in Oxford, to only moderate success ('not outspoken enough for my friends, and too outspoken for the authorities').

Rabelais is no.17 in *One Hundred Best Books* (1916) with a glowing paragraph:

Rabelais is the philosopher's Bible and his book of outrageous jests. He is the recondite cult of wise and magnanimous spirits. He reconciles Nature with Art, Man with God, and religious piety with shameless enjoyment. His style restores to us our courage and our joy; and his noble buffoonery gives us back the sweet wantonness of our youth. Rabelais is the greatest intellect in literature. No one has ever had a humor so large; an imagination so creative, or a spirit so world-swallowing, so humane, so friendly.

The opening essay in *Visions and Revisions* (1915) also gives Rabelais top praise:

What in this mad world do we lack, my dear friends? Is it possibly *courage*? Well, Rabelais is, of all writers, the one best able to give us that courage ... To read Rabelais is to gather, as if from the earth-gods, spirit to endure anything ... He is the sanest of all the great writers; perhaps the only sane one ... Everything in life is sacred and everything is a huge jest. He was one of those rare spirits that redeem humanity ...

Jacqueline Peltier's *Lettre 7* (printemps 2004) is devoted to Rabelais, and she reviewed Lieutenant's translation in NL17, November 1992. She draws attention to Rabelais's appearance with his friend Socrates in the Elysian Fields, at the end of *Morwyn* (1937), that book most revealing of JCP. The two, and especially Rabelais, defender of mercy and

pity and the human heart, comfort the ‘Captain’ as he returns from the underworld: ‘At the bottom of the world is pain; but below the pain is hope.’ (*Bon espoir y gist au fond*).

‘François Rabelais’ by Llewelyn Powys first appeared as a review in *New York Herald Tribune Books* on 11 December 1927; a smoother version is in *Rats in the Sacristy* (1937). Lieutenant, exasperated by JCP’s prose style, many times ‘to calm myself picked up the luminous essay by Llewelyn Powys! this was how I discovered that he had been religiously incorporated, phrase by phrase, in the essay by his ‘daddy Jack’, and enlisted to defend opinions that would have made his blood boil. More winding paths of brotherly love...’

JCP’s long essay in *Pleasures of Literature* followed in 1938, and Rabelais appears in many of JCP’s letters, notably those to Iorwerth Peate, written while he was writing the book in the late 1940s.

Catherine Lieutenant’s translation of JCP’s *Rabelais* consists of a long introduction by her, followed by JCP’s Preface, his Life of Rabelais, The Story Told by Rabelais, and An Interpretation of Rabelais (His Genius, His Religion), with long Additional Notes by Lieutenant, Index and Bibliography.

Notes: ‘Honest cods’, that favorite Powys catch-phrase, comes from Rabelais (?via Urquhart).

Le grand Peut-être (the great Perhaps) is attributed to Rabelais as his last words.

‘The circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere’ (originally from Empedocles, taken up by theologians, a favorite of JCP’s to describe the ‘System of Things’), appears in *Rabelais* as the final benediction from Bacbuc, Priestess of the Divine Bottle.

KK

Catherine Lieutenant

Excerpts from

Introduction to her 1990 translation of Rabelais by John Cowper Powys (1948)

1942, 1943, 1944. Wartime. Most European countries are invaded. London has the Blitz. Battles rage in Moscow, in the Crimea, the Caucasus, Stalingrad. Bombs rain down everywhere. In France, clandestine publishing is organised. One of the resistance newspapers is named *Pantagruel*.

Banished to Siberia, Mikhail Bakhtin works unfaltering (he has lost a leg) at a subject that won’t even earn him a doctorate but which will overturn, renew, and impose adulthood on knowledge of one of the most important writers of all time. Not a thesis, comrade examiner, more of a revolution.

Banished to deepest Wales by lack of funds and by social conventions, one of the three or four greatest anglo-saxon writers of the century, and one of the most unknown,

is harnessed to a similar task. No thesis (he already has a degree, in history), more of a gospel.

He is seventy, has suffered all his life from nervous stomach ulcers, has lost all his teeth which does not bother him as he lives on raw eggs and olive oil, has recently lost the use of one eye which obliges him to limit his vast correspondence, in favour of the remaining 'Cyclopean' one required to gain his daily bread.

'The One-eyed and the One-legged', or 'The two prophets of Maître François'. He would have been greatly amused. Neither knew anything about the other. [...]

The war led [John] to seek hope and comfort, to seek a future other than in the religion of his forefathers. At least: *The simple fact that two thousand years ruled by the sign of Pisces have concluded with two world wars and the chilly prospect of a third, is a sure proof that you cannot put Love on a pedestal without giving one also to Hate.* [?]

But should it surprise us that Powys looks at Rabelais from a christian point of view, now that Christianity, for him, is not enough for human needs? No more, to my mind, than we should be surprised that Bakhtin examines him in marxist terms when for him Marxism is clearly inadequate. Two men in search of the panacea. [...]

Powys is a second Rousseau... his whole essay on Rousseau [in *Suspended Judgments*] is a self-portrait, essential to anyone attempting to know him. His autobiography contains as many lies as Rousseau's own. Chiefly by omission....

His Rabelais will be eminantly subjective, emotional and passionate, because his true aim is not to illuminate but to infect with acute rabelaisitis, relying not unreasonably on Rabelais to finish the job. [...]

Powys is a reader, and an inspirer of others to read. And he finds *the therapeutic methods of this great doctor are the best* to cure what he suffers from, and to cure anyone who suffers from anything. But Rabelais is a horse-doctor, and Powys's stomach is not strong enough for horse-drenches... And so, convinced the medicine is necessary but unable to swallow it, Maître Powys *gilds the pill*. He soaks it in his favorite honey, colours it to his own liking and swallows it with eyes shut and a big mouthful of strong tea...

It is not Rabelais we discover [in this book], but Powys. Rabelais is his discoverer.

Does this mean that *everything* he says about Rabelais is false? Far from it! That would be far too simple. Apart from giving the reader a fierce desire to know Rabelais better, Powys emits ideas, opinions and *intuitions* that are entirely his own and which compel more than simple noticing. But a reader wishing to know Rabelais as he really was needs to sift good grain from wild seed, in this doubly fascinating book where risks of misunderstanding lie in wait round the corner of every page. [...]

It has to be said that one of the peculiarities of J.C.Powys is giving special meanings of his own to a whole series of words, not always clearly defined but never the dictionary

meaning. These words, as written by him, are always pejorative. *Satire* is one of them, always poisonous. And *science*, always immoral. *Moral*, always abusive. *Reason*, antipathetic, always taken as one who thinks you can rationalise the imagination. *Logic*, ‘fatal and insane’, mother of the worst aberrations of which she should not be proud. An *atheist* is always a rationalist, and of course dogmatic. In any case, inferior to a Christian. As for *the law of cause and effect*, just rubbish, got rid of by a click of the fingers.

What a pity that ‘satire’, ‘science’, ‘moral’, ‘reason’, ‘logic’ and probably ‘atheist’ are a longer way of writing ‘François Rabelais ! Most of the woes of humankind come from their not giving the same meanings to the same words....

Rabelais wished everyone to be educated in politics says J.C.Powys, just as it should be. But he himself was not. He therefore lumps together what he calls ‘fanatical scientists’ and the ‘fanatically religious’, all in his view in deranged pursuit of different certainties [...]

The truth -- there is only one! -- is that our religions, monotheist and male, anyway, and our science without conscience, have never killed except by *will to power* and *will not to know*; both of these (camouflaged as ‘religious faith’ or ‘scientific curiosity’ or ‘philanthropy’) being little different from perverse infantilism. Because, when all’s said and done, Powys is right: humanity is divided in two, not between ‘atheists’ and ‘believers’ but between ‘adults’ and ‘children’. To the misfortune of us all, children make up the majority, and in their turn are divided into natural children and perverse ones. It is from this last group -- who do not want to grow up, and want no one else to grow up -- that *all* tyrants and *all* sadists are recruited, with various ‘fanaticisms’ as their alibi and bad excuse. [...]

A child. Another stumbling-block. Doesn’t Powys take for childishness the naturalness of Rabelais, one of the greatest adults of all time? If he’s mistaken in this, it is surely also because seeing Rabelais as an infant (*childlike*) allowed him a ‘rhythmic stream of eloquent prophecy’ on the famous saying of Christ? But who less innocent than Rabelais? Oh, la la...

It is here, in fact, that Powys deviates most seriously from Rabelais. And this in so far as he is kindred in spirit to Rousseau ... What separates them most radically is their conception of the Age of Gold. For Powys ... it is in the *prehistoric humility of the ancient anarchy of paradise, far more ancient than Christ or the Buddha*, of which *our race* has not lost the memory. For it to return, we need to recover *the innocence from before the Fall*. A return to the Good Savage...

To be brutal: the Good Savage and the Fall have never existed, because man is born with the brain he has and its organisation forbids innocence. Maybe the Age of Gold does exist, but it is in the future, not the past, and if mankind wants it they will have

to sweat for it... [M]en are condemned to grow, to mature, to become adult enough to be their own policeman, ‘father’, ‘mother’, ‘safety regulations’, ‘prescribing chemist’, without which Nature will devour them or they her. [...]

How can we account for the blindness of this modern interpreter, who as I have said read more carefully than most? The presence of Merlin, Arthur and the rest in a study they have nothing to do with can be explained by the correspondence during the war between the author and Iorwerth Peate, museum curator and student of Welsh literature. The letters, which cover the period of writing of his book, reveal a Powys cut off from the world, buried for ten years in study of his ancestral tongue and the reclaiming of a culture of which he had always felt deprived. In fact, by the time of writing, the most fascinating part of this work was already over. He had spent two years in translating what he could of the Master. He had perhaps dreamed of producing *the* great modern translation of Rabelais, but was obliged to renounce it for economic reasons. What remained – to write a prophetic essay on Rabelais – was for him not difficult: had he not held forth on this subject many times before? He could have written this essay with his eyes shut, but while he was writing, as can be felt throughout, above all in the letters, his ‘daydreams’ were already peopled by the characters in his colossal *Porius*, jostling and teeming, impatient to take over.

Ultimately, it was surely inevitable that his personal renaissance became entwined with Rabelais’s, and that sooner or later he could no longer clearly trace the frontier between those two poles? Poles, as Rabelais said, are made to meet each other. And disjunction, like the law of cause and effect, can disappear if you know the right way to click your fingers. If Boreas has met Auster and Eurys visited Zephyr, why the devil shouldn’t François Rabelais and Merlin the Enchanter get to know each other? Why shouldn’t John Cowper Powys be both Saint Paul *and* Taliessin? Two and two *can* make five, since imagination is a *fact*. [...]

I wish all happiness to anyone seeking a guru in J.C.Powys, and for certainties in what he writes. To find this you must read *one only* of the books by this ‘poet-charlatan’, no matter which, and stick to it. Because if you read another, those beautiful certainties will have crashed. J.C.Powys puts into the mouth of Rabelais a phrase of Whitman’s to which he could equally lay claim: *Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself, I contain multitudes*. [...]

John Cowper Powys wants to weigh up everything, knowing that all is true, and the opposite of all is true [...] He’s a kind of searchlight sweeping a sky where possibilities are endless, who says what he sees at the moment of seeing... or imagining. If the piece of sky he is spotlighting reveals a left ear, he will say *Truth is a left ear*. If he later reveals a chair-leg out of the shadows, he’ll say *Truth is a chair-leg*, possibly adding *which looks like an umbrella*.

To find the truth, no need to add up all these pieces of personal truth! No need either to make them compatible! A reader expecting a master of philosophy after reading Powys will have no option but to philosophise for himself, imagine for himself, seek truth for himself, and discover what he can, like him: *Marry, don't marry ... Read Powys, don't read him ...* But if you do read him, read all of him, or risk imagining many false ideas about him ...

It is precisely this that makes him rabelaisian. [...] Rabelais contradicts himself all the time and he does it *on purpose*. Contradicting himself is his method of teaching, as Socrates's was of asking questions. This is Pantagruel's method of dealing with Panurge, in the *Third Book* ... *Marry, don't marry ... Believe in God, don't believe ... Children, drink deep. If you'd rather not, leave it. But by the cudgel of Diogenes, grow up quickly, or you'll end by causing us trouble! You are the Sovereign here.*

– Ah, but what about him over there? His crown ... his sceptre ... our father ... the image of God on earth ... and all that ...?



Cover of *Rabelais* by Catherine Lieutenant

– Dame Guillotine, if you please? Clack. There you go. All gone. You're on your own. Like the grownups. *Sov-er-reign*. Come along, dry your eyes and stop crying.

The work of J.C.Powys *taken as a whole* is saying just that. With an unbelievable amount of circumvolution, endless precautionary speeches, and splitting hairs longways into sixteen unequal parts (to respect their freedom) ... But, no less than Rabelais, he works to leave his reader uncertain, and at the end of the day their conclusion is the same: *Do what thou wilt, and if what you have wished turns out badly, learn to lick your wounds ...*

That old devil, Old King Learproteusfabulator has many tricks up his sleeve. Why should the Age of Gold not be both *ahead* and *already* ? Click your fingers ...

trans. KK

from Morwyn, or The Vengeance of God (1937) (pp320-321)

...When I returned to life again I found that both the two magnanimous spirits were bending over me.

“Take comfort, Captain,” Socrates was whispering in his simplest prep-Greek. “Remember the Tear of Tityos.”

But the other great Shadow lifted my head upon his own lap, as he squatted there; and I shall never to my dying day forget the words he uttered as he bowed down above me.

“You are going back into your own world, dear cod,” he said gently, “and may that Intellectual Sphere, whose Centre is everywhere and Circumference nowhere, keep you in His Almighty Protection. *He* is the System-of-Things, my honest friend, and *not* these false gods. He works slowly, but He works surely, for His ways are not the ways of power and force, but the ways of mercy and pity. Beware of those who look only to the future; for all true advance is also a return. The sleeping-place of the Age of Gold is in the depths of every human heart; and to this must all revert. Bloody religion and bloody science are not forever. At the bottom of the world is pain; but below the pain is hope. Be of good cheer, dear cod, He is overcoming the world. There is knowledge ; but He is not in the knowledge. There is religion; but He is not in the religion. Wherever a man refuses to do evil that good may come, wherever a man is merciful and pitiful *even unto his hurt*, there and there only is the great and true God, who is below all, and above all and in us all!”

It’s a queer thing to have to confess, my son, but so deeply did these words move me in my weak state that even before he ceased speaking the tears were pouring down my cheeks.

(Believe ... or don't believe ...)

Chris Thomas

JCP and Friar John

In *A Glastonbury Romance*, Chapter 15, JCP describes the sense of fear which Mr Geard experiences in the haunted room at Mark’s Court and refers to what he calls Mr Geard’s ‘*fear funnel*’:

He could feel it [his fear] descending. It ran down a funnel... And then, in a flash, he thought of Canon Crow. The Canon had been accustomed to read Rabelais to him sometimes of a night, when the servants were in bed. The Canon had laughed at him at such times and called him “Friar John des Entommeures,” “Friar John of the Funnels.” He was all one great Funnel now.” [1]

JCP's play on words here [2] and his linking of Friar John's name and epithet with the physiological manifestation of fear and anxiety also suggests JCP's own identification with the character of Friar John.

Henry Miller declared that JCP sometimes referred to himself as Friar John [3]. JCP's letters to Miller and his other correspondents testify to this identification: '...how

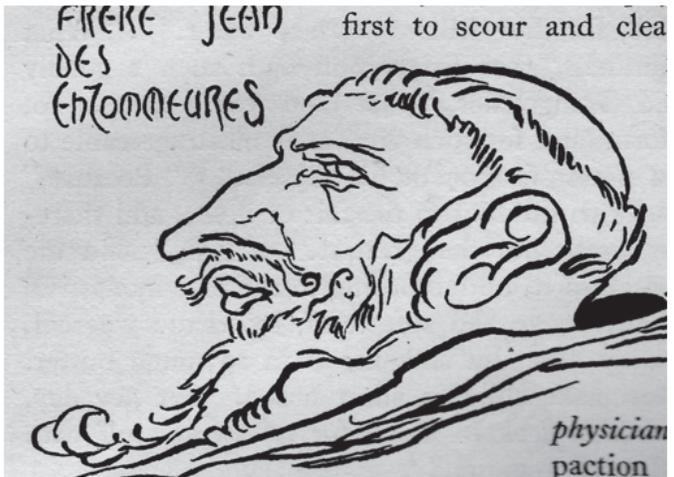
I do love your calling me *Friar John!*' [4] In a letter to Hal and Violet Tovillion JCP signed himself 'old Friar John Powys and Sister Phyllis Playter' and signed a letter to Louis Wilkinson, dated 5 December 1956, 'Friar John'.

In his identification with the comic, life-loving [5] and cudgel-wielding Friar John, JCP found a playful eponym, but with a literary pedigree, consistent with his many other non literary and ironic sobriquets such as 'the Ancient of Days', 'Jack o' Lantern', 'Jack out of the box', 'John the medium', 'Jawer Jack', and 'John Quick and Dead'. [6]

Friar John, the entirely faithful friend, is introduced in Book One, Chapter XXVII, of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, with words that must have deeply appealed to JCP:

But there chanced to be at that very crisis in this fortunate Abbey a cloistered monk called Friar John of the first Cut, or, if you prefer, of the Meat-Choppers [des Entommeures], a monk who was young, gallant, lively, bold, adventurous, sturdy, tall and lean; a monk who had a big mouth, and huge nose, a monk who was a mighty despatcher of canonical hours, a glorious rusher-through of masses and rattler-off of prayers, and indeed, to sum it all up, as true and veritable a monk as there has ever been upon earth since a monking world first monked its monkeries. [JCP's translation] [7]

JCP found in Friar John the epitome of his own philosophy and attitude to life. Late in life, in the shadow of WWII which had only just concluded, JCP reflected on the personal relevance of Friar John (who as Abbot of Thélème, the seminary for free spirits, held similar views):



Friar John by Joseph Hémard

In spite of all recent events I still hold with...Friar John, that men and women, if not driven insane by hunger and terror, or by the shameful stupidity and devilish cunning of their rulers, are naturally good, naturally kind, naturally enduring and finally naturally able to dispense...a little human kindness and a little humorous toleration and common sense. [8]

It's no surprise that JCP told Llewelyn in 1935 that he considered Rabelais to be *after Homer and Shakespeare the greatest writer in the world.*[9]

Notes

1. *A Glastonbury Romance*, Macdonald, 1966, p.446

2.* *Entommeures* -- see note below.

3. *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymous Bosch*, Henry Miller, New Directions, 1957, p. 150

4. JCP letter to Henry Miller, 28 January 1956, *Proteus and the Magician, the letters of Henry Miller and John Cowper Powys*, Powys Press, 2014, p.117

5. *Rabelais was a life-worshipper; a life-analyser; a life apotheosizer.* John Cowper Powys, *Rabelais*, Bodley Head, 1948, p.302. JCP might well have delighted in Voltaire's estimation of Friar John as "le premier des bons bouffons".

6. See especially *Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 1935-1956*, Macdonald, 1958.

7. *Rabelais*, p.149. This passage is a good illustration of the effect of Rabelais's richly polysyllabic, comic and allusive prose which must have attracted JCP. In his essay on *Finnegan's Wake* in *Obstinate Cymric*, JCP refers to "the humorous use of popular proverbs in Rabelais, Cervantes and Shakespeare and their exploitation in *Finnegan's Wake*." The context is instructive as Joyce quotes at least one Rabelaisian word in Molly's monologue in *Ulysses* and says that her husband would bring her a copy of "Master Francois" to read in bed. Joyce also made notes on words in Rabelais for incorporation in *Finnegan's Wake*.

8. "My Philosophy" in *Obstinate Cymric*, John Cowper Powys, Village Press, 1973, p.181

9. *Letters to his brother Llewelyn*, 1925-1939, volume 2, Village Press, 1975, p.200

**entommeures* has several meanings indicating Friar John's devotion to drinking (the funnel is a drinking vessel), his swearing of oaths and his slaughter, with a "staff" or "baton", of an invading army in the abbey vineyard "Friar John is truly "entommeure" in both senses of the word" says Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World*, 1984 [1965] referring to his speech and association with "chopping knives" in the attack against his enemies. CT

There seems no agreement on the exact meaning or translation of the probably punning name *Frère Jean des Entommeures*. In his *Rabelais* JCP calls him *of the First Cut (or if you prefer, of the Meat-Choppers)*. Urquhart has "Friar John de Entoumeures". Cohen in the Penguin edition has "of the Hashes" (modern translators seem to prefer this culinary image to "funnels"). "Of the Choppers-up" might do to suggest chopping both food and people, as Friar John frequently does. The dictionaries (Concise Oxford and Cassell) give hints with *entonnoir* meaning a funnel or to fill a barrel; *assommer* to stun or confound; *entamer* to cut. "The monk", made abbot of Thélème, is seen as an admirable and entertaining character.

KK

Llewelyn Powys

François Rabelais

in *New York Herald Tribune Books* (Section VII), Sunday 11 December 1927

The Lives, Heroic Deeds and Sayings of Gargantua and His Son Pantagruel by François Rabelais. Translated from the French by Sir Thomas Urquhart and Peter Le Motteux. With illustrations by Frank Papé. New York, Boni & Liveright. Two volumes, \$20.

True lovers of François Rabelais will take delight in this new edition of the great humanist's works. The printing has been admirably done, and in appearance the two volumes are worthy of the sublime matter they contain. Sir Thomas Urquhart's incomparable translation is used and the text is furnished with illuminating annotations. With so much in excellent order, dissatisfaction would seem ungenerous. It must, however, be confessed that the new illustrations are unfortunate. Gustave Doré followed Rabelais's extravagant imagination with an exuberance of draftmanship scarcely less extravagant, and in spite of its brutality, his art was in harmony with Rabelais's madcap genius. This is not the case with Mr Papé, who has set his own ephemeral sense of the comic against the mellow humor of the ages. We look at his work, angling as it does for the laughter of the general public, and can only feel sincere regret that the inspired and monstrous fancies of the great Frenchman should have found so shallow an interpreter.

Rabelais was much more than a bawdy "whiffer-up" of good vintage. His genius is as deep and as uncircumscribed as is life. Here is a wild duck that will support no saddle, a bridlegoose not easily to be bridled! For nearly four hundred years the wisest scholars of Europe have tried to discover Rabelais's secret and to explain it in words that all men could understand. They have failed. Like Shakespeare and like Goethe, he is an interpreter of the eternal mysteries, and for this very reason is full of contradictions. He is heretical, blasphemous, and yet at the same time religious. He is "inexcusably" gross, and yet at the same time most delicate. To regard him merely as a drinker with a taste for wenching is to misunderstand the whole temper of his mind.

It is impossible not to be struck by the difference between the Rabelaisian tone in regard to erotic and excremental matters and the kind of outspokenness of our own day. With Joyce, for example, the urge underlying his obscene explosions is a savage, almost pathological attraction-repulsion; whereas with Rabelais "these primordials" simply fall into their places like splendid sacraments, essential parts of his huge gala song.

Certainly his broad, free, humorous treatment of "country matters" has done us great service. It has cleared the air of much that is hypocritical and unseemly, and has

been a justification for many an honest cod who has wished to approach such subjects in a natural way. It should be clearly understood that Rabelais never wrote a single page that is prurient or pornographic. He is, in fact, the great purifier. He lets fresh air into the jakes of society, and his laughter, like sunshine, causes wormwood and pungent camomile to grow out of the very middens of the world. Concealed drains are dangerous to the health, those open to the air are harmless. Rabelais follows the great aristocratic tradition of *natural refinement*.

It is in truth Rabelais's wisdom to accept life on the terms given. He is a philosophic optimist, one of the few of that kidney who command respect. Big fish eat little fish, and he knows it; and when Panurge by his superior wit overreaches Ding-dong and drowns sheep and shepherds in the sea, he feels no concern. He is a great individualist and believes that each human being should learn to know himself and fulfil his destiny without let or hindrance. He is the great champion of freedom, the great liberator of the human spirit, and before his God-like hilarity the turrets of convention tremble. Small wonder that the walls of Jericho fall when so brave a trumpeter has his lips to the curled ram's horn.

And yet as we read, it becomes clear to us that his celebrated admonition "Do what thou wilt" was qualified by his belief that it is constraint and tyranny that turn men's minds to evil. "Because men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompteth them unto virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice", Rabelais would have us feel confidence in the natural goodness of man guided by the recommendations of sweet reason. What he hates and despises are the narrow, unenlightened views of illiberal persons who are forever trying to capture the wild peregrine gods so that they may tether them for their own glory. Self-development, that alone is of importance. "Give yourself up to the study of Nature's truths and let nothing in the world be unknown to you." He would have each of us drink of the good wine of life "with unbuttoned bellies."

For those who sacrifice the golden hours of consciousness to the task of making money he feels nothing but contempt. When Pantagruel is asked to become president of the courts, he refuses. "For," says he, "there is too much slavery in these offices." And later when Pantagruel offers Panurge "a sweet remonstrance" against his squandering the revenues of the Lairdship of Salmygondin in Dipsodie and reminds him that his reckless manner of living renders it "hugely difficult" for him (Pantagruel) to make him rich, Panurge answers:

Rich! Have you fixed your thoughts there? ...Set your mind to live merrily in the name of God and good folks, let no other cark nor care be harboured within the sacro-sanctified domicile of your celestial brain ...For if you live joyful, merry, jocund and glad, I cannot be but rich enough.

Quite apart from such “honest harmless knacks of wit”, what “an abyss” of wisdom is to be found in these extraordinary and fabulous chapters! If the teaching of this “new gospel” had been followed for the last four hundred years, how large an amount of misery would the world have been spared! This, for example, is how Rabelais writes of war:

The time is not now, as formerly, to conquer the kingdoms of our neighbour princes, and to build up our own greatness upon the loss of our nearest Christian brother. This imitation of the ancient Herculeses, Alexanders, Hannibals, Scipios, Caesars, and other such heroes, is quite contrary to the profession of the gospel of Christ... and that which heretofore the Barbarians and Saracens called prowess and valour, we now call robbing, thieving and wickedness.

And again:

These devilish kings, which we have here, are but as so many calves, they know nothing, and are good for nothing, but to do a thousand mischiefs to their poor subjects, and to trouble all the world with war for their unjust and detestable pleasure.

The style of this notable jester frisks and capers, “like an ass with a brizze or gadbee under his tail.” It is capable of scattering the vapors of all men, whether simple or learned. Not one of us but can play at his parlour games – at “charming the hare,” at “grapple my lady.” His high spirits redeem the most grotesque incidents. When Gargantua returns from war, he combs cannon-balls out of his hair, “which his father, Grangousier seeing, thought they had been lice, and said unto him: ‘What, my dear son, has thou brought us this far, some short-winged hawks of the college of Montague?’” Friar John is advised that the doctors think not too well of the excessive consumption of alcohol. “Well physicked,” said the monk; “a hundred devils leap into my body if there be not more old drunkards than old physicians.” Panurge harbors a very characteristic grudge against the Parisians. “They are,” said he, “little tipping sippers that drink no more than the little bird called a spink or chaffinch.” And he loves nothing better than to see “a great puffguts of a counsellor” overthrown by his roguery. Epistemon, when he returned from his visit to hell (where he saw Xerxes as a crier of mustard, and Villon wrangling with him because he offered to enhance the price of victuals), brought back the comfortable news that the very devils were “boon companions and merry fellows.” Whether in heaven or in hell, all is jollity and heyday with Rabelais.

How excellent is the description of Panurge’s dream!

A pretty, fair, young, gallant, handsome woman, who no less lovingly and kindly treated and entertained me, hugged, cherished, cochered, dandled

and made much of me, as if I had been another neat dilli-daring minion like Adonis.... A little after, though I know not how, I thought I was transformed into a tabor and she into a chough or madge-howlet.

In his waking hours this most lovable wag of medieval mischief and piety goes to the death-bed of the poet Raminogrobis, who has just driven from his chamber a flock of priests “dun and ash coloured,” in order that he may be able to repose himself “and acquiesce in the contemplation and vision, yea, almost in the very touch and taste of the happiness and felicity which the good God hath prepared for his faithful saints and elect in the other life and state of immortality.” Though the old man was obviously dying “within grace,” he was to Panurge, because he had offended the priesthood, an arrant heretic, “by the virtue of god a resolute, formal heretic.” Panurge believed his heroic chamber to be full of devils. He would not enter it again. “For,” said he, “who knows but that these hungry, mad devils may in the haste of their rage and fury of their impatience, take a qui for a quo and instead of Romaninagrobis snatch up poor Panurge frank and free?”

It is interesting to notice as one reads these broad pages the peculiar dignity, so natural and yet so spacious, that surrounds the lives of the great giant kings. Their simplest actions have about them a grave and royal style, their great heads, large enough to contain whole worlds, are entirely purged of the kind of distempers that poison the minds of men “who always look out at one hole.” What excellent reading it is when Grangousier catches sight of the staff of one of the pilgrims that Gargantua is about to eat up with his lettuce, and with true paternal care stays him for the moment with the words, “I think that is the horn of a shell-snail, do not eat it,” or, best of all the glimpses Rabelais gives us of the old king in his home, when “after supper he warms himself by a good, clean, great fire, and, waiting upon the broiling of some chestnuts, is very anxious in drawing scratches on the hearth, with a stick burnt at one end wherewith they did stir up the fire, telling to his wife and the rest of his family pleasant old stories and tales of former times.”

When limited people deplore the work of Rabelais for religion’s sake “my soul is ready to fly into some marsh among frogs.” As a matter of fact he was profoundly religious. This can be proved in sentence after sentence. Often in the midst of his maddest sallies, his most copious ribaldry, there will fall upon the page a sudden stillness, and this little great good man by some utterance full of devout feeling will call up comfort for our souls out of the depths. It has been well said “he preserved a certain faith in things that were for the time impossible of demonstration.” Where you least look for it there starts the hare. It appears that the doctor “in the jovial quirks of his gay learning” *puts his trust in God*. “Wisdom,” he writes somewhere, “cannot enter a malicious spirit, and knowledge without conscience is the ruin of the soul.” Friar

John declares against the priests, "But may God be their aid if they pray for us, and not through fear of losing their rich soups." To which Pantagruel answers, "All true Christians of all estates, in all places, in all times, pray to God, and the spirit prayeth and intercedeth for them, and God receiveth them into favour." Of great chapters in literature few are more moving than the Thamous one in which Pantagruel explains that the proclamation delivered to the pilot Thamous in the sea of Paxos, that "the great God Pan was dead," referred to the death of our Lord. It is a passage I would commend to the notice of all readers "who are worthy and fit to receive the celestial manna of honest literature." It is as though the pathos of that enchantment with which we surround our childish hopes, in our forlorn predicament, were at last understood by a mind sensitive, undaunted, and full of a profound and tender irony.

For my part I understand it of that great Saviour of the faithful who was shamefully put to death at Jersualem... And methinks my interpretation is not improper; for he may lawfully be said in the Greek tongue to be Pan, since he is our all. For all we are, all that we love, all that we have, all that we hope, is him, by him, from him, and in him. He is the god Pan, the great shepherd. At his death, complaints, sighs, fears, and lamentations were spread through the whole fabric of the universe, whether heaven, land, sea, or hell..." Pantagruel having ended this discourse remained silent, and full of contemplation. A little while after, we saw the tears flow out of his eyes as big as ostrich's eggs.

For a quarter of a century it has been my custom whenever I have found myself in the presence of a wise man to question him on the subject of the immortality of the soul, and the answers I have got have been "not unlike to the song of Gammer Yeaby-Nay."

To my mind no words uttered by Saint Paul are as apt to allay incredulity than the temper of Rabelais's careless oracles. "I believe," said Pantagruel, "that all intellectual souls are exempted from Atropos's scissors."

To receive the benediction of Rabelais is like receiving a benison from our own sorrowful and exultant mother. It is as if the corn-bearing, grape-bearing earth herself had risen up to bless us. No man or no woman need fear to go to confession "under a burdock leaf" with such a monk. He is the great reconciler of the natural with the supernatural. Catholics, Protestants, Turks, and Atheists, we need none of us feel ashamed to call ourselves believers after the order of François Rabelais. The net of this antic fisher for the souls of men is wide and the meshes of it free and open. "Now my friends, you may depart, and may that intellectual sphere, whose center is everywhere, and circumference nowhere, whom we call God, keep you in his almighty protection."

Chris Thomas

A meeting with Catherine Shakespeare Lane

On Friday 20 April 2018, I accompanied our Chairman, Timothy Hyman, and committee members Kevin Taylor and Dawn Collins, on a visit to the Royal Academy where we had arranged to meet the artist and photographer Catherine Shakespeare Lane. We had anticipated this meeting ever since Kevin presented us, at a committee meeting, with a mysterious photograph he had found in the archive of papers belonging to Lesley Pollinger which he is looking after on behalf of the Powys Society (see Kevin Taylor's article about the Pollinger archive below). The photograph, which has never been published, shows JCP in old age leaning back in his chair with his arm upstretched and looking into the face of a young girl standing behind him, who looks directly into the camera. The reverse of the photograph provided a few clues. A note states "*JCP & CSL photographed by Cyril James Lane 1959*". We guessed CSL was the daughter of the photographer but had no idea who these people were. However, after the committee meeting I quickly managed to discover their identity.

Cyril James Lane (1911-1961) was Keeper of Botany at Leicester City Museum and Art Gallery in the 1930s. He was an expert linguist (who was seconded to the BBC in WWII as supervisor of East European languages) [1], a keen photographer, and author of *Flowers of the Countryside* published by Brockhampton Press in 1950. In 1938 Cyril married a German refugee, Susanne Ida Elise Elfrieda Freutel. Catherine was their third child, born in 1950, whom I later identified as a contemporary artist, Catherine Shakespeare Lane, [2] the same person as the young girl in the photo. This, and other genealogical information, enabled me to locate a collection of 33 letters and a card exchanged between Catherine's mother Susanne and JCP, dating between 1958 and 1961, in the Archives and Manuscripts Department at the National Library of Wales. We plan to publish this complete collection of letters in the *Powys Journal* in 2019. I contacted Catherine by letter and she proposed a meeting.

Catherine told us a moving, and what for her was still a deeply emotional, story about how her mother, born to Jewish parents in Berlin in 1920, had come to England from Germany in 1935 (the year the Nazis implemented the Nuremberg race laws that stripped Jews of the right of citizenship). Susanne found a refuge and sanctuary in Leicester. The upheaval of leaving Germany, the effort of integrating into English society, the difficulty of living in a new country and learning a new language, followed by Susanne's subsequent state of depression, were very hard to deal with. In England Susanne discovered the works of JCP and read through the whole of *The Art of Happiness*

(1935) and *In Spite Of* (1953). Susanne was inspired by JCP's informal, conversational style, and his words about endurance, fate and destiny, overcoming pain and suffering, and managing unsettling feelings of loneliness and insecurity. Susanne wrote to JCP thanking him for his help. He replied in his usual enthusiastic and welcoming way. Susanne visited JCP, in Blaenau Ffestiniog, by herself, in July 1958. This was followed by a second visit, accompanied by Cyril and Catherine, in March 1959.

It is clear, on the evidence of his letters to Susanne, that JCP responded very sympathetically to Susanne's situation and must have felt close affinity with her position as an exile, and with her Jewish background and knowledge of German language and literature.

We were eager to learn more about Catherine's memories of the day she met JCP, but she said she was only nine years old and now retained hardly any memory of the day at all. However, she showed us a curious artefact – a strange miniature figure, dressed in a cloak and hood, which Phyllis had given her. It was hard to work out exactly what the figure represented but it did make me think of those tiny hooded figures favoured in Romano-Celtic religion called *Genii Cucullatii* or the 'cloaked ones', and the hooded archetypal figure of Telesphorus associated with healing, fertility, life and rebirth.

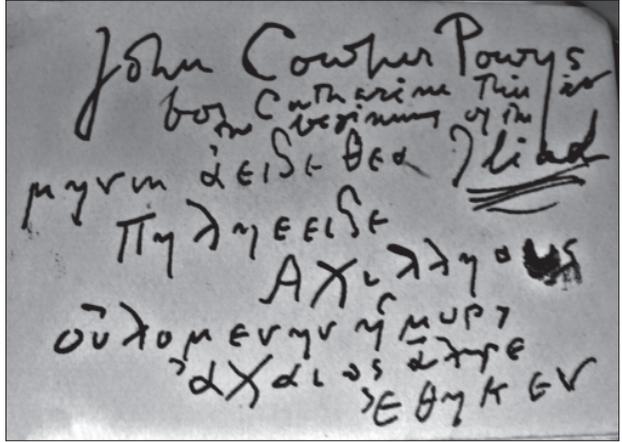
Catherine then showed us a thick volume containing her father's entire collection of photographic contact prints. This was of special interest, as she showed us two more photographs her father had taken of JCP on their visit to Blaenau Ffestiniog. Catherine reminded us that these photographs have in fact been published before, for instance on the front cover of *John Cowper Powys and the Magical Quest* by



CSL and JCP, 1959, and (right) the curious figure

Morine Krissdottir, published by Macdonald General Books in 1980, and the back cover of *Three Fantasies*, published by Carcarnet in 1985. Cyril and Catherine are credited as the source of the photo on the cover of Morine’s book.

Catherine now showed us her childhood autograph book, inscribed by JCP, as well as her mother’s books that JCP had inscribed, all proudly treasured items. We scrutinised the



Inscription in autograph book — 1st line of Iliad

inscriptions which not only give a picture of JCP’s familiar obsessions and interests, but in at least one case revealed some insights into hitherto unsuspected literary connections between JCP and James Stern – another important twentieth century writer.

JCP inscribed Catherine’s autograph book, “for Catherine” with a very bold signature and has written, in Greek, the opening few lines of Book One of *The Iliad*.

The Art of Happiness (John Lane, the Bodley Head, 1935) is inscribed *For our dear friend Susanne Lane from John Cowper Powys on the pleasure of her visit to us. What did Achilles say to Xanthus? ἀλλὰ και ἐπρεξ* “All the same for that!” Susanne was still using her copy of the book in the 1990s, for she has written faintly in the inside cover a description of her encounter with a bookseller who had met JCP in the late 1940s/early 1950s: “10/6/95. I met today Brian Wright, bookseller of Kirkby Stephen. He told me that as a student he called without appointment on JCP in Wales and was received with kindness and courtesy. Even in old age he seemed a huge figure in every way. Mr Wright told JCP that his real interest so far had been in the writings of Llewelyn. JCP replied (without any rancour) ‘I thought it wasn’t Theodore. His fans are much more sophisticated.’ Mr Wright thought that JCP was writing *Porius* at this time. His handwriting was large and untidy. He saw him reclined on a sofa with a large writing board. The meeting was still clear in his memory 45 years later. He regarded JCP as god-like’.

In *In Spite Of* (Macdonald, 1953) JCP has written *Inscribed for Susanne Lane by her devoted friend John Cowper Powys. “im ganzen guten schönen resolut zu leben”*. The quotation (a favourite of JCP) comes from Goethe’s poem, *Generalbeichte*, *General Confession*, written about 1802/1804, and can be translated as ‘in the

whole, the good and the beautiful, resolutely to live'. Goethe had intended the poem to express his philosophy of living life in the full. JCP may have encountered the lines in a misquotation by Pater in his essay on Wincklemann or by Carlyle in an essay on Schiller who also misquotes Goethe substituting *schönen* with *wahren*. Elsewhere JCP quotes the phrase several



Catherine S.L. and Timothy Hyman

times ...*Resolut zu Leben in Blaenau is my Goethean Motto now!* [3], in a letter to Dorothy Richardson in 1938 citing Goethe as his underlying inspiration, and inscribing the phrase in a book for his friend the painter Elsa Vaudry [4]. He may also have remembered Nietzsche's reference to living life resolutely in *The Birth of Tragedy*. This Goethean theme, a subject that Susanne and JCP must have discussed in some detail, is echoed in Susanne's bookplate pasted in the inside cover opposite JCP's inscription. The bookplate designed by a popular Czech German artist, a master printer, maker of bookplates, and friend of the poet Rilke, Emil Orlik (1870-1932) [5], was produced for the 100th anniversary of Goethe's death and bears the lines: '*Zum Sehen geboren, zum schauen bestellt*' ('A watchman by calling, far sighted by birth') and shows an image of Goethe contemplating the night sky and looking at the moon and the stars. This is Goethe the scientist who studied the phases of the moon through a telescope in his Weimar garden. The quotation is from Faust Part 2, and the first two lines spoken by Lynceus, the Watchman, in his song, in Act 5. Interestingly, although JCP does not quote these lines they do appear as an epigraph to a poem, *Lynceus*, dedicated to JCP and Phyllis Playter by John Redwood Anderson, and published in his *Pillars to Remembrance* (1948).

Grimm's Fairy Tales (Pantheon Books, 1944), re-translated by James Stern (originally translated by Margaret Hunter). The book was presented to JCP by Jimmy (James) Stern (1904-1993) and his wife Tania Kurella Stern (1904-1995) [6] who visited JCP in September 1959. James Stern was an admired short story writer, noted translator of Kafka, Brecht, Sigmund Freud and Erich Maria Remarque,

book reviewer and critic, who was closely acquainted with many literary figures, celebrities and artists of the twentieth century. He was a friend of Louis Wilkinson (whom he met in 1930, when he was working at the *London Mercury*) [7], as well as Alyse Gregory and Eve and Malcolm Elwin (their letters are full of references to the Powyses and can be consulted in the Stern archive at the British Library.) This copy of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* is inscribed by James and Tania Stern to JCP and then from JCP to Susanne Lane and is testimony of a remarkable and unique literary association. It is a measure of JCP's good heartedness that he so generously gave to Susanne his presentation copy of a book which he often said was his own favourite in his childhood [for illustrations of the inscriptions see back cover].

Notes

1. Museum News, 1943.
2. Catherine describes herself as a modern archaeologist inspired by the principle of chance, free imagination and the artistic possibilities of discarded and found objects. There is a certain parallel here with JCP who frequently made use of found objects in his writings like the heron's feather Christie uses to mark her place in *Hydriotaphia in Wolf Solent*; or the cauldron he found in a field in Corwen which is mentioned in *Obstinate Cymric*; or the shells, rockpools and seaweed he refers to in his *Autobiography*; or the pink lichen covering the tombstones in Llangar churchyard he describes in his diaries. He even leaves room to compare the art of the lace-maker with the marks of chance in nature in his Foreword to Marion's book on lace-making. The Greek Goddess, Tyche, which he called 'the incarnation of pure chance', was for JCP not only the force underlying the multi-verse but also a symbol of his relationship with Phyllis, as Frederick Davies explained in an article in *Powys Review*, No.20.
3. Quoted by Morine Krissdottir in *Descents of Memory*, p.408.
4. *Powys Review*, No.3 Summer 1978.
5. Susanne's bookplate is illustrated in *Die Exlibris des Emil Orlik*, by Eric Scheffer, 1992. Orlik was a member of the Vienna and Berlin Secession. He contributed to important early twentieth century art periodicals such as *Jugend* and *Ver Sacrum* and created portraits of contemporary writers, composers and musicians – most famously of Mahler.
6. Unfortunately Stern's correspondence with JCP does not seem to have survived in any public collection. However, an extract from one of JCP's letters is quoted in Miles Huddleston's biography of Stern in which JCP declares how he was suddenly impelled to kiss the forehead of Stern's wife, Tania, "I've got a mania for seeing inside ladies foreheads", just as he had been impelled to kiss the forehead of Augustus John "in a sort of pure ecstasy!" (letter to Louis Wilkinson dated 27th December 1956).
7. *Louis Wilkinson, A Happy Man* by James Stern, London Magazine, December 1981/January 1982.

Kevin Taylor

Pollinger archive of Powys documents

Laurence Pollinger became John Cowper Powys's literary agent in 1934 and would represent him until the end of JCP's life: their extensive correspondence is archived in the National Library of Wales. Laurence's son Gerald represented JCP's Estate and took a close interest in The Powys Society, attending many of its meetings in the 1980s and '90s: his Honorary Life Membership was reported in NL44 (2001) and his obituary appears in NL54 (2005). In the late 1990s Christopher Sinclair-Stevenson took over from Pollinger as agent for the Estate – a role he still holds.

Following Gerald's death in 2005, Pollinger Ltd was run by his daughter Lesley, who in 2010 donated a substantial amount of historical material to the London Metropolitan Archives: Our Secretary, Chris Thomas, visited LMA and reported on the Powys records he found there in NL72 (2011).

In 2016 Lesley left the family company in the hands of a larger agency, Peters Fraser Dunlop, inheriting a filing cabinet of office materials – mainly duplicates of manuscripts, typescripts and letters. Lesley has been kind enough to give these materials to The Powys Society to hold on trust, and I have now catalogued them. They relate not only to JCP but to a range of figures in the Powys world whom Pollinger represented or had dealings with, including Theodore, Llewelyn, Bertie and Francis Powys, Alyse Gregory, Gamel Woolsey, Emma Goldman, Henry Miller, Kenneth Hopkins, Peter Eaton and Lawrence Mitchell. Since they are mostly duplicates they would not be eligible for archival deposit, but they do nonetheless contain some interesting items. I was particularly struck by the following:

- Signed contracts between T. F. Powys and Chatto & Windus for *Mr Weston's Good Wine* (14 Dec 1925) and *Mr Tasker's Gods* (21 Feb 1924).
- Manuscripts in TFP's hand of many of his stories and fables.
- Sketch by JCP of a Star of David with annotations, dated May 1934.
- A draft note by JCP to his friends announcing that he is giving up letter-writing 'owing to the physical and mental importunities of old age... so as the better to concentrate on writing my books in order that I may die pen in hand' (undated, but from context likely to be late-1940s/early-1950s).
- A letter (to Ernest Rasdall) dated 31 Jul 1952 in Phyllis Playter's hand but purporting to be from JCP – a (perhaps rare?) example of Phyllis not merely answering a letter on his behalf but signing it as though she were him. [1]
- The Will of Alyse Gregory (dated 5 Apr 1966).

- A report of 30 Aug 1976 listing the US copyright registrations & renewals for JCP's works.
- A development plan, treatment and rights offer for a film adaptation of *Mr Weston's Good Wine*, March 2013 (this never went ahead).
- Order of funeral service for Lucy Penny (née Powys), 10 Nov 1986 [2]
- Publicity statement by Macdonald & Co on the occasion of JCP's award from the Free Academy of the Arts, Hamburg, 1957. [3]
- Colour photograph of JCP's death mask. [4]
- Photograph of JCP with a young visitor to Blaenau Ffestiniog in 1959 – identified as Catherine Shakespeare Lane, then aged 9, now a well-known photographer and artist. (See Chris Thomas's separate story in this *Newsletter* of the discovery of the photograph and meeting with Catherine Shakespeare Lane.)
- A limited-edition poem by Mark Holloway in memory of Alyse Gregory. [5]
- *Syllabus of a Course of Twelve Lectures on Carlyle, Ruskin, Tennyson* by J. C. Powys, B.A., with a synopsis of each lecture and a pre-reading list (undated, but looks early 20thC). [6]

If anyone would like to see the complete inventory (it runs to 302 items), please feel free to contact me by email at ktaylor@cambridge.org, or via the Hon Secretary, and I will be glad to send it to you.

Notes by Chris Thomas

1. Ernest Rasdall (1914-1970) was a civil servant at the GPO and an energetic book collector mostly active in the 1950s and 1960s. He frequently wrote to many well known authors, including JCP, posting them copies of their books, and requesting an autograph. The Powys Society Collection has a copy of *In Spite Of* (1953) inscribed for Ernest Rasdall by JCP dated 26/4/1954, Corwen. A small collection of JCP's letters to Rasdall, covering the period 1952-1961, has been deposited at Cambridge University Library. Other writers with whom Rasdall corresponded are Ethel Mannin, Tolkien, Shaw, Kingsley Amis and John Wain. Occasionally books with inscriptions dedicated to Rasdall appear in the catalogues of rare book dealers. For instance Blackwells Rare Books Catalogue (2016) offered for sale a copy of *Down the River* by H E Bates (1957), illustrated by Agnes Miller Parker with, tipped in, an ALS by Parker to Rasdall, in which she discusses the illustrations she produced for JCP's *Lucifer* (Macdonald, 1956). The catalogue entry states that '...the limited edition of [*Lucifer*] was not signed by her' as she was dissatisfied with the printing. The catalogue description quotes from Miller's letter to Rasdall in which she says she complained to Macdonald that " 'the hand made paper on which [*Lucifer*] is printed is unsympathetic to my wood engravings' " and goes on to encourages him 'not to bother with it'. There is a useful note about Ernest Rasdall in *Tolkien Notes*, No.6, available on-line.

2. Lucy Penny (1890-1986) was the youngest of the children of Rev. C. F Powys. Lucy was born at Montacute. She married Hounsell Penny in 1911. Lucy's funeral service was held in Mappowder at the Church of St.Peter and St.Paul. The funeral service booklet, published in a limited edition of 250 copies in 1987, includes a reproduction of a portrait of Lucy in 1900 by her sister Gertrude Powys. Details of Lucy's funeral service, including tributes, were published in the Newsletter and in the *Powys Review* No.20; JCP's letters to Lucy appeared in the *Powys Journal*, Vol.I, 1991, letters from Phyllis to Lucy appeared in the *Powys Journal*, Vol.II, 1992 and letters to Lucy from her mother appeared in the *Powys Journal*, Vol.IV, 1994; a reproduction of a painting of Lucy (c.1947) by W.E.Powys appeared in the *Powys Review*, No.24.
3. The text of Hans Henny Jahn's letter to JCP notifying him of the award by the Hamburg Free Academy of Arts in 1958 and a photograph of Rolf Italiaander making the presentation to JCP appears in *John Cowper Powys, A Record of Achievement* by Derek Langridge, 1966, following p.xvi and p.200
4. JCP's death mask was made by sculptor, Oloff de Wet, who gives an account of the process and a description of JCP laid out in the mortuary at Blaenau Ffestiniog hospital, in his memoir, *A Visit to John Cowper Powys*, Village Press, 1974 (first published in the *Texas Quarterly*), pp.36-37. "His lips were parted, the mouth open – to use his own words, '...my mouth – like the mouth of a tragic mask imitating a little bird.' For many years the death mask could be seen on open display in the Powys family collection of Peter and Margaret Eaton at their bookshop, Lilies, Weedon, near Aylesbury (*Essays on John Cowper Powys*, edited by Belinda Humfrey, University of Wales Press, 1972, p.360). The death mask was sold to a private collector in 1987. JCP was presented with a copy of a book devoted to reproductions of death masks of "great men" in 1932 and was fascinated by the death mask of Dostoevsky. He wrote to Dorothy Richardson about this on 31 December 1932: *I've got a queer book of Death Masks of 'great men', as that old Victorian phrase runs (we've stopped believing in any 'great men' but 'still, strong' iron Dictators) called Undying Faces [by Ernest Benkard, translated by Margaret Green, 1929, originally produced in German in 1927] published by W.W. Norton Ltd (who gave me the book) and in it there's the death mask of Dostoevsky & I'm struck by the terrific toughness and rude strength of his face which to me resembles those busts of... Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes. (The Letters of John Cowper Powys and Dorothy Richardson, edited by Janet Fouli, Cecil Woolf, 2008, p.73)*
5. Mark Holloway (1917-2004) was a biographer, historian, poet, bookdealer and literary editor. He was married to Victoria Strachey, great niece of Lytton Strachey, and was the half brother of poet, magazine and literary editor, and correspondent of JCP, John Gawsworth (1912-1970). Mark Holloway was the author of a study of utopian communities in America called *Heavens on Earth*, also a memoir of John Gawsworth, and a biography of Norman Douglas. He lived for a while in Mappowder. He wrote a memoir of his time in Mappowder, *With T.F.Powys at Mappowder*, which was published in *Recollections of the Powys Brothers*, edited by Belinda Humfrey, Peter Owen, 1980. Mark Holloway's obituary, by Paul Willetts, appeared in *The Independent* on 31 March 2004
6. See also similar reproduction of a syllabus of lectures by JCP on *Representative Prose Writers of the Nineteenth Century* for Cambridge University Local lectures (1902) and summary of content in Langridge, 1966, pp.23-43..

Jerry Bird

Wolfeton (Ashover) House *

Wolfeton, or to give it its original name — Wolveton, House, stands in its grounds just south-east of Charminster village, among the water meadows of the river Frome. The architectural historian, Sir Nicholas Pevsner, describes it in *The Buildings of England, Dorset* (1972) as sixteenth-century, but in fact parts of the house may date back to the fourteenth century. It is certainly true, however, that what remains today is largely the legacy of the Trenchard family, who rebuilt the house in the sixteenth century.

The house has strong literary associations. Thomas Hardy used the name Trenchard for the hapless anti-hero of his novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge: The Life and Death of a Man of Character* (1886), and used Wolfeton as the setting for his short story 'The Lady Penelope' in his book *A Group of Noble Dames* (1896), in which it is described thus:

In going out of Casterbridge by the low-lying road which eventually conducts to the town of Ivell, you see on the right hand an ivied manor-house, flanked by battlemented towers, and more than usually distinguished by the size of its many mullioned windows. Though still of good capacity, the building is much reduced from its original grand proportions; it has, moreover, been shorn of the fair estate which once appertained to its lord, with the exception of a few acres of park-land immediately around the mansion. This was formerly the seat of the ancient and knightly family of the Drenghards, or Drenkhards... .

John Cowper Powys wrote in his 1929 diary 'Walked alone to Poundbury ... Saw in the distance the scene of Ducdame'. *Ducdame* (1925), was his third novel, in which Wolfeton appears as 'Ashover House', home of the ill-fated squire, Rook Ashover:

Ashover House had been a small house in the 13th century. In the 17th, it had been a spacious one. Now in the 20th Century it was a small house again; the mediaeval buttresses, the Tudor staircase, the Jacobean doorway, the Inigo Jones ceiling being the only portions of it that witnessed to its former dignity. For the rest it was a little, old fashioned lichen covered building dominated by two gigantic trees. But small as it was, it had its own mysterious pathos to Rook as he watched it, so hushed and motionless there. Beyond the house his eyes followed the familiar kitchen garden with its high brick walls and well kept outhouses. And, beyond that too, he looked; to where the trunks of the old apple trees weaving their twisted shadows on the long grass led to the thorn hedge where the yellow hammers always nested

* This article is based on two reports and a feature article written for, and published in, Dorchester Voice Magazine issues 33/34, and on a subsequent conversation with Captain Nigel Thimbleby.

Both authors emphasise the fact that the house had once been larger. The Trenchards fell on hard times towards the end of the eighteenth century and Wolfeton house was badly neglected. For a time it was let as a farmhouse before passing through the hands of several owners, including a branch of the Bankes family. Eventually Wynne Albert Bankes's grand-daughter, Priscilla, inherited Wolfeton house. In what sounds like part of the storyline of Powysian novel, in 1936 she married a penniless Polish aristocrat, who for political reasons was unable to return to his country after WWII, and she became known as the Countess Zamoyska. She was unable to live at Wolfeton as her career took her away for long periods and in 1948 the house suffered further indignities, being converted into flats, although, during this post-war period when so many historic houses were simply demolished, it could have suffered a far worse fate.

The current owner, Captain Nigel Thimbleby, moved into the gatehouse at Wolfeton while recovering from cancer, which had, unfortunately, ended his army career in which he served in the 11th Hussars. His mother had agreed to take the house on in 1961 after being approached by Priscilla, who felt unable to cope with its upkeep. As the flats gradually became vacant, they were not re-let, and Nigel moved into the main house with his wife, Katherine, after they married in 1972, and the gatehouse was rented out. He then began work on restoring and conserving the historic house — a long, arduous and painstaking process which he continues at the age of 82.

He tells an interesting story from when he was stationed in Kenya with the army, in the 1960s. He was on leave in Nairobi when he met a 'young chap' in a club: 'He was a very personable fellow', the conversation was convivial and 'much drink was taken'. Nigel was surprised to be asked to visit his farm that evening. 'We took off in his little two-seater aeroplane, and I soon realised he was navigating using only the landscape, a compass and his watch. I was getting worried as it began to get dark, but all of a sudden, some flaming torches appeared in the gloom, and we landed safely on a tiny airstrip – his sons had been listening for the sound of the plane and had lit the torches to guide us in'. This 'personable fellow' was, of course, none other than the late John Gilfrid Llewelyn Powys!

Recently, much of the Thimblebys' time has been taken up with fighting developers Land Value Alliances' proposal



Wolfeton House

to build up to 120 houses on the ‘Strawberry Field’ just north of the house. The proposed development would ruin the historic context and the visual landscape of Wolfeton House, and would be visible from Poundbury hill fort, from where Powys viewed the ‘landscape of Ducdame’ in 1929, and from the old Roman ramparts of Dorchester itself.

At a planning meeting in Dorchester on 19 April, in a packed Council chamber, objections to the scheme were voiced by local residents, architects, historians and representatives speaking on behalf of the Thomas Hardy Society and English Heritage. Simon Hickman, of English Heritage, described Wolfeton as ‘one of the best historic houses in the country’, and ‘one of Dorset’s most important buildings’ whose ‘setting is essential’. He also criticised the recommendation to grant outline planning permission ‘before establishing whether up to 120 houses *could* be accommodated’ as ‘simply bad planning’.

Alistair Chisholm, dressed colourfully in his Town Cryer’s raiments (he was on his way to give a talk) mentioned both Thomas Hardy and John Cowper Powys, and emphasised the value of the tourism potential of the area to Dorchester in terms of the visitors that flock to the area because of its literary associations, and said the development would be ‘an act of irredeemable damage to the Hardyan landscape’.

After nearly three hours of debate, the Councillors refused to follow the advice of their planning officer, Jean Marshall, and voted overwhelmingly for a proposal to reject the application by a margin of ten to one, with one abstention.

Tony Fincham, chairman of the Hardy Society said: ‘It’s wholly appropriate that the committee rejected the plan. We objected on the grounds that Wolfeton House features in one of Hardy’s short stories and the front of the house is very much as he described it then. This development is within the curtilage of the house. If you fill in every field around Dorchester you’ll ruin the landscape Hardy described and spoil it for future generations. There is every chance the developer will appeal but this is a very encouraging first step and one just hopes they won’t get it through on appeal.’

A Council spokesman said: ‘The impact of the development on the heritage assets within Charminster meant that the committee could not support the application.’ It is now remains to be seen whether the developers may decide to appeal the decision or take it to judicial review.

For now, the landscape of *Ducdame* is safe, and the house looks very much as it did when JCP knew it, but further plans for housing and a northern ring-road are looming.

Wolfeton House is open to the public from June to the end of September — on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 2.00-5.00 — and to groups, by appointment, throughout the year.

Jacqueline Peltier

Weymouth Sands – notes on some mysteries

While reading *Weymouth Sands* for the first time, I often wondered about the strange names Tissty and Tossty JCP had given to the two dancers. I only recently discovered they come from an old custom which was apparently established in the counties along the southern coast of England.

When cowslips were in bloom, a child would make a ball of cowslip flowers referred to as a ‘tisty-tosty’. Cowslip flowerheads were picked off close to the top of the stalks and 50 or 60 of them were hung along a string. The flowers were then pushed carefully together and the string tied to gather them into a ball.

I must have proved a poor reader for Powys, in the *Sark House* chapter, gives us a clue:

Born in the little village of Radipole at the end of the old *Weymouth Backwater*, now Radipole Lake, the sisters could not even now catch the scent of any spring flower without recalling those cowslip-balls they used to toss from hand to hand as they danced on the green in front of the inn... . (*Weymouth Sands*, Macdonald 1973, 227)

The balls were then tossed between the two girls who, all the while, recited a hurried list of names of possible contenders for their favours. The name still on the lips of the child who drops the ball was ‘the one’ for her. Though this game was usually played between girls, boys might also be involved, or so this verse by Robert Herrick suggests:

I call. I call. Who do ye call?
The maids to catch this cowslip bal
But since these cowslips fading be
Troth, leave the flowers; and maids,
Yet, if that neither will you do,
Speak, but the word and I’ll take you.

Another example of the wide variety of JCP’s hints, difficult to identify at first guess, was given to me further in in the same chapter, when the unpleasant Lucky is dreaming of turning *Sark House* into ‘a rendezvous for all erotic eccentric and of himself as an unexclusive Cicerone to a universal Cyprian Alsatia...’ (*Weymouth*230).

Here I was puzzled by the very strange expression ‘universal Cyprian Alsatia’ which did not convey any meaning to me. So I googled the word ‘Alsatia’.

I found there was an area in north London, north of the Thames, south of Fleet Street, east of the Temple and extending to Whitefriars Street. Previously occupied by the Whitefriars monastery, it constituted a kind of sanctuary, being beyond the reach of common law, for debtors, vagabonds and ladies of the night, until a Parliamentary Act abolished it in 1697. According to Walter Thornbury in *Old and New London*: ‘This disreputable and lawless nest of river-side alleys was called Alsatia, from its

resemblance to the seat of the war, then raging on the frontiers of France, in the dominions of King James's son-in-law, the Prince Palatine.'

The adjective 'Cyprian' comes from Cyprus, an island famously known for the worship of Aphrodite and by extension for the licentious behaviour of its inhabitants.

The quack doctor Girodel thus dreams of recreating such a place at Sark House with himself as its tolerant guide.

What a lot you can learn from John Cowper if you pay attention!

Dorchester Meetings, 7th July

Two modest but enthusiastic groups met in the Museum Library (destined to be a tea room), on a hot day with cheers from football-watchers in pubs.

Ray Crozier gave a well-researched survey and history of Patchin Place, NYC, where both JCP and LIP lived on and off in 1920s and 30s, with Alyse Gregory and Phyllis Playter, at nos. 4 and 5. Patchin, resembling a London mews, was at the heart of the Greenwich village bohemian/ literary/ artistic community. Recently a nest of psychotherapists, no.4 is now 'gutted' and modernised for sale. The room as it was is described in *The Owl, the Duck, and Miss Rowe, Miss Rowe* (Miss Rowe was the caretaker). Photographs showed the legendary ailanthus trees at different stages, and the red Gothic building opposite, formerly a courthouse and women's prison, now a library. A full article by Ray will appear in the *Journal*.

After an excellent lunch, former chairman John Williams dissected two short stories of changing identities: 'Nor Iron Bars' by TFP, with an innocent villager gaining respect from having been in prison, and 'A Friend in Need' by Somerset Maugham with an apparently aimiable clubman revealed as a murderer. JW questioned the techniques and effects of the different authorial voices: TFP's deceptive simplicity and Maugham's insecure sophistication.

New Bookshop Opening Soon

Excellent news from Dorchester: Julian Nangle, who, one or two of you might remember, ran the much-lamented secondhand bookshop in South Street years ago, is opening a new antiquarian bookshop at 25 High West Street, Dorchester. A glance at his current catalogue reveals some very choice items of great interest to Powysians. The shop, 'Books Beyond Words', is due to open around the end of July. To obtain a current catalogue email julian@nanglerarebooks.co.uk or telephone 01305 261186.