

Editorial

Cecil Woolf, that staunch supporter of the Powys Society, died on 10th June, aged 92: his many Powys publications include diaries by JCP and LLP and over a dozen booklets in his “Powys Heritage” series. Appreciations by Anthony Head and Peter Foss are on page 2 – more to come in November. Meanwhile, our admiration and above all, thanks.

The photograph on the front cover of this *Newsletter*, taken in June 1929, shows JCP in pensive mood gazing over the river Thames at Hammersmith. He is concentrating and looks confident (despite travel anxieties recorded in his Diary). He was on a three-month family visit to England. *Wolf Solent* had been published in USA the preceding month. Perhaps here he is thinking of his forthcoming visit to Glastonbury. Or watching Bertie bathing before breakfast? (see Diary for 20 June 1929; and see his letter to Phyllis in NL 46). An extended view is on page 27.

The highlights of the year’s activities are in the Chairman’s annual message.

We report on the meeting held in March at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, to celebrate the Society’s 50th anniversary, with tributes to the Society and to our President.

Neil Lee-Atkin previews the annual Llewelyn Powys Birthday Walk in August. Kevin Taylor, Dawn Collins, and Paul Cheshire provide updates concerning our e-book publications, social media and the web site.

We look back to JCP’s connections with other writers and at early critical responses to seminal books: *The Saturnian Quest* by G. Wilson Knight (1964) and *John Cowper Powys: Old Earth Man* by H.P. Collins (1966). These books are still essential reading

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for all serious students of JCP. Collins appears again with a word-portrait of JCP (and reference to TF) in an essay for *The Contemporary Review* in 1962.

A meeting planned for December will be at a new venue, Pushkin House in central London, appropriately to discuss JCP's book *Dostoevsky* (1946). This book on *the greatest of all novelists* was written during the height of WWII, and contains JCP's views of the crisis in world affairs as well as his hopes for the future.

Thanks to Marcella Henderson-Peal for most of the excellent photographs.

KK, CT

Cecil Woolf

20 February 1927 – 10 June 2019

Anthony Head writes:

The death of Cecil Woolf is an inestimable loss to both his family and his vast circle of friends and acquaintances, as well as to the wider world of literature and publishing. As the oldest surviving relative of Leonard and Virginia, he was the leading light for Bloomsbury scholars and enthusiasts everywhere. He was an acknowledged authority also on Frederick Rolfe (Baron Corvo), but for Powys aficionados it is a source of good fortune that another major publishing interest was in the Powys Brothers, particularly John Cowper Powys, and his passing marks the end of a period of publishing in this field that is unlikely ever to be equalled.

The Powys Society owes Cecil an enormous debt of gratitude. From the time he began to publish volumes of JCP's letters in the early 1980s, his interest in the Powyses never wavered and where large publishers would steer well clear of them, Cecil was willing to commit the effort and money to publishing letters, diaries, essays, monographs and all sorts, despite their limited popular appeal and the near certainty of financial loss. No other publisher has done more over such a span of time to maintain the profile of the Powyses and encourage interest in them, and many of the more than two dozen Powys titles he published have found permanent homes in numerous university libraries both in the UK and North America.

Working with Cecil over the years on the letters of JCP and on the Powys Heritage series of booklets was a pleasure and privilege, and the lack of additions to the latter in recent years had more to do with my own commitments and circumstances than with any waning enthusiasm on Cecil's part. He was always curious to know my own views on this or that project, and always willing to pursue new ideas.

There are many people who could recount the delights of their visits to Cecil and Jean's Georgian town house in Mornington Place, and I am lucky to be one of them. I was always welcomed with great kindness and generosity – and with lunch and wine if the timing was right. The narrow hallway and stairs lined with boxes of books and Jean's hats, the age-worn *chaise longue* in the upstairs drawing-room (an old friend in itself), the Duncan Grants and Vanessa Bells hanging here and there: all have left an indelible imprint.

It surprises me to realize again that Cecil had reached the age of 92, and that he must have been in his early 60s when I first met him. He seemed young to me then and ageless ever since. But he was prodigious in his energy, unperturbed in his perseverance, benign in his discreetly pointed wit. London will seem to me much emptier without him, but Cecil will remain an abiding presence in the lives of all who were touched by his civility, encouragement and benevolence.

*

Peter Foss writes:

Cecil Woolf was a true scholar – his Corvo Bibliography is superb. Cecil published three of my books: editions of the early diaries of Llewelyn Powys. On reading my Introduction to the first of them, *The Diary of a Sherborne Schoolboy*, he told me how it had brought back memories of his own research into Frederick Rolfe, Baron Corvo, whose early stories and poems came out under his imprint in the early seventies. What excited him most was my discovery in Texas of love letters sent between Llewelyn Powys and his younger friends at Sherborne. It was, after all, Woolf who first edited and published, in a fine scholarly edition, the supposedly 'notorious' *Venice Letters* (1974) in which Corvo detailed his erotic liaisons with the ragazzi of Venice.

December Meeting in London

Kate Kavanagh will lead a discussion of JCP's book *Dostoevsky* on **Sunday 1 December** at Pushkin House, 5A Bloomsbury Square, at **2pm**. The meeting will be held in the reference library on the ground floor.

The origin of JCP's book can be traced back to September 1942 when he was commissioned by the anthologist and editor Reginald Moore to contribute a long essay to his newly established periodical *Modern Reading*. The circumstances of the commission are described by Elizabeth Berridge (*see* p.29); she says it was James

Hanley who provided the initial inspiration and encouragement for the essay. Dostoevsky features in JCP's letters to Hanley in the 1930s, and they seem to have held long discussions about Dostoevsky when they were neighbours in Wales between 1935 and 1939.

Although the original Dostoevsky essay did not appear in *Modern Reading*, JCP did reshape the material and have this published by the Bodley Head in 1946. The book was written at the height of the war and appeared at its end; JCP's comments and insights on Dostoevsky reflect his concerns about human affairs, current events, communism, and the contemporary world.

JCP had engaged with Dostoevsky since he first discovered his work in 1908; for comparison with the 1946 book see the notes taken at a lecture delivered in 1915 (these will be in the next *Newsletter*) and the essays in *Visions and Revisions* (1915) and *The Pleasures of Literature* (1938). Reading Dostoevsky's novels remained for JCP a shattering experience, although he was also conscious of Dostoevsky's occasional lapses into what he thought of as *dullness*. JCP called Dostoevsky *my great Daimonic Spiritual master and a supreme psychologist far deeper than Freud*. He especially admired Dostoevsky's ability to evoke *real reality* (or what Dostoevsky called *reality in a higher sense*) in handling the ultimate problems of human life and human character: his ability to reveal human capacity for evil and cruelty (the sublimation of sadistic impulses was a major theme for both writers) as well as human capacity for suffering, spiritual ecstasy, and sanctity (qualities which repelled and enraged D.H. Lawrence, who also otherwise had great admiration for the Russian writer).

In advance of the meeting members may also wish to consult helpful articles about JCP, Russian literature, and Dostoevsky by **Jacqueline Peltier** in *la lettre powysienne*, No 21, Spring 2011 and No.22, Autumn 2011; **Charles Lock**'s essay 'Polyphonic Powys, Dostoevsky, Bakhtin and *A Glastonbury Romance* ' in *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 55.3, 1986; and articles in *The Powys Journal* by **David Gervais** (volume XV, 2005) and by **Angelika Reichmann** (volume XX, 2010) .

All are welcome to attend the discussion meeting. Refreshments will be available. The event is free although a voluntary contribution would be welcome. If you wish to attend the meeting please notify Hon. Secretary – contact details are in the inside front cover of the Newsletter.

Chris Thomas

Chairman's Report 2018-9

Attending at Cambridge, a few weeks ago, our celebration of fifty years in this Society's existence, I had a moment of retrospective wonder: how that sporadic assembly of a few strangers in a Hampstead parlour, on the cusp of the 1970s, has somehow built into our present quite elaborate structure, while yet retaining much of the original spirit. There was an element of comedy at the heart of it – a “Society” made up mostly of those misaligned within society-at-large. And that seemed obviously to tally with one theme in John Cowper Powys's fiction – Geard's Commune, Owen's Revolt, Myrddin's Age of Gold. All of them, of course, Lost Causes, doomed to fail...

Our own Quixotic Society might likewise be said to have repeatedly suffered cyclic defeats, in one of its chief hopes – to raise widespread awareness of the work of the Powys brothers. But new initiatives are now coming into fruition. Kevin Taylor (with several text-checking volunteers) has now made e-books available for John Cowper Powys's major fictions. Paul Cheshire (handed the baton from the pioneer, Frank Kibblewhite) is renewing the Powys Society's website; and has also taken charge of our JSTOR/*The Powys Journal* project, which should soon be bringing the Society regular income. Dawn Collins is making a success of a Powys Facebook and reading group. None of this could have been predicted seven years ago.

Infusion of new blood into both *Journal* and *Newsletter* has also ignited new energies. After many difficulties we did successfully publish Chris Gostick's edition of JCP's correspondence with James Hanley. I enjoyed in December a discussion of *The Meaning of Culture*, led by David Goodway; while at the end of March our fiftieth Anniversary, held in the beautiful rooms of Corpus Christi College, was perfectly orchestrated by Hon. Secretary, Chris Thomas. One shadow in the past year has been the illness afflicting Stephen Powys Marks, and now the loss of his wife Tordis. On behalf of the Society I send him all our warmest sympathy and good wishes.

Cecil Woolf, valiant supporter of the Society with his many publications, will be further celebrated in our November newsletter. We owe him a great deal.

Timothy Hyman

AGM 2019

The Annual General Meeting of the Powys Society will be held at the **Hand Hotel, Bridge Street, Llangollen**, at 11.00am, on **Sunday 18 August 2019**. All paid-up members of The Powys Society are welcome to attend and participate in the AGM whether or not they are attending the 2019 conference.

Agenda

- 1 Minutes of AGM 2018 as published in *Newsletter 95* (November 2018), and matters arising
- 2 Nomination of Honorary Officers and Members of the Powys Society Committee for the year 2019-2020
- 3 Hon. Treasurer's Report and presentation of annual accounts for year ended 31 December 2018
- 4 Collection Liaison Manager's Report
- 5 Hon. Secretary's Report
- 6 Powys Society and social media
- 7 Publication of e-books
- 8 Development of Powys Society website and access to the *Powys Journal* on JSTOR
7. Chairman's Report as published in *Newsletter 97*, July 2019
- 8 Date and venue of conference 2020
- 9 AOB

Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary

Committee Nominations 2019-2020

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

	<i>Nomination</i>	<i>Proposer</i>	<i>Seconder</i>
Chairman	Timothy Hyma n	Sonia Lewis	Tim Blanchard
Vice-Chairman	David Goodway	Susan Huxtable Selly	Ray Cox
Treasurer	Robin Hickey	Anna Rosic	Sheila Powys Hancox
Secretary	Chris Thomas	Marcel Bradbury	Jerry Bird

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

<i>Nomination</i>	<i>Proposer</i>	<i>Seconder</i>
Louise de Bruin (Conference Organiser)	Pat Quigley	Dawn Collins

If these nominations are approved by members at the AGM, the committee, from August 2019, will consist of those above as well as **John Hodgson**, **Michael Kowalewski** (*Collection Liaison Officer*) and **Kevin Taylor** who have 1 year

left to run of their three year term of office, and **Paul Cheshire** (*Web editor and JSTOR manager*), **Kate Kavanagh** (*Newsletter editor*) and **Dawn Collins** (*Social Media manager*) (who have two years left to run of their three year term of office). **Jacqueline Peltier** serves as an honorary committee member. **Charles Lock** (editor, *Powys Journal*) serves as *ex-officio* member.

Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary

Neil Lee-Atkin

Annual Llewelyn Powys Birthday Walk

This year's Annual Dandelion Fellowship Gathering and Llewelyn Powys Birthday Walk will go ahead as usual on **Tuesday August 13th**.

Once again the Sailor's Return will not be available, so I have contacted the Red Lion at Winfrith who have again agreed to host our group as they did last year, so we will follow last year's format:

Meet at the **Red Lion in Winfrith at 12 noon** for lunch and the annual toast to Llewelyn; congregate in the beer garden at the Sailor's Return at 1.30pm, which Tom Brachi has once again kindly made available for readings, and commence the walk up to Llewelyn's Stone at 2pm.

I have also contacted Lulworth Estates with a request for permission to allow two cars access up the now 'pedestrians only' Chydyok Road as far as the Chydyok Farm buildings to facilitate our elderly and less able members to access the memorial stone, and this has been granted in perpetuity.

This year we will be celebrating Llewelyn's 135th birthday and the 24th annual 'Birthday Walk' up to Llewelyn's Memorial Stone high on Chaldon Down. All are welcome.

New Members

We are very pleased to welcome three new members to The Powys Society, who have joined since the last announcement published in *Newsletter* 96 (March 2019). New members are located in West Lulworth in Dorset, Sheffield and Warrington. This brings the current total membership of the Society to 258, including Honorary members, and allowing for other members who are deceased, or who have either resigned or not renewed their membership. Full details of membership trends will be presented in Hon. Secretary's report at the AGM at this year's conference.

Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary

The Powys Society Conference, 2019
The Hand Hotel, Bridge Street, Llangollen
Friday 16th to Sunday 18th August
‘Adventures with Ideas’

Programme

Friday 16th August

- 16.00 Arrival
- 17.30 Reception
- 18.30 Dinner
- 20.00 **Janice Gregory:** ‘Alyse Gregory – Out of the Shadows’

Saturday 17th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Elmar Schenkel:** ‘Some Observations on J.C. Powys and Friedrich Nietzsche’
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.15 **Chris Campbell:** ‘Excavating and Extracting: The archaeology and aesthetics of historical memory in the novels of John Cowper Powys and poetry of Kamau Brathwaite’
- 13.00 Lunch
- Afternoon free – recommended journey by steam railway from Llangollen to Corwen
- 19.00 Dinner
- 20.30 A lecture on ‘John Cowper Powys and Merlin’ presented by **Richard Graves**

Sunday 18th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Goulven le Brech:** ‘The Philosophy of *The Little Blue Books*’
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.00 AGM
- 12.00 **Dr David Goodway:** ‘The foundation and early days of the Powys Society’
- 13.00 Lunch
- 15.00 Departure

For details of speakers and presentations please see *Newsletter* 96, March 2019, pages 10-13

CT

***Treasurer's Report
Statement of income and expenditure
for the year ending 31st December, 2018***

These are the figures for the year ending December, 2018. There was a deficit in 2018 of £1,791.23, compared to a deficit of £1,910.50 in 2017. The balances in the three accounts at the end of December, 2018 were:

Community Account: £3,666.00, Everyday Saver Acc: £1,248.78, Business premium Acc: £6,205.39. Over the year the Society has needed £17,691.00, the largest expense having been the E-book project which amounted finally to £3,505.00.

	£ 2018	£ 2017
INCOME		
Subscriptions	4,779.02	4,559.90
Bank Interest	26.26	3.26
Books	1,331.87	25.93
Conference	7,376.83	8,649.63
Gift Aid	385.79	404.24
Donations	2,000.00	350.00
TOTAL	<u>15,899.77</u>	<u>14,492.96</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Printing of NLs and Journal	4,798.80	4,130.22
E-book Project	3,505.00
Alliance of literacy Societies	15.00	15.00
Committee and Officers' Expenses	2,365.20	3,162.73
Conference Expenses	6,812.00	8,472.51
Venue for Cambridge Meeting	75.00	183.00
Accountants	120.00	120.00
TOTAL	<u>17,691.00</u>	<u>6,403.45</u>
EXCESS OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME		
	<u>1,791.23</u>	<u>1,910.50</u>

Opening Bank balances:

Community Account : 971.20

Everyday Saver: 1,755.14

Business Saver: 10,185.06

Closing Bank balances:

Community Account: 3,666.00

Everyday Saver: 1,248.78

Business Saver: 6,205.39

Robin Hickey, Hon. Treasurer

A meeting and celebration Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

Cambridge seems a coherent town (much more so than Oxford) with the colleges fitting together like a jigsaw. Corpus, the *alma mater* of the Powyses, with its typical modest entrance leading to a magnificent 18th-century quad, appears practically unchanged since JCP's time there. The ivy, however, that once covered the walls of the Old Court, reputedly planted by JCP's grandfather, as described in *Autobiography*, has since been removed. (The college changed its Roman Catholic name for a few centuries to St. Benet's College, then reverted; this is mentioned by TFP in *Unclay*.)

On Saturday 30 March 2019, a bright sunny day, 38 members, honoured guests, friends and partners, some coming from France and USA especially for the event, gathered in Corpus for morning coffee in the Old Combination Room. (The previous evening some members had met for dinner in the Ivy restaurant in Trinity Street.) The Old Combination Room was decorated in *fin-de-siècle* gold and black by the architect Harry Lyon (brother of JCP's future wife), whom we were to hear and see more of. The room is dominated by a copy of Raphael's painting *The School of Athens*, and features a magnificent fireplace also designed by Lyon.

We transferred to the New Combination Room, presided by portraits of past College dignitaries, including JCP's other brother-in-law (married to another sister of Harry Lyon) Edmund Courtenay Pearce (1870-1935), Bishop of Derby, and Master of Corpus, also mentioned in *Autobiography*. Some older portraits of college dignitaries looked remarkably fearsome, not to say ugly. On the dais were Tim, Chris, David Goodway, Charles Lock and John Hodgson. Glen, looking well, at the side in the front row.



Timothy Hyman (Chairman) welcomed members and recalled his encounters with strong personalities in the early days of the Society. In 1972, at the centenary conference at Churchill College, he met George Steiner, Wilson Knight and a tipsy Colin Wilson. He remembered the euphoric atmosphere and dedicated spirit of the first years of our unique Society.

Chris Thomas (Secretary) described some of the highlights from the Society's past, saying that for many members the Powys community has played an important role in their own lives. He paid tribute to all our past Chairmen, volunteers, committee members, authors and enthusiasts who have contributed to the remarkable archive of scholarly material in the pages of *The Powys Review*, the *Journal* and the *Newsletter*, collected over 50 years. (The PSNA, French and Swedish magazines must also be recorded.) He then read tributes to the Society received from Jacqueline Peltier, Frank Kibblewhite, Susan Huxtable Selly, Jeremy Hooker, Amanda Powys, and Jeffery Babb.

David Goodway recalled how the Society was established by Barbara Spencer, who was reluctant to include TFP and Llewelyn in its scope. His early contacts included people such as Benson Roberts (Chairman) who lent him books, and memorable talks by Isobel Marks, Belinda Humfrey, Bill Mander (on Derbyshire), Rosemary Manning (on Alyse), Mark Eaton, Joan Stevens, Rod Harper, Kenneth Hopkins, Derrick Stephens (Secretary), Angus Wilson (President, on JCP and E.M. Forster) – and Glen Cavaliero on *Wolf Solent*.

Charles Lock read a tribute to Glen Cavaliero's long tenure as our President (see page 12) from Tony Head in Japan, recalling how he had visited JCP's old rooms at Corpus while receiving tutorials on early Viking history from Ray Page (1924-2012), Professor of Anglo-Saxon and expert on Norse runes. Charles also paid tribute to Glen, honouring his position as President and his reputation as a sensitive literary critic from whom he had learned much. They had met at the Weymouth conference in 1975, and Glen was Charles's supervisor for his doctoral thesis on JCP. (Charles too had visited JCP's old rooms, in the presence of Professor Page in his capacity as College archivist -- the rooms now provide a meeting place for Life Fellows of the College).

Charles recalled and esteemed Glen for his views of Nabokov (whose autobiography is worthy of JCP's); for recommending Raymond Furness and L.T. Mead; and on the 1991 drive through Norfolk, visiting Mary Barham Johnson with her relics of Cowper. He quoted an apposite line from Glen's poems: *Only the rustle of a scholar's page can stir the wing....* "Reading is the ultimate experience."

Glen himself then read from his diary, recording his formative visit to 1 Waterloo in 1958. Having just finished *Owen Glendower* and "enlarging his psyche", he wrote to JCP and while walking in Wales called at Blaenau. 1, Waterloo was occupied by Rolf Italiaander presenting the Hamburg Academy medal, but a whisky-fuelled evening established immediate communication: "There was twice as much light in the room". Glen also said that he was enjoying the recently appeared JCP-Hanley letters edited by Chris Gostick, and read from a JCP letter to Hanley.

After coffee, with the ancient portraits looking on severely, **John Hodgson** (who also owes Powys to Glen) discussed Chapter Five of *Autobiography*, that life of the *de-classing of a bourgeois- born personality*. Introduced to both school and university by his father, the trauma of Sherborne marked JCP for life. Wounded, he developed survival-techniques of propitiation, pretending to be mad, reliance on inner life and his anarchistic vision of non-class-distinction. Both experiences ended with illumination: at Sherborne he became a poet and realised his power of capturing an audience, and Cambridge ends with the Stone Wall experience, the importance of miniscule life, and his decision to write novels. (These start uneasily, both conventional and minimalising, with self-mockery.)

Socially, he is “no trouble”, though an unusual and eccentric figure, with no lasting friendships. Cambridge as a university, he said, had no influence on him at all. It was a time of walking, experiencing Cambridgeshire – the dusty roads outward, swamps, brooks, haystacks, turnips,...

In the discussion that followed **Chris Thomas** said that he thought JCP’s descriptions of the people he knew at Corpus are amongst the best in the whole book, especially his account of Harry Lyon and the historian G.P. Gooch (who though his contemporary at Trinity College also acted as his private tutor) and that he was much more gregarious and sociable than he seems to suggest. **Sonia Lewis** said that JCP was a manipulator of ‘truth’, that individual people were incidental to Powys – it was his relation with nature and his inner subjective world that was most important to him. **Timothy** said that he thought that it was the old medieval romance embodied in Corpus that impressed JCP. He probably consulted the medieval illuminated manuscripts in the Parker library. **John Hodgson** commented that the Corpus years were important for JCP’s development and future literary interests, his future study of unorthodox subjects and philosophical writing, because this was when he read a lot of Matthew Arnold, studied theosophical literature and fell under the influence of his cousin the occultist Ralph Shirley. **Chris Thomas** said he thought JCP’s time at Cambridge was a period of idealism. **Timothy** said that JCP’s sadistic urges appeared to dissolve at this time. **Richard Graves** said that this was a very happy period in JCP’s life. **Charles Lock** referred to JCP’s important connection with G. P.Gooch – they met when both attended lectures on history. Gooch’s memoir *Under Six Reigns* (1958) refers to his acquaintance with JCP – both describe in their autobiographies preparing for entry to Cambridge University in 1891 and studying Euripides.

The College archivist **Lucy Hughes** showed us interesting items connected with the Powyses from the Corpus archives, such as letters from Alyse Gregory and Malcolm Elwin, Llewelyn’s death mask (donated by Alyse Gregory), Littleton’s photograph album, correspondence dated 1963 about JCP between Eric Ceadel (1921-1979), senior tutor and Fellow of Corpus Christi, and Henri Lazard (1904-

1978) a benefactor of the College, and a copy of a book called *The Expansion of England* (1883) by Sir John Seeley (1834-1895) which JCP borrowed from the library and which acknowledges help from Edward Byles Cowell (1826-1903), Professor of Sanskrit and Oriental languages at Cambridge. Lucy said she thought Professor Cowell might have been one of JCP's history tutors. Lucy speculated whether JCP might have encountered the objects in the College's collection of ancient artefacts acquired by Parker librarian Rev. Samuel Savage Lewis (1836-1891). **Chris Thomas** said this seemed very possible and if this is correct then JCP would have probably mentioned this in conversation with the antiquarian collector E.P. Warren, when he met him in Lewes a few years after leaving Cambridge. We asked Lucy if JCP's name has survived which he says in *Autobiography* he inscribed on a beam in his rooms, but the beam has been whitewashed and can no longer be seen.

After lunch in the grand chandeliered dining hall (see back cover), the group admired Corpus Old Court and the windows of JCP's rooms, then visited several sites in Cambridge designed by Harry Lyon: the chapel of Sidney Sussex College, and the Lady Chapel at Little St Mary's church (recently very sympathetically refurbished) where the poet Richard Crashaw was a priest in the 17th century.

Then – as on our previous Cambridge meeting in 2010 – on to view the high stone wall erected around 1500 between Peterhouse College and the rough watery field Coe Fen (now a nature reserve: *coe*=cow). Here JCP describes *the greatest event in my life at Cambridge*, as he passed the wall on the way to have tea with a novelist *of a satiric turn*, and fell into a visionary state of ecstasy (well analysed by John Hodgson in NL70).

Timothy Hyman read, *in situ*, JCP's account of this experience, and **John Hodgson** read a description of the same wall from Edward Conybeare's *Highways and Byways in Cambridge and Ely* (1910). The wall is now scraped clean, denuded of the little plants that so fascinated JCP.



An old drawing of Corpus Old Court

Our exhilarating day in Cambridge concluded with tea and conversation in the café of the Fitzwilliam museum. It is often hard (as with any old friend) to associate the young man who walked here with the walker of Phudd Hill and the Corwen mountains, whom we know better through letters and diaries. But this was a rewarding piece of time-travel.

CT, KK

from Autobiography, chapter 5

The greatest event in my life at Cambridge was a very quiet event, ... It was indeed a sort of Vision on the Road to Damascus. ... [S]omewhere in the umbrageous purlieus to the rear of the Fitzwilliam Museum ... there stands an ancient wall; and as I drifted along ... I observed, growing upon this wall, certain patches of grass and green moss and yellow stone-crop. Something about the look of these small growths, secluded there in a place seldom passed, and more seldom noticed, seized upon me and caught me up into a sort of Seventh Heaven.

A few seconds ago, before touching my pen to tell you what kind of Seventh Heaven it was into which, leaning upon the handle of "Sacred," I was transported, I felt all that I have ever felt, of the burden of this extraordinary moment. ... It is impossible for me to describe it! And yet I never see the least patch of lichen, or moss, or grass, in the veinings of an ancient rock but something of the same feeling returns. ... that mysterious meeting-point of animate with inanimate, had to do with some secret underlying world of rich magic and strange romance. In fact I actually regarded it as a prophetic idea of the sort of stories that I myself might come to write; stories that should have as their background the indescribable peace and gentleness of the substance we name grass in contact with the substance we name stone.



Timothy Hyman reading by the stone wall

Tony Head
A Tribute to Glen Cavaliero

It is a great disappointment to me not to be able to attend this gathering to mark the Powys Society's 50th anniversary and to honour its President, especially as it is taking place in one of the most fitting of all possible locations. The Powys connections with Corpus Christi College are well known to Society members, if not, alas, to the wider public, and I have some fond memories of Corpus myself – among them sitting snugly, if somewhat timidly, in his rooms with the former college librarian and archivist, the late Norse scholar Ray Page, for my supervisions on early Viking History. 'Those Vikings, you know,' I recall him saying *à propos* their arrival in the Orkneys from across the treacherous northern seas, 'must have been bloody barmy!' ... a charge, it strikes me now, sometimes leveled in a later age and with equal bewilderment at members of the family whose lives and achievements the Society was founded to celebrate.

I have a suspicion that Glen will feel as much embarrassment as delight at the tributes and accolades he receives today, but I will risk deepening the former in the hope of enhancing the latter with my own.

It need hardly be said how fortunate the Society has been to have had Glen as President for the greater part of its existence. That it continues to thrive is due in no small measure to Glen's untiring devotion to the cause, even when the waters through which the Good Ship Powys has had to manoeuvre – like those of any other fellowship of kindred spirits – would sometimes have tested the hardiest of Vikings.

Glen's numerous achievements as a poet and critic speak for themselves. On a purely personal note, much of my knowledge of writers such as E.M. Forster, Charles Williams and Sylvia Townsend Warner, and all my knowledge of others such as Barbara Pym and Phyllis Paul, I owe in some way to Glen's writings or guidance; and I am sure I am one of innumerable readers over the years whose engagement with the fantastic variety of English literary genres – the supernatural, the rural, the comedic, the fantastic indeed – would have remained rudimentary but for Glen's own prodigious energy and commitment in sharing in his many works the fruits of his vast erudition. If the true measure of a critic's worth is – as I believe – to send the reader back to the text with a new enthusiasm or curiosity, then Glen's place in the highest rank of literary interpreters is indisputable.

It was Glen's book on John Cowper Powys which helped me, as an undergraduate, to get some sort of handle on this astonishing writer and thinker, first encountered fortuitously in a bookshop in Canterbury in 1978. To discover that I had the leading authority on him living just a ten-minute walk across town was a further stroke of luck. Both then in my undergraduate days and during all my, alas, too infrequent visits from Tokyo these past thirty years and more, I do not think there has been a time when I have

left Glen's company without a determination to rectify some gap in my knowledge or seek out some work or other new to me from our conversations.

Among my favourite of Glen's writings is his essay *The Powys Family – Some Records of a Friendship* in the Powys Heritage booklet series. In portraying the Powyses he met and knew – their generosity, their compassion, their often mischievous humour, their powers of observation and intellect – Glen reveals a natural affinity with them, which is to say that much of what he wrote of them is true of Glen himself.

But one passage in particular has stuck in my mind, in which Glen recounted how on a visit to Phyllis Playter in 1966 he had taken a walk on the Moelwyns with one of his fellow hotel guests – an anonymous employee of Woolworths – and on entering a cave had mistaken a large hole in the cavern floor for a pool of water. I think we can assume that but for that anonymous 'Man from Woolies' who pulled Glen back from the abyss at the critical moment, today's gathering would not be taking place.

With such serendipities are the events of our lives strangely interwoven. In the year of my birth – as it so happened – a young and unknown scholar plucked up the courage to write a fan letter to a neglected novelist living in North Wales, little suspecting that in doing so he was setting in train a process – or a process of processes, arcane and intangible – that would come to have such an influence not just in my own life but in the lives of many other people, and result one day in the occasion of *this* day. I am forever grateful to Glen that he did, and I send my fondest greetings and good wishes.

The Powys Society

from Frank Kibblewhite

Ours is a wonderful and uniquely special literary society attracting a diverse range of truly amazing individuals and I'm delighted to have been a member for over thirty years and pleased to have played a small role in its past.

from Jacqueline Peltier

Little did I guess when I stopped one day in 1982 at *Shakespeare & Company*, George Whitman's bookshop (where when a student I had worked as a part-time assistant) and asked the young Englishman in attendance if he could tell me if there was a Powys Society. He gave me an affirmative reply and the address of Margaret Eaton, a dear and life-long member. Little did I guess the importance the Society would soon take on in my life!

I joined that same year, received a detailed letter from Derek Stephens, at the time Honourable Secretary, and in the summer of 1983 attended my very first conference, which took place ... in Weymouth, at a small college behind Brunswick Terrace. Derek kindly introduced me to several members. I remember in particular Louise de

Bruin and Michelle Tran van Khaï, but I was much too shy and impressed to dare speak to anybody, and contented myself with listening to all these luminaries: Glen Cavaliero, of course, but also G. Wilson Knight, Cedric Hentschel, Kenneth Hopkins, Tim Hyman and Charles Lock, and a few others. In the coming years I was to learn a great deal about the three Powys brothers from all the lectures which were given, which particularly enlightened my understanding of John Cowper's thinking, and his views on and relations with Nature.

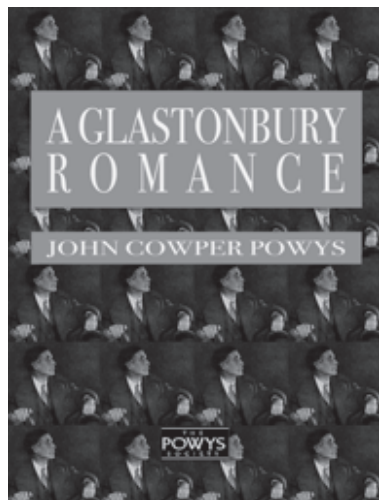
From previous journeys in Britain, I was already familiar with Weymouth and Dorset, but it was fascinating to be able to go from one year to the next to many other places for the conferences, from Bath to Wales or from Norwich to Chichester. The two or three days the conference lasted always seemed far too short. I remember so well for instance those book auctions which dear Francis Feather used to conduct with such *maestria*, and which provided a couple of hours of merriment and pleasure. The atmosphere was always congenial and friendly, and it was wonderful to be able to discuss Powysian matters with learned and erudite people during meals or in the evening at the bar. When, during a conference, Glen asked me whether I would accept being made representative of the Powys Society in Europe, I gladly accepted and was never to regret it. I tried to be worthy of the task, as helpful as possible, bringing information to people interested in Powys' works, or being a link, as when I had the great privilege of representing the Powys Society at our friend Sven Erik ("Eric the Red") Täckmark's Powys exhibition in Uppsala, which was the very first of its kind.

So – long live the Powys Society! Let us hope for a brilliant future, with its dedicated members, eager to maintain and improve the reputation of the Powys!

Kevin Taylor
More eBooks published

In the March 2019 Newsletter I reported on publication of the very first Powys Society eBooks: of *Owen Glendower* and *Porius* by John Cowper Powys; *The Brothers Powys* by Richard Perceval Graves; and *Recollections of the Powys Brothers* ed. Belinda Humfrey. I'm happy now to report that the remaining four titles in our eBooks project have also been published and are available for purchase on the Amazon Kindle: *Wolf Solent*, *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Weymouth Sands* and *Maiden Castle*. While a handful of low-grade scans of some of these works have been found in relatively dubious areas of the internet, ours are the first respectably imprinted digital editions of any of JCP's great Wessex and Welsh novels, professionally scanned and checked to a high level of accuracy and formally licensed by the Powys Estate.

You should be able to find these editions by searching on Amazon.co.uk or Amazon.com or any other Amazon site worldwide, available to purchase at the very



reasonable prices of £9.99 (UK), \$12.70 (US) and in various other local currencies. If you cannot locate them easily that way, Paul Cheshire's wonderful re-design of the Powys Society website <http://www.powys-society.org> features a prominent 'Publications (Society)' tab which takes you to a set of direct links to the relevant Amazon web pages.

Paul Cheshire was also responsible for the inspired suggestion that we scan the original US Simon & Schuster printing of *AGR* with the complete Wookey Hole chapter, before any of the libel-related cuts made by the UK publisher which have survived into most modern printings (see *PJ XXVII* for Paul's article with the full story of the cuts). He acquired a clean US first edition which made its way to Chennai with the other books to be scanned by Newgen, an organisation used frequently by my own company Cambridge University Press and by other sizable publishers like Macmillan. Notwithstanding their scale, Newgen were delighted to take on a small project for a literary society and were exemplarily friendly and efficient to deal with throughout the whole process. Any typographical or scanning errors that do remain in the eBooks can, if found, be reported to me via a link on the Powys Society website, and I will in due course be able to re-publish them in updated form.

The project has not been without its frustrations, and Amazon have not been quite as easy to deal with as Newgen. While the Kindle Direct Publishing tools are easy enough to use, an unexplained blockage prevented me from releasing these latest titles for some weeks, and Amazon's customer services department was not helpful or responsive – in fact it seemed at times the responses I was getting were from robots rather than humans (a probability in these days of AI). The blockage is at last cleared and sales are being made. At the time of writing (early June) we appear to have sold 92 copies and earned £202.49 in royalties.

At a time when the commitment of publishers to JCP's works is at a low ebb, with little certainty around how, or even whether, his major novels are to be kept in print, it is comforting that we now at least have good eBook versions, to secure their future availability in high-quality digital formats.

Paul Cheshire
Towards a Secure, Mobile-friendly, Google-ranking Website

I took over editing the Society's website in March. First, I want to pay tribute to Frank Kibblewhite for the work he has put in as our webmaster over the last ten years. He was well aware that the website needed an upgrade, but as a busy publisher at his Sundial Press he didn't have the free time to do more than add new material. His emails to me – promptly and ever-willingly dealing with requests to add new material – were mostly post-midnight! Frank cherished the website, and as I have looked through its many pages, I recognise that I have work to do if I am to emulate his experience and knowledge of the wider Powys community. Frank has been characteristically generous with his time over this handover, and I'm very glad that it has been done with his blessing.

I would also like to thank David Graves and Richard Perceval Graves whose company GWS Media has maintained the domain registration over that time.

The website has now been updated to confirm with current coding standards: it is formatted centrally from a style sheet, which gives it a consistent appearance and layout. The content has been lightly edited in places. The online shop selling our publications is up and running, the entire contents of *The Powys Journal* are listed together with links to their online sources at JSTOR. All Newsletters from 88 onwards are available as PDFs.

Developments currently in progress include:

Acquiring secure site certification: web browsers have started encouraging this by labelling sites 'not secure' if they lack this certification). The site's address will (or *should*) have changed from <http://www.powys-society.org> to <https://www.powys-society.org> by the time this newsletter has appeared.

Responsive web design: the site currently scales down on small screens making it hard to use on smartphones and tablets, which are used by about 25% of our viewers. I hope to have this new mobile-friendly design (with collapsible drop-down navigation bar) in place by the end of June.

Google optimisation: this all-powerful search engine uses both the above criteria to rank websites. It also allows the owner of a website a degree of control over the indexing and appearance of its pages. I have to date requested the removal of over 400 out-of-date pages that were included on their index. A search (24 May) on 'Powys Society' showed our site in first place with an array of six of our pages. We were in fourth place for a search on 'Llewelyn Powys', seventh place for 'T.F. Powys', but only listed in eighteenth place for 'John Cowper Powys'. All site improvements will help raise the visibility of our website for a search where there is more online material, and thus more competition.

Dawn Collins
Facebook and other social media

The Powys Society is now visible on three social media accounts: Twitter, Facebook and Instagram along with the Society's own web page. I encourage members to participate and contribute to all three accounts. I strongly believe in the important role social media can play in the future growth and development of our Society helping to attract more new members.

Social Media is not going to go away and if the Society does not have a social media presence it will become increasingly more difficult to be viable as a society. The fact of the questionable business and political practices of the tech behemoths is, I think, no reason for not engaging with the 'now' of how the world works.

Social media can enable those within the Society and other non-members interested in the Powyses, to interact on a casual and regular basis, and respond for instance to articles in *The Powys Journal* and the *Newsletter*. Social media does have its place and a very useful one. On the Powys Society Facebook page you will find examples of engagement from people who do not belong to the Powys Society but read JCP, in particular, avidly and enjoy the posts. The engagement with the Facebook page is currently reactive rather than proactive and I tend to take a back seat in the hope that members and others will contribute posts. That does happen but not often enough.

On the Facebook page I particularly welcome all visitor articles, comments links or photos. The Instagram account is not open for everyone to post on. But if members would like to have any images or comments included could you please send to my email address and I will paste to the Instagram account if you do not have your own account.

The Powys Reading Group is linked to the Powys Society Facebook page. The group has been making a chronological reading of the novels (mainly) of JCP. There are 28 people who regularly view the group and live on-line discussions which take place at regular intervals. Our next reading will be *Autobiography* which although not strictly a novel is a major work and gives valuable insight to JCP's novels.

Do please contact me if you would like more information about how to contribute to our social media accounts.

News and Notes

It is with sadness we report that Tordis (Mrs Stephen) Marks died in June. The Society sends all sympathy to Stephen and to Dorothy and Edward.

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From Kevin Taylor:

The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature

The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature, edited by Geraint Evans & Helen Fulton, published in April 2019 to great acclaim (Roger Lewis in the *Daily Telegraph* called it ‘the best book ever published about my homeland’), devotes a page, in the context of an extended discussion of David Jones, to JCP, who ‘uses Welsh locations and characters to explore a magical exoticism which owes more to Matthew Arnold than to Jones’s idea of the Welsh as the inheritors of Brythonic Romanity.’ It goes on to note that in *AGR* ‘the figure of Arthur operates as an assimilated remnant of Welshness in an English town’ and to find *Porius* ‘characteristic of all of his work in being mainly concerned with the psychology of myth and the dynamics of personal relationship. This makes his work quite different to that of most Welsh writers of the period, writers for whom the personal has become inescapably political.’

Peter Mayer

A tribute to Peter Mayer (1936-2018), founder of the Overlook Press and publisher of JCP’s major novels, appeared in the *Bookseller*, 31 May 2019.

From Ray Cox:

Spotted in the editorial of *Country Life* magazine for May 29, 2019, where there is a reference to JCP in the context of landscape influencing literary people. After mentioning Coleridge, Hardy, R.D. Blackmore and William Barnes, the article says the epic novels of JCP *influenced by Wessex and North Wales, are less familiar now, but just as steeped in sense of place.*

the editorial in Country Life magazine (May 29th, 2019) - aP

From Dawn Collins:

Stephen Rogers recently contacted me through the Powys Society Facebook page, which he ‘liked’, and told me he has published an article about JCP’s meeting with Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939), novelist, literary critic and editor of the *English Review*. Stephen provides a date for the meeting with Ford Madox Ford in New York which is described by JCP in *Autobiography* (Macdonald, 1967, p.547). Stephen’s article is entitled *A Royal Personage in Disguise* and appeared in *Ford Madox Ford’s Literary Contacts*, International Ford Madox Ford Studies, Volume 6, 1997, pp 121-128 and can also be found on-line at: <https://theeveningrednessinthewest.wordpress.com/category/john-cowper-powys/>.

Stephen also told me that he was a friend of British novelist Robert Nye (1939-2016), who was a great admirer of JCP’s work.

CT adds: Stephen Rogers is a former research fellow of the modernist magazines project and the author of articles about twentieth century literary periodicals. In his article Stephen Rogers also quotes from one of JCP's letters to Katie Powys (4 February 1944) in which he refers to the meeting with Ford. Ford's reminiscences of his friendships with his contemporaries especially Henry James, Joseph Conrad and Stephen Crane are described in his memoir *Return to Yesterday: Reminiscences, 1894-1914* (1931). There is an obituary notice for Robert Nye in NL 88, July 2016. We also published a memoir by Robert Nye about his friendship with JCP in NL 46, July 2002. The editors would like to know if readers can supply more information about JCP and Ford Madox Ford.

From Susan Rands:

In his memoirs, *Old Friends and Modern Instances* (2001), the British diplomat Sir Nicholas Henderson describes his lifelong friendship with the economist Howard Davies (past Deputy Governor of the Bank of England and currently Chairman of the Royal Bank of Scotland). Howard Davies was Sir Nicholas Henderson's Private Secretary when he was Ambassador to France in Paris from 1974 to 1976. In his memoirs he mentions that Davies's *favourite authors are Balzac, John Cowper Powys and Wyndham Lewis*. Newsletter 29, November 1996, has a note referring to an article in the *Financial Times Weekend Review*, 27 April 1996, by Howard Davies, recollecting his first reading of *A Glastonbury Romance* '25 years ago, the masterpiece of an author whose world view remains challenging and life-enhancing.'

CT adds: Sir Nicholas Henderson's memoir contains an illustration of his bookplate composed of an image of an ancient Greek tetradrachm silver coin showing the image of an owl sacred to Athene. JCP also owned two Greek tetradrachms. People who visited JCP in Blaenau Ffestiniog in the late 1950s and early 1960s, all record that JCP kept beside his couch, on a tray, several talismanic objects, including two Greek coins with the head of Athene in high relief on one side and on the other an owl. JCP used to encourage his visitors to hold the coins as he believed they would bring good luck.

From Catherine Bayliss:

The Jonathan Bayliss Society was recently formed to promote awareness of the 20th-century American writer **Jonathan Bayliss**, who, like JCP, wrote huge unconventional novels. For more information, see www.JonathanBayliss.org or email Powys member Catherine Bayliss at president@jonathanbayliss.org. Powys Society programs have been a major influence on the JBS's plans for the future.

From Jacqueline Peltier:

I had the pleasant surprise a few days ago to receive the latest edition of *Cahiers Flaubert Maupassant* (similar to our *Powys Journal*), published by *L'association des Amis de Flaubert et de Maupassant*, from a French friend and former subscriber of *la lettre powysienne*, in which the French translation, from *Jugements Réservés*, of the long chapter JCP devoted to Maupassant in *Suspended Judgments* had been

published in full, preceded by a short but most precise presentation of JCP by my friend **Gilles Cléroux**. Gilles is a keen admirer of JCP and has read many of his books, but like us he can't help being puzzled by the lack of interest manifested among his literary acquaintances for Powys. I much appreciated his passionate interest in "our" writer.

From Charles Lock:

James Purdy

On 13 March 2019, exactly 10 years after the death of James Purdy at the age of 94, I travelled to the graveyard of St Mary's Church in Weedon Lois, Northamptonshire, where his ashes were interred next to the grave of the English poet Edith Sitwell, in accord with Purdy's final request. The idea was appealing in its sheer oddness. I don't think there's another American writer of such importance buried in Britain. TS Eliot, of course, but he'd long been a British subject. At the symposium held later that afternoon at the University of Northampton I observed that it would have been much less trouble to have honoured Purdy's wishes had he chosen to be buried next to JCP. We could have scattered the ashes off Chesil Beach – and I knew the spot, as that is where Louise and Tim and I had scattered Gerard Casey's ashes in 2001. What a gravestone Purdy now has, and a local habitation to his name, and a proximity to Dame Edith that constitutes its own moment and force in literary history.

CT adds: An article about James Purdy with a brief reference to JCP, a description of some of his books, the current revival of interest in Purdy's work, a reproduction of the inscription on his gravestone and a note on how Charles acquired Purdy's ashes was published in the Books Section of the *Guardian* on 11 March 2019. A short film recording the burial ceremony of Purdy's ashes has been posted on YouTube and a video accompanied with a setting of words by Purdy may be found at <https://songofamerica.net/song/come-ready-and-see-me/>

From John Sanders:

JCP and Robinson Jeffers

American poet Robinson Jeffers and his wife Una were keen admirers of JCP and Llewelyn. Robinson Jeffers also corresponded with Katie Powys in 1930 and 1931 about her book *Driftwood*. A small collection of Powys books can be found in the Jeffers personal library at their home, Tor House, in Carmel in California and includes interesting interpolations made by Una Jeffers such as various marginalia, annotations, and underlining as well as other material such as photos, reviews, letters and newspaper clippings. The library includes copies of American editions of JCP's *A Philosophy of Solitude*, *Autobiography*, and *Essays on De Maupassant*, *Anatole France* and *William Blake*, and Llewelyn's *Earth Memories* and *Love and Death*. The books by the Powyses with all the additional material have been catalogued and included in *The Last Word, A Record of the "Auxiliary" library at Tor House*, compiled by Maureen Girard, Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation, 1998.



*Tim Blanchard,
Dawn Ciollins*



*Charles Lock,
David Goodway*



*Chris Michaelides,
Hilary Bedder*



*The meeting at
Corpus Christi College,
Cambridge,
30 March 2019*



Richard Graves



*Kate Kavanagh,
John Hodgson,
Charles Lock*

Michael Warman, Sonia Lewis



Tim Hyman



Glen Cavaliero

Chris Thomas
John Cowper Powys at Hammersmith

Earlier this year Amanda Powys sent me the photograph of JCP which we have reproduced on the front cover of this *Newsletter*. A wider view of the whole photograph is illustrated here. I felt sure I had seen this image somewhere before but I couldn't think where. A link to another copy of the photograph, at the Powys Society Instagram account, can be found on the home page of the Powys Society website. Luckily the reverse of the original photograph has a date inscribed '17 June 1929' which helps to identify more precisely the location of the photo, since we know JCP was staying with his brother A.R. Powys in Hammersmith in London on this date. JCP's 1929 diary suggests it might have been taken on 20th June while he was watching ARP bathe in the river (before breakfast). Amanda said she believed the woman gazing at JCP is Isobel Powys (1906-1999), daughter of ARP, but she couldn't identify the other person looking straight into the camera (who bears a striking resemblance to Sylvia Townsend Warner).



Stephen Powys Marks confirmed the identity of his mother, Isobel, and told me the other person in the photograph is 'Topsy' who was a friend of Isobel. They were both pupils of the architect Clough Williams-Ellis, who was in the 1920s developing plans for the village of Portmeirion in Wales, and in 1929 had just moved his practice to an address in Hampstead. Stephen said that the photograph was taken in the garden overlooking the river Thames at A.R. Powys's house, No. 13 Hammersmith Terrace,

which ARP had occupied since 1920. Hammersmith Terrace is a row of 17 Georgian houses whose back gardens lead down to the river; in the photograph JCP is seen leaning against the parapet of the shared terrace wall that encloses the garden of each house. The location is confirmed by an entry in JCP's diary for 17 June 1929, where he describes staying with ARP in Hammersmith until 21st June.

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Hammersmith Terrace has famous associations: other occupants include May Morris, daughter of William Morris; arts and crafts printers T.J. Cobden-Sanderson and Emery Walker, founders of the Doves Press; the eighteenth century painter, occultist, and alchemist, Philip de Loutherbourg; and the novelist, humourist, lyricist and contributor to *Punch*, A.P. Herbert, who lived next door to ARP at No.12. Naomi Mitchison, who corresponded with Llewelyn (see NL 66) lived a short distance away at Riverside House, and occasionally invited A.P. Herbert to her social gatherings. Kevin Taylor wonders if the comic fictional character called Topsy invented by A.P. Herbert might have been named after Isobel's friend, or perhaps the influence worked the other way? Topsy appears in Herbert's *Punch* columns of the 1920s and in later novels, *The Trials of Topsy* (1928), *Topsy MP* (1929), and *Topsy Turvy* (1947).

A.P. Herbert was deeply passionate about boating and life on the river Thames. He owned his own boat, named 'The Water Gipsy'. Stephen told me that Isobel also owned a sailing skiff, "Newt"; he has photographs of her with her boat moored at the bottom of their garden. Stephen's private collection of family memorabilia includes other photographs of the garden and riverside entrance of 13 Hammersmith Terrace. A.P. Herbert wrote lovingly about the river scenes at Hammersmith in a novel *The House by the River* (1920) which was made into a film by Fritz Lang in 1950: *a short half mile of old and dignified houses clustered...along the sunny side of the Thames, with large trees and little gardens fringing the bank across the road...it had a unique, incomparable character of its own...it had something, perhaps, of an old village...and something of the sea...in the little gardens...by the river wall the people...took their teas and their suppers...*

In his diary entry for 19 June 1929, JCP describes the same view of the Thames which he observed when he was photographed with Isobel and Topsy: *every night its moonlight on the river at the bottom of the garden...I see at night the lights of barges & tugs & in the morning with a hazy dim glowing misty sun atmosphere, like a Claude, I see the boats, long & thin....Swans, herons, ducks, seagulls are seen at intervals. The tide rises. The tide falls.*

The Diary of John Cowper Powys for 1929, ed. Anthony Head (Cecil Woolf 1998). For tributes to Isobel see *The Powys Society Newsletter* 39, April 2000, pp.3-4 and leaflet *In Honour of Isobel, A Reading of Family Letters*, 1988.

On the life of A.R. Powys see *The Powys Review* No.10, Spring 1982, pp.49-66

Elizabeth Berridge
Notes from the Boilerhouse

Elizabeth Berridge (1919-2009) novelist and short story writer was married to **Reginald Moore** (1914-1990), *one of the most active editors of world War II* [1], sports writer, founder of the Sportsman Book Club, and editor of *Sports and Recreation*, the *Hourglass Library* (in which he published the collected stories of James Hanley), *Modern Reading* (1941-1952), *Selected Writing* (1941-1946), *The Windmill* (1944-1948), *Bugle Blast* (1943-1947), *Stories of the Forties* (1945) and other literary anthologies, miscellanies and collections of short stories by writers of the 40s and 50s (including his own work). Woodrow Wyatt, the author and Labour MP, said, in an obituary notice of Reginald Moore in the *Times*, 2 March 1990, that he was *immensely kind and helpful to new writers* and that *he was a whole and rounded man without a trace of malice or envy*.

This extract from an article by Elizabeth Berridge about her husband's literary legacy, his friendship with **James Hanley** and correspondence with JCP [2] was published in the *London Magazine* December 1998/January 1999.

CT

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...We were living by this time in the cottage James Hanley had found for us in Llansantffraid [3]. We had met him in 1942 in London, and he and Reginald hit it off at once. He was on a six-month stint with the BBC and hating it but was using this time to learn the cello.

Reginald was, like James, something of a solitary. Neither man belonged to literary clubs or cliques. We talked about James's great friend John Cowper Powys, whom he had persuaded to return from America and live in Wales. James called him '*the giant of the family, and every one a genius*'. At this time Reginald was contemplating the launch of a *Modern Reading* library with a view to encouraging the neglected art of the novella and the long essay. Out of their discussion came the idea that Powys should be asked to write a 40,000 word essay on Dostoevsky. Unfortunately this project foundered after only five numbers owing to paper quota difficulties, and two years later the essay was returned to Powys. In 1946 it was published by Bodley Head and later reprinted by Village Publications. It was dedicated to James Hanley. However, Reginald commissioned a 5000-word essay for *Modern Reading* on Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* [4].

James took enormous trouble to help his friends and was anxious for us to move to Wales, so we were not surprised one spring morning in 1943 to receive a telegram: '*Eureka. Found cottage. Nine fruit trees. Come immediately.*' So James was instrumental in changing our lives as he had changed the lives of Powys and his

companion, Phyllis Playter. As Powys wrote, *we both owe so much to him and Tim [James's wife] for without them our destiny would not have been half such a nice one.* It was the beginning of a life-long friendship.

...Reginald would disappear into the boilerhouse and I would hear the rapid tap of his typewriter keys as he started on his correspondence. To Henry Miller he wrote, *'I do nearly all my work here as it keeps me out of the literary stewpot.'*

Miller was one of several writers with whom Reginald had a special affinity. John Cowper Powys was another. He corresponded with them and published their work for some years. Both were older than he: Miller in his forties, Powys in his seventies. These two had a great deal in common, both raked enjoyably over heaps of metaphysical compost and their books broke the bounds of conformity, ideas and images flooding unimpeded over the pages, prolific yet dazzling.

To the devil with Art, Powys had written in his *Autobiography*; *my writing novels and all are simply so much propaganda, as effective as I can make it, for my philosophy of life.*

It could be Miller speaking.

An odd aside might be picked up here: on Good Friday 1943, Powys wrote to Reginald, *...the Lord forgive me but I am absolutely ignorant of this Henry Miller – I know not what sort of bird he is.* Nine years later he slips into a letter: *My friend has been writing to Henry Miller whose name was first introduced to me by yourself in Modern Reading (though it now turns out that we knew each other in New York when he was a boy.)*

Not exactly knew each other. Miller had attended some of the brilliant lectures Powys gave in America when Miller was twenty-five and Powys in his forties. They were to meet in 1953 when Miller paid a brief visit to England and wrote to Lawrence Durrell that he found this country *really weird...you can't hate or despise the English. I had a glimpse of Wales, much better. Saw old John Cowper Powys at Corwen. What a joyous old codger! A lively mage.* Old Friar John, he confessed, had been one of his first living idols... *The first man I beheld who was possessed by his daemon. Talk such as I have never heard again in my life. Inspired talk. And now at eighty he is still inspired, still writing masterpieces, still filled with the joie de vivre, the elan vital.*

Powys gave Miller a walking stick from his collection. He had one for each day of the month; some from Africa, curiously carved, others sturdy as tree trunks, with a strange bardic air, and one had reputedly belonged to an American president. The choice of stick set the mood for his daily walk.

Powys was an endearing character; his letters are revealing. Unlike Miller, he welcomed suggestions for essays and went so far as to write: *I leave the title to you for I always feel that Editors are much better than their authors at good titles.*

Whereas, when Reginald titled an extract from *The Airconditioned Nightmare* or *Modern Reading* Miller's reaction was swift: *I hate having changes made in anything I do, even if it is bad: although who's to say as to that, eh?* Unlike Miller, too, Powys asked no favours. He expected to be paid for work done, that was all.

At the start of his correspondence with Powys (18 letters) Reginald was aware of his circumstances in that little house in Corwen and thoughtfully enclosed a stamped addressed envelope in each of his own letters, a gesture Powys greeted *with entire commendation*. Both before and after we moved to Wales, urgent little notes would arrive from James: *Do what you can for dear old John C.P. He'll never admit to needing cash, but things are tight with him just now*. This may have sparked off Reginald's letter of October 27th 1942, asking how he would like to be paid for the ill-fated Dostoevsky piece. His reply reveals a deep disquiet about money:

I want it in a lump sum the moment they receive my MSS safe and sound! I don't want it in fragments. I want all [underlined six times] the advance royalty Mr Pollinger gets for me in one lump on receipt of the 40,000 words in type! 'All in one lump sum' as far as advance royalty goes is the word! I can get on OK until then. It is much better for Phyllis's...very secret private economics to get a lump sum.

Laurence Pollinger, our agent as well as his, acted as a necessary shield in financial matters. For Powys hated discussing money, although he was jubilant when a surprise royalty windfall from his *Owen Glendower* temporarily delivered him from pot-boilers.

I return to working (every other day with Rabelais) on my long Dark Age romance. 'Introducing Rabelais' for Bodley Head entails work with a big French dictionary for I have to translate from the original 15.000 words...it fills a SCANDALOUS gap in our British Public Educational Curriculum!...but I really owe to you this Rabelais job and I am proportionately grateful...because you started me with Joyce and that led to Dostoevsky and that led to Rabelais.

When he had accepted the challenge to write on Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* he remarked that *Timmy is the only woman I ever met who thoroughly enjoyed and understood Ulysses – she beats me there, for I never got on very well with it although I got a lot out of Finnegan*. That book he regarded as *mythological burlesque* and his interpretation was different from the orthodox Freudian approach: that of sleep and dreams and the unconscious. The essay bears rereading today despite its rambling nature, although it was the target of some sarcastic comment.

In 1943 Reginald wrote to Powys: *One of the most amusing things about reading reviews for Modern Reading [5] is that John Cowper Powys was on one hand praised for contributing an eminently sane and balanced interpretation of Joyce, and on the*

other treated as a mild lunatic! The enclosed may tickle your sense of fun. 'Inform Powys...' well, I'm doing it, but I advise you not to reply or she will be after you with a broomstick.

To which Powys replied:

Goodness but what a terrifying Druidess of Mon! this is indeed a treasure. I shall keep it (but NOT as you advise reply to it.)

I am not sure of the identity of this woman with a broomstick, but it may well have been Ethel Mannin, who at that time was firing off postcards in every direction.

Powys suggested that [*Finnegan's*] difficulty lay in its *erudite allusion plus such a reservoir of colloquialisms and slang as has never before been tapped, plus a wholesale anagrammatization of our language...a completely new system of imaginative and symbolic punning*. It could also be summed up as a gross explosion of unbridled mirth at the absurdities and tragicomedies of mankind.

Although he had enjoyed writing what was to him a 'pot-boiler', he balked at another suggestion of Reginald's that he should attempt a Postscript to his novels. His alarmed reply ran to twelve pages.

All his letters were written in a clear, slanting hand on blue copy paper folded in half and, mercifully, numbered. He used a bright blue ink and nibs of varying thickness and his sentences, heavily underlined, with dashes and exclamation marks, ran across the pages and around the margins like a choppy sea. It is as if he is conversing on paper: ideas igniting one another, a deluge of non-sequiturs. He admitted that reading them must be like *decoding the Rosetta Stone*. Afterthoughts were scrawled on the back of envelopes.

His 12-page letter is too long to quote in its entirety, but extracts will give an idea of his deep unease.

I am a tremendous egoist and a terrific sensation-monger, but I've got – you might say I'm afflicted – for it's a real neurosis – with a taboo or inhibition (I myself have christened it by the term 'anti-narcissism') against turning my thoughts or attention on myself as a personality. Now this mania is so strong that I never open any printed book of mine! Once 'out' of print – and I feel towards it as I do to old letters of mine – a kind of nervous aversion...on the other hand I adore (almost to the point of exhibitionism) describing in detail particular sensations whether sexual, aesthetic, religious, neurotic, normal or abnormal that have thrilled me in the past and today too...

What I am particularly 'forbidden' to dwell upon is my work... you know the sort of thing? What did you intend in this?...What was this a symbol of? '

He suggests writing a piece about his ideal novel (tongue in cheek, of course, for this never materialised.)

I would like to indicate where in my view, Don Quixote, Rabelais, Sterne, Balzac, Dostoevsky, Scott, Dickens, Jane Austen and Emily Bronte deplorably fail -- where in fact there are dreadful blotches, blots, spillings, and blurs, upon the orbs of these luminaries!

*

Powys believed that every work of art is a purgation of the artist from something poisonous in himself: *the really great things in writers of genius, he wrote, that will influence posterity are not those which are premeditated and intended, but those which rise up from the depths of the writer's unique soul and are suffused throughout his work.* This quality he found in James Hanley. In a Preface to *Men in Darkness*, an early collection of five long stories, Powys wrote, *He has gone down to the sea-banks of submerged humanity, has raked remorselessly and emerged with his salvage.*

It is somehow significant that Powys and Hanley were both admitted as Bards to the Welsh *Gorsedd* [6], a high honour, at the same time. Each delighted in the grotesque; mischievously distorting everyday incidents, inflating anecdotes into something gnomic. For instance, James took enormous pleasure in writing *What Farrar Saw*— a fantasy of a novel inspired by the prospect of endless traffic jams when everyone dug out his car again as petrol became more plentiful after the war. It was a holiday for him after the intensity of *No Directions*, followed by *Sailor's Song* which tells in a prose that so often approximates to poetry a sailor's long struggle to come to terms with the sea, with woman, with his fear of death. (I was to adapt this for radio in 1954).

I can see James now, that small, neat, solid figure in green shirt, sports jacket and corduroys. The curiously youthful head with curly brown hair framing over his brow, sea blue eyes humorous and enquiring and those nervously strong hands which could deal capably with any job about the house, play a Chopin etude or type the last draft of a novel (*The only thing that matters, he would say, is the one you're writing.*)....

His love of simple games was shared by Powys, who in one letter refers to playing ducks and drakes with him by the river Dee on one of James's rare visits to Corwen; James won as he usually did.

Shuv-ha'penny was our chosen game. Not a weekend passed without a Hanley-Moore battle at either their cottage or ours. We played on a genuine slate board, kept polished to a high degree of slipperiness with talc. Scores were meticulously kept, even when a mouse ran up James's trouser leg one evening. He killed it with a swift hand chop and threw it outside, then carried on with the game.

Reginald, who needed exercise to defeat his recurring nervous dyspepsia (a condition he shared to a lesser extent with Powys) started a village sports club persuading James to act as treasurer, while he took on the job of Hon. Sec. as well as opener for the cricket team...

John Cowper Powys was rescued from writing pot-boilers again in 1944 when Cape published *The Art of Growing Old*, and the Royal Literary Fund awarded him two grants, enabling him to finish *Rabelais* and get on with his Dark Age romance, *Porius*.

But in 1945 he suggested a piece for *Modern Reading* which was also translated into Welsh for *Y Cymro*.

It will be entirely about the Present World Situation treated astrologically occultly metaphysically and historically! & the resemblance between the Present World Crisis or Turning Point of History and the world crisis in the Dark Ages nearly 2000 years ago! Yes, you can count on this article coming to you and will be entitled Pair Dadeni or 'The Cauldron of Rebirth'.

This however was never published by *Modern Reading* as it was included in his collection of essays on Welsh matters (Keidrych Rhys's Druid Press) [7] before *Modern Reading* even went to press. That autumn Powys was taken ill with his old trouble, an ulcer that led to haemorrhaging and he spent a month in hospital in Wrexham. When he came out he had to live on raw eggs and spend his days resting. What cured him, apparently, was drinking pure olive oil, for by the following summer he was taking his daily walks and working on *Porius*, despite the cataract on his right eye...

By 1946 we had moved to Glanbrogan Hall, a large but neglected 300-year-old house among fields. It had beautiful oak floors, five attics and the ghost of a hound whose name, Luath, was engraved on his tombstone under a walnut tree. We were glad of the extra space and running water, but still had to rely on oil lamps...

Apart from some lively exchanges on the short story, there are now fewer letters from Powys. Reginald argued that there was room for *the flash of lightning that a good short story should be, as well as the spread-eagle novel*. To which Powys replied:

As for me, unluckily the grand defect of my best quality is my queer mania for long works and real authentic incapacity to concentrate what wits I have on articles, sketches or short stories. It's queer but there it is and it's something to have discovered – if we've got to wait till our eightieth year to do it! To keep within our natural limitation aye! How few writers learn that, but how they double their pleasure in their work those who do!

The last three letters written in 1952 when he was eighty, are penned in a larger hand than usual, with a thicker nib, because his eyesight was failing. There is none of the excitability of earlier years; the fire is dying down – although he will go on writing for another ten. What comes across clear and strong in this correspondence is the mental energy of both men and Powys's prodigious capacity and relish for work....

This courteous exchange of letters, the stimulating rapport between perceptive editor and erudite, cooperative writer seems to me to reflect a gentler age, odd as that may sound.

Notes

1. *British Literary Periodicals of World War II and aftermath, a critical history* A.T. Tolley, 2007
2. Although some of Reginald Moore's letters to JCP are missing the majority of both sides of the correspondence between Reginald Moore and JCP has been preserved. The original letters have been deposited in the Archives and Manuscripts collection of the British Library. JCP's letters are of course all handwritten. Reginald Moore's letters are typewritten. The correspondence begins on September 15 1942 with a letter from JCP accepting Moore's commission to write an essay on Joyce, continues on 20 September 1942 when JCP accepts another invitation to also write a long essay on Dostoevsky, and concludes with three letters in 1952. There are 18 letters from JCP to Reginald Moore. Some of JCP's letters are illustrated with his sketches and drawings.
3. Between 1943 and 1945 Elizabeth Berridge and Reginald Moore lived at Gelli cottage, Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain in Montgomeryshire (now in Powys) close to the border with Shropshire and not far from Oswestry and Welshpool. In 1946 they moved to Glanbrogan Hall (the oldest parts of which date back to c1500), in Llanfechain in Montgomeryshire. Woodrow Wyatt recalled visiting their *large, rambling, ghost-ridden house* in Wales in the 1940s (*Times*, 2 March 1990)
4. In *Modern Reading*, No.7, 1943, and in *Obstinate Cymric*, published by the Druid Press, 1947
5. *Modern Reading* No.7 was reviewed by R.D. Charques in the *Times Literary Supplement*, August 1943: *There is a very long and less than completely intelligible article, by John Cowper Powys, on Finnegans Wake.*
6. JCP participated in the Corwen Gorsedd on 16 May 1936 and was installed as a bard at the Corwen Eistedfodd on 22 August 1936. In a letter dated 21 August 1939 JCP referred to himself and Hanley as 'fellow bards'.
7. *Obstinate Cymric*.

Grace Banyard
Nature and the Novel:

a review of John Cowper Powys: Old Earth Man by H.P. Collins (Barrie & Rockcliffe, 1966). First published in The Contemporary Review, May 1966.

If a blend of Powys brothers could have been hammered and pressed like malleable metal, what strength and beauty the final shape might have achieved! Bertie's plodding arrivals at unalterable opinions, gentle Littleton's equally divided passion for athletics and reading and natural history, Llewelyn's joy in living and his mastery of the essay form, ironic Theodore's pessimism and his fidelity nevertheless to a poetic conception of the world, Willie's coming to terms with his countryman's inheritance on a sheep farm in Africa, and John's tortured fancies and inspired flights in his "elemental" novels: these would only be some of the factors in that overpowering whole.

As it is, separate study of the writers among them -- with the exception of Littleton and his serene volumes of autobiography -- can be exasperating and exhausting as well as rewarding. For Llewelyn, Theodore and the later starter, John, wrote compulsively, and surely too much. And here another 'if' intrudes: the inherited wealth of the Rev. Charles Powys isolated his eleven children from the realities of their Somerset village even more strongly than was usual in the nineteenth century. The sons found it hard to mix and grew up with a set of notions of what 'the other half' and, especially the lower orders, were like. They also spent too much of themselves casting off their father's evangelical puritanism, and their constant repudiation of what they loved left in them a want of real spirituality. If the mundane spur of poverty had been applied, who knows what removals of the archaic, the other-worldly, the verbose, and the downright tedious would have been made, to reveal the underlying sensitivity to evil and suffering, and to reassure their readers.

In the *Life of Llewelyn Powys*, Malcolm Elwin quotes his subject, saying "John has genius, I and Theodore originality". How far the claim for the eldest brother may be allowed is explored by H.P. Collins, who grasps the nettle on the first page of his opening chapter: "His genius for being John Cowper has always been more evident than his genius for any kind of writing. It is considering the oddness of the writings without relating it fully to the oddness of the man that has defeated his less sympathetic critics". It is an admonition which will repay the reader who keeps it in grateful mind. The book's subtitle, "Old Earth Man", gives a clue to its treatment; more than a biography, valuable as this aspect of it is to fill in the background of a remarkable family, it supplements John's own guide to his inner

life and helps to define the masochistic elements in the loudly proclaimed “forward to Nature” philosophy that was mixed up with a good deal of self-deception. His inability to own that rural England is dead for example, has plagued his books, and is one with his often willful interpretation of other men’s thoughts. Thus, he delightedly recorded that G.P. Gooch summed him up as, “lacking in all moral scruple”, whereas the historian now vividly remembering long congenial walks with Powys in the Cambridge countryside of 70 years ago. And incapable of scolding to this day, tells only with humorous affection how Powys, also a history student, incessantly and unaffectedly talked all the while of his enthusiasm for English literature.

Not till 1915 did the too ready flow of words channel into the writing of his first novel, *Wood and Stone*, “full of ideas” and “in style the least involved” of his stories. Mr Collins admirably relates criticism of this book and of the massive works that followed to the temperament and circumstances of their begetter, to the sadistic self-hauntings no less than his debt to Hardy and his affinity with D.H. Lawrence, to his ulcers as well as his sentimental brand of politics, to the destructive in him along with the creative, and to his yearnings both for anarchic communism and Roman Catholicism. Tone-deaf to ordinary talk, he could not bring his characters to life as they described themselves, and, too much like their author, they did not convince. Yet Mr Collins maintains persuasively that out of John’s communion with mother earth he must eventually emerge as “one of the most challenging and formidable figures of our age”, not as the founder of a school but as a fertilizer of the future, so long as novels are written and read. To contain him tidily was manifestly a difficult task; how far it is successful may be gauged by the reaction of one reader at least who is resolved to try again.

Chris Thomas adds:

A few days after the meeting held in Cambridge in March celebrating our 50th anniversary one of our members who had also attended the meeting e-mailed me copies of an exchange of letters between Grace Banyard and H.P. Collins. These letters had been found tucked into a second-hand copy of *Old Earth Man* acquired from a local bookshop. What a lucky find! For these letters brought back into focus JCP’s relationship with his contemporary at Cambridge, the historian G.P. Gooch (1873-1968) whose friendship with JCP we discussed during the examination of the Cambridge chapter of the *Autobiography*.

Grace Banyard was Gooch’s assistant at *The Contemporary Review* which he edited between 1911 and 1960. Banyard also reviewed books for *The Contemporary Review* and contributed to *The Fortnightly*, *The Countryman*, *John O’London’s*

Weekly and *The Fortnightly Review*. Frank Eyck consulted Banyard on her memories of working with Gooch at the *Contemporary Review* for his biography of Gooch published in 1982.

The letter from H.P. Collins to Grace Banyard is dated 27 December 1969. He thanks Banyard for the *sensitiveness and understanding* of her review of his book and shares with her a sense of loss after the death of Gooch. Collins has interesting things to say about re-reading JCP's books – he declares that *it is easier to appreciate him than read him*. Grace Banyard replied to Collins on 7 March 1970 and reveals that Gooch was much more deeply influenced by JCP when they were at Cambridge than JCP says in *Autobiography* – *I have never known what Gooch really thought of me...I have a notion that Gooch regarded me...as something between a fraud and a fool*. As Banyard reveals, JCP was wrong about this! She says that just before his death Gooch recalled his *long walks with JCP* [at Cambridge] *talking all the time on every subject and particularly on the books Powys was going to write*.

Chris Thomas
A note on H.P. Collins

Harold Poulton Collins (1899-1985) is probably most familiar to readers of JCP as the author of an early complete survey of John Cowper Powys's life and work – *JCP: Old Earth Man*, first published in the UK in 1966 and in the USA in 1967. It is still well worth reading today. A review of the book by Grace Banyard, published in the *Contemporary Review* in 1966 is reprinted above. Belinda Humfrey, editor of *The Powys Review*, was personally acquainted with H.P. Collins and secured several contributions from him for the *Review*, in No.13, 1983/1984 (a review of Dan Farson's book about Henry Williamson, *Henry: An Appreciation*), and in No.15, 1984/1985 (a review of the letters of John Middleton Murry to Katherine Mansfield), as well as contributions to *Essays on John Cowper Powys* (1972) and *Recollections of the Powys Brothers* (1980). His essay in *Recollections* covers memories of how he first met Llewelyn in 1926 at the house of Louis Wilkinson. It was unfortunate that ill health prevented H.P. Collins from presenting a talk at the Powys Centenary conference at Churchill college, Cambridge, in 1972. Belinda Humfrey composed the obituary for H.P. Collins which was published in *The Powys Review* No.18, 1986.

H.P. Collins achieved celebrity in the 1920s and 1930s as a translator (*The Pensées and Letters of Joseph Joubert*, 1928) and as an effective book reviewer

and accomplished literary editor. In the 1950s he was a regular reviewer for *The Contemporary Review*. He was the literary editor of Middleton Murry's *Adelphi* magazine (which published JCP's essay on Dorothy Richardson, June 1931) and contributed many articles and reviews to T.S. Eliot's *Criterion* (such as an article on *The Classical Principle in Poetry* and a review of Virginia Woolf's *The Common Reader* in 1925). H.P. Collins was also the author of *Modern Poetry* (1925) which was much praised for its survey of contemporary trends. A review of this book in *Poetry* declared that *Mr Collins is a brave and fastidious critic*; but some critics lamented his failure to examine the work of Sacheverell and Edith Sitwell, T.S. Eliot and Robert Graves. In its conspectus of current trends in literature and the role of literary criticism the book was an advance over Harold Monro's earlier survey of the field in *Some Contemporary Poets* (1920). *Modern Poetry* still holds an important place among Middleton Murry's *Aspects of Literature* (1920) and Eliot's *The Sacred Wood* (1920), *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* by Laura Riding and Robert Graves (1927) and *New Bearings in English Poetry* by F.R. Leavis (1932).

In 1931 H.P. Collins reviewed the second volume of Edgell Rickword's anthology of criticism, *Scrutinies* – a volume with a significant influence on Leavis's periodical *Scrutiny* which was first published in 1932. Rickword's *Scrutinies* reprinted articles from his other publication *The Calendar of Modern Letters* (to which TFP contributed short stories). [1] Later, in October 1961, H. P. Collins would publish a review of Harry Coombes' book on TFP (1960) in *Essays in Criticism*, saying that *Mr Coombes is a critic extremely sensitive to the humour and of Theodore Powys* and concluding *Modern in awareness, Theodore is scarcely modern in culture*. JCP read the review, which he liked and said he thought the writing of H.P. Collins had *power and quality*.

T.S. Eliot had a high opinion of Collins as a critic, praised his essay on the criticism of Coleridge which appeared in the *Criterion* in January 1927, and wrote a review of *Modern Poetry* for the *Adelphi* although this was not published. Eliot also produced at least two testimonials for H.P. Collins recommending him for a teaching post or as an editor.

On 6 September 1946 Eliot wrote: *I have always regarded him as a very sound and reliable reviewer and critic with a wide knowledge of English literature and varied interests...part of the value of Mr Collins's literary criticism was derived from his interest in and knowledge of political and social history* [2]; and on 16 January 1953: *Mr H.P. Collins was for some years a valued contributor to the Criterion...[he] was extremely helpful in reviewing books. I always had the most*

satisfactory relations with him...I think that he would be very efficient also in other kinds of editorial assistance [3].

Notes

1. F.R. Leavis called the Calendar *that uniquely intelligent review which, from 1925-1927, was...the critical consciousness of the younger adult generations.*

Leavis seriously engaged with TFP's writing during this period which he greatly admired, referring to his work in *New Bearings in English Poetry* and *The Great Tradition*. He hoped to review *Unclay* for the *Criterion* but Eliot failed to commission anything. Leavis did however write about *Kindness in a Corner* for the *Cambridge Review* (9 May 1930). Leavis also reviewed R.H. Ward's *The Powys Brothers* in *Scrutiny* (December 1935).

2. Footnote to a letter dated 13 January 1926, quoted in *The Letters of T.S. Eliot*, Vol.3, 1926-1927, edited by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, 2012.
3. Footnote to a letter dated 16 April 1930, quoted in *The Letters of T.S. Eliot*, Vol.5, 1930-1931, edited by Matthew Hollis, 2014

H.P. Collins

The Largeness of Powys

First published in The Contemporary Review, October 1962

Among his mountain fortresses in his adopted land of Wales the oldest of the strange brood of Powys is celebrating his 90th birthday. The University of Wales is complimenting him – none too soon – with an honorary degree. The sculptor Jonah Jones has given a word picture of him in old age:

John, now full of years, rests his long limbs on a sofa across the upper window of his tiny quarryman's cottage. His head lies back on the cushion, the silver locks still curling in Powysian splendour over the vast cranium. The brow is socratic, deeply furrowed, but untroubled. The eyes, deep set are piercing and benign. It is with the nose, hawk like, the nostrils, wide-winged, that the Powysian spirit begins. Then comes the great upper lip, cruel, ready to boom. This is John. The mouth is built for rhetoric, his greatest love. The whole effect of the head is of the falcon, of Horus, the hawk god, belying the underlying tenderness of the John who prays daily, for the delivery of animals from the agony of vivisection.

If this is dramatic, it is no more so than John Cowper himself, whose whim has ever been to display himself to the world as an actor; often in a semi-tragic role, sometimes as an avowed buffoon.

There is of course a long-established Powys legend. Very well as long as it is the right sort of legend, but we must beware of what, in a recent *Spectator*, Mr Bernard Bergonzi good-humouredly called “powysology”; for the word has dubious implications. There is a clan quality about the Powys which makes them far more unlike the rest of the world than they are unlike one another. None the less they are very dissimilar – the two outstanding brothers as sharply as any. Theodore’s devotees are rarely the enthusiasts for JCP. Broadly, we might say, John Cowper is Homeric where TF is biblical. John was once hailed near his home by some vinous soldiers as “the Old Man of the Mountains”. In a real sense he is; while Theodore is of the lowland valleys. Such a metaphor is needed to distinguish the Quietest, sceptical, life-rejecting art of *Mr Weston’s Good Wine* from the positive, upward striving affirmation of his inartistic brother, the Pauline anarchist, the eloquent, erudite sensationist with his earthy philosophy of “enjoy-defy-forget”!

Both are essential countrymen; both defy their own era and are generally timeless. It is easy to see why they are our last rural novelists. The last countrymen of original genius, they matured in the latter years of Hardy, to whom they both owe much. Our rural novel, so vital in its centrality, its clear outlines, directness, its truth to Nature, was by the 1920s almost swamped by urban values and town-centred intellectuality. JC and Theodore Powys (both eccentrics) lent it new vitality: Theodore by the strange integrity of his religion *à rebours*, JC through his saturation with the spirit of empirical psychology. Yet even more than any of his forerunners is JC a man of the earth. He is an exile, banished by his own intellectuality and the morbid intensity of his questing conscience, from the soil. He who calls Hardy a townsman! He has achieved depths hitherto unplumbed because he is the first impenitent countryman to delve psychologically into sophisticated minds (beginning with himself); and the one intuitive psychologist creatively aware of the elemental, the animist, the occult forces that his autobiography is, that elude a merely social culture.

Because his rapt earnestness has always overridden art, his massive novels are suspect for their formlessness; and it is not surprising that his autobiography is his one unquestioned masterpiece. Insistently recalling Rousseau, it has few, if any, superiors in English. Alas, its very candour and thoroughness seem to have frightened off readers. He touches Newman’s *Apology* at one extreme and Pepys’s *Diary* at the other. Beneath the lovable and almost defiantly childlike personality there is a resolve to accept and proclaim nothing that is not proved upon the pulses; nothing that does not ring true to a well-seasoned intellect and an almost Dickensian alertness for the absurd.

John Cowper was born in Derbyshire, but his father, the well to do simple clergyman, soon migrated to Montacute in Somerset, via Weymouth the scene of

some of his best natural descriptions and the true hero of Jobber Skald. His mother was one “in love with that side of the moon which turns itself away from the earth” and the proud robust humility he inherited from his father is tempered by another kind of humility that is not far removed from a sense of oppression. His temperament is genial yet introversive. From his conscious oddities and his sense of guilt he suffered much in early life; and in his teens, the wisest fool of Sherborne School was bullied. With a Parthian denunciation of his tormentors, he fled from school and duly entered the family college, Corpus Christi, Cambridge, where in his rooms thirteen years later his more Pagan brother Llewelyn found, rudely carved on a beam, the words “Pray for the soul of John Cowper Powys”.

Little moved by academic Cambridge, but much by its society and its countryside he took a second class in history in 1894 and embarked on the literary career which led, very slowly, to his reluctant recognition as the most fundamental creative force after D.H. Lawrence and to the acknowledgement of *A Glastonbury Romance* as, in Prof. Wilson Knight’s words “perhaps the greatest work of our generation”.

He taught literature eloquently in girls’s schools and until the first war was outwardly little but a popular lecturer, a talker and a sensitively imitative writer of lyrics. He suffered vilely from gastric ulcers – and from his own morbid inhibitions – but drew delighted audiences among the shoulder chipped, the socially depressed, the convention-ridden and (above all) the Jews of the United States, to whom he expounded Dostoevsky and Whitman with the passion – and the mannerisms – of a field preacher. He gained little academic recognition, was amusingly satirised by his *confrère*, Louis Wilkinson, made a useful income and incubated his early novels of socialism and exploratory psychology. In 1915 and 1916 he published two volumes of criticism remarkable for their range and diversity and a certain persuasive power of exposition. He always had what Joubert called *l’âme et l’esprit hospitaliers*. The honesty as well as the extreme fluidity of his mind showed clearly in his earliest novels, *Wood and Stone*, *Rodmoor* and *Ducdame*. These found quite a few discriminating champions, but novel readers in general had not yet enough psychology or concentration for such fare; while the avant garde were deterred by his grave reverence for Nature and his emerging repudiation of the twentieth century in its material bearings.

His genius for being John Cowper Powys is probably greater than his genius for writing novels. He does not so much advance the novel as refound it lower down. *Wolf Solent* written while still in New York State (*coelum non animum mutat*) was published in England in 1929 and won, if not wide acclamation, a discriminating recognition of the author’s idealistic quality. His first major work, some find it his best novel. To call *Wolf*, as some have, a modern Hamlet is misleading, but one could envisage a modern genius with patience, sincerity and psychological awareness of

drawing a man (albeit himself) more deeply self- knowing than Shakespeare's glass and mould.

Side by side with his novels John Cowper issued a long series of gracefully written essays, propounding his sensationism as a *modus vivendi* in a difficult world. They show a cheerful adaptability, a yearning for social justice and tolerance and a remarkable understanding of feminine character. Penetrating books on Dostoevsky and Rabelais bore even livelier witness to his sympathetic humanity – and to his amazing faculty for allusion.

Before his final return from the USA he wrote *A Glastonbury Romance* and the *Autobiography*. Unwieldily Leviathan though it is and constantly though it affronts probability and form, the *Romance* is a deepening of human experience. It explores human nature and instinct with unprecedented intensity. The struggle for the soul of Merlin's Glastonbury between the vulgarian Christ "Bloody Johnnie" Geard and the forces of materialism with all the sensory, naturalistic and amatory experience it includes, is unforgettably described.

By 1935 John Cowper was reinstalled in Wessex, issuing *Jobber Skald*, a story broadly parallel to *Wolf Solent*, less satisfyingly constructed but with natural descriptions recalling (with how great a difference!) Hardy. *Maiden Castle*, not quite so good, stressed the intensification of living through the love of antiquity and homely, unchanging things. In 1937 he longingly migrated to Wales, to steep himself in the recondite, dreamlike, purposive but slow moving historical novels, *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*. Some find that his most enthralling aspect; but most of us marvel at the achievement while enjoying it with certain reservations.

Prophetically of the future, John Cowper is by no means of the past. All through the 1950s he has produced stories, fantasies and essays, including *The Brazen Head* (about Roger Bacon and Bonaventura), *Homer and the Aether* and several "moral science fictions". His letters to Louis Wilkinson, collected and most ably edited over a quarter of a century by this oldest friend, are a heart-warming sequel to the *Autobiography*. One needs to know a little of the writer's mind before fully embracing them, but once the idiom and the humour are familiar, they are a joy: the correspondent is even more *déboutonné* than was the self-chronicler.

In the sunset of life he appears serener than ever before, though he has endured heavy bereavement and is afflicted with much of his old internal trouble, occasional fits and partial blindness. The insatiable reader still hungers for knowledge. But it may be at least a satisfaction to him, as it is a gratification to others, that he has achieved and conveyed an unprecedented knowledge of one subject: a writer's self.

H.P.Collins
All of Life is Here

A review of The Saturnian Quest: A chart of the prose works of John Cowper Powys by G.Wilson Knight (Methuen, 1964). First published in The Times Literary Supplement, 15 April 1965.

John Cowper Powys “wanted art who never wanted force”. His wilful formlessness and ingrained incomprehension of everyday people have provided one of the major tragedies of recent literature. Except in minor writings, his fluent verses and some dazzling critical essays, he is not merely formless but reckless of all verisimilitude. His universe is one vast projection of the Powys idiosyncrasy. Yet all this is no excuse for underestimating him: his integrity and his scope and the strength of his imagination group him with the greatest of his contemporaries. Apart from his masterly autobiography his serious fame is likely to rest on his fluid “novels”. These novels are unpopular, not only because they defy modernity (except in psychology) but also since they constantly fail in dramatic verisimilitude without qualifying as fashionably symbolist, and since their traditional mode of narrative conflicts with their rejection of conventional assumptions about what people are like. At a time when man in his relation to man is almost the sole preoccupation of art he has tackled man in his relation to the elemental with an unfamiliar psychological intensity. He has found a generous, if a shade over-devout, champion in Professor Wilson Knight.

If Professor Knight is never quite so felicitous – because more subjective - with lesser writers, as with Shakespeare, we never lose sight of his extraordinary gift for delving to the heart of his subjects and the acute concentration with which he interprets them. Others may publicise John Cowper Powys more attractively; nobody could better probe the depths of what may be called Cowperism. It is possible with his enthusiastic concern for occult and bi sexual experience in literature Professor Wilson Knight is coming to care less for literature as literature, and in his deeply felt interpretations of the novels he sometimes ceases to see them as novels, still less distinguishes between the good and the bad as such. “*A Glastonbury Romance* is less a book than a Bible”, he remarks at one point: and though well aware of Powys’s humours, he gives us a major prophet rather than an all too fallible eccentric. Since he is so well aware that Powys’s humours call at the moment for something more challenging than an exposition by the esoteric for the initiate, it is all the more a pity that he matches his very real penetration with an exacting and even an opaque style. He can conclude a pointed equation and contrast of Powys with D.H. Lawrence by such a passage as:

After centuries of mythological, religious, and literary enquiry, Powys, without any dilution of virility and with deep respect maintained to the great Phallic

giant near Cerne Abbas (IV, 132, 138) has through what he calls his “masculine feminine intelligence” (XI, 582) brought the “psychic sensuous Tao born of that “marriage of Psyche and Eros” for which “so many mystics have groped” (VIII, 341) to full consciousness of some “Golden Age” (VIII, 364) within the bisexual and “Saturnian” dimension (VI, 206).

If John Cowper Powys is the most poetical of our important novelists since Hardy, what distinguishes him as a man is the cultivated breadth of his humanity, extending into an unexampled sympathy with all life or sub-life of animism, if the term must be used. He particularly challenges this over sophisticated and urbanised age because he rejects the urban while allowing no experiences to escape him. For all his quirks he is instinctively devoted to truth; he is not afraid of appearing childish while he proclaims that the child is not merely father to the man but is the greatest and most neglected factor in the man. (Still more, it may be interpolated, in the woman).

So *The Saturnian Quest* is welcome, daunted though some may be by its overstressed and -sought discoveries – what it may be asked are “Powys’s Platonic affinities”; or the “bisexual pointing” of the delightful Wizzie – as delightful to Professor Knight as to the rest of us – in *Maiden Castle*? In short though the exponent is quite often right about the novels, he imports a good deal of himself; and he can equate some very slight stories with, say, a *Wolf Solent* because equally they contain ideas which can be fitted into a somewhat amorphous philosophy.

George Steiner

Champion for a Welsh Titan

A review of The Saturnian Quest by G Wilson Knight (Methuen, 1964)

First published in The Sunday Times, 14 March 1965

When about fifteen I came across a second hand copy of *Wolf Solent* in a New York book store. After that I read everything I could of John Cowper Powys’s voluminous work. I am convinced that Powys is one of the great novelists of the English language (more comprehensive, more talented than D.H. Lawrence), that *Wolf Solent*, *Jobber Skald* and *A Glastonbury Romance* are the only English prose fiction that challenges Tolstoy. I am equally certain that *Owen Glendower* and *Porius* come nearer to an imaginative realisation of the past than anything we have since Shakespeare’s history plays, and that the *Autobiography* has few equals. Ten years ago such assertions seemed ludicrously eccentric. Today with *Wolf Solent* on the railway stalls as a Penguin “twentieth century classic” and studies and translations of Powys underway in Europe and the United States, the case looks less implausible.

If so, part of the credit belongs to G. Wilson Knight. He has long been a champion of Powys's work, bringing to the cause that fine urgency of argument, that delight in critical commitment which he has lavished on Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Byron. It is appropriate, therefore, that this first attempt at a total view of Powys's achievement, following on Powys's death in 1963, should be by Wilson Knight.

It is his especial gift as a critic to penetrate that which he is writing about by a process of almost unconscious imitation. A passionate actor and reciter, Wilson Knight mimes his authors. Thus *The Saturnian Quest* is very much a book in the Powys manner: abrupt, lyric, hermetic. It goes straight to the core of those psychic illuminations, erotic energies and philosophic metaphors which, as Wilson Knight rightly insists, are active in everything Powys wrote. The fact that Wilson Knight is himself is in sympathy with Powys's mysticism, with his Nietzschean vitalism and occult conjectures, gives his exposition zest and authority.

Undoubtedly these matters are central to Powys, and the reader who is already steeped in the Powys world will find in Wilson Knight a brilliant companion. What is needed now is a general preface to Powys, the master of narrative, natural setting and character in whom Angus Wilson has found a power of invention and humour fully comparable to Dickens's, setting out the main facts of his life (so far as they are relevant to an understanding of the work) and placing the major novels in their English and European context.

Such a preface will guide the new reader from the classic directness of *Wolf Solent* through *Jobber Skald* (now reissued as *Weymouth Sands*) to the fantastic realism and social comedy of *A Glastonbury Romance*. It will help him see in *Porius* the uncanny blend of character analysis, almost Proustian in its delicacy, with poetic myth. In Powys, as in Tolstoy, , an idiosyncratic, often obscure and amateurish philosophy lies near the vital centre of poetic genius; but it is by that genius, and the delight it gives, that the work stands.

Colin Wilson
John Cowper Powys's private world
an overview by Chris Thomas

A reading of Colin Wilson's review of The Saturnian Quest, a study of JCP's prose works, by G Wilson Knight, (second edition, Harvester Press, 1978)

The review of Wilson Knight's *The Saturnian Quest* by Colin Wilson (author of *The Outsider*, 1956, and numerous books on a variety of subjects) was first published in *Books and Bookmen*, February 1979. The second edition of *The Saturnian Quest* (the first edition was published in 1964) includes a new acknowledgement of source material, a list of *errata* and textual corrections,

and a new Preface with a list of the author's subsequent publications about JCP's work – mostly essays and reviews, some of which had already been collected in *Neglected Powers* (1971), and others which were later published in *Visions and Vices* (1989). The first edition of *The Saturnian Quest* originally also included the subtitle 'A Chart of the Prose Works of JCP'. In his book Wilson Knight praises Colin Wilson for *making important contacts with Powys's esoteric sexology*. Wilson comments in his review on the significant role that sexuality plays in JCP's novels. Frustratingly however he doesn't mention the source of the very interesting letters that he quotes from. Colin Wilson's review is a good example of the kind of existential criticism which he practised for instance in his essay on Aldous Huxley in the *London Magazine* in 1958 and his book on David Lindsay in 1970.

Wilson recommends *The Saturnian Quest* very highly, saying that Wilson Knight manages to capture the essence and essential spirit of JCP's greatness. There are frequent references to JCP in Colin Wilson's other work, including his book *The Occult* (1971) and a long article about him in *Aylesford Review* in 1964 (see NL83, November 2014). Despite certain fundamental reservations about JCP's writing Wilson held a high estimation of JCP as a novelist.

Colin Wilson died in 2013. An obituary was published in *Newsletter* 81, March 2014. Wilson gave presentations at two Powys Society conferences: first in 1972 and again in 2002. His talk at the centenary conference on *JCP - the depth psychologist* was however not received very well, but not for the reason he gives here – he was heckled and interrupted because his talk had become incoherent and he had difficulty getting his points across. At the 2002 conference he gave a talk on JCP entitled *To Live in Two Worlds*.

In his review of *The Saturnian Quest* Colin Wilson pays a warm personal tribute to Jeff Kwintner and the Village Press: *the excellent Jeffrey Kwintner*, reminding us that Wilson was also a member of Jeff's coterie of writers (which included Iain Sinclair – also at the 2002 Millfield conference) that Jeff gathered around him in the 1970s, aimed at founding a new counter-culture. Relevant to our forthcoming meeting in December to discuss JCP's book on Dostoevsky are Wilson's comments on the interesting connections between the subject of morbid sexuality and evil in Dostoevsky and JCP's fascination with these themes in his own work. This review has an historical significance as it reflects a period in the past when it was perfectly possible to refer confidently to a new *Powys industry* and declare optimistically that books about JCP were now beginning *to pour off the university presses*.

Books for Sale

Powys, J.C.

A Selection from the Poems, London, Macdonald, 1964. No DW. Ex-lib. **£10.00**

Letters to Nicholas Ross, London, Bertram Rota, 1971. Edited by Arthur Upfield with a note from him to 'Austin' on ffeep and a compliments slip. DW. **£25.00**

Photographic print of JCP in very old age. From Bernard Jones collection. VG. **£15.00 pf.**

(With Llewelyn) Confessions of Two Brothers, London, Sinclair Browne, 1982. VG/VG. Kenneth Hopkins's signature on endpaper. **£15.00**

Miller, Henry, **The Immortal Bard** [JCP], Village Press n.d. Pamphlet. Good. **£10.00 pf.**

Powys, Llewelyn

A Baker's Dozen, London, John Lane, 1941. VG/VG. **£15.00**

A Pagan's Pilgrimage, London, Longmans, 1933. Inscribed by Alyse Gregory to J. Redwood Anderson with a quote from the Wisdom of Solomon. 2nd Imp. 1933. No DW. **£30.00**

Ebony and Ivory, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1939. 1st thus. Pages browned. **£8.00**

So Wild a Thing, Letters to Gamel Woolsey, Brushford, Out of the Ark Press, 1973. VG/VG **£20.00**

Powys, T.E.

Black Briony, London, Chatto & Windus 1923, 1st ed. 'Inscribed 'V.S.Pollock from ARP 1924'. Good. No DW. **£45.00**

Kindness in a Corner, London, Chatto & Windus, 1930. VG/VG **£25.00**

Uriah on the Hill, Cambridge, Minority Press, 1930. Paper wrappers. Cover browned. Loose stitching. **£10.00 pf.**

TFP associated material

(Both of the following look as if they've been kept in a barn!)

Westroppe, John Jayne, Strange Tales and Stray Songs, Epping, L. Forster Jones, [1938]. Book of poems sent by the author to TFP, with inscribed compliments slip and ALS. Cover and covers very poor, contents clean and good (and apparently unread). **£15.00**

Bage, Robert, Hermsprong, Turnstile Press, 1951. Poor condition, water-stained and tilted. Inscribed: 'To Theodore with love from Alyse. Christmas 1952'. Theodore's last Christmas. **£15.00**

Gregory, Alyse

'Benjamin Constant' in *Horizon*, September 1942. Covers stained and a bit battered. Clean contents. **£8.00**

So Wild a Thing, Journals 1923-48, Brushford, Out of the Ark Press, 1973. VG/VG **£20.00**

Article of 6 pp.on Gregory by George Sims, ABMR, November 1987. **£8.00**

Woolsey, Gamel

Collected Poems, North Walsham, Warren House Press, 1984. Inscription, VG/VG. **£20.00**

Middle Earth (poems), North Walsham, Warren House Press, 1979. Paper wrappers. VG. **£15.00**

Other

Marks, Herbert H., Pax Obbligato, (illus. John Farleigh), London, Cresset Press, 1937. VG/VG. **£20.00**

Potocki of Montalk, One More Folly, Plush, Mélissa Press, n.d. Usual poor state. **£10.00 pf.**

Wilkinson, Louis, Bumbore: A Romance, North Walsham, Warren House Press, 1980. **£12.00 pf.**

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