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All art in this issue is by Meg Boe

Founded in December 1983, the Powys Society of North America seeks to promote the study and appreciation of the literary works of the Powys family, especially those of John Cowper Powys (1872-1963), T.F. Powys (1875-1953), and Llewelyn Powys (1884-1939). The Society takes a special interest in the North American connections and experiences of the Powyses, and encourages the exploration of the extensive collections of Powys material in North America and the involvement of the Powyses in American literary culture.

Movement Without World

Phenomenological Remarks on the Opening Chapters of *A Glastonbury Romance*

H. W. Fawkner

"Superficial thoughts are thoughts of mediation."
Michel Henry

The second chapter of *A Glastonbury Romance* is called "The River." The third is called "Stonehenge." These chapter-names call attention to a fundamental issue in the work - the nature of movement and the nature of immobility. A stone does not flow. A river does not stand in the silhouette of its own immobility. Stonehenge does not move, the river does. It may be argued, however, that the *Glastonbury Romance* as a Glastonbury Mystery is work that surreptitiously undermines this common distinction made by reason between mobility and immobility. In paying attention to John Cowper's undoing of this opposition, we will need to focus on the peculiar way in which the work establishes a phenomenology of motion which by the same token is a phenomenology of immobility - and likewise the way in which the work's celebration of solidity is the starting point for the construction of a theory of life as movement without transcendence and as transubstantiation without displacement.

As always with John Cowper, the locus in which the clue to the nature of reality is to be found is erotic emotion. But by "erotic emotion" one is no longer referring to that which the narrator refutes as the "categories" of "fashionable psychology" or "popular opinion" but to whathe calls the "unique universe" created by amorists (70-71). In Powys, erotic emotion is not sexual in the modern sense. It is a non-Platonic purity in life-movement itself, a "something" which is as tangible in the "fibrous interstices" of an old tree (71) as in a lover driven by desire to the point of madness. The purity of the life-movement "equalize[s]" creatures who lack similarity (70). What is the purity of the life-movement? It is the absence in

movement of anything other than itself. This claim is absolute - and consequently means that the world too is absent in the purity of the life-movement. Purity means: absence of the world. Purity means: the world is missing. The missing of the world in movement, the failure of the world to appear when pure movement alone appears - this is an event in which phenomena belong to a domain of magic. The inability of the world to appear in the event of pure life-movement is revelation . . . which is why Powys, when he decides to write about the Glastonbury Mystery as a revelation of the very nature of revelation, does not throw himself recklessly into a sea of information about the Glastonbury myth but into the delineation of the originary mood in which man and nature encounter originary movement as the knowledge of purity. Such a mood is realized in chapter two, "The River," when John and Mary Crow come to a grassy clearing at the point where Alder Dyke runs into the river. Here is the boat they have been looking for. It is chained to a stake and full of muddy rain-water. Once the bailing is over, Mary seats herself in the stern, John holds the oars upright as he places himself on the opposite seat. He balances the oar-blades just above the water - and then they set off (73). The river tide bears them along, the weeds shining lustrous and green beneath the sunlit surface of the water. Swaying dace appear. They twist and turn, flash by and sink down, rise and hover. Swiflty the water propels John and Mary past marigolds in golden beds, past cuckoo flowers and less delicate-tinged clumps of dead, faded reeds.

Every now and then they would come upon a group of hornless Norfolk cattle, their brown and white backs, bent heads, and noble udders giving to the whole scene an air of enchanted passivity through which the boat passed forward on its way, as if the quiet pastures and solemn cattle were the dream of some very old god into which the gleaming river and the darting fish entered by a sort of violence, as the dream of a younger and more restless immortal. (74).

This commentary foregrounds a sensation that is basic to *A Glastonbury Romance*: the sensation that movement is godlike and, what is the same, the sensation that the godlike is discoverable in motion. But these lines also call attention to the way in which the absolute appears as movement, to the way in which movement manifests itself as divinity. What is this way? Here it is the way in which the sensation of the fluidity of the onwardness of movement (the swiftly-passing boat) moves inside the way of movement itself (the swiftly-running river).

Movement here is a way within a way, a movement within a movement. This reduplication of movement within itself, this overall hallucinatory ("enchanted") sensation of movement's manifestation as the self-magnifying glorification of its own essence, is a crossing of the 'two' ways of movement as a crossing which crosses out movement - movement becoming in its inner auto-affection that which enjoys the absolute as pure immobility. This pure immobility is first the sensation of effectuating no move whatsoever on the seat of the boat - and second the sensation that what movement reveals (pastoral nature, life) is a secret that simultaneously affirms and erases movement. The various units that make up the "enchanted passivity" (74) are on the one hand entities belonging to an alien world, one without youth, flow, and restless onwardness, and on the other hand entities that belong to movement itself . . . being in fact its ultimate revelation. On the one hand the "quiet pastures and solemn cattle" are instantiations of that which is "very old" and static. On the other hand the "hornless" cattle, "quiet pastures," and "noble udders" convey the sense of movement dammed up to the point of self-saturated bursting. That such things might be thought of as "the dream of some very old god," and that movement ("the gleaming river and the darting fish") might be thought of as "the dream of a younger and more restless immortal" entering its divine fellow-being "by a sort of violence," means that life, in so far as it thrives on the purest events of its own self-enhancing, may be thought of as a dream 'entering' a dream - as a movement entering that which movement dreams, viz., itself.

The nature of reality - this is the issue which is addressed by all great writing, art, and philosophy. In *A Glastonbury Romance* this address shapes itself as a questioning of movement. To question movement is to ask movement a question. Which question? The question: What are you? The question: Who are you? In art, the solution to this question does not lie in an answer but in the movement of the process which pushes the question to the luminous level of its possible appearing. The question of movement enters its own mode of questioning much as movement, for John and Mary Crow in the boat on the swiftly-running river, enters the current of its own onwardness . . . much indeed as "the dream of a younger and more restless immortal" enters "the dream of some very old god" (74). The question of movement, which quickly becomes the dreaming that progressively urges the work towards the visionary, toward movement's internal vision of itself. Movement as auto-vision moves as quest and questioning through movement as 'fact.'

The work's questioning of movement quickly becomes a

recognition of movement's sensual-ontological situatedness: movement is situated on this side of the world. But so too is earth! What is revealed to John and Mary Crow is that which is revealed to most "[c]asual amorists" (80) - the co-belonging of earth and movement to a domain which lacks not only ideality and idealism but also worldliness. What safeguards the escape of John and Mary from the world is not the material-physical reality of their "united physical labor" (in steering the boat) but the reality of this "united physical labor" as movement. "Nothing in their sweetest and most vicious love-making had brought these two nearer to becoming one flesh than did this ecstatic toil" (80). The toil is not "ecstatic" because it is toil, because it is physical effort. For "vicious love-making" too is physical toil. What has happened when John and Mary have shifted from love-making to river-gliding is that reality itself has shifted from the world to movement. But by the same token reality has shifted from world to earth. "The prolonged struggle of these two with the boat and with the water became in a very intimate sense their marriage day upon earth" (80; emphasis added). Earth is a condition of possibility for their "marriage day" because water - as movement! - is a condition of possibility for their marriage day. Water, in so far as it is movement, is precisely earth - in other words an element that does not belong to the world but to the elementalism which is anterior to the world. The elements, as movement, precede the world - being that which the world cannot touch, being that which the world has not 'yet' touched. The 'not yet' of not-yet-being-touched is not in time; hence the not-yet-being-touched can occur after the manifestation of the world. The originary freedom which releases itself prior to the appearing of the world can be encountered after every encounter with the world. The event of the death of the world - this is precisely the domain where the world has 'not yet' occurred. In the current section of the text, the word "universe" designates world - and its headquarters may be identified as the "First Cause" (78-80). Mary and John are subservient to the First Cause - as is all life (77). But during the course of existing in this subservience, they also take upon themselves the decision to defy it. "[S]ome obscure and lonely fury in them turned upon that tremendous First Cause, and deliberately and recklessly defied it!" (80).

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In the section quoted below we notice three things. Archi-movement (1) is upon earth. Archi-movement (2) affects and causes itself. Archi-movement (3) is an absolute.

The quivering poplars seemed to bow down their proud tops to watch these two; the cattle lifted their heads to gaze at them as they swept by; . . . small, greenish-coloured, immature pike, motionless like drowned sticks in the sunny shallows, shot blindly into the middle of the river and were lost in the weeds. The prolonged struggle of these two with the boat and with the water became in a very intimate sense their marriage day upon earth. By his salt-tasting sweat and by her wrought-up passion of guiding, these two 'run-down adventurers' plighted their troth for the rest of their days. They plighted it in defiance of the whole universe and of whatever was beyond the universe; and they were aware of no idealization of each other. They clung to each other with a grim, vicious, indignant resolve to enjoy a sensuality of oneness; a sensuality of unity snatched out of the drifting flood of space and time. It was not directed to anything beyond itself, this desire of theirs. It was innocent of any idea of offspring. It was an *absolute* . . . . (80-81; emphasis added).

Movement upon earth is archi-movement. It is not in the world (". . . in defiance of the whole universe"). Nor is it beyond the world (" . . . in defiance . . . . of whatever was beyond the universe"). It is without "beyond," in other words without transcendence. But what then is left when we have removed all world, when we have removed not only the mundane but also all that which transcends the mundane? What is left is intimacy, archi-marriage, marriage "in a very intimate sense." What is archi-intimacy? Or rather - what is archi-intimacy as an absolute ("It was an absolute")? Archi-intimacy as an absolute is a passion without world and without transcendency . . . in other words an intimacy that does not point to a world around it or point beyond itself to a spatio-temporal horizon that might promote idealization. The quivering poplars, gazing cattle, plopping water-rats, swirling eddies, flapping moor-hens, and greenish-colored pike are thus (1) not a world and (2) not a horizon, environment, or landscape 'around' the archi-intimay, 'around' the absolute. On the contrary - these too are the absolute, these too are the archi-intimacy! These too are "snatched out of the drifting flood of space and time" (81), snatched out of the world, snatched out of the 'beyond' of transcendency, snatched out of the river as intentional flow and transcendent onwardness. In a sense the river itself is snatched out of the world, out of flow - hence ultimately out of itself. The river become movement rather than flow at the moment when it is understood as a being that moves in itself, as a being whose

primary feeling is the sensation of affecting itself, as a being that is its own offspring, as a being that is not intentional, not "directed" toward a transcendent "X," as a being that is "not directed to anything beyond itself" (81). This expression "not directed to anything beyond itself" becomes pointless if there is no directedness whatever; in that event the words "beyond itself" become superfluous. The expression "not directed to anything beyond itself" can only mean one thing: that there is a directedness, and that this directedness, having lost all worlds and all horizons, is to be understood as the directedness of the marriage upon earth toward itself. This is the meaning of the word auto-affectivity . . . that affectivity affects affectivity, that affectivity affects itself; that the self-affecting of affectivity is life upon earth rather than life in the world, rather than life beyond the world. There is not the slightest touch of egotism or solipsism in this self-affecting, for the self which hypothetically would have been there in the world to effectuate the act of self-affecting has, like the world itself in which it would have been thinkable, vanished beforehand into nothingness as quickly as the shooting of those motionless, greenish-coloured, immature pike into the Norfolk river-weeds.

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Let us now return more forcefully to our main point of interest: movement. We have caught glimpses of a movement which, as it were, is snatched out of movement itself. This other, more primordial movement is archi-movement, movement as defiance of flow. This defiance of flow which archi-movement, without ever directing itself toward flow, effectuates inheres in 'Glastonbury.' 'Glastonbury' is a defiance of flow, of the world, of transcendence. 'Glastonbury' means: the cessation of the absolute as transcendent divinity beyond the horizon. Glastonbury as archi-movement is a Glastonbury that affects Glastonbury. Glastonbury as absolute is a Glastonbury that affects itself. This self-affecting, visualized by the narrator as a quivering in the air, is a materialization of an absolute whose absoluteness absolutizes itself upon earth. The earth-air affectivity as auto-affectivity is adumbrated in the "quivering poplars" watching Mary and John in their boat. The narrator keeps returning to a Glastonbury atmosphere that "quivers." That which quivers moves without flowing and without flow. The immature pike which "shot blindly" into the mid-river water-weeds are "lost in the weeds," recalling our inability to distinguish the arrow of a small animal's flight from the instant

of its vanishing from the world. Here perceiving is by the same token the act in which the possibility of perception is lost. Percepts vanish in the act of being given. The pike which shoot "blindly" into their instant vanishing also appear "motionless like drowned sticks in the sunny shallows" (80). The motionlessness or irreal deadness of the immature, greenish-colured pike is concomitant with an infinite shallowness in flow itself - this absolute degree of shallowness being archi-movement . . . the quasi-mobility or hypermotility in flow that snatches fluidity, hence also the world, out of itself.

The "silver-scaled dace and red-finned roach" participate in this originary snatching, or live in the immediate vicinity of its possibility. The same goes for the quiver that quivers the poplars, for the lifting that lifts the heads of the Norfolk cattle, for the plopping, gurgling, and sucking of water-rats escaping into their mud-burrows, for the moor-hen's harsh cry, for the aerial sedimentation of lark-music. The originary snatching also promotes the work's leaps out of its own framework of First Cause, blazing Sun, and supergalactic Deities. *A Glastonbury Romance* has a tendency to snatch itself out of its own grandiloquence - to become a dream within a dream. Here my familiar objection to the 'polyphonic' reading of John Cowper materializes as the sense - shared I think by nearly all readers - that the work's capacity to shake itself out of its own dream and dream a dream that is deeper than the intended, intentional one is by no means a matter of a shifting of discursive voices or of discursive tonalities lying alongside each other. The reading-experince is an event in which we intermittently are taken to a domain 'this side' of the work, 'this side' of all its 'voices.' The domain 'this side' of the 'voices' of the work is not another 'voice' in it - as if we were condemned to endure the reverberations of the world even in the act of relinquishing worldly truth - as if we were destined to 'exist' also in those moments when emancipation is emancipation from existence.

Two possibilities now arise. Either we interpret First Cause, blazing Sun, and galactic Deities as flow, saving archi-movement for the domain of revelations and love-makings that occur 'this side' of First Cause, 'this side' of blazing suns, and 'this side' of galactic Deities. Or else we grant that archi-movement occurs also in and as the 'astrological' activities of First Cause, blazing Sun, and galactic Deities too. I favor the latter view - on the condition that the manifestation of archi-movement in the First Cause, blazing Sun, and galactic Deities is understood as archi-movement subjected to aesthetic infantilism.' Astrological' archi-movement ("one of those

infinitesimal ripples in the *creative* silence of the First Cause," 21; emphasis added) is too wild, crazy, and outrageous to be thought of as belonging strictly to the world; its very transcendency ("*beyond* the deepest pools of emptiness between the uttermost stellar systems," 21; emphasis added) is suggestive of an immanency deployed 'this side' of the world ("the soul of a particular human being who was *emerging* from a third-class carriage of the twelve-nineteen train from London," 21; emphasis added). Yet it cannot be said that this archi-movement is as revelation-oriented as the archi-movement empowering the Crow amorists as they travel down the river as auto-affection. There is in the case of First Cause, blazing Sun, and galactic Deities a sense of exhaustive disclosure, but this sense is in its very exaggeration no revelation, least of all a revelation of revelation. Disclosure is here revelation only in the sense that a curious imaginative freedom is given to the narrator by himself, and in the sense that our trust in his imaginative reality presupposes a strange readerly empathy - as if we are asked to recognize the source of all possible discursive revelation as a revelation-event anteceding all discursive revelation - a revelation-event known to the writer only . . . and of which *A Glastonbury Romance* is a mere spin-off effect, a mere toy. Believing in the astrological buffoonery of the opening page of *A Glastonbury Romance* is like shifting over all responsibility for the reality-principle over to someone whose onto logical integrity is deep enough to warrant the most irresponsible co-operation on the part of the reader. Yet this shift of responsibility, indeed of irresponsibility, is not effectuated progressively during the act of reading; it is a condition of possibility for reading. Thus the reader does not make a deal with the narrator - least of all in terms of some 'suspension of disbelief.' It is rather the case that imagination as such only 'works' in the work on the condition that it recognizes the narrator as a midpoint of possible revelation. This does not mean, in the opening pages, that we feel that the narrator is revealing something. Nor does it mean that we feel that the narrator is going to reveal something. Rather, we feel that discourse such as this - being as it were a reversed, backward-pointing form of prophesy - does not point to a future perception of the Grail but to a Grail-perception that has already been effectuated. This anterior Grail-perception belongs exclusively to the narrator - to a voiceless Being whose affective magnificence is the luminosity of an anterior, almost faded glory. It is as if he has once seen the Grail, and as if the preposterousness of this seemingly undeserved instant of vision

has given him the undeniable right to get away with any claim, with any assertion about the nature of life and cosmos, with any frame of imaginative reference.

The 'craziness' of the work's inagural discourse thus has the unsettling quality of communicating to the reader at once the sense that the narrator is wildly out of bounds - being the last authority on earth to be trusted - and the sense that some unspeakable fact of lasting revelation beforehand places the reader in the realm of an enduring imaginative truth. The opening paragraphs of *A Glastonbury Romance* are so imaginatively crude and aesthetically reckless than any reader who wishes to progressively build up some sort of trust-relation to the narrator is beforehand canceled as a readerly option. The one who reads realizes that there is an instant confluence of the act of reading and the act of assimilating the unreadable. Reading the unreadable quickly establishes itself as the only manner of feeling the text. This reading-the-unreadable sensation engages directly with the issue of movement-rather-than-flow . . . for in an important sense the readable is always flow and the unreadable is always the a priori cancellation of flow. To find oneself reading the unreadable is the queer sense of flowing along the current of a lack-of-flow. This empty flowing in flow's lack and absence is what I mean by archi-movement - indeed exactly what the work means by movement. The boat, the river, the Norfolk cattle, the motionless pike, the exalted tiers of musical larks - these are the activity of a flow which lacks itself . . . and which in this lack reveals itself as archi-movement. The First Cause, blazing Sun, and galactic Deities - all of them units of debris within aesthetic infantilism - are in an important sense themselves 'drowned sticks' revealing immobility in the midst of flow, revealing flow as archi-movement rather than as flow and plausible onwardness.

A narrator whose imaginative impingement is no more flow-oriented than the immobility of an immature, greenish-coloured pike is a narrator who, like that young pike, is already fraught with age - already in an important sense dead. This is in fact the affectivity of the lines telling us that "small, greenish-colured, immature pike, motionless like drowned sticks in the sunny shallows, shot blindly into the middle of the river and were lost in the weeds" (80; emphasis added). Although the pike are small and young, they make their appearance in terms of that which already is drowned, dead - in fact vanished ("were lost"). By implication the greenishness is itself dead, vanished, "lost." That which makes its appearance - entering green disclosure, revelation - is beforehand traversed by the ripple of its inhering invisibility, beforehand erased by the blindness of

the shot ("shot blindly") in which it spontaneously cancels its verifiability. In *A Glastonbury Romance* there is thus always a pre-mature burial of appearances in their own unlikelihood - this unlikelihood being not only the source of the astonishment given to us by nature on days of incomparable enchantment but also the source of our sense the narrator. If there is a submersion of flow in itself, so that movement (say ina river) may be felt as the buried motility that does not itself move, then the pike-like narrator of *A Glastonbury Romance* - himself greenish-coloured, himself "motionless like drowned sticks in the sunny shallows," himself "lost" in the weeds in the blind instant that shoots him out of the appearing he makes - is a submersion of narration in itself. The narrator's ability to be "snatched out of the drifting flood of space and time" (81), to be "shot blindly" out into the current which by the same token is his vanishing, does not occur in the world - for the world is the drifting flood of space and time, the place where flow has the ascendancy over movement, the place where each leap is a displacement. Neither the pike nor the narrator is to be understood as one who makes a leap. In manifesting his nature - in manifesting his presence as a presence 'this side' of the world - the pike/narrator does not enter a realm of exhibiting (the world). To manifest is not to exhibit. Exhibiting occurs in the world, manifestation occurs 'this side' of the world. The condition of possibility for an act in the world is that there is some distance between this act and some other act - some other event situated within the drifting flow of time in a position of anteriority or posteriority. Appearing-as-exhibiting is a showing that presupposes a gap, difference, or distance between itself and its other. In contrast, appearing-as-revealing (manifestation) is a showing which makes itself known by refusing to have anything whatever to do with such a mundane mode of appearing. The pike does not appear in the world; on the contrary, it appears in and as movement . . . and is this movement. The narrator does not appear in writing; on the contrary, he appears in manifestation. The aesthetic infantilism (known in all religions, all cults) that may or may not accompany such archi-manifestation is itself a phenomenon betokening the futility of the rules and laws of the drifting flood of space and time - the futility, in other words, of the world.

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Chapter 2, "The Will," features on the one hand the worldly and on the other hand that which appears 'this side' of the worldly. 'This side' of the mundane event of the reading of William Crow's will there is a preoccupation with the

submersion of Canon William Crow in himself - a submersion which occurs as movement rather than flow. After existence there is not 'death' - but a hovering, a "vague stirring" (45). After flow there is not a posthumous flow, but archi-movement only. William Crow's afterlife is movement-rather-than-flow in the way that plants, in manifesting life, fail to manifest flow. It is no coincidence that the narrator keeps returning "to the placid sub-human breathings of heliotrope and lemon verbena" in the adjacent conservatory (65). It is no coincidence that the Norfolk clay shoveled onto the Canon's coffin is identified as "auspicious for the growing of roses" (45). The heliotrope is not in the world but rather in its placid breathings. The rose is not in the world but rather in the event of growth, of being grown. The references to the movements of specters are references to their movements, not to themselves - movement being that which death cannot take away, being not the Norfolk roses but their growth, being not the plants in the conservatory but their "breathings" (65). "The words emanated from a pale, insubstantial husk upon the air. . . . The words were almost as faint as the sub-human breathings of the plants in the conservatory" (65). When presence flows ("the presence of the night flowed in") it is the influx of a movement which is not itself flow, but "something inexplicable" (66). This 'something' is present - is precisely a presence, is precisely presence - not only in the movement-without-flow of the supernatural, and not only in the movement-without-flow of plants and gardening, but also in the movement-without-flow of a room. Indeed the idea of a the presence of presence in a coffin is in a sense only a miniature version of the overall sense of the "sequestered felicity" (45) which can be felt in the room once this room is permitted to manifest itself as something affecting itself . . . as auto-affectivity, as a room affecting a room, as a room feeling itself, as a room whose self-affection is the affecting of presence by itself. Archi-movement is precisely this: the motionless motility in which presence 'grows' in itself - the wraith, the Rectory garden, the Norfolk rose, the night, the heliotrope, the lemon verbena, the corpse of William Crow, the large, old-fashioned Rectory drawing-room as "inner sanctuary." "Thus this room possessed that rare delicious quality that certain old chambers come to have that overlook scholastic quadrangles or walled college gardens" (45). The narrator's learned-or-imbecilic disquisitions on matters of astrology and supernatural afterlife would become pointless and embarrassing had he not made certain that these matters - like those of room-life, animal-life, plant-life, planet-life, galaxy-life, spirit-life, sex-life, child-life, portrait-life, and furntiture-life - be understood in their subserviency to the archi-force of life's invisible origin and root-manifestation: archi-

movement as the presence-to-itself without flow or go-between of presence itself. The subserviency is not a slave-master phenomenon; for in the phenomenalization promoting archi-movement's 'expression' in its various life-forms there is no gap or interval between that which expresses (movement) and that which is expressed (movement), between that which gives life (presence) and that which lives (presence). Because of this lack of interval between archi-movement and itself, between archi-presence and itself, we are encouraged to discover, contemplate, and indeed worship the sequestered reality of life not only in large things like universes, gardens, and drawing-rooms but also in more withdrawn but no less presence-oriented things like a small eighteenth-century sofa or a little green velvet arm-chair (47). In so far as each such unit of life is movement-rather-than-flow, the discovery of this movement in the very life-units which appear to be deprived of movement is a discovery that equalizes all units of life and all moments of life-discovery. Life itself is understood as being beforehand equalised - as being that which is equal to itself.

After life, William Crow has certain "memories" (45). These "memories" are a submersion of recollection in itself. They signal no flux of consciousness. Rather they move in an "ether" which is a submersion of air in itself - being an element which in its downward descent has "penetrated clay and planks and grass-roots and chilly air" (45). In the area of submersion where the flux of the world no longer makes sense - where indeed it no longer is even real or possible - there are "confused memories" which are phenomenalized in the mode of manifestation to be explored in the ensuing river-chapter. In order to be something other than the river itself (in order to be something other than flux), river-weeds and other forms of river-life are an absence of flow, are a bracketing of the element in which they are submerged. There are thus always units of movement within flow, 'this side' of flow; units of reality that have snatched themselves out of the world, "out of the drifting flood of space and time" (81). The name of one such unit is life. Contra hearsay, life does not belong to the world. Only the world sports this view. There is thus a near-universal intuition in life (but still not in the world) that life has nothing whatsoever to do with the world or with existence. The sense of the fantasy or possibility of afterlife is in *A Glastonbury Romance* the sense that that life outlasts the world - and that this outlasting-of-the-world is tangible as phenomenon prior to death . . . in life itself. Life itself is the ongoing sensation of an outlasting of the world.

A water-rat or a river-weed remains in itself in its accomplishment of life (GP, 259). In the river, but unlike the river, it does not flow away into a beyond-itself, it does not

objetivize itself or throw itself before itself, ahead of itself, in front of itself. In the world, being-alive is existence, an ongoing process of exteriorization (GP, 259). But life is not in the world, not a process of exteriorization. It is archi-revelation (GP, 327). Archi-revelation of what? Of the archi-body (GP, 327) - of the materiality we are 'prior' to being ears, mouth, nose, hands, legs, torso. What is this archi-body, this materiality 'preceding' the materiality known to the world (to representation)? It is the life-plenitude that is not a 'state' (GP, 245), the unbreakable immanence that does not require any "Know thyself" (GP, 255). The water-rat or river-weed does not crave for some Outside, some Beyond, some Apart, or some Above (GP, 217). Its livingness excludes beforehand all self-surpassing. The river surpasses itself, and is nothing other than this self-surpassing. But life does not. Life always 'forgets' to surpass itself, to 'travel,' and is in its material essence this forgetting and this forgetfulness (GP, 211).

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Stone is the living essence of life's forgetfulness - for stone, like life itself, always 'forgets' to exist. To 'forget' to exist is to 'forget' to flow. Philip Crow is incapable of this forgetting. His aim is to exist by the edge of "a subterranean river flowing under the Witch's Rock" (50; emphasis added) with the intent of having himself "floated" on a new sort of boat (51) - which, like the envisioned electrification of nature itself will be the terminal point of "planting" the will (51). The sense of intentionality and flux in this industrial dream is existential enough to kill off all sense of life as archi-movement . . . this movement being the dropping of the wind, the closing of flowers, the darkening of shadows over the lawn, the diffusion "over the daffodils in the grass and over the hyacinths in the flower-beds [of] a peculiar chilliness, rising from a large hidden pond beyond the field, and not yet palpable enough to take the form of vapor" (50). Life is that which is not yet palpable enough to be 'existence,' to be in the 'world.' Life is opposed to world (CMV, 183).

In movement, flow ceases to exist as flux. Such a cessation is thematized in the stoneward movement of John Crow across Salisbury Plain toward Stonehenge. During this long walk, which becomes increasingly painful to John's feet, his onward momentum is split into two different sensation - on the one hand the sensation that walking is a process, on the other hand the sensation that this process is beforehand arrested and gathered into a sense of movement rather than process; into the sensation that walking, once perpetuated into the experience of

its own pure, 'material' essence, does not occur in the world . . . but rather in walking as such. 'This side' of walking there is a walking-sensation that progressively unravels a movement which in essence is the sense in a walk that it is not the event of traveling to a destination beyond itself. This is the secret of John's first walking-hallucinations - those caused by the monotony of the movement of his legs and by the sustained impact of physical pain. He hallucinates "fleeing hosts of wounded men" suggesting huge migrations of defeated peoples (92). The one who flees is not in essence one who is traveling with a particular destination - but rather one who has no specific place to go to, his or her route being no arrow pointing in the direction of a desired flux but rather the archi-trajectory of panic itself . . . the feeling that movement as such is life's only option. John Crow comes close to this migration-without-purpose mood for the simple reason that walking, carried to the extreme limit of the possible, itself eventually loses all teleological significance. Accordingly, when John's walking turns into a limp, he becomes sensitized to various objects which appear to the eye as the visual representation of movement installed in its own unpointing essence. "[E]very milestone he passed recorded the distance to Stonehenge" (93) - but a milestone now is no longer primarily a stone indicating a distance but a stone indicating itself. "There was not a signpost or a milestone on that wayside but had gathered to *itself* some . . . " (92; emphasis added). Stone is in the works of John Cowper Powys the ultimate image, figure, and materiality of auto-affectivity. This is precisely why John Crow has the upper hand over Owen Evans when the latter asks the former: "Could you worship a stone?" "Simply because it's a stone?" (98). John does not have to think in order to answer. "Certainly. Simply because it's a stone!" (98). Here both Owen and John are calling attention to the 'stupidity' of stone - its lack of interior interval . . . of any kind of distance-from-self permitting it to be seen as vaguely conscious. But whereas this lack of interior interval (of self-mediation) is for Owen a fault and a lack, for John it is the object's absoluteness, the reason for worshiping it. The lack of consciousness in stone is that which permits it to affect itself absolutely . . . auto-affectivity being no 'conscious' or 'reflective' event in which a being internally sets up a dialogue with itself, but rather the event in which such an internal dialogue is ridiculously superfluous. The name of this superfluity . . . is life. What is worshipped in stone-worship is always that which worships itself. But stone as stone's auto-deification is not a self-worshiping; for stone is not a 'self' in the first place but . . . stone

. . . a god.

It is of course no coincidence that the narrator now permits John to enjoy a pause in his onward journey - one in which the horizontality of travel is submerged in the verticality of movement. Movement is vertical even when its empirical objectivity is horizontal, lineal, 'flat.' In this way, the is a difference between the flatness of Salisbury Plain (which is horizonal) and the affectivity of the flatness of Salisbury Plain (which is vertical). Affectivity is always vertical, like life itself. The affectivity of movement is always pure immobility - and no one displays this more consistently than the Powys-narrator. In the present context, it is thus no surprise to learn that as John Crow rests his painful foot on some fallen stones in a ruined sheepfold, staring after sunset across the chalky uplands, he is excited by the aspect of a circular dew-pond "full almost to the brim of bluish-grey water from the middle of whose silent depths rose a few water plants" (92; emphasis added). Here that which rises in "that blue-grey, motionless transparency" (93; emphasis added) is felt to be the movement of motionlessness as such. But this movement of the motionless is nothing less than the movement of life in itself, its auto-donation (CMV, 300) - a movement encountered by all of us in the immobility of a stone. A large, absolutely immobile stone is always movement for the simple reason that we all of us beforehand know gravity, and because the verticality of gravity is a 'pull' that we never cease to live in. We live in verticality-as-movement, we live in movement-as-verticality. The movement-life of this sensation is at the root of our sense of our own living flesh - making us the auto-incarnantion of life in itself - as well as at the root of our perception of the anatomy of a boulder. In walking horizontally over a plain towards a distant point on the horizon, I nevertheless constantly remain in the immobility of walking itself . . . which is a static, upright sense of being the very life that cannot walk out of itself. When the dew-pond permits John Crow to discover originary life as the form of a newt suspended in the "motionless transparency," this more or less prehistoric life ("these minute saurians") conveys "an almost sacred reassurance"; "it had sunk down a short distance below the surface; but there it floated at rest, its four feet stretched out, absolutely immobile" (93; emphasis added). The "distance" utilized by the newt in the sinking-act does not primarily denote an interval in space but a degree of submersion . . . in fact the depth of movement as such as it sinks in itself. What is seen here is not an animal, or even a phenomenon, but the invisible source of life itself. "Even as he watched it, it gave the faintest flicker to its tail and with its four feet still immovably extended it sank slowly out of sight into the depths of the water" (93).

The sinking-act of that which sinks into itself is here an immobile newt; but in the chapter in general - "Stonehenge" - it is stone. The perception of stone is the perception of the immobile as it sinks - the perception of the invisibility of gravity. This non-celestial invisibility belongs to life itself (CMV, 297), and indeed to all action in general and as such (CMV, 219). But movement as the vertical-invisible has in A Glastonbury Romance not only a 'lower' end (stone) but also an 'upper' end . . . the Grail being as it were stone's aerial co-implication. The Grail's skywardness is not celestial but gravitational; it emerges out of a sense of invisible reversal in gravity itself. A Grail falls upward into the sky - implying that a chalice has a certain dull weight - just as a boulder sports a certain unstated weightlessness.

To the motion of visible and horizontal things - motorcars, airplanes - we add the movement of invisible and vertical things: a stone, a chalice. From the viewpoint of common sense, the sun sets as an entity on the horizon and seems itself to be horizonal, intentional (possible target of an intent that aims). But in the present scenario there is neither common sense nor sunset but an "after-sunset nebulosity" (93). The sun is not understood as a horizonal entity but as a version of stone, in other words of movement and verticality. Hence the idea that the Hjle Stone is "the Sun Stone" does not only suggest that stone is implicity sun - "It's Helios, the Sun!" (99) - but also that sun is stone. This does not mean that a narrator, character, or reader is likely to entertain the ludicrous notion that the sun is solid rather than gaseous. It means, rather, that the work is progressively constructing a well-wrought ontology of movement - one in which text-sections depicting the motion of newts and dew-ponds by no means appear as mainly descriptive.

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To walk is normally to travel on foot from one place to another. But in special circumstances, such as those currently being endured by John Crow, walking becomes a reference to itself. "First one leg, then the other leg" (94). Walking as auto-affectivity is now so auto-affective that it becomes as 'closed' as a soul committed in prayer to the immanency of its spiritual potential. "[Q]uite as naturally as he had before grown conscious, in that infantile fashion, of the triumph of walking, he grew conscious now of the necessity of praying" (95). Although the walking and "the faint whiteness of another milestone" are ostensibly a directedness toward Stonehenge, and although the praying is ostensibly a directedness "to the spirit of his mother" (95), the emphasis is so strong on movement and so weak on flow ("I can't go on," 95) that the walking, the milestone, and the praying become what the Plain itself is - a great downland space

which is "indrawn upon itself" (96). To be indrawn normally means to be narrowly confined to the limited interiority of personal subjectivity; but the "interior world" of the Plain is not a personal subjectivity; nor is it something limited, confined, or narrow. We are thus in the midst of an auto-affectivity which is "indrawn upon itself," which is drawn into itself as that which affects itself; but at the same time this "indrawn," "interior world" is "so much vaster" than personal subjectivity that we are encouraged to imagine an entity which is perfectly absurd from the viewpoint of common sense . . . an entity whose inward withdrawal from the world is vaster than the world.

The wide Plain stretched around them, cold and mute, and it was as if the daylight had ceased to perish out of the sky, even while the surface of the earth grew dark. The identity of that great space of downland was indrawn upon itself, neither listening nor seeking articulation, lost in an interior world so much vaster and so much more important than the encounters of man with man . . . (96)

The Plain is not interactive ("neither listening nor seeking articulation"). Nor is it vocal. It is "mute." Yet it is affective. The affective is not in essence interactive or phonic. It is not a site for the setting-up of an interplay of reverberations - distributed according to some ingenious system of musical-semiotic differentiation. As the refutation all such worldly systems-thinking, affectivity is instead that which in the final analysis refers only to itself - this 'only' being its vastness. Accordingly the narrator has not only made the Plain indistinguishable from affectivity (from the painful "thudding" coming from John's heel, heart, and head, 95), he has also made the Plain's infinitely vast indrawnness indistinguishable from affectivity's own infinitely vast indrawnness - indistinguishable, in other worlds, from auto-affectivity. The indrawnness of the downlands is like the indrawnness of any strong feeling (such as pain): the interiority is bigger than the possible subject of its origin and presence. 'This side' of John - but also of the world, of man - there is an infinite affective interiority which is more spacious than John, than the world, than man.

The vast indrawnness is a liberation. The name of this liberation is life. Life is an emancipation from the world; from 'man,' from 'John.' This emancipation is for John the sense of "becoming inhumanly small and weak," the sense of becoming "nearly nothing at all" (101). This "nearly nothing all" is what the aforementioned newt instantiated as a "minute" saurian floating at rest and sinking slowly in the dew-pond (93). Its feet were

"immovably extended" (93) as are the feet of John now that his limp has terminated as slow movement within Stonehenge. As the newt sank slowly in the pond (93), so John now moves as movement itself within this "titanic Circle" (101) - a Circle which itself is nothing but this movement of movement itself in itself. John feels that he has "been given a sort of exultant protean fluidity," one which might enable him to "go down on all fours before him and scamper in and out those enormous trilithons" (102); but such a "fluidity," far from pointing to a possible return out of movement into flow, denotes "a wild ecstatic happiness in being exactly as he was" (102; emphasis added). Ekstasis is thus not an exodus but life as such.

Ecstasy is not transcendence but immanence, transcendence qua immanence. The stepping-beyond suggested by transcendence is beforehand organized as an inhering component of the Plain's indrawnness, of life's indrawnness. Life is that which is indrawn into life, this indrawing-of-life being the greatest of all vastnesses. Being "down on all fours" (102) in the Stone Circle is in essence no different from sinking slowly with one's "four feet stretched out" in the dew-pond (93).

The Stonehenge ecstasy does not go out into the world. On the contrary, it goes into Stone- henge, into itself. This going-into-itself of ecstasy, of Stonehenge - is movement. "The enormous]body of colossal stones wavered, hovered, swayed and rocked before him" (103). In a sense this movement is subjective, being a mere emotional impression in John's excitement. But the narrator is constantly implying that subjective movement does not have its origin in the movement of subjectivity but in the movement of stone . . . in the movement of movement as such. "They were so old and great, these Stones, that they assumed godhead by their inherent natural right, gathered godhead up, as a lightning conductor gathers up electricity, and refused to delegate it to any mediator, to any interpreter, to any priest!" (103; emphasis added). Stone, movement, archi-walking, the absolute: this is the site where there is no mediation, no go-between; where that which is gathered up, the absolute, is gathered up in a gathering which does not pass on the gathered into a world or horizon beyond the gathering. Stonehenge is retained within itself. But so is the ecstasy. So is the walking. So is pain. So is John. Hence John is not a "mediator," "interpreter," or "priest." Once he has entered the Circle, he is not a subjective go-between 'mediating' the reality of Stone, of movement; 'interpreting' it. He is exactly where the Circle is (in archi-movement), and he is exactly what the Circle is (archi-movement). The combined where and what - is stone, John. Its locus is 'this side' of the world. But since that which is 'this side' of the world is always affectivity, what

remains in the epochi of the world, what remains in the phenomenological residuum after the reduction of all worldly existence, is Mary . . . or rather that part of Mary which escapes from the world and from existence - Mary as affectivity.

He had turned as soon as they were a few paces away from the stones and was now gazing at them with an ecstasy that was like a religious trance. It was an ecstasy that totally abolished Time. Not only was Mr. Owen Evans and his motor car obliterated, but everything, past and future, was obliterated! Mary alone remaind. But Mary remained as an essence rather than a person. Mary remained as something that he always carried about with him in the inmost core of his being. She was a dye, a stain, a flavour, an atmosphere. Apart from Mary, Stonehenge and John were all that there was. (102-103)

The superficial reader, influenced by the mindless, latterday tenet that the word 'essence' always denotes so-called essentialism, will be inclined to view the reduction of Mary to her essence as an 'essentializing' of Mary, in fact as an idealization of her. However, the condition of possibility for a serious reading of the works of John Cowper is the reader's awareness that 'essence' in the Powys-space is affective - and that affective essences are as materially real as anything else in life. To say that a feeling is 'less real' or 'less material' than a hammer, dishcloth, lamp-post, pillar box, factory, salary, underground station, or level of employment is not only foolish - it is downright hypocritical. The words used to indicate the nature of Mary's essence - "dye," "stain," "flavour" - are based on the idea of physical-material remainders, feeling itself being the hypermateriality at the root of such residues.

"I am getting near Mary!" John thinks as he travels in Owen Evans's automobile towards Glastonbury (108). The traveling is flow rather than movement if, as the narrator's commentary has just suggested, the motor car is one of the objects of the world, one of the things that is "obliterated" by Stonehenge (103). What is obliterated by Stonehenge? The answer is clear, simple, absolute, and uncompromising: "everything" (103). "Not only was Mr. Owen Evans and his motor car obliterated, but everything, past and future, was obliterated!" Notice that Powys does not write "everything past and future" but "everything, past and future." The word 'everything' is followed by a comma. Everything is focused first - because it is precisely the past and the future as everything that is obliterated. "Everything" means - the world. Since Mr. Evans's automobile belongs to the world, it too is obliterated; it does not belong to Stonehenge. Even if it

were parked right in the middle of Stonehenge, Mr. Evans's automobile would not belong to the Circle. The automobile belongs to "everything"; Stonehenge does not.

The automobile, then, is excluded from life. It belongs to the obliterated rather than to the obliteration-power. An automobile represents speed rather than pace, flow rather than movement. Significantly, John Crow is passed by an automobile driving "at top speed" just after having "dragged his body into motion" during the last miles of limping toward the Stone Circle (93). "While it went by his one fear was lest it should stop and offer him a lift. Its vicious look, its ugly noise, its mechanical speed, its villainous stench, the hurred glimpse he got of the smart people in it, all combined to make it seem worse to have any contact with such a thing than to die upon the road" (93-94). What is glimpsed here is the terrifying denial in the ego of that which gives the ego to itself, viz., archi-movement (CMV, 259). This denial is evident in the very beings who feel that nothing in their lives is lacking (CMV, 259). The automobile, as the false auto-movement of life in itself as auto-donation, is a pseudo-presence of life to itself. However, Evans's automobile does not belong quite as firmly to the world as does the automobile carrying away the smart people at top speed toward the horizon. His automobile secretly contains in itself an intimation of an arresting of flow, almost of a submersion of a car in itself - so that Evans's automobile relates itself to the smart one that has just flashed past as motorized immanency to motorized transcendency.

At last he came in sight of the faint whiteness of another milestone. This ought to carry the token "One mile to Stonehenge." But this time the roadway opposite the milestone was not empty. Under the nebulousness of that rusty-brown horizon-tinge stood a small dark motor car. It had a red spot at the back but no headlights. It obstructed the road, but it did not impinge upon the scene with the crude violence of the car that had recently passed him by. (95)

This car is in fact just as "indrawn upon itself" as the "interior world" of the vast Salisbury Plain described on the following page (96). Evans's car is in fact stonelike. It arrests the sense of unimpeded, fluid onwardness ("It obstructed the road," 95); and like the "One mile to Stonehenge" milestone it refers in a sense to an absence of forwardness, thus to itself. "It had a red spot at the back but no headlights" (95; emphasis added). This car contains no hurried motorists. It is is stationary. It does not point ahead to a horizon in which it hopes to surpass itself and achieve transcendence (which is precisely the goal of all "smart

people" (95). Like the milestone, like any significant "Erection" (104), Evans's car suggests movement - but movement as the flow that has been lifted out of itself in order to achieve a sightless, blackened stationariness which itself moves. From this perspective, the various stones of Stonehenge are all milestones . . . milestones in a not-world where flux has been obliterated, giving birth instead to movement as such. The Circle is the precise articulation of this motility without mobility. In a sense each stone in Stonehenge cries "One mile to Stonehenge" - but the preoposition "to" no longer occurs in a world, no longer points to anything beyond itself.

Such a milestone cannot have any purpose. The same may be said about life, about affectivity, about the Circle. Riding in Evans's car to Glastonbury, John asks the driver if he believes inalways struggling to find a meaning to life?" (107). Evans replies that it has never been in his nature "to take life . . . in that . . . way . . . at all." John finds this view to be his own. "Life to me is simply the experience of living things" (107). As they make their way towards Glastonbury, John notices two tones in Mr. Evens. His "first manner" is "pontifical" (106) - but his "second tone" (107) is an "almost cowering tone" (106). But neither of these two tones has any importance whatsoever for John as the event of "walking all day over the chalk uplands" changes into the event of "plunging into an ever-deepening wave of rich, sepia-brown, century-old leaf-mould. From spinneys and copses and ancestral parks, as they drove between dim, moss-scented banks, a chilly sweetness that seemed wet with the life sap of millions of primrose buds came flowing over him. . . ." (107). The expression "came flowing" does not suggest flow but rather the coming of flow: flow's arrival by means of a passive not-agent which is not itself flow. This passive not-agent is life - and in this context life is a particular region of the land. John and Owen "grew more and more dominated by the motions and stirrings, the silent breathings and floating murmurs, of a spring night in Somersetshire" (107; emphasis added). Motion is now not onwardness but archi-affectivity sensing itself. "In the darkness John felt the car crossing a little bridge" (107). The past is now itself understood as movement; past time being not simply 'history,' a flow of nows that once were real and now only live in human recollection, but the "smell of ancient seignorial parklands, through which they had recently passed," "deep-buried race memories" emerging out of dykes and ditches rather than out of cognition (108).

As they pass the hamlet of Pilton and cross another small stone bridge over Whitelake River, the thoughts of Owen Evans become so submerged in their own life "that he instinctively beg[ins] driving very slowly" (108). The "quiver" (109) of these

thoughts is in itself an instantiation of movement as submersion and reduction ("it reduced all the rest of life," 109). But however painful and tragic this "quiver" is, it carries even in the auto-generation of its own perversity all the hope there is in life itself - being in the final analysis nothing but the expression of the affective gesture in which life beforehand suffers in joy from the event of its own lack of internal distance.

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Herbert Williams, *John Cowper Powys*, Bridgend: Seren, 1997, 173 pp.

by Glen Cavaliero

The inclusion of John Cowper Powys in a series specifically concerned with writers associated with the Anglo-Welsh border country arouses mixed feelings. On the one hand it implies his acceptance as a figure popularly known; on the other it tends to suggest a narrowness of focus and a provincial reputation. But although the Border Lines series includes no other writer of comparable profundity or scope, in view of the scandalous fact that not one of Powys's novels is currently in print in the United Kingdom, and that he is regarded by some guardians of literary orthodoxy as merely the object of a cult, this placing of him in what might be regarded as a normative context is decidedly welcome.

Herbert Williams is a poet and broadcaster who has already shown his enthusiasm for his subject in a television documentary based on Powys' life in Blaenau-Ffestiniog; and his book likewise emphasizes Welsh connections and concerns. It provides a lucid and up-to-date account of the main facts of Powys's life, together with brief descriptions of his principal writings, but concentrating (correctly in my view) on the novels. In addition, it contains a considerable amount of new material about Powys's time in Wales, and indeed comes fully to life only when that stage in his career is reached. These chapters should be of enduring interest, for Williams draws on passages from the diaries excluded from Morine Krissdóttir's selection, *Petrushka and the Dancer* (1995) . He has also interviewed people in Corwen who knew Powys when they were children; and their recollections, if not always accurate concerning other members of the family (neither Theodore nor Llewelyn visited Corwen as one narrator suggests) are vivid and enlightening. As a Welshman himself Williams is in a position to judge the degree to which Powys managed to win acceptance from the local community: these chapters put his later years in a fresh perspective.

By contrast the earlier part of the book, recording what can already be found in R.P. Graves' *The Brothers Powys* (1983), are comparatively pedestrian. They are most rewarding when voicing the author's misgivings as to Powys' moral irresponsibility both in his personal eccentricities and his relations with his wife: Williams is not prepared to indulge John Cowper in this respect and accords Margaret Powys far more understanding and sympathy than has been shown her by previous writers on the subject. (On the other hand he tends to take some earlier judgments on trust--was Powys's mother as "morbid" as "Louis Marlow" suggests in his frequently cited account of the family in *Welsh Ambassadors*? This is one of several legends about the Powyses that calls for re-examination: Wilkinson's account is avowedly that of someone to whom the ethos of a late-Victorian country vicarage would be inimical. Littleton Powys's corrective version in *The Joy Of It* needs to be read alongside it for a balanced account to emerge).

Herbert Williams's discussion of *Autobiography* is especially perceptive. He can be critical of the world in which Powys grew up, as when he refers to 'the customary cruelty...which the English upper middle classes inflict on their sons' in sending them to boarding school. Elsewhere he asserts that John Cowper's 'uninhibited outpourings' were 'profoundly un-English', and singles out his feelings for Llewelyn, 'whom he addresses in terms of endearment which families less given to such hot-house affinities would find strange, even embarrassing.' Williams is independent enough of his subject's influence to raise such potentially disturbing questions, although his emphasis is as much on Powys's greatness in life as on the greatness of his writings. He pays close attention to his evidence for John Cowper's claim that he was a magician: but it is not so much the occult but the moral implications of that claim which interest him. '(Powys) devised a personal philosophy which has had a profound effect on the lives of many." It is an aspect of his achievement that contemporary literary critics tend to ignore.

Williams himself makes no attempt to re-assess Powys's literary standing, though he mounts a spirited defense of the frequently disparaged *Maiden Castle*. But for the most part (*Owen Glendower* excepted) the accounts of the novels are written as for readers hitherto unacquainted with them. Williams is healthily skeptical of some of Powys's own self-assessments. With reference to his dismissal of *A Philosophy of Solitude* as a 'wretched' book, he comments that 'it is important to remember that authors are often inclined to say worse things about their own writing than they really mean'--a sound observation.

Within the spatial limits prescribed for him Williams has done a valuable job, providing a readable and informative account of John Cowper Powys which admirers can commend to would-be readers while learning from it themselves. However, one is left hungry for more. Powys cries out for a fully researched interpretive biography that will fill in the many gaps still left in our knowledge of him, and which will relate the growth in his art to the progress of his life. Despite the on-going publication of his diaries and letters, he remains a profoundly mysterious figure. Williams's own view of the matter, while it needs underpinning, is as likely a clue to the mystery as any. 'It is not that he was a god; not even god-like; but that his comprehensive sympathy and dignity make him a symbol of the essential worth of all things under the sun.' It is a perceptive comment, for perhaps the greatest of Powys's many gifts was his capacity for self-identification and unjudging sympathy.

Report on the 1998 Powys Society Conference

by W. J. Keith

When Paul Roberts, the new Chairman of the Powys Society, wrote inviting me to speak at this year's conference, he expressed the hope that a wide range of Powys family members would be represented. And so it turned out, the contributions united under the title "The Brothers Powys, Their Friends and Contemporaries." We heard papers, of course, involving the "big three"--John Cowper, Theodore, and Llewelyn--but Littleton, Elizabeth Myers (the novelist and short-story writer who became his second wife), and the incorrigible Powys friend, critic and parodist Louis Wilkinson were also discussed at length.

But that is not all. The papers were pleasantly varied in approach as well as in subject-matter, Several, naturally, presented the fruits of recent original research (Roberts himself on the reviews of John Cowper's early novels in both Britain and the United States; Larry Mitchell, well known to the PSNA, on the publishing history of Theodore's early fictions; and Chris Wilkinson, Louis' grandson, on the correspondence he is now editing between Llewelyn and Louis). Others were more interpretive in nature. Thus David Gervais offered some shrewd and independent critical thoughts on the relationship between religion and comedy in Theodore's work, while the present writer surveyed John Cowper's relatively neglected productions as a literary-critical commentator. In addition, more factual and informative papers (John Batten on Littleton, Anthony Glyn on Elizabeth Myers) focused on the contributions of less familiar members of the clan. As usual, there was plenty of time for lively and detailed discussions, both formal and informal, after the lecture-sessions.

The annual conference is not, however, merely a matter of academic papers. It was held, as on many occasions in the past, at Kingston Maurward agricultural college, on the outskirts of Dorchester, and members were able to enjoy the house and extensive gardens that formed much of the background to

Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* . One evening, a dramatic reading of the later correspondence between Llewelyn and Louis Wilkinson was staged, which was entertaining in itself but contained added interest since Oliver Wilkinson, Louis' son, acted as narrator, while Chris read the part of his own grandfather. A curious effect was gained, for audience and performer alike, when Oliver's name occurred in the text (from the 1930's)--and there he was, on stage, in 1998! Finally, on the last evening, the conference members proceeded by coach to Weymouth, where appropriate Powys readings were offered near places associated with the family, and we watched the traditional amusements of Dorset holiday-makers (cockles and whelks, bathing huts, and even a Punch-and-Judy show) that so fascinated John Cowper and Llewelyn.

This was my first visit to these annual conferences, and my return to south Dorset after almost a quarter of a century. Needless to say, along with other out-of-region members, I visited the Dorset County Museum with its recently opened Literary Galley. This I found highly impressive, a fair balance achieved between the interests of casual visitors and the needs of specialists. Certainly, the Powys presence, thanks to the recent acquiring of two substantial collections, is far more evident than it used to be. Hardy is still deservedly at the center, but Barnes, the Powyses, Sylvia Townsend Warner, and various other between-the-wars inhabitants of East Chaldon are well in evidence. My only disappointment concerned Dorchester itself. It has not improved in the last twenty-odd years. Generally tarted up for tourists, it has accepted that kowtowing to the rootless kiddies that is one of the sillier features of our times. As a result, Hardy's Casterbridge now offers such "attractions" as a Teddy Bear House, a Tutankhamen Exhibition, and a Dinosaur Museum, all of them absurdly irrelevant to the rich culture of the locale.

Happily, however, the outlying countryside, including Maiden Castle and Kingston Maurward, remains beautiful, and the weekend was accounted a success by all. The new executive is to be congratulated on the satisfactory result of its first year in office.

"I Am Myself Alone" Solitude and Transcendence in John Cowper Powys

Janina Nordius

Doctoral Dissertation, Department of English, Göteborg University, 1996,

212pp.

Janina Nordius's doctoral dissertation, *I Am Myself Alone: Solitude and Transcendence in John Cowper Powys* , is an investigation into the manifestation of solitude. Nordius writes "[t]he aim of this study is to examine John Cowper Powys's fictional inquiry into solitude and to show how this inquiry constitutes an integral structure in all his major novels." Nordius focuses her investigation on six of Powys's novels, namely: *Wolf Solent, A Glastonbury Romance, Weymouth Sands, Maiden Castle, Owen Glendower* and *Porius*. Instead of applying one single critical approach to the novels Nordius bases her analysis on close readings of the novels. Nordius writes "I shall adopt a position of relative eclecticism; that is, I shall draw on aspects from whatever critical approaches might prove useful in shedding light on Powys's exploration of solitude, as it emerges in my reading."

Nordius's point of departure is the "philosophy of solitude, that Powys formulated in his essays *In Defence of Sensuality* (1930) and *A Philosophy of Solitude* (1933)" which is outlined in the first chapter. Nordius argues that solitude is "one of Powys's major themes, prevalent in all his major fiction." She also points out that "Powys does not limit his inquiry into solitude to [the] level of interhuman experience; his work also explores solitude as a basic metaphysical condition -- cosmic loneliness in Time and Space." Consequently, what Nordius designates as solitude "is, in effect, different aspects of being alone, as they appear in Powys's work."

Grounding her investigation in Powys' philosophy of solitude, Nordius distinguishes between several different types of solitude. She writes: "Powys did not himself categorise or name different types, or aspects, of solitude. In order to examine his treatment of solitude in the novels, however, some kind of categorisation is required." The most crucial distinction made is the one between transcendental solitude and solitude in quotidian reality. Solitude in quotidian reality is defined

as "a phenomenon occurring wholly within the social interplay of ordinary reality: it may be a feeling of exclusion from human contacts and friendship, or, a situation much more common in the novels, it may be the result of a more or less misanthropic, reaction against the demands and duties of personal relations and a social life." Contrary to this notion of solitude, transcendental solitude " transcend[s] the realm of quotidian reality: by forgetting about his ordinary reality, Powys's solitary character may enter into that privileged state of simultaneous defiance and embrace of the not-self which is the philosophy's aim to achieve."

For example, one instance of transcendental solitude, Nordius argues, is to be found in *A Glastonbury Romance* when John Crow arrives at Stonehenge. The overwhelming impression that Stonehenge makes on John Crow is represented as an effect of this vast solitude: " the primeval erection at which John Crow stared now . . . was increased in weight and mass by reason of the fact that nothing surrounded it except a vague, neutral, Cimmerian greyness, (104)" emphasis [Nordius]).

What is described here is an experience of transcendental solitude, triggered by physical solitude: John feels as if he and Stonehenge are alone in space (103). In a discussion of the element of escape in *Wolf Solent* Nordius gives another example of transcendental solitude: "characterised by the forgetting, of quotidian reality, these escapes are most often momentary transports into transcendental solitude--that is, psychic-sensuous embraces of the material world."

According to Nordius, what is remarkable about transcendental solitude is that it has the capacity to avoid the classical subject/object duality. " Transcendental solitude--involving an embrace, between the self and the not-self--can be seen as either predominantly self-assertive or predominantly self-abandoned. Self-abandoned transcendental solitude involves--at least in its ultimate manifestations--a "losing of self, hence, it may be called "'non-subjective'." To make this distinction clearer Nordius acknowledges that the distinction between non-subjective and subjective solitude is the same as the one "that Maurice Blanchot seems to have in mind when he distinguishes between essential solitude, and solitude in the world."

Thus, Nordius argues that there is a split running through the novels of John Cowper Powys. On the one hand there is the world/quotidian reality in which there is mundane, ordinary solitude of which there is quantitatively a lot. On the other hand there is a region which is not in the world/quotidian reality, a region which is qualitatively different from the world.

Nordius argues that even though solitude in general is propagated for as a means for happiness in the novels it is only self-abandoned transcendental solitude which is never criticized or represented in a negative light. Nordius exemplifies this in her discussion of *Weymouth Sands,* the only one of the novels discussed by Nordius which clearly foregrounds, she argues, "the drawbacks of solitude and loneliness". Even in this discussion which shows the downside of solitude, self-abandoned transcendental solitude prevails as nothing less than bliss.

Nordius's investigation into the works of John Cowper Powys and its argued discovery of solitude as "a decisive force that helped to shape and form on of the most remarkable bodies of fiction in English twentieth century literature" is both well researched and well written. Its discussion of the various manifestations of transcendental solitude is what makes her analysis interesting. The discussion of solitude in the world, which surfaces in each and every discussion of the separate novels is in comparison rather dull and lengthy.

However, one fundamental question which needs to be raised is whether it is possible to maintain that what Nordius identifies as transcendental solitude really is solitude. Despite Nordius insistence on transcendental solitude indeed being a type of solitude one cannot help to suspect that in its qualitative difference from the world/quotidian reality it is similarly something qualitatively different from solitude. This suspicion arises from her own acknowledgement of reciprocity/embracing constituting a vital aspect of Powys's novels. If indeed reciprocity/embracing is ontological and not quotidian in Powys does that not cancel any notion of a transcendental solitude? What is lacking in Nordius,s investigation is an engaging with this element of reciprocity/embracing. One cannot help feeling that after having opened up a region of Powys's works left more or less unexplored by critics so far, the region in Powys's novels which is not situated in the world, Nordius shies away from that same region in her incorporation of if into her different categories of solitude.

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How I met the Powys brothers

by Greg Bond

From 10 July to 15 July 1998 I visited South Dorset, with a view to retracing some of the steps of the Powys brothers. This is not an original undertaking, and to write about it is even less original. I am convinced, however, that I met all three of the brothers who wrote and lived in the area at various times, and, I would urge readers who are not interested in this kind of personal, coincidental, ego-boosting and ego-boosted diary-like approach, for which no guarantee of significance or insight or anything at all can be made, to exercise their age-old rights and decline to read.

I had three full days in the area, and, being on foot, had chosen to stay in a B and B in the village of Osmington, four miles east of Weymouth, four miles west of Chaldon and a mile in from the coast. From here I would be able to walk to some of the places I wanted to see, see them, and then be able to walk back again. Besides, this was the only place I found in the guide book I had, there being nowhere to stay in Chaldon. I took the train from Waterloo station, and, though I did not see the face on the steps, I saw thousands of faces in the intercourse, thousands of people milling around aimlessly. At best these faces showed emptiness, at worst distress. (Large railway stations in Britain have become so uncomfortable.) I arrived in Weymouth and immediately was able to relive for myself John Cowper Powys's fascination for the gay cheapness of the sands, with Punch and Judy and bits of bathers' flesh revealed. I did not meet Sylvanus Cobbold, but I know he lives there somewhere still. I then walked to Osmington.

Although it was not planned that way, I had a day for each of the brothers. The first day belonged to Theodore Francis Powys. I set off for Chaldon, knowing that rain was forecast. Avoiding a field of bulls I lost my way on the hills, and arrived, with boots muddy, just after lunchtime, at West Chaldon, in the hollow under Chaldon Down. A mile further along a country lane, and past Beth Car, I found the churchyard, and took a seat on the one bench, sheltered from the wind that was now blowing from the west. I had not been there long before I met Archdeacon Truggin.

Archdeacon Truggin has left the village because he cannot afford to live there. He was given notice on his tenancy: House prices are beyond his means. The vicarage is now a private home. Truggin still comes to look after the churchyard, though, and a number of other churchyards in the area, and it seems he makes a nice job of it. The grass was mown, there were roses along the path. But Archdeacon Truggin no longer digs graves. That, he told me, was too much for a man of his age, who could not cope with the amount of stone he would encounter once two feet down. It could take a young man two or three days to dig a single grave. What, I asked him, has happened to the good earth the churchyard was said to hold? Look at the brambles, the nettles and weeds, he answered, that grow along the side. They want to do something about them, and plant something nice. Archdeacon Truggin tends the graves. When a stone falls down he rights it, and when a grave sinks, he lifts the slab, fills in the hole, and replaces the slab. The craftsmen in him shone out as he spoke. Sometimes he even has to use a small crane.

The crows were braving the gale from the west. Archdeacon Truggin, already late for lunch, headed off home.

I entered the Sailor's Return. The pub was full, because the car park was full. Though I had met no cars on the road between West and East Chaldon, they had all come from the north end of the village, driven under the Five Marys. I walked up to the Five Marys after lunch, and sat there for a while in the driving rain.

What's it like in there? I'm asking you, and you, and you, and you and you? We are warm and out of the rain and the wind. And you?

I set off back into the village and took the path to the downs and Chydyok and the sea and the cliff walk back to Osmington. I did dimly see Chydyok, from a distance of half a mile, but now it and the hills were being so battered by the storm that I turned back. I had no desire to end my days in the sea off the Dorset coast.

Needless to say I lost my way when walking back over the hills. I found what looked like a promising path until it turned into a narrow cattle track deep in the brambles, and, ankles in mud, I turned back, headed for higher ground and walked on. No sight of the hare I had spoken to on my way out that morning.

When I passed some thirty army cadets going the other way, I was cheered. They had some eight miles yet to walk, to march, of twenty-two in total, they told me, and not one of them was wearing anything on his head.

Lovely day for it!

And so I did search for Poxwell stone circle, but I never did find it. The moods of God had sought me out.

T. F. Powys came to live in East Chaldon because it was home. (His brothers followed him because he had blazed the trail.) Chaldon was home because it was near to Montacute, but it was also home because it was the place where the moods of God could sweep in over the downs and engulf mortal man. The sight of the shadows of the clouds on these windy, lark-inhabited, rough and stony hills is the sight of the moods of God, and the moods take any direction they will. Like the moods of God, and like the moods of man, the clouds' shadows are fickle. They may leave you be, they may draw you into the sea or they may herald the coming of the fisherman out of the sea. The late-middle aged lady who bends down to pick a daisy is not immune to them. Mr Thomas, sitting on the cliff top, his face to the sun, is not immune.

Next morning my boots were still wet (I had no other shoes), and the rain was driving against the windows. I sat in and read *Wolf Solent* and browsed through the back copies of *The Birdwatcher* and *Dorset Life* and *The Countryman* that my landlady had left in my room. By early afternoon the rain seemed to ha ve stopped, so I stuffed newspaper into my boots (how fortunate that the pub in which I had watched a World Cup match the evening before had free copies of the *Daily Express*, and what else should one do with that paper but stuff it in boots and stamp on it?), packed two changes of socks and set off again. The rain began to pour down again. The bus never came, so I walked down the road towards Weymouth, to catch another bus in Preston. The traffic was horrendous, of course, and I the audacious fool who haughtily insisted on walking where no feet should tread.

The bus took me to Weymouth, and I dillied and dallied on the seafront, for, although my goal was Dorchester, by bus or by train, I had no desire to move. I met the lady who sells seafood on the beach.

Glad the Dutch lost, hope the French lose, and we were all so chuffed when the Germans were knocked out. Been the worst year for business since I been here. It don't even pay for my bread and butter. Henry gets all my stock at the end of the day.

I have never in my life seen such a large, clean, well-fed and contented herring gull as Henry. Henry was standing at my feet, happily waiting for the end of the day.

Dorchester in the rain. Maiden Castle in the mist. A nice gentle walk out to the cemetery? I visited the county museum. John Cowper Powys was the only one of the three brothers who took on the dimensions of the history of the area, the only one who knew what the skeletons and skulls, the flints and the earthenware pots, and also the English terraced houses of our last two centuries had to say for themselves. He was the only one who could bring these objects and places to life. This, though, was because he knew all there is to know about the digestive systems of the earth.

I was able to walk back from Weymouth to Osmington, the rain had stopped, and I had changed my socks twice. Fortified by fish and chips eaten in a seafront shelter whilst listening to two teenage lovers become very intimate in the adjacent shelter, I again set off. But it was not until I was on the final mile of my hike, on the hidden back path from SuttonPoyntz to Osmington, taken to avoid the main road, walking underneath the White Horse carved in the hill, that I really met John Cowper Powys.

The path is overgrown, and all vegetation is wet and glistening after the rain. There is mud and there are rotting sticks, there are secluded ponds, shady corners, there is dampness. The slugs are out for the kill. I can see the slow worm and the rat, the intestines of the earth and the sediments in the mud by the stream. I would like to become Thuella Wye and abide here for a while, but I want to get back and watch the world cup final in the pub.

Which is what I did.

The sun was shining brightly when I awoke, but the ground was an iridescent wetness. I did not anticipate it, but this was to be the day when I met Llewelyn Powys. I walked the coast path from Osmington Mills to Lulworth Cove, passing the White Nothe and the old cottages, looking more like a row of city

terraces than country dwellings. It was not for me to take the smuggler's path down to the shore, for I am the father of two children who may still have need of me. I lay for an hour on the top of Bat's Head, with a view to Durdle Door, and the wind and the sun in my hair. Then I headed inland, saw Chydyok in the sunshine, and took the upper path back to Llewelyn's stone.

The Living The Living He Shall Praise Thee

I walked on to Lulworth, drank a pint, and took a path across the hills again to Chaldon. But I took a wrong turning, and the unintended detour again took me past Chydyok.

The Living The Living He Shall Praise Thee

The sun on the downs where the adders dwell; there is strength in even our weakest moments, the strength that saw us striding out over the downs and lying bed-ridden in our middle-age. In every crevice the drama of life and death is played out. I can see Llewelyn Powys now, in his cape, searching for the drowned man. I can see him praising in his soul the sense of sexual love. He was so right. And I can see him praising the senses everywhere. He was so right. It was said that Llewelyn was a blessed child.

I walked down from Chydyok to Chaldon, took my leave from Archdeacon Truggin in the churchyard, and then followed the path from East Chaldon back up to the cliffs of the White Nothe. I descended into the glades between Ringstead and Osmington Mills, glades like those where Merlin and Porius did battle, and then I drank Dorset ale to Llewelyn's health in the Smuggler's at Osmington Mills. As I was drinking I wrote the above on the blue sea on my map of the area.

All three of these brothers were like the reptiles John Cowper Powys describes in his philosophy (*In Defence of Sensuality*). They were all serene creatures, who kept one eye permanently closed and the other permanently open.

SONG OF THE HERMIT THRUSH

by Paul Wiener

".....in one place I saw the half-eaten carcass of a sheep; and in a pit there were the bones of a horse among the cowslips. Mr. Thomas regarded these phenomena with the same gentle look, as being part of the accepted order of things. After a while Mr. Thomas grew less shy of me, and he began ,to confide to me some of his ideas - ideas about God and the weather."

from SOLILOQUIES OF A HERMIT, by T. F. Powys. The Powys Press, 1993

Theodore Francis Powys published *Soliloquies of a Hermit* - originally *The Soliloquy of a Hermit*- in 1916. Books of personal diaries, ramblings, musings, confessions, observations and proclamations, many of greater substance and articulation, had been part of the British literary diet for centuries. The genre had long been thrust towards shameless possibility overseas by Whitman's "Leaves," and there was little reason for fanfare. Hardy was still a poet to be reckoned with. H.G. Wells, Joseph Conrad and Winston Churchill were well established writers. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was a year away from publication, but *Dubliners* had been in print for two years. Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* had caused a riot in 1913. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* had nearly closed down theatres in 1915. For all its proud defiance of contemporary values, the *Soliloquies* might have been written, if not published, in 1816.

Three years younger than brother John, TF had been writing for years, but was yet to become the curiosity who published his charming antinomian allegory *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* in 1927 at a time when Hemingway, Dos Passos, O'Neill, Joyce, Gide were powerful voices of modernism. John Cowper was yet to become the wandering celebrity homing in on Wales, a literary lion in sheep's clothing whose literary reputation would, unlike Dickens', always lag behind his genius for dramatizing himself.

Europe was at war, but the war is nowhere to be found in the soliloquies.TF was at peace. As spare as John's *Autobiography* was indulgent, TF's book, like his brother's 1934 work, never

mentions sex, music, or current events, and barely alludes to women. But autobiography was not the point. Unlike his brother's book, *The Soliloquy of a Hermit* was an attempt to put an attitude, not a life, into words, the attitude, moreover, of a man whose voice proudly bespoke a withdrawal as finely crafted as a Greek urn. Declaring against religion and belief in his most charitably Christian tongue, Theodore, who loved Christ, was trying to have it both ways. And like most men who talk to themselves, he succeeded.

We read diaries for three reasons: to learn more about the writer, especially if he or she is already known to us; or because the writing is beautiful, incisive, riveting or otherwise gratifying; or because truths or facts are revealed to us that satisfy deep-rooted needs. Powys' soliloquies reveal little of the man we don't already know from his novels, letters, friends and family members, not because he's hiding but because he didn't have much to hide that was revealable. Some of the writing here is well-formed and memorable, as carefully chosen diary entries are likely to be. And much of it is unremarkable, even when it's good.

A friendly reviewer of this book will do well to quote aphoristicpassages, sometimes as much for their intentions as for their proportions: "I take and eat of the mystic fruit; only when the fruit is taken away I do not pretend that I have it still." "Humanity reached its goal when it became man." "The fact that it is hard to get anything out of oneself drives people to go and get what they can out of others." As with some poetry, the less we try to understand it the better it sounds. Except that we can be sure TF was usually trying to mean something.

Which is fine.

There are, however, if few facts, a number of sprightly truths that peek shyly out of this small book and offer a warm welcome to those of us who, like TF, John and others of the Powys clan, need to dress our intuitions in the finer fabrics of mystical utterance: "All priests ought to be trained as unbelievers, for unbelief is the only good soil for the believing mood to grow in...." TF often spoke of himself as a priest, almost defiantly, for he took the work of ministering much more seriously than he took spreading the "word of god," which he properly felt were indistinguishable from his own. A devoted churchgoer - he read the lessons at East Chaldon church for

almost forty years - he nevertheless reserved a special place for cynicism, inconsistency and doubt in his particular book of uncommon prayer.

TF chose to live a peaceful, rural life uncluttered by what most of us call work. He did a lot of gardening, and quite a bit of "gardening" as well. Like many of the Powyses he was not particularly sociable - the sense of family already freighted his blood - but known he was, if only for his aura of solitude. "It is well that I have reached this silence, this quiet haven that I longed for as a child, and could not find." "It is much better, I have found, to love a chair than to love a person; there is often more of God in a chair...." Quite sensibly he disdained work - that is, working for others, working to succeed, working for progress - as mostly wasteful, prideful and distracting from the more important things: the life of the mind and spirit. "In Heaven's name let those that make work into a god with a Brummagem name, take him out of my way; I do not like that kind of god." "Must everyone here on earth be either ordering or obeying, stealing or giving, blessing or cursing?" He lived for his family, his writing, his self-gratification and his kind of god.

In the soliloquies TF speaks often and familiarly of god, of Christ, of prayer and of his own self-assigned role as mediator between world-corrupted religion and the kind of natural godliness descended from Emerson, Wordsworth, Richard Jefferies, W.H.Hudson and Krishnamurti. "How can I tell that even in this sad day of nothing done, a wave of thought, beginning in a tiny ripple, may not have been conceived in me?""....now I believe that the most wonderful thing is that nothing wonderful happens. We are, just as we are, and nothing else; are we not wonderful enough?" "The centre of life is always near; it is only the outer parts that are afar off and hard to understand." At times he sounds disingenuous; at times he disagrees with himself. But he doesn't care if he does.

He was aware of his constantly shifting feelings and perspectives, but refused to rigidify himself, referring to these changes as "moods of god" that inhabited him - indeed, that enriched him. "When I am like that I feel as if mind and body are hemmed in by black darkness, and that if I move I shall touch the jagged edges of a rusty knife, held in the claws of an ugly round-headed demon; and so I wait and hope that this mood of God will not last long." In this he was unlike most philosophers, who sacrifice love of the world for a consistent method of understanding it, and was closer to the poets who

simply celebrate its dark complexity. "I wonder if we shall ever understand that the world is not made for work but for Joy."

As hopeful and down-to-earth as many of Powys' soliloquies are, nevertheless they are also, like even our greatest soliloquy on being, grounded in personal conflicts and intuitions that load his vocabulary with a teasing resonance and occasional obscurity. Sometimes we sense that only he knows what he means, but because of his skill in manipulating humility -his own and ours - we respect his efforts anyway. Though Powys would never have wanted to dumb down his insights into inarguable homilies, his jottings can be disappointingly banal or sadly are out-of-reach. "Every moment that I have to spend does belong to me, and the moments may be gold or dross as I choose to make them." "There is only one way of escape and that is in prayer." "It is well to break your head against all the walls that you can, while you are young, so that when you grow old you can slay yourself quietly in your own garden." This last is a favorite of mine - I'm reminded of Don Corleone's death in *The Godfather* - but I have no idea what prompted TF to say it, nor can I tell how he feels about aging.

Despite his generally blithe tone, TF would not have wanted to be thought happy. Who can blame him? But I suspect he was anyway. He had Luddite tendencies while the telegraph was a major news medium. He was obsessed with Christ but scorned his fellows' common notions of Him. He considered himself a nervous man, kept to himself, championed the honest "ugliness" of reality and the decay that always transforms it. In Chapter 13 of the "Soliloquies," TF lightens up a bit and essays a portrait of himself as"Mr. Thomas" - as seen through the eyes of a hunting acquaintance: "...he used to brood in odd corners and try to hatch a little god out of his eggs- a little god that would save his type, the outcast monk type, from the well-deserved stones and jeers of the people." Many of his characters have an almost pre-Raphaelite appeal. No one is quite all there.

He identified with life more than he investigated it. "The earth loves me, I think I may say that...." Much of his writing, in and out of his novels, seems to be an attempt to find a way to liberate the church from its particularities while keeping it recognizably Christian. As a non-Christian and a non-believer it's sometimes hard for me to understand what he wants and what he sees: "There is no need for us to become anything more than what we are, in order to believe in the Son of Man." Powys had his own clear understanding of Christ: "He longed that the

vision that will free man from his immortality may come to all, and be received by all."

Apparently he felt man's wish to remain immortal prevented him from getting the most out of himself, which is grounded in the moment. It's a bit confusing, as verbal religion is apt to be. Yet I find his sincerity infectious. How often have I wished to convert my wish to believe in an object of belief, and had to resign myself to hearing myself talk.

It's no accident that I chose to review this work. Aside from being a lover of the Powys family and its voices, I fancy myself also a kind of hermit. As a frequent, wide-ranging correspondent and uninvited voice on dozens of internet discussion lists, I find the response to my words and opinions are often such as to make soliloquies out of dialogues. I work alone in a brightly lit office in a silent, unoccupied basement wing of a large university library, connected to the world by cables, wires and airwaves. Here, sometimes accompanied by music, I make decisions about what books or films to buy and which to cast away, what courses to teach, and to whom, how to promote the latest library service or database, how to raise money to spread the word, how to make information-gathering more agreeable to those who are afraid to learn. I don't have a single friend who has read, much less heard of, John Cowper, TF or Llewelyn Powys. Does it bother me? Or shouldn't I consider you a friend, bound as we are hopefully,invisibly to this old-fashioned, transcendent family of unquenchable singularities?

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NOTES AND COMMENT

by Nicholas Birns, Powys Notes editor

News From Sweden

H.W. Fawkner, the author of our major article this issue, is a figure well known in Powys studies, and *Powys Notes* is most privileged to feature his complex yet intuitive musings on *A Glastonbury Romance*. Readers of Fawkner's earlier book on Powys, published in 1986, will remember that the philosophical models he put in dialogue with John Cowper were those of Hegel and Derrida. In recent years, though, Fawkner has turned to phenomenology, which is a very interesting move in today's critical environment. Insofar as American academics take note of phenomenology of all as a distinct mode of thought (instead of the mere boilerplate phrase "the phenomenology of x or y...") they slot it into a side pocket of intellectual history, alongside existentialism, well before deconstruction. Fawkner sets out on a different path.He takes his cue from Husserl and Heidegger, but most directly from the contemporary French thinker Michel Henry. Fawkner and his students at the University of Stockholm are using Henry's phenomenology (as revealed--a phenomenological double entendre there--in his work *The Essence of Manifestation* as well as, incongruously, in a book on Marx) as a philosophical frame to discuss literary texts. What is interesting here is that the literature is not subordinated to the philosophy; rather the philosophy is used to establish the precise nature of the mode of imagination transpiring in the literary works. I have had the pleasure of visiting Stockholm twice in recent years to give lectures to the English Department there. Rigorous and wide-ranging literary discussions were interspersed with relaxation such as eating the, to an American palate, drastically underspiced Mexican and Korean food that fine city has on offer. The intellectual atmosphere at the Stockholm English department is a heady and invigorating one indeed. There is a joy in learning, a pleasure in the life of the mind, very different from the contemporary situation in the United States, with its endless jockeying for positions on MLA conference panels and paramount concern for

paramount concern for whether one is on the right side of whatever wave of trendiness is cresting at the moment. One could surmise that not only would JCP be happy that his works were being studied so attentively in such a department but that, irrespective of his own place in their work, he would be exhilarated to find, at any place and time, this celebration of literature at its most complex and least compromising. Several of Fawkner's students work on John Cowper Powys. One of them, J. P. Couch, is represented in this issue by his review of Janina Nordius' book on Powys. If Powys inspired as much academic interest in the rest of the world as he did in Sweden, his reputation would be very different indeed!

Availability of Books

The book availability situation in the US is looking up. The Overlook press edition of *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Maiden Castle* have been selling briskly, helped by their presence in Barnes and Noble superstores and Internet bookstores such as amazon.com. Evidently what books like this needed is simply a space, cyber or otherwise, for their availability in order to sell; to quote a not-so-good American movie, "If you build it, they will come". *Wolf Solent* was republished by Vintage in December, and Overlook is publishing *Weymouth Sands* in May. Both these re- releases are very good news, as these medium-sized books are ideal for adoption by college professors and reading groups. I have never seen the Colgate edition of *Porius* outside the MLA convention. For reasons adumbrated in the previous two issues of this journal, a Powys without *Porius* and *Owen Glendower* freely available is a Powys of whom contemporary readers will have an incomplete picture.

Letters to Frank Warren

Cecil Woolf, which earlier published Frank Warren's edition of Powys' *Letters to Glyn Hughes*, now follows up with Warren's edition of Powys' letters to himself. Though fewer in number than those to Hughes or to other correspondents in previous volumes of this series, it is full of gems, such as Powys' quoting from Catullus to assert that after life there is "a perpetual sleep".

Powys insists that White Nothe, the cliff where Llewelyn's ashes are buried should, according to Thomas Hardy, be properly called "White Nose". and adds that Hardy remarked that the cliff resembles the Duke of Wellington's nose. Coincidentally, I recently read Hardy's *The Trumpet-Major*

which gave some background for understanding the Napoleonic frame of this anecdote. I wonder whether reading Hardy in a Powysian way might, on going back to Powys, elucidate some of the specifics of Powys' individuality as a writer. To read Hardy through Powysian eyes frees Hardy from being the last of the great Victorian novelists, and permits us to see the stranger, more idiosyncratic, more "local" (in the sense of geography as well as temperament) side of Hardy.

The letters to Warren are written between 1956 and 1959, and cover only a short portion even of Powys' later life, but they are full of his personality and determination. Powys provides an amusing anecdote of his inspection of Nietzsche's library some years after the philosopher's death. And Powys makes clear his position on the political unity of the United Kingdom when he says "But certainly Daniel Defoe was one of our greatest men. And think how we owe to his wise negotiation the joining together of the Scottish and English parliaments and the making, oh yes the making of One Great Britain!" (33).

Veteran Powys-watchers will be fairly familiar with most of the Powys family gossip in these letters, but might find something new in unexpected juxtapositions. Warren includes an intriguing afterword by Frederick Davies, one of the few to know Powys well in his very last years. Davies tells a priceless story of Powys, on their first meeting, suddenly and sepulchrally pronouncing his own name--"JOHN COWPER POWYS. "Then he smiled and said quietly but quite seriously,' With a name like that I had to be SOMEBODY, even if only to MYSELF"'..."(48).. This book should be in the library of anyone seriously concerned with the Powyses.

Powys and the Millennium--January 2000 special double issue

The fine and, in the most positive sense of the word, eclectic work gathered herein has encouraged me to be more ambitious with the journal. The next issue of *Powys Notes* will be a double issue, to be published in January 2000, on the topic of "Powys and the Millennium". Contributions on all aspects of Powys studies, from short notes to full-length essays, are welcome. Richard Maxwell suggests *A Glastonbury Romance* would be a fruitful topic; one also remembers that *Porius* is set at a nearly demi-millennial point (499 AD). Interested contributors should contact the Editor at the earliest possible opportunity.