

## Editorial

The 105 cover photograph, one of the best of JCP, is rightly well known. It was taken in August 1938 or perhaps in September 1936, by Phyllis Playter, when she and JCP visited the mountains of ‘World’s End’, above Llangollen, a few years after they moved to Corwen. Other 105 articles include the recent JCP-dedicated number of the French magazine *l’Atelier du roman* (see back cover); a report on the Zoom discussion last November on the replaced chapters of *Wolf Solent*; followed by two near-centenaries: a 1923 article (revealing of its time) by Llewelyn on the Sense of Smell, and from the same year, JCP’s challenge on a picture in the Metropolitan Museum by the sixteenth-century Netherlandish painter Adriaen Isenbrandt. We have a review of an online lecture on Marian Powys the lace-maker, as well as notes on the illustrator of JCP’s *Lucifer*, Agnes Miller Parker, and on Richard Jefferies and W.H. Hudson, as well as recent appearances of JCP in the *TLS*. Another tribute to the late Theodora Powys Scutt is followed by a well-documented account of JCP and his connections with Taoism; and finally a poem on World’s End by a new member, Dachlan Cartwright, with informative notes on esoteric references, and features of that remarkable place.

**KK**

Two important leaflets are loosely inserted with this issue of the Newsletter – the **booking form** for this year’s conference and a **voting form** on amendments to the Society’s constitution. We are delighted to confirm details of our Spring meeting in Ely in May and our conference in Street in August. Both events will be held in-person. The on-line lecture on Marian, reviewed by Paul Cheshire, marks the return to these pages of American lace expert Elizabeth Kurella who contributed a tribute to Marian in *Newsletter* 33, April 1998. We update the select bibliography of *Wolf Solent* with some more significant items. We also publish a sequel to Jacqueline Peltier’s excellent bibliography of JCP’s works in French translations which reveals the strength of interest in Powys in France after 1989.

### John Cowper Powys at 150

In 2022 we celebrate the 150th anniversary year of John Cowper Powys’s birth. The Society will be toasting JCP at its events this year. A pilgrimage to his birthplace in Derbyshire is being

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planned for his actual 150th birthday: Saturn's day, 8 October 2022 (more information will follow in the July Newsletter). Tributes will be collected on his home page of our website. You are warmly invited to submit your own tribute. Please contact Paul Cheshire at powysjournal@icloud.com

CT

### **Proposals to amend the Society's constitution**

Please return your voting form (see inserted leaflet) to Hon Secretary  
**by 31 May 2022**

**For details of amendments please visit our website at:**

<https://www.powys-society.org/AboutSoc.html>

### *Committee nominations 2022-2023*

In accordance with rule 4.6 of the Constitution the following statement has been prepared by Hon Secretary giving details of vacancies and the names of members willing to serve on the committee for a further period when their current term of office expires at the AGM in August 2022.

All paid-up members, including Honorary members, are entitled to submit nominations for the committee. Nominations must include the name of the **Proposer and the Secunder** (who must also be paid up or honorary members) and should be **submitted in writing, or by email, including a statement confirming the Nominee's agreement**. If more than one nomination is submitted for any vacant post **a postal ballot will be required**.

Nominations should be sent to the Hon. Secretary **by email to:** [chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk) or **by post** to 87 Ledbury Road, London W11 2AG. Nominations must be received by **Wednesday 1 June 2022**.

### **Honorary Officers**

The current Honorary Officers of the Powys Society committee are:

Chair and Acting Treasurer Paul Cheshire

Vice-Chair David Goodway

Secretary Chris Thomas

The one-year term of all these officers expires at the AGM on Sunday 14 August 2022 and therefore nominations are sought for each position. **Paul Cheshire, David Goodway and Chris Thomas** have indicated their **willingness to serve for a further year**.

**We are particularly seeking nominations for the role of Treasurer.**

## Members of the committee

Current members of the Powys Society committee are: Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor*, with Chris Thomas), Dawn Collins (*social media manager*), and Robin Hickey, (who all have two years left to run of their three-year term of office), Louise de Bruin (*Conference organiser*) whose term of office expires in August 2022 and Marcel Bradbury (who has one year left to run of his three-year term of service). Anna Rosic continues to serve as a co-opted committee member; Marcella Henderson-Peal and Nicholas Birns serve as Honorary committee members; Kevin Taylor (*eBooks and Editor of the Powys Journal*) and Charles Lock (*associate editor of the Powys Journal*) serve as ex-officio members of the committee.

Nominations are sought for one vacant position for membership of the committee from August 2022. Louise de Bruin has indicated her **willingness to serve for a further period of three years.**

**Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary**

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## AGM

This gives notice that the Annual General Meeting of the Powys Society will be held at **9.30 am on Sunday 14th August** at the Wessex Hotel in Street, nr Glastonbury.

All paid-up members of the Powys Society are eligible to participate in the AGM whether or not they are attending the conference.

**Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary**

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## New Members

We are pleased to welcome six new members to the Powys Society who have joined since the last announcement published in *Newsletter* 104, November 2021. New members are located in Dundee, Jersey, Weston super Mare, Poole, USA, and Horsham. Two members were reinstated. Two members terminated their membership at the end of 2021. One member resigned January 2022. One member's materials returned by PO in Budapest marked undeliverable and removed from mailing list. This brings the current total membership of the Society to **246**, including Honorary members, and allowing for other members who are deceased, or who have either resigned or not renewed their membership.

**Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary**

## *A Spring Meeting*

**Saturday 7 May 2022 at Ely**

**A discussion** will be led by **Chris Thomas** on *Wood and Stone*, Chapters 8 & 9.

**Venue:** The Old Fire Engine House, Ely, Cambridgeshire. **Commencing** 11.00 am. We are delighted to announce our first meeting in 2022 will be in-person. We are glad to be able to return to one of our favourite venues. All are welcome. The event is free except for refreshments and optional lunch which may be taken in the restaurant. If you would like to attend the meeting please notify Hon Secretary at [chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk)

*Wood and Stone* was JCP's first published novel and dedicated with the author's 'devoted admiration' to Thomas Hardy. The novel was published by Arnold Shaw in USA in 1915 and deals essentially with the relationship between two brothers James and Luke Anderson. In his high-sounding Preface JCP points to the main themes of the novel: the struggle between the 'well-constituted' and the 'ill-constituted', the conflict between power and sacrifice, and between pride and love. These themes coalesce in Chapter 8 'The Mythology of Sacrifice', and Chapter 9 'The Mythology of Power'. Here is JCP at a formative stage of his career as a novelist with all his faults, capability and potentiality. The setting of the novel is the Somerset village of Nevilton overshadowed by two hills, Leo's Hill and Nevilton Mount, which dominate the story with their elemental characteristics and their Christian and pagan resonances. Nevilton is recognisably Montacute. The two brothers are recognisably JCP and Llewelyn. In the novel JCP vividly evokes the locations of his childhood memory and the place from where his father used to point out to him Glastonbury Tor. But Nevilton is not envisioned here as some sylvan idyll from the past – there are dark forces at work. JCP declares Nevilton exudes an oppressive sense of *something depressing and deep and treacherous which lurks ever in the background*. At our conference this year we plan to visit Montacute and organise a guided walk to St Michael's Hill, Hedgecock Woods and Ham Hill offering an opportunity to visit the scenes of Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 of *Wood and Stone* walking in the footsteps of JCP's character the Reverend Hugh Clavering.

Members may wish to read reports of a previous discussion of *Wood and Stone*, on the occasion of its centenary year, in Newsletter 85, July 2015. *Wood and Stone* was reprinted by Village Press in 1974. A digitised copy which is free to download can also be found on the internet at <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/53157>

**Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary**

**The Powys Society Conference 2022**  
*The Wessex Hotel, Street, Nr Glastonbury*  
*Friday 12 August to Sunday 14 August*

**‘Strange Seas of Thought’**

We are very pleased to confirm that this year’s conference will take place, once again, in-person, at the Wessex Hotel in Street. Our venue is situated only a short walking distance from some of the key locations described in *A Glastonbury Romance*. The title of this year’s conference is taken from Wordsworth’s reference to the mind of Newton ‘*for ever voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone*’. The conference will commence on Friday night with Charles Lock leading a celebratory toast in advance of JCP’s 150th birthday. Our speakers will explore themes associated with creativity, thinking, visionary experience, myth and transformation, abandoned ideas and issues concerned with the editing of JCP’s texts.  **Louise de Bruin** will explore the inner world, intense thoughts and passionate emotions of Katie Powys through readings from Katie’s private diary. We are delighted to welcome **Michael Grenfell** (emeritus professor at the University of Southampton) who is attending a Powys Society conference for the first time. Michael will consider some of the possible connections between William Blake and JCP from their joint quest for gnosis and illumination to the influence of gnostic ideas about good and evil and their shared dedication to the faculty of the imagination. ‘*Imagination is My World*’ declared Blake. ‘*Imagination not God’s will is what creates*’ said JCP. We are also very pleased to welcome **Felix Taylor** to our conference for the first time. Felix has just achieved his DPhil with a dissertation that includes a chapter on JCP. In his talk Felix will discuss JCP’s relationship to Welsh myth and especially his use of the strange stories narrated in the *Mabinogion* reminding us of JCP’s response to the landscape surrounding his home at Blaenau Ffestiniog which he called ‘*romantic and Mabinogionish*’. On our **free Saturday afternoon** conference goers are invited to travel to Montacute and enjoy a guided walk to St Michael’s Hill which is topped by a circular tower from where there are views over the fields towards Glastonbury Tor. We will pause here for readings from JCP’s first published novel *Wood and Stone*. We will then proceed along a woodland path on the south side of Hedgecock Hill woods and Ham Hill to the Prince of Wales public house (which features at the end of *Wood and Stone*) from where there are panoramic views over the Somerset levels and where there will be an opportunity to listen to readings from Llewelyn’s essays on Hedgecock Hill and Ham Hill. We return to Montacute via the north side

of Ham Hill. The entire walk encompasses a distance of approximately 3.37 miles and should take about 80 to 90 minutes to complete at a leisurely pace. Alternatively members may wish to remain in Montacute and explore places associated with the Powyses in the village. On **Saturday evening** we are planning a special event to include readings from the poetry of Katie Powys and JCP's letters to Katie. On Sunday morning **Morine Krissdóttir** will give a talk on editing the deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent* and also examine wider questions about editing JCP's texts for publication. This will be followed by a panel discussion with conference members which we hope will include our two sponsors from Australia **Adrian Gattenhof** and **Peter Brittain**. **Charles Lock** will conclude the conference with a talk on the different ways in which our reading of *Wolf Solent* is altered by the addition of JCP's deleted chapters. This year the **AGM** will take place immediately after breakfast from 9.30-10.30 am. **The book room** will be open as usual at selected hours with a new selection of titles including examples of the Society's own publications.

**Chris Thomas. Hon Secretary**

### *Draft Conference Programme*

#### **Friday 12 August**

16.00 Arrival

17.30 Reception and Chair's welcome (**Paul Cheshire**), with a toast to JCP at 150 (**Charles Lock**)

18.30 Dinner

20.00 **Louise de Bruin**: 'The Diaries of Katie Powys'

#### **Saturday 13 August**

08.00 Breakfast

09.30 **Michael Grenfell**: 'John Cowper Powys and William Blake'

10.45 Coffee

11.15 **Felix Taylor**: 'John Cowper Powys and the reshaping of Welsh myth'

13.00 Lunch

Afternoon free – optional visit to Montacute and guided walk to St Michael's Hill, Hedgecock Hill Woods and Ham Hill or self-conducted tour of places in Montacute associated with the Powyses

19.00 Dinner

20.30 Selected poems by Katie Powys read by Chris Michaelides, Hilary Bedder and Robin Hickey with letters from JCP to Katie read by Richard Graves

## Sunday 14 August

08.00-09:30 Breakfast

09.30-10.30 **AGM**

10.30-11.00 Coffee

11.00-12:00 **Morine Krissdóttir**: ‘Editing a Volcano’ with Q&A and panel discussion

12.00-13:00 **Charles Lock**: ‘Addition or Detraction? Thoughts on the future of *Wolf Solent*’

13.00: Lunch

15.00 Departure

### *The Speakers*

**Louise de Bruin** is a long-standing active member of the Powys Society. For many years she was contributing editor of the *Powys Journal* and for even longer she has been one of the organisers of the Powys Conferences. She also edited two volumes of extracts from Mary Casey’s diaries, *A Net in Water* and *Under the Shadow of the Oath*, and for the Sundial Press a short novel by Philippa Powys (aka Katie Powys), called *Sorrel Barn*. She currently shares her time between Haarlem in her native country, the Netherlands, and Mappowder in Dorset where she lives in the cottages in which Gerard, Mary and Lucy used to live. Louise was introduced to the Powys family by Gerard Casey, son-in-law of Lucy Penny, née Powys, the youngest daughter of the Reverend Charles F. Powys and his wife. He picked her up in Kenya in the early 1970s when she and her companion were hitch-hiking through Africa and introduced her first to Will Powys and sometime later to the writings of the brothers Powys. In 1977, he invited her to join him for a Powys conference held in Weymouth and to meet his mother-in-law, his wife Mary and other members of the Powys family.

Louise writes ‘Katie has very rarely spoken for herself. This I hope to let her do in my talk on her diaries which I rescued after Lucy’s death from damp and silverfish. Katie started to keep a diary in August 1903 when she was 17 and with long gaps here and there kept it up until almost the day of her death. In her diaries she pours out her many passions: sadly enough, most of these unfulfilled. One of them was for writing: diaries, poetry, novels and one play. But having had no formal education, her writing life was one long struggle with grammar, syntax and spelling. When she picked up her diary once more in 1927 on the advice of brother Theodore, she wrote miserably: ‘I have done some writing but my farming has failed; and as I am slow and uncertain in my writing it is of no commercial value. Thus the good of my life is to humankind is NIL.’ Being the extraordinary person she was, that was of course not true at all, but

apart from that, *The Dial* published part of her *Driven Passion* under the title chosen by John, *Phoenix*, and in 1930 her novel *The Blackthorn Winter* came out. That same year also saw *Driftwood*, a small volume of her poetry, in print, both under her writer's name Philippa Powys. Posthumously The Powys Press reissued *Driftwood* with some heretofore unpublished poems. And in 2011 the Sundial Press released a volume with two of her short novels: *Sorrel Barn & The Tragedy of Budvale*. Especially *Sorrel Barn*, as always with Philippa, a dramatic love story, set in a beautifully described Montacute of the early nineteenth century, is in my biased opinion a gem, which adds as an extra bonus a glimpse of quite a different side of life in the Montacute vicarage as pictured by her brothers John, Littleton and Llewelyn.'

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**Michael Grenfell** has held Chair positions in Scotland, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland and the University of Southampton, UK where he is now based. His background is in French Studies and early research projects included French Catholic non-conformist intellectuals' response to dechristianisation in France. His academic career also involved extensive research and publications on language, education and linguistics, as well as a close association with the French social philosopher Pierre Bourdieu with a focus on biography, music and the fine arts. He has a personal interest and involvement in a range of esoteric philosophical traditions and disciplines, and has worked closely with the ideas of J G Bennett and associate connections. He was committee member of the *William Blake Society of St James* in London in the 1980s and 90s when he was their *Press and Publicity Officer*. He also edited the *Blake Journal*. His special focus has been on *Blake and Gnosticism*. He is the author of some 20 + books and several research papers on these topics and others. See: <http://www.michaelgrenfell.co.uk> Michael writes: '*John Cowper Powys and William Blake* – This talk will explore the literary and philosophical links between the works of John Cowper Powys and William Blake. I shall begin with some account and comments on JCP's own writing on Blake and the elements he identified in it. I shall extend these with consideration of the core philosophy at the centre of Blake's work. What that philosophy is, is of course highly contested. However, I shall address my own perspectives on Blake with respect to Gnosticism, or more accurately Gnosis, and the kind of relationship to the world it implies. How this is pertinent to JCP will be discussed with respect to Blake's view of creativity, nature, Christianity, and indeed human consciousness. I shall explore these themes in terms of areas of 'overlap' with reference to a selection of the fiction and non-fictional work of JCP. Ultimately, I am looking for points that may be regarded as a 'common vision', or at least an appreciation of what they shared and how they

differed. Referents will be drawn from both philosophical and literary traditions in order to articulate the extent of their mutual *metanoia*.’

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**Felix Taylor** works as a librarian at The Queen’s College, Oxford, and has recently written a DPhil thesis on the reception of Welsh mythology & folklore in the novels of Arthur Machen, John Cowper Powys and Alan Garner. Felix’s lecture will give an overview of JCP’s use of the Four Branches of the Mabinogion in his novels and wider philosophy. It will argue that in *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*, JCP reshapes and rewrites Welsh myth to suit his own strange theories about the Welsh people and their psychological ‘peculiarities’.

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**Morine Krissdóttir** was Chair of the Powys Society between 1987 and 1996. She was curator of the Powys Society collection at the Dorset Museum before items were transferred to Exeter University. Morine has published articles in the Powys Society *Newsletter* and the *Powys Journal* – Foreword to Vol. 1 (1991); Introduction to the diaries of JCP, 1932-1933: ‘A Selection on the Writing of Weymouth Sands’, Vol. II (1992); ‘The Twig in the Crystal: Phyllis through John’s diary’, Vol. III (1993); The diary of a Man Who Walks, Vol. VIII (1998); a review of book by Janina Nordius ‘*Myself Alone*’, Vol. VIII (1998) and ‘Missing the Middle’, Supplement Vol. XXXI (2021); Morine also edited the six deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent* for the Supplement, Vol. XXXI (2021)). She is the author or editor of *John Cowper Powys and the Magical Quest* (1980), *Petrushka and the Dancer: The Diaries of John Cowper Powys, 1929-1939* (1995), *The Dorset Year* (with Roger Peers) (1998), and *Descents of Memory: The Life of John Cowper Powys* (2007). Morine is the co-author of *Shielding: People and Shelter* (1985). Morine writes: ‘As well as giving a brief description of the challenges met in preparing the deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent* for publication, I would like to discuss more generally the difficulties that editors, past and present, have encountered when faced with JCP’s prolixity.’

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**Charles Lock** recently completed his twenty-sixth year as Professor of English Literature at the University of Copenhagen. Among his recent publications: *Anne Blonstein continuing*, to mark the deposit of the poet’s archive at the Poetry Collection, University of Buffalo; ‘A Symphony of Concessions: Cables, Railroads, Orthodoxies in Harbin and Beyond’ in *Japan’s Russia: Challenging the East-West Paradigm*, eds O. Solovieva and S. Konishi (Cambria, 2021); and ‘Thinking on Location: An Essay in the Vulnerability of the Subject’ in the *Journal of History*

*and Theory* (December 2021). Forthcoming (with the late Magnús Snædal) is an extensive study of the sixth-century manuscript in the Gothic language known as the *Codex Argenteus* (or Silver Bible, held at the University of Uppsala, Sweden), and of the circumstances under which it was first printed in 1665. Charles is a regular contributor to the Powys Society Conference and *Powys Journal* – he was Editor of the *Journal* from 2011 to 2020. He presented a lecture at our conference in Street in 2018 which was published in the *Powys Journal* in Vol. XXIX (2019) under the title, ‘Diversions and Digressions: What happens in the reading of *A Glastonbury Romance*’. Charles contributed an obituary of our late President Glen Cavaliero in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXX (2020). Charles writes that his lecture will ‘consider the differences that the recent availability of the deleted chapters might make to our understanding and appreciation of *Wolf Solent*. This will involve questions of editorial principle and the aesthetic implications of challenging the unified wholeness of a literary work’.

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*Chris Thomas*

### **JCP and Phyllis at World’s End**

On Friday 12 June 1936 Phyllis Playter attended the sale of the contents of a two storey half-timbered Tudor and Elizabethan manor house, with later extensions and additions, called Plas Ucha yn Eglwyseg or World’s End Manor. The manor house, which is built on the site of an earlier 11th or 12th century hunting lodge, was also, reputedly, once the refuge of the Princes of Powys. The house is situated above Llangollen, adjacent to Afon Eglwyseg river, at the head of a narrow valley below the escarpment of Eglwyseg mountain, on the road to World’s End and Minera. World’s End is a peaceful and secluded place surrounded by streams (Nant Elli and Nant Craig y Moch), cascades, forests, woodland, heathery moorland, sloping pastures and plantations of oak, yew and pine. Here there are rocky outcrops, and spectacular limestone cliffs with panoramic views of the Dee valley including a view of Castel Dinas Bran. JCP described Phyllis’s visit to Eglwyseg Manor in his diary:

*This day the T.T found her house – the Ancient House of the Powys princes... She & the two Ladies of Llangollen are going to be driven by ‘the boy’ (Mr Jones’s son) to World’s End – to a sale starting at one something – at World’s End Manor House...Yes the T.T. has found the House of Princes of Powys going back beyond Rhodri the Great to Eliseg. She seriously thinks of us living there!...the T.T really & truly want to live there. What will the upshot be? (Diary 12 June 1936, *Petrushka and the Dancer*, p.214)*



*Plas Ucha manor house, Source – [www.coflein.gov.uk](http://www.coflein.gov.uk)*

Morine Krissdóttir explains in *Petruska and the Dancer* (p. 201) that Phyllis had by 1936 started to feel as if she had isolated JCP in Corwen but considered that moving deeper into a remote mountain landscape might assist JCP begin to draw down the sources of his Welsh inspirations.

On Tuesday 16 June 1936 JCP noted in his diary: *A letter from Wynnstay Office to say the Manor House at World's End could not be let independent of the land. So that is a relief! as it takes away any feeling of tantalization – & makes it easier to settle down where we be!*

It was probably at the sale of the contents of Plas Ucha yn Eglwyseg, or perhaps later on, that Phyllis purchased an old striking Grandfather clock that JCP sometimes refers to in his diary:

3 January 1940

*Just as the World's End Clock struck 3 am the T.T. was late to bed*

11 March 1940

*the World's End Clock struck Three.*

25 April 1940

*up Mountain I rushed; promising to be back at 9.30 and so to the tick of World's End Clock I was*

25 July 1940

*the 'World's End' Clock in its bag-pipe, yes its wild shrill bagpipe scream bagpipe scream bag pipe bag pipe scream scream yelled Twelve Twelve Twelve!*

On Thursday 17 September JCP, Phyllis, Gertrude and The Old made an excursion to World's End which JCP described in his diary (also quoted by Felix Taylor in his article 'JCP and the Anti-Vivisection Movement' in *The Powys Journal* Vol. XXIX 2019):

*We all 4 set out...to WORLD'S END & the Eglwyseg Manor of the old Chiefs of Powys – of Talaith Powys...the Eglwyseg Rocks are amazing! And the Stone Woman is like Ceridwen herself. It is a retreat for the old gods. The gorge above it is full of Caves & the terrifying Hole, probably bottomless, whose peculiarity is – hynodrwydd – that it goes down to Hell. Near it is a Cave – a Dragon's Cave...the green green grass was enchanted like emerald & the dark black pines where the sun dropped little pools of gold was like the Black Forest. Through the forest we climbed till we got clear out on the Moor beyond where the air was Divine. Never shall we forget it. World's End! World's End!*

In *Descents of Memory*, p.327, Morine Krissdóttir comments on this passage: *Presto! He had his dramatic opening scene (for Morwyn).*

It may have been during their walk in the mountains in September 1936 that Phyllis took the photograph of JCP which appears as the frontispiece of Wilson Knight's *Saturnian Quest*, and is used on the cover of the Village Press edition of *Obstinate Cymric*, illustrated following page 360 in *Descents of Memory* and which now appears on the front cover of this issue of the Newsletter. However the list of illustrations in *Descents of Memory* on page 10 also states that the photograph was taken in August 1938 which would therefore indicate JCP visited the mountains at World's End on several occasions.

JCP must have known about the legends associated with Llangollen's patron saint St. Collen (who lived in the 7th century) and who is said to have fought with a giantess, Cares y Bwlch, on Eglwyseg mountain just as he is also associated with Glastonbury where he defeated Gwyn ap Nudd on the Tor. In *A Glastonbury Romance* JCP refers to Gwyn ap Nudd as *the Welsh Prince of Darkness*. Mr Geard, who he calls, *the arch conjuror*, plays *unconsciously the primeval role of Gwyn ap Nudd*. St. Collen does not appear in *A Glastonbury Romance* although he is probably amongst the many *dead saints* derided by John Crow. Mary Crow asserts *This holy earth*

with its hundreds of saints is a bit sickly to us sometimes. For the life and exploits of St. Collen see *Lives of the British Saints*, by Sabine Baring Gould, Vol. 2, 1908, pp.157-161. Baring Gould notes that the legend of St Collen's fight with a giantess on Eglwyseg mountain was a familiar story in Corwen.

Plas yn Eglwyseg is a Grade II listed building. For more information on the Manor see Notes on the Antiquity and Etymology of Eglwyseg, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 1865, pp. 133-136. The house is mentioned by George Borrow in *Wild Wales* (1868), *Murray's Handbook for Travellers in North Wales* (1885) and *The Gossiping Guide to Wales* (1890). There is an interesting article about the house by Maurice Schofield in *Country Life*, 8 October 1948, called A Regicide's Retreat explaining how Oliver Cromwell's brother-in-law, Colonel John Jones, came to live here in the seventeenth century.

A range of images of Pla Ucha yn Eglwyseg can be viewed at: <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/28689/images>

Today Offa's Dyke Path passes the Manor and World's End.

For a description of another ancient manor, Plas Uchaf (Upper Hall), a Grade 1 listed house, located south west of Corwen and also visited by JCP and Gertrude see the article by Peter Foss in *Newsletter* 98, November 2019.



*World's End, limestone cliffs and Eglwyseg Valley*

*Kim Wheatley*

**Zoom discussion of the six deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent*, 27th November 2021**

Led by **Kevin Taylor**, twenty members of the Powys Society met on Zoom to discuss the six deleted chapters of *Wolf Solent*, which appeared as a supplement to volume XXXI of the *Powys Journal*. (Page numbers below refer to this edition. References to ‘Wine’, Chapter 19 of the full-length novel, are to the 1998 Vintage edition.) Kevin observed that the deleted chapters, hitherto unpublished, constitute an exceptional addition to our knowledge of JCP’s oeuvre. Kevin was delighted by the reception of the deleted chapters, as seen in the range of opinions expressed in the November 2021 *Newsletter*. It was a pleasure to work with Morine Krissdóttir, whose introduction, ‘Missing the Middle’ clarifies the chronology of the composition of the novel. The amount of amendments that JCP made to the manuscript of the deleted chapters held at Syracuse University sheds light on his methods of composition. Quoting from JCP’s letters to Phyllis Playter, Morine gives strong evidence of the extent of Phyllis’s editorial interventions, raising the question of how much his writing in general owed to her input.

**Chris Thomas** said that this project underlines the importance of JCP’s letters to Phyllis and expressed the hope that they would eventually be published. Chris was intrigued by the edition’s illustrations of some of the hotel stationery on which JCP composed *Wolf Solent*. **Janice Gregory** said she was surprised that Phyllis was so involved in rewriting the manuscript, since JCP’s style is so distinctive that it is hard to see how it could be melded with another approach. **Paul Cheshire** said that the best example of Phyllis’s contribution is the amazing ending of *AGR* about the Towers of Cybele. Chris T pointed to quotations from the letters in Morine’s introduction in which JCP asks Phyllis for help. Kevin noted that there is no actual evidence of Phyllis’s handwriting in the manuscript: she may have dictated variants, or weighed in on plot questions and organizing of material. **Louise de Bruin**’s edition of JCP’s correspondence with Louis N. Feipel, who copy-edited *Wolf Solent* meticulously, will appear in the next *Powys Journal*. As a side-note to mention of inconsistencies in *Wolf Solent*, Paul wondered why JCP’s later publisher Eric Harvey did not correct anomalies such as those in *The Brazen Head*. Chris T noticed that the deleted chapters contain the American endearment ‘honey’ (used by JCP in a letter to Phyllis, p. 17) that does not appear in the full-length novel. **Marcella Henderson-Peal** recalled reading two pages of a play by Phyllis, written in an ultra-realist style. Phyllis Playter’s futuristic teenage short story was republished in the March 2016 *Newsletter*.

Discussion then turned to the unrecoverability of the original typescript of the novel sent by JCP to Simon and Schuster. Belinda Humfrey, in her essay in *John Cowper Powys's Wolf Solent: Critical Studies* (1990), states that the National Library of Wales manuscript contains other material cut from the printed novel and suggests that JCP added to the ending of the novel after his 16th August 1928 letter to Llewelyn in which he discusses his intention to compress the deleted chapters into 'Wine.' The novel originally included a character called Sammy Roop, friend of T. E. Valley, alluded to in the deleted chapters but nowhere in the final version. **Kim Wheatley** wondered if the lack of chapter titles in the deleted section indicates that JCP typically added titles late in the composition process. Kevin referred us to Jonas Holm Aagard's article on JCP's chapter titles in *Powys Journal XXI* (2011). JCP struggled with the title of *Wolf Solent*.

Moving on to overall impressions of the deleted chapters, **Timothy Hyman** said he enjoyed them and appreciated the range of opinions expressed in the November *Newsletter*. He raised the question of whether 'Wine' is a sufficient condensation of the excised material. **John Hodgson** modified his partially dismissive review in the *Newsletter*, calling the deleted chapters fascinating and the condensation a stroke of editorial genius. According to John H, the deleted chapters comprise the 'bleak' low point of the book, in which Wolf makes no progress. Kim found a mix of misery and comedy in the deleted chapters. Janice praised the chapters' wonderful attentiveness to detail and the humorousness of the scene in the Post Office in which Wolf fails to send a telegram. Timothy drew attention to the letter in which JCP told Phyllis that he wished to preserve 'the miseries thro' which Wolf passes on his way to the field of gold' (p. 23). Timothy had always felt a lacuna when reading the novel. The deleted chapters provide some answers. **Chris Michaelides** and **Kate Kavanagh** commented on the bathos of the end of deleted chapter XXIV, the (symbolic?) flooding of the bedroom floor. Kevin perceived tense psychological parrying between Wolf and Gerda in this chapter which heightened the bathos of the 'flooded floor' ending and recalled the eventual intentionally bathetic ending of the novel as published: 'Well, I shall have a cup of tea'. **Dawn Collins** and Marcella found the deleted chapters domestic and mundane in comparison with the more 'existential' final version, although Marcella noted that the descriptions of school-teaching are more vivid than in *Autobiography*. Kim was struck by the emphasis on the Gothic subplot in the deleted chapters: the implication is that Monk and Landlord Round have been psychologically damaged by Urquhart, and Wolf becomes preoccupied with Jason's threat that Urquhart will put a 'madness' on him (p. 81). Given the

reference to the two Gothic novelists Matthew Lewis and Ann Radcliffe (p. 82), Kim speculated that the choice of the name Monk could be a nod to Lewis's Gothic novel *The Monk*. Chris T brought up Morine's idea that *Wolf Solent* itself resembles the book that Urquhart is writing (p. 24). **Richard Simons** found that the deleted chapters include fewer nature descriptions and references to Shakespeare than the rest of the novel. Paul commented on the way in which the disfigurement of Gerda (originally discussed by Ben Jones in *The Powys Review* in 1977) drops out of view in the course of the deleted chapters. Kim cited Morine's opinion (in *Descents of Memory* p. 228 and in 'Missing the Middle' p. 28) that Wolf's pity for Gerda in response to the damaging of her beauty is a better reason for Wolf's refusal to sleep with Christie. In the finished version, part of the reason is the memory of the man on the Waterloo steps, yet that haunting image of suffering is only mentioned twice in the deleted chapters. Chris M found the first two of the deleted chapters different in tone from the last four. **Nicholas Birns** saw the relationship between Wolf and Christie as more three-dimensional in the deleted chapters. Timothy found the high point of the deleted chapters to be Wolf's falling out with Christie. Kim thought that the dialogue-heavy deleted chapters occasionally enable other characters (not just Gerda and Christie) to evade the untrustworthy perspective of Wolf and the unreliable narrator.

Morine's introduction makes connections between the novel's characters and the Powys family and contends that JCP may have excised the disfigurement of Gerda in response to his sister Katie's fall from her horse (p. 28). Wolf's mother is based on his sister Marian and Jason is based on Theodore. Chris T suggested that the scene in which Wolf offers to get Jason's poems published recalls JCP's efforts to help Alfred de Kantzow get his poems published, as recounted in *Autobiography*. As Kevin noted, Jason is resistant, responding to Wolf, 'You think you're God, don't you?' (p. 216). Chris T wondered how Gerda represents JCP's wife Margaret other than in her ability to whistle like a blackbird. Kevin and Chris T commented on the letter from Louis Wilkinson to JCP (quoted in the November *Newsletter* p. 36) attacking *Wolf*: 'And what sophisticated poppycock, all this 'philosophizing' about 'reality.' Of course any object is strained through the consciousness perceiving it, but the object remains itself. The whole business is sheer lunacy.' The whole diatribe is both brutal and hilarious. Wilkinson was always very critical of JCP, all the way back to his portrait of JCP in *The Buffoon* (1916). Chris T said that Wilkinson criticizes JCP for the very reasons that we all love reading JCP. Louise asserted that nevertheless, the two friends had a mutually loving relationship.

Returning to the differences between the deleted chapters and the whole novel, Kevin pointed out that the deleted chapters play up the homoerotic attraction between Wolf and Darnley. Darnley's lack of sexual interest in Mattie is emphasized. Wolf even wonders if there's something between Bob Weevil and Jason (p. 190). **John Roberts** found Bob Weevil (with his JCP-like obsession with girls' legs) to be more of a character in the deleted chapters. Gerda comes more to life in these chapters, too. John R especially enjoyed her retort to Wolf about buying cheap butter, which gives insight into their finances (p. 132). Paul found the illicit relationship between Urquhart and Redfern to be plainer in the deleted chapters, although hinted at in the final version, and almost wistfully observed that we can never 'unlearn' the extra knowledge provided in these chapters. Dawn expanded on Paul's point, claiming that it is possible to know too much and it can be better not to know. According to Dawn, the deleted chapters give too much detail such as Wolf's conversations with other characters. The excision of these chapters allows readers to engage more imaginatively with Wolf. Chris M agreed with Dawn, while emphasizing that she loves both the novel and the deleted chapters. The deleted chapters cause us to lose sympathy with Wolf. Kate asked us to imagine what happens to the characters after the end of the novel. (British academic John Sutherland writes on such 'extra-textual' matters.) Janice joked that she doesn't care! Louise proposed that since Wolf is JCP, he would choose Christie, the character based on Phyllis. Chris M suggested that Wolf would leave Gerda and be unhappy with Christie.

Some comments addressed the novel's treatment of social class. John H spoke on the role of retail in *Wolf Solent*: the shops in Blacksod, Wolf's awkward encounters with tradespeople, the comic masterpiece that is Bob Weevil, Mrs Solent's transition to running a tea-shop – an act of downward social mobility that makes Wolf anxious. Kevin drew attention to an interesting moment of class-consciousness during the New Year's Eve supper, when Wolf throws a 'quick glance' at Jason involving complicity with 'snobbishness' and meets no 'response,' causing Wolf to feel ashamed (p. 180). Shifting from the topic of social reality to internal reality, Chris T noted that Wolf's notion of his soul as a 'crystal' (p. 75) – possibly drawing on the mysticism of Meister Eckhart – looms larger in the deleted chapters than in 'Wine.' Timothy stressed that Wolf's internal life is the heart of the book: it doesn't matter if he is alone at the end because he has fulfilled his redemptive Saturnian quest. The bleaker, Dud Noman-like side of Wolf is more clearly seen in the deleted chapters. On the surname of the Squire, as well as the possible Eckhart resonance, Nicholas

reminded us that Sir Thomas Urquhart was the seventeenth-century translator of Rabelais (who looms behind *Wolf Solent* as behind so much of JCP's work).

The deleted chapters also help to define the characters through their choice of reading material. Selena Gault mentions enjoying the poetry of William Barnes (p. 219). Wolf's mother reads *The Illustrated London News* as well as *The Trumpet-Major*; Gerda reads a children's book, *Holiday House*, as well as *Theodolph the Icelander*, the correct title of the story referred to as *Theodoric the Icelander* in 'Wine' (p. 431) and the *Autobiography*. Bob Weevil's father reads the *Western Gazette* – an autobiographical touch and an emblem of banality.

Finally, we considered the way in which the deleted chapters emphasize the theme of incest. As Louise noted, the possibility of incest between Christie and her father is floated. Kevin drew attention to the passages in which Wolf aligns himself with Malakite. The deleted chapters also hint at incestuous feeling between Wolf and his mother. Janice reminded us of a previous discussion of JCP's possible incestuous attraction towards his sister Nelly. As a writer and a man, JCP was profoundly interested in unconventional sexual relationships.

*Chris Thomas*

***Wolf Solent* select bibliography Part 2**  
***continued from NL 104***

**Prefaces and Introductions**

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**Other Reviews**

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*The Arrow*, Student Newspaper of Pennsylvania College for Women, Pittsburgh, PA., 'From the Library Shelf', 14 October 1929, p.2 (Unsigned)

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## **Doctoral Thesis**

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*Wolf Solent and Black List, Section H, An Enlightenment*, John Brebner, *Powys Notes*, Spring 1987, pp.1-6,

*I Wish I'd Written – Wolf Solent by John Cowper Powys*, *The Guardian*, 17 February 1995, John Gray

## **Books**

*Neglected Powers*, G Wilson Knight, 1971

*Amorous Life*, Harald Fawkner, 2007

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## ***Kate Kavanagh***

### ***L'Atelier du roman* [the workshop of the novel] no. 107, December 2021**

As we all know (haha) the English go for Nature, Europeans for people ... so it is not surprising to find non-English discoverers and sharers of JCP's fusion of sympathy with the human as co-equals of plants and minerals and weather (not to mention spaces beyond the terrestrial). This universal sympathy clearly survives in translation; perhaps in some ways better without the occasional English distractions of JCP's old fashioned or deliberately simplistic (or anti-sophisticated) tricks of style.

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### ***Atelier du roman***

This handsome and lavish quarterly was founded in 1993 and is edited by by Lakis Progudis. The contributors are both academic and established writers and translators, many multilingual, some familiar to the Powys Society, others not, or only through the bilingual *Lettre Powysienne*. In this number of 192 pages, half are devoted to JCP, with essays by a dozen appreciators. The following are approximate condensations of the 12 articles; translations of the author and of Powys text, also approximate, by me (KK), in italics.

On the cover, and on the opening page, as subtitle below ‘John Cowper Powys’, is ‘Au commencement fut la sensation’ [*in the beginning was sensation*], followed on the cover with a lone figure admiring a view and telephoning: ‘You’d never believe how quiet it is here’; and on the page inside with the pencil drawing of JCP in 1934, short-haired and thoughtful, by Ivan Opffer. Commissioned by the publisher John Lane, this was the frontispiece of *Autobiography* in 1934 and its reprint in 1949. The drawing did not meet with the subject’s approval. From his diary, August–September 1934: *Then Mr Ivan Opffer the Dane came ... [he did] about 10 drawings but could not catch my likeness ... Mr Opffer’s picture has no resemblance to my Phyzzz! – [The Dorset Year p 61 + note, 62, 86.]*

Below this on the inside page, from *Autobiographie*: ‘Ce qui n’existe pas, ce sont telles et telles théories...’ [*What do not exist are passing theories relating to atoms, electrons and sound waves. What does exist is the human capacity for imagination!*]

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First contributor is Denis Grozdanovitch (b.1946), who it seems was the one to alert the group to the value of JCP. His eight notes start with his discovery (in his teens) of *Wolf Solent*, its first pages with their vision of life paradoxically both minimalist and magnificent, showing him the way and leading to a long Powys companionship, recorded in notebooks.

*Continuing to read in a kind of trance, I reached page 19 when Wolf, looking back on his life, told himself that ‘perhaps I never knew reality as others did. My life was busy, boring and patient. I carried my burden like a camel. And if I [managed it], it was not truly my life. My ‘mythology’ was my true life.’ Oddly – in the mysterious way great writers communicate with their readers, – even though I had never lived such a boring, busy and burdensome life, I was strongly affected by the truth of that affirmation, that the true life of sensitive souls lay in what Powys called their ‘personal mythology’. This idea I was to discover as central to the Powysian interpretation of life, and to which he gave the name of Life Illusion.*

Wolf follows this with the entrance to Selena Gault’s sitting room of three magisterial Cats, a detailed and realistic scene confirming the reader’s confidence in the author. *To me [DG], it is a sign of a great author never to overlook in any scene the swarm of small happenings that give it reality.*

DG continues, counteracting JCP’s hatred of the machinery invading the countryside with the description of moss (from *AGR*); associating JCP with Thoreau and Hamsun, and with Montaigne and Rabelais as *both a mystic materialist and a visceral antidogmatic sceptic*. He analyses the scene in *Maiden*

*Castle* (*Camp retranché*) between Dud and his father, with its varying degrees of irony, and the uses of *alter egos*. He quotes letters to Henry Miller. Admiring JCP's 'dithyrambic' methods with other writers – *not so much literary analysis as clairvoyance* – none are more pertinent and enthusiastic than his studies of French and other classics, *each a kind of voyage of initiation*. And none more important to JCP than Rabelais. DG ends with the long ode to Spring and its harbinger the Celandines (*chélidoines*) from *Maiden Castle*, and a vision of children in *AGR* that readers may take to represent themselves.

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The essays following take a range of JCP texts, most but not all translated, ranging from the early (1923) version of *Art of Happiness* to the late fantasy *You and Me*.

Christine Jordis (b.1942 in Algeria) has specialised in English literature (writing among others on Blake and Jean Rhys). For her, JCP's methods of dealing with life are more than ever needed. She concentrates on *The Art of Happiness* (1935), the necessity to create and preserve one's personal space threatened by incessant and invasive calls to social community, and to resist useless self-reproach. 'Service to humanity', says JCP, is not enough. We have to start with ourselves. We must acknowledge the vegetable and mineral worlds as fellow-travellers, as well as all living beings, quoting Blake: 'If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as they are – infinite.'

We also need to watch our selves, recognise the enemies within: depression, self-dislike, inertia... We need good magic to resist these demons, *to know how to lose ourselves in the elements, to make ourselves a wisp of smoke, a walker among stars, a visitor to myth and legend, to live in filth and splendor or farce and fantasy, in sadness or ecstasy*.

Nunzio Casalapro (b.1950, Italy) writes on JCP's less well known novel *Ducdame* (1925), oddly retitled in translation as *Givre et Sang* (Frost and Blood), edited by Diane de Margerie.

Its apparent themes are brotherly affection and the hero's reluctance to beget an heir. His nicer brother Lexie is mortally ill. Should the dead ancestors influence him from their tombs? The essay pursues the Life-Death themes in this somewhat melodramatic novel.

The (anti-) hero Rook Ashover has a choice of three possible women, Netta, an actress, his cousin Anne, and Nell, wife of the fairly mad Dostoevskian death-obsessed vicar (who eventually kills him). It is a book full of repetitions and

doubles, and unearthly elements. Earth and Nature, life-forces, play their part, as do Death and voices of the dead, an aged fortune-teller, the land of the Cimmerians, and a vision of Rook's future son. Rook's surrender to death finally gives way to Life, as Lexie recovers and marries, while Anne gives birth to Rook's son.

Judith Coppel has translated a number of Powys books. Here she deals with the earlier (1923) version of *The Art of Happiness* (translated by her but as yet unpublished), which in her view makes a good introduction to JCP's thought and philosophy.

As usual, it is addressed to the less worldly fortunate, and opposes the abstract systems of all kinds (science, politics, religion) that are presented to us as dominant, in favour of everyday experiences of *unexpected beauty of familiar things seen in new ways... the infinite diversity of existence...*

No systems, for Powys, satisfy intelligent minds or explain the mysteries of life, and they operate to destroy our natural pleasure in living. As illusions they may be helpful but should not be taken as Truth. They are a trap, which only our self-created Life Illusion can contradict. At the same time Powys warns us of the possible dangers lying in wait for free thought, such as snobbism in art or passion turning to obsession. There are hostile powers ready to destroy our simple pleasures, Compassion should not destroy joy. We should combat the demon of self-reproach (auto-sadism). We should distinguish pleasure from happiness. Compromise! Forget! – when helpful; learning survival from nature.

Goulven Le Brech talked on the Little Blue Books at our last live Conference, (Llangollen, 2019).

He sees Wolf Solent as the archetype *sensual escapist*, but many other Powys characters also seek solitary ecstatic contemplation as the ultimate experience: what Romain Rolland, writing to Freud, called the *eternal or oceanic* experience, orchestrated by what Powys called the magnetic powers, Sun and Moon. These intense moments happen in solitude, with a feeling of joy at sharing life with the whole world (Wordsworth's *pleasure that there is in life itself*).

JCP recalled these moments from early experiences in a suburban garden, from his reading and his walks with his dog, and from the simple delights of upstate New York and of Wales, where he felt a close affinity with its history and character. In his last more sedentary years his companions were old friends in print, from Heraclitus to Whitman, and Goulven finds the same companionship, in Dorset or Wales, from the books of John Cowper himself.

Amélie Derome 's chosen books are *Atlantis* and *Homer and the Aether*, under the title *L'infime à l'assaut de l'infâme* ['*miniatures against infamy*'].

JCP joins (uncelebrated) the many sequels to Homer and the adventures of Ulysses/Odysseus. Always interested in how spiritual forces manage to creep into ordinary life, he combats the accusations made against the classics of boredom and elitism (since his time extended to racism and anti-feminism). These elements, of course, exist, with dull teaching perhaps most to blame. JCP's invention of the supernatural Æther is as a naive but enthusiastic interpreter of the action which the reader can share and enjoy, apart from learned interpretations. For JCP, the *Iliad* contains (among fiercer sentiments) the totality of ordinary human experience: loving, eating and sleeping, all interesting events.

JCP's interest in past authors (as in his famous lectures) is to enter their minds. He calls this *dithyrambic analysis*. In *Atlantis* this includes minds from the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms: its true heroes are a moth, a fly, the club of Hercules, a pillar in a colonnade and the shoot of an olive tree. No protected areas here, all worthy of the Muse as much as the anger of Achilles or Odysseus's nostalgia. These non-human characters also direct the action, in the place of gods -- the Club on its own initiative disposing of the giant arch-villain Atlantean scientist. This chimes with JCP's preference for non-specialist audiences for his evocations of famous authors in his lectures, reaching out to the young and curious as well as to old friends of the subject and even the disadvantaged -- like the sightless Homer.

Marco Martella likes to read *A Philosophy of Solitude* (1933) appropriately alone in a garden. JCP deplored the encroaching disturbance of modern life, separating us from the ancient language of nature. We need to create our own circle of solitude, which does not mean lacking sympathy with others. This book is our guide. We need to turn back to organic life, simplify, think of ourselves as a skeleton. Ancient philosophies can help us -- Taoism, Heraclitus, the Stoics, as well as Rousseau and Nature-loving poets like Wordsworth, and illuminations from old religions. Ancient thoughts float in the air like pollen, or the scent from invisible trees, and we can breathe them in. We may be drawn to the superhuman or the subhuman, water or wind (*nothing so much as wind awakes distant memories that carry the essence of life...*) We need to become passive, to wait and hope for the mystery, the moments of epiphany that may arrive. There may be sadness, the *cosmic tragedy* that runs through all things and all beauty, including the joy at the heart of life. It is our good fortune that books such as this can help us, even briefly, accept life ultimately and in spite of all.

(Hence the great value of gardens, and the delights of lighting a wood fire.)

Our moral duty to life is to notice the details of what Nature is doing, as did Vergil and Wordsworth. JCP's early novels emphasise the effects of season and weather on human energy and feelings. In all his books there is a hero who reflects himself, and his *Autobiography* contains them all, unplanned and inexorably as breathing.

Pierrick Hamelin (novelist and essayist, from Nantes in west France, author of *John Cowper Powys, une philosophie de la vie*). His contribution is written as a letter to JCP from the beach at Lulworth on a fine June day. His delight and absorption into his surroundings is that of JCP: *Everything here seems eternal ... this landscape leads me ever closer to your worship of elemental powers, always linked to the mysteries of Time.*

In *A Philosophy of Solitude* JCP speaks of the wind, calling up vague emotions from the pool of recurrent feelings lived by our ancestors who felt this wind through the ages ... Before anything, is *the fundamental miracle of being alive*. Wordsworth again: *The pleasure that there is in life itself* -- words long pondered by PH, as Nietzsche advised, antidotes to the pessimism of Schopenhauer. He owes this to JCP, along with a poet's view of the world, animate and inanimate, with all its subtleties of beauty (comparing this with Llewelyn in *Glory of Life*). All we need is to find time to look.

John Cowper believes, as he says at the end of *The Art of Happiness*, that we all have this power of turning our thoughts from negative to positive, in spite of the fact that our lives will always contain worry, with much expert advice on how to deal with it. JCP's method of dealing with it is the *Ichthyian Leap*: of collecting and compressing all our miseries into a ball. With an effort they can then be ejected in one go, like the leap of a fish from the water. Naturally, says PH, we return to our element as before, and he disputes JCP's virulent hatred of psychoanalysis, *that engine of destruction*. PH notes the earlier calmer views in *Psychoanalysis and Morality* (1923), and a more considered (if negative) view of Freud. More of this in *Autobiography*. JCP had the gift of multiple existence, able to slide in and out of all religions and philosophies, like colours in a painting of our personal landscape.

PH returns to the landscape of Lulworth, the sound of waves and cries of birds, and a gradual abandoning of thought and body for something above them, an eternal mystery in sand and waves, rocks and clouds and the blue of the sky ...

Marcella Henderson-Peal (no introduction needed! The Powys Society's representative in France) *Vers la Liberté* [*Towards Liberty*] traces connections between the Powys family and JCP's late fantasy *You and Me* (1975).

John Cowper's position as the oldest of eleven siblings made him inevitably both a leader of the pack and needing private space. His late fantasies return to his childhood and also re-envision it, often in ludicrous ways. They can be seen as magic toys, able to re-interpret powerful themes in his thought and life. (The late 1950s when they were written, ten years post-WW2, exempted them from politics, while new modern inventions lent themselves to imagination.)

*John Cowper Powys, Space Traveller* by Glen Cavaliero analyses them subtly, calling them *fairy tales in a surrealist Rabelaisian spirit*. JCP's wellknown love for Rabelais, his energy, respect for humanism and love for life, is evident, as is his disrespectful vocabulary and humour and absurd scenarios.

The late fantasies discover different worlds with different layers of reality, often with young travellers discovering that the worlds connect with themselves. *You and Me* has children produced from parents fused like joined twins and non-physical. In his novels, the hero-figures are often semi-solitaries, without children, unlike the crowded Powys vicarage. They have, however, female opposite numbers of different kinds, and are challenged by heroic situations like those in Greek myths (shades here of the child JCP commanding his 'Volentia army'). The fantasy-tales give no impression of being planned, rather a haphazard plucking of strings of imagination, both serious and fun.

Lakis Proguidis (Greek-French b.1947, essayist. He has written on Rabelais, Robert Musil, Witold Gombrowicz, among others). In *The eternal first morning* John Cowper may be compared to Goethe, in the quantity, diversity and originality of his work. Why isn't he famous? Is he a writer for the *happy few*? It is as if he were infectious.

A formula: *sensation precedes knowledge*.

As Pilate asked: 'What is truth?' (answer: 'I am.')

There is no scientific 'truth', only method. For the Greeks, Nature is ruled by necessity. For Powys, ruled by poetry, free to all.

Humans are the only threat, with their will to power. Only humans wish to live apart from nature. Hence a utilitarian economy, with nothing free.

In *Owen Glendower*, written 1938-40, published 1941, its hero puts his faith in negotiating separate interests: this failed. He disappeared: but no one ever saw him dead. In the book, all goes well until a French diplomat is seen making sadistic experiments. Glendower needs French support; he compromises. But all turns against him from then on. History has turned a page. A curtain has been lifted: progress requires cruelty. But forever? This is neither a historical novel nor a prehistoric novel. The death of Glendower was never witnessed.

*Chris Thomas*

**A list of books by JCP and TFP in French translation published since 1989**

Note: see also *John Cowper Powys en français dans le texte* and ‘French translations of the Works of John Cowper Powys and T. F. Powys since 1967’: a list compiled by Jacqueline Peltier in *Powys Review* 24, 1989.

*I am indebted to **Goulven le Brech** for help compiling this extension to Jacqueline’s original list of translations in French.*

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- Wood and Stone*, Phebus, 1991, translation by Patrick Reumaux (the title is not translated in French)
- Morwyn*, [ou] *la vengeance de Dieu*, Bourgois, 1992, translation by Claire Malroux
- Rodmoor*, (first ed. 1992, *Seuil* [threshold]; second ed. 2021 *Le Bruit du temps*, translation by Patrick Reumaux
- Correspondance Privée*, Henry Miller to John Cowper Powys, Criterion, 1994, translation Nordine Hadad
- L’Art du bonheur* in ? *L’Âge d’Homme*, 1995, translation by Marie-Odile Fortier-Masek
- Les Plaisirs de la littérature*, in *L’Âge d’Homme*, 1995, translation by Gérard Joulié
- Owen Glendower*, Phébus, 1996/2017, translation by Patrick Reumaux
- L’art d’oublier le déplaisir*, José Corti, 1997, translation by Marie-Odile Fortier-Masek
- Petrouchka et la danseuse*, journal 1929-1939, José Corti, 1998, translation by Christiane Poussier et Anne Bruneau
- L’Art de vieillir*, José Corti, 1999, translation by Marie-Odile Fortier-Masek
- Dostoïevski*, Bartillat, 2001, translation by Guillaume Villeneuve
- Esprits-frères, choix de correspondance*, [letters 1910-1940], José Corti, 2001, translation by Christiane Poussier and Anne Bruneau
- Le hibou, le canard et Miss Rowe ! Miss Rowe !*, Atelier de l’agneau, 2007, translation by Christianne Armandet
- Psychanalyse et Moralité*, PUF, 2009, translation by Judith Coppel-Grozdanovitch
- Jugements Réservés* [*Suspended Judgments*], Penn Maen, 2016, translation by Jacqueline Peltier

*Perdita Wane*, Penn Maen, 2019, translation of *Weymouth Sands* by Jacqueline Peltier (previously translated as *Les sables de la mer* by Marie Canavaggia published in 1958)

*Nietzsche*, Fata Morgana, 2019, translation by Bernard Noël (presumably a translation of JCP's essays on Nietzsche in *Visions and Revisions* and *The Pleasures of Literature*)

*Une philosophie de la solitude*, Allia, 2020 (first éd 1984, *La Différence*), translation by Michel Waldberg

### **Also see**

*Scènes de chasse en famille*, correspondance avec Llewelyn Powys et Philippa Powys, Rouen, 2003, translation by Patrick Reumaux

*Le pré de la chèvre* [*Goat Green* by T. F. Powys], Le Bruit du temps, 2021, translation by Patrick Reumaux

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### ***Llewelyn Powys***

#### **The Sense of Smell**

**Peter Foss** writes: *This essay is catalogued as E130 (page 158) in my 'Bibliography' (2007). It was first published in a magazine called 'Arts and Decoration' Volume XIX, No.5 (September 1923), p.36, and republished as 'The Sense of Smell' in 'Honey and Gall' [Little Blue Book, No 534,1924.] It is mentioned in Elwin's Life on page 160. It hasn't to my knowledge been reprinted since. The essay is nice – the magazine publisher's blurb talks about his 'suavity of style and mastery of English.'*

**CT** adds: *Llewelyn's essay published in Arts and Decoration first appeared under the title: Images and Colours Evoked by the Fifth Sense. The Part that Smelling Plays in Aesthetic Appreciation. The essay reproduced here follows the text published in Honey and Gall.*

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#### **The Sense of Smell**

It has often been remarked that of all the five senses, the sense of smell is the most potent for suggesting to the mind old memories which if deprived of its agency would inevitably be lost in the great stream of obliterating forgetfulness which sooner or later overtakes all human experience.

How often has one heard a friend as some unexpected smell assailed him stop and say, as though in actual truth he was listening to plaintive, clamorous voices calling to him out of the past – ‘It reminds me of something.’ Perhaps the exclamation is provoked by a gust of wind which carries with it the unmistakable chimney-corner smell of burning peat, or, perhaps by a dooryard laden with the sweet perfume of lilac bushes, or by an open blacksmith’s shop where horse shoeing is in progress, or by a pen of damp-wooled sheep huddled together in a sheltered corner of a muddy turnip field.

In autumn evenings, when the children of our great cities build bonfires on the cold curb, I myself am constantly transported back to lonely places in the heart of Africa. A whiff of smoke from the charred and burning pile and I see once more with startling distinctness strange silhouettes woolly-pated and devil black, gathered about red flames. I hear the baboon-like negroid jargon, the midnight outer murmurs mixed with the breathing of recumbent cattle and the shrill sound of the wind as it comes whistling between the tall native spears standing erect and ever ready at hand in the soft mud.

It is interesting to speculate as to what particular smell is most definitely characteristic of this planet earth. What particular smell would, if we had been subjected to a succession of transmigrations in remote borders of the Universe instantaneously bring back to our memory recollections of this particular existence? What scent, what smell more than any other would compel us to distinguish this planet from all other planets and carry our minds upon an irresistible wave of retrospection back to the cornfields, to the gleaming cities, to the wide, undisturbed oceans of the sun-lit satellite upon which it had once been our lot to eat and drink and laugh and cry and sleep?

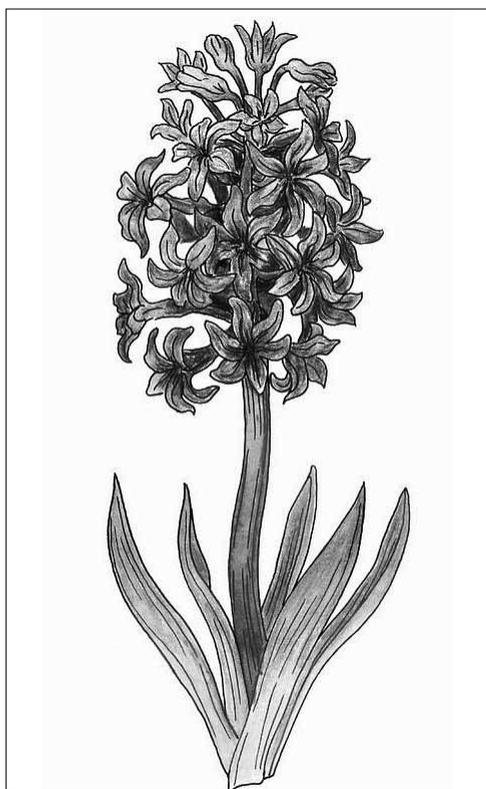
Doubtless each single one of the illuminate worlds which go dancing like gnats through the halls of the material universe has its own peculiar aroma. The smell of a trowel full of moon mud for example being as different possibly from a spadeful dug from another globe as is the elusive scent of newly-fallen snow from the hot exhalations that rise in the month of August from parched sea-side sand.

For myself I would have three particular smells which, to my thinking, though I had lain under a pyramid for 4,000 years would be potent enough to recall my truant memory – the smell of an upturned furrow in springtime when white sea-gulls and rooks follow the plough – the smell of brine (not necessarily of the sea itself but as one comes upon it sometimes at the end of a street where the flotsam swings backwards and forwards against slippery wharf timber) and the smell of newly fallen rain in garden plot and meadow.

With such aromas in our nostrils surely the dullest of us would cry out in joyful recognition of this ribbed and obdurate body – shaped like an orange as we used to be told – upon whose flanks the drama of our race, so tragical, so heroic, so pitiful, had been enacted. We would remember it at once, recognise it at once, and cry out this is the earth we knew, this is that very earth, where our ancestors struggled for mastery, for mere existence, through countless remote periods, this is the round world we wot of, where Caesar ruled in Rome, where temples and spires rose glittering to the sky to commemorate impossible hopes come to a fond and deluded people from without.

For what a world of history lies hidden in this matter! When on a sultry day traversing a metallic sidewalk we are suddenly refreshed by the air of a cool wide-open stable door, our olfactory nerves are recording the exact odour which was inhaled by Alexander and his captains many centuries upon the occasions of their visiting the royal mews to call to their European slaves for golden grain from the bin.

The sweet smell of a cow's breath, distilled as it always seems to be from morning dew and mushrooms and ripe blackberries, was as familiar to the drovers in the ancient glens of Pelion as it is to us today. But the smell of animals is not always as reassuring. Go to a place where a lion has killed some ill-starred herbivora and above the reek of the mangled, grass-filled entrails of the unfortunate victim, you will catch quite distinctly, still lingering about the flat tropical fern leaves the smell of lion! One can make as light of it as possible, but whenever the air of a virginal tropical retreat is tainted in that way it will go hard but the stoutest heart will feel some chill of atavistic misgiving. I suspect that the sweat of a lion's pelt is as distasteful to the nose of mortal man



*Hyacinth: a beauty voluptuous, ancient and time-forgotten*

as the spittle of a cat to a little grey mouse dodging behind tea caddies and cocoa tins in a kitchen cupboard.

Apart from the romantic interest that we feel for traditional trees such as the bay and the myrtle, there is much that could be said about the other simpler smells of the vegetable world. The homely bitter sweet of the elder for instance is supremely redolent of the rough and tumble of country life; delicate and yet astringent it is like curds and whey gone sour in a farm pail. And what a racy gipsy quality is to be compressed out of walnut leaves! And out of ground ivy what a quintessential quiddity of earth mould! Thus and not otherwise one might conjecture smelt that fecund breath which first put life into the lungs of the Unicorn and into the enormous windpipe of the hippopotamus.

Hyacinths smell of a beauty voluptuous, ancient, and time-forgotten, primroses of the vows of false lovers whispered in a thousand rain-wet seclusions and already fast fainting into oblivion. Old fashioned pinks turn one's thoughts to old maid's gardens, to prim, well cared- for walks full of sunshine and unfrightened birds and punctual, punctilious honey bees.

But let us now forget the flowers, those exquisite treasuries of sweet memory, and turn quite capriciously elsewhere. Imagine yourself once more taking into your hands the taut, slippery, silver body of a spotted trout freshly caught. What a scent! how naked, how piercing is contained in that leaping slip of arrowy resilience! – a scent as of the breath of eels mingled with green water-weeds and river reflected water-cress.

Other quaint accidental smells crowd in upon one's memory. The smell that issues from a beer-barrel when the spigot had been drawn is honest, 'there is no question on't,' and so is the smell of an uncorked bottle of malmsey, or the divine ochre coloured oozings from the cider press at work behind the further rick in Titinhull Manor farm. And much could be said also for the solid satisfying odour of a baker's shop when the black oven doors are open, yes! the simple, restorative odour of bread, it would be unwise to forget that oldest of smells, a smell as welcome and familiar to Moses and Confucius and Jesus as it is to us today.

And there are other stranger smells yet. Here's a merry perfume to be drawn in by the human nose – the smell of a stark shrouded corpse, of dead human flesh not easily to be confounded with that of either beast, fish or fowl, separate, a thing by itself, and a most formidable reminder to all natural simple people of the ambiguous terms upon which we have been privileged to smell any smells at all.

*Chris Thomas*

**John Cowper Powys**

**A Masterpiece and a Controversy**

JCP's essay *A Masterpiece and a Controversy* was first published in *Arts and Decoration*, October 1923, p.39, and has since been reprinted only once in *Elusive America*, edited by Paul Roberts, 1994, pages 157-160. When the article first appeared in *Arts and Decoration* the editors included a subtitle: 'Two noted critics in sharp disagreement over a canvas in the Metropolitan Museum'

This example of JCP's art criticism differs from his other essays on artists by having a specific art work as his subject. In the essay JCP confidently demolishes the opinion of an acknowledged authority and art connoisseur, Sir Martin Conway, and proposes a completely different estimate of a painting in the collection of the Metropolitan museum. JCP calls Conway an unimaginative expert lacking insight.

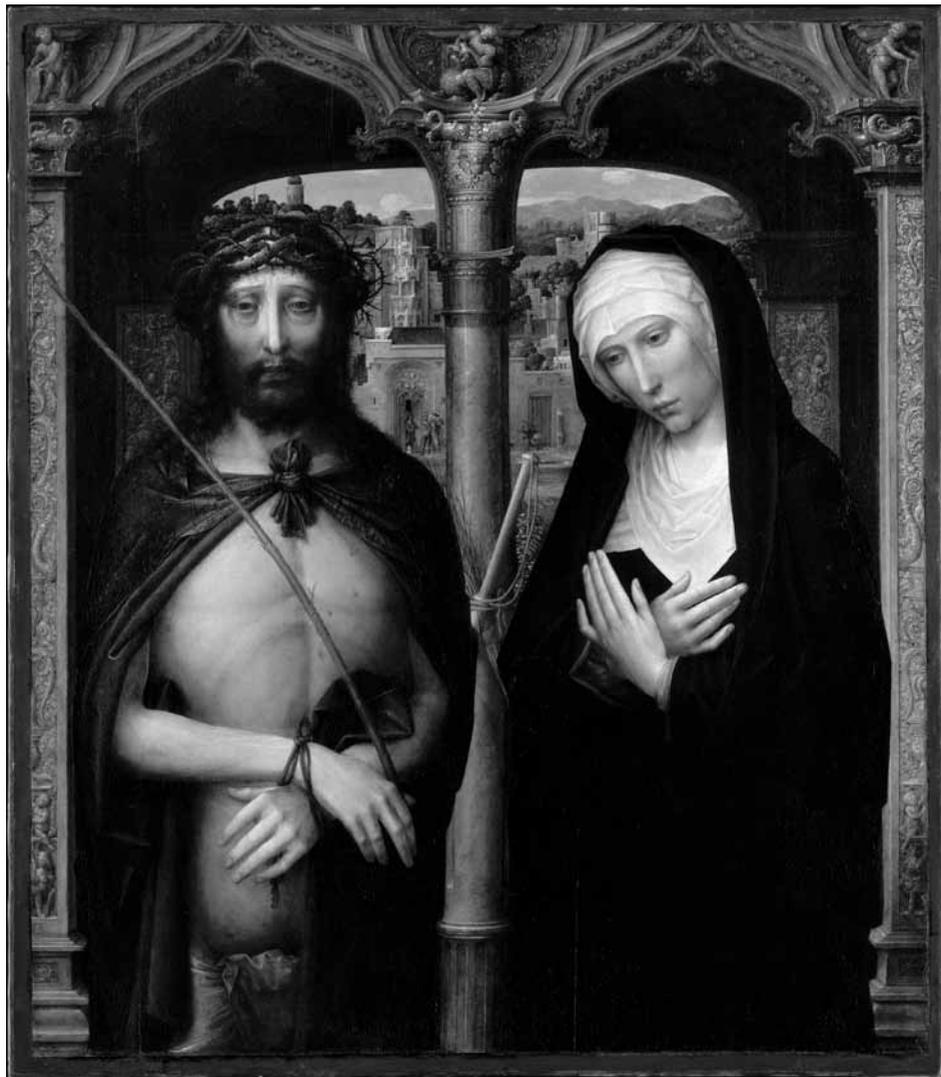
The artist discussed by JCP, Adriaen Isenbrandt (1480/1490-1551), was a painter, acknowledged in his lifetime as a master mainly of altarpieces and other religious subjects. He established a large workshop in Bruges about 1510 and was influenced by the work of Gerard David (c.1483-1523) who was the leading painter in Bruges at the end of the fifteenth century.

The Metropolitan museum, which JCP must have visited numerous times, sometimes no doubt with Marian, has several works by Isenbrandt in their collection including a portable triptych, *The Life of the Virgin*. The painting which is the subject of JCP's essay is today displayed with the title of *Christ Crowned With Thorns (Ecce Homo)* and the *Mourning Virgin*, and dated 1530/1540. The catalogue describes the work as 'austere and haunting'. The painting is located in Gallery room 603 in the collection of European paintings 1250-1800.

Sir Martin Conway (1856-1937) was an English politician, explorer and mountaineer as well as an art critic. He was Professor of Art at University College Liverpool, 1884-1887, Slade Professor of Fine Art at University of Cambridge, 1901-1904 and the author of books on Durer, Giorgione, and Early Flemish Artists. Conway's history of Netherlandish painting *The Van Eycks and their Followers* was published in 1921 and includes a long section about Isenbrandt.

The unsympathetic passage in Conway's book which so annoyed JCP reads: '*An unusually large-scale pair of three-quarter lengths of Christ as the Man of Sorrows and the Virgin as Mater Dolorosa, united on a single panel, are in New York Museum. They show Isenbrant in his most pretentious and least charming mood. They are*

*theatrical, artificial, unconvincing. The nobility which Van Eyck infused into the great figures of the Ghent altar-piece is absent here. The spirit which created those imposing manifestations was gone from the earth. Nothing remained but a formula which Isenbrant employed with technical dexterity and without a suspicion of its emptiness in his hands.'* (pages 304-305).



*Ecce Homo and the Mourning Virgin by Adriaen Isenbrandt  
Source – Metropolitan Museum, New York*

## JCP:

In one's search for adequate critical assistance in the appreciation of the old masters one is so often faced with a wretched choice between the unstimulating conclusions of imaginative experts and a popular style of obvious appraisal wallowing shamelessly in every sort of banality and ineptitude.

Sometimes, however, we are not even permitted this ambiguous choice. For we get both kinds of unsatisfactory criticism packed together in the same volume! Such a combination of uninspiring research with popular sentiment certainly comes about when Sir Martin Conway composed his charmingly illustrated volume entitled 'The Van Eycks and Their Followers'; for one is at the same time stirred to admiration by the worthy knight's erudition, and reduced to amazement at his lack of insight.

As it happens, one can make this particular case a matter of rather piquant interest to any lover of art living within reach of the New York Metropolitan Museum; for there, in the midst of the carefully selected Altman Bequest, among the other Flemish Primitives, on the wall at right angles to the lovely Imaginary Landscape of Patinir, hangs a picture which affords an unforgettable example of what I mean.

It is a picture attributed without question to Adrian Isenbrant. It is entitled 'Ecce Homo and Mater Dolorosa.' It represents these two sorrowful beings standing side by side in a cloistral archway, divided by a metal-foliated marble pillar, absorbed, each of them, in profound and separate thought.

Of this picture Sir Martin Conway says: 'It is pretentious, theatrical and un-convincing.' Now any reader of these pages who happens to live in New York can go to the Altman Collection; and there in the presence of this picture, decide for himself between Sir Martin and the writer of this sketch as to the value of the genius of Adrian Isenbrant!

Such an effort on our reader's part would be rewarded by the recognition of a very pretty controversial point in aesthetic criticism; a point which has no mean significance, as I have tried to show, in regard to the whole matter of the revaluation of the old masters. It may well happen that the pages devoted to the painter in Conway's book represent the fullest discussion of his work that exists in print. And how inadequate and misleading it is!

It is not only of our New York Isenbrant that the Englishman speaks disrespectfully. He refers in the same flippant manner to that other masterpiece of this painter, the 'Virgin of Seven Sorrows,' which is still in Bruges; and to the supposed [painting] of the artist as Saint Luke. This portrait alone, if it is indeed the face of Isenbrant, would impose itself as an unforgettable human document upon anyone who was not a jocose antiquary!

It represents a personage with fair hair, very dark, large eyes, the pupils of which seem abnormally distended, a thin twisted nose and a mouth of which one sharply curved lip seems in the process of being bitten by the other, or at least of being drawn in by the man's breath, in the strain of an intense aesthetic concentration.

It is a strange face, the face of this Isenbrant-Saint Luke, the face of one who, himself without any deep personal tragic experience, has yet come, amid the confused cross-currents of life, to find a certain mitigated impersonal tragedy in things, from which emanates a solemnising beauty.

Nothing seems to be known of Adrian Isenbrant until his arrival in Bruges in 1510. Sanderus, writing in Latin, describes him thus: 'Adrianus Isenbrandus brugensis Girardi Davidiis discipulus fuit; in nudis corporibus et vultibus humanis egregius' – 'Adrian Isenbrant of Bruges was the pupil of Gerard David and excelled in naked bodies and in human countenances.' He belonged to the Painters' Guild in Bruges. He married twice. He was in the habit of sending his pictures by ship to Spain. He died in 1551 and was buried in the Church of St. Jacques in Bruges. Nothing else do we know of him; except that on one occasion he had some pictures stolen, one of which was valued at ten guineas!

Those who know well that particular room in the Metropolitan Museum where Isenbrant's 'Ecce Homo' hangs will remember, on a different wall, an exquisite Madonna and Child of this Gerard David. Nothing, however, could possibly be more different from the Isenbrant than the whole scheme, tone, temper and atmosphere of this charming work. One feels at once that, though he may have painted in Gerard's studio, this man with the in-drawn lip, was certainly no 'disciple' of such a happily attuned nature.

The modern authorities are surely right in attributing to Isenbrant the 'Virgin of the Seven Sorrows' in Notre Dame of Bruges; for the beautiful thought-drugged features of that figure in the queer choir-stall throne correspond almost exactly to those of this other Mater Dolorosa who has made her way to New York.

Neither the Son nor the Mother in this haunting picture, characterised by Conway as 'theatrical, pretentious and unconvincing,' seem aware of the other's presence. In unapproachable solitude they each seem sinking down into fathomless depths of calm, unruffled sorrow; a sorrow so gentle, so mild, that it is hardly even tragic; a sorrow that seems to be faintly remembering some forgotten assuagement and awaiting some unknown healing; a sorrow, in fact, so mysterious, so calm, that it almost resembles that strange, mute expectancy, which one catches sometimes on the face of rocks and stones and trees.

The bound hands of the man – and how beautifully the cord that binds them trails loose against the naked flesh; ‘nudis corporibus egregious’! – hang down helplessly, awkwardly. Whereas the hands of the woman are deliberately crossed upon her breast.

Behind the two, behind the cloistral archway in which they stand, is a city of fountains and towers, of gardens and temples; and behind that again are the blue hills. One has an extraordinary feeling as one looks at them, isolated, separate, each becalmed on an invisible sea of grief, as if we also, seated on our chairs in this Altman room, were an actual portion of this picture; were an active living part of some vast indifferent crowd in the street below, who look up and incontinently pass by; for what is it to them that these two should stand so still, knowing not each the other?

Adrian Isenbrant signed no picture, left no single written document to prove his title to his own work. Like his friend Gerard David, for nearly three centuries he was no more than a name upon the lips of men. His pictures were attributed to Jan Mostaert of Haarlem, who never came to Bruges. It was a M. Hulin de Loo who first identified him with the unknown Master of the ‘Virgin of Seven Sorrows’; a curious instance of the long blindness of those whose blindness is with these delicate adjudications.

For there is something in the very impersonality of this picture in its solemn, grey, green light a light like the reflection of cavern-moss in a mirror of bronze – that seems to answer congruously enough to that autobiographical ‘Saint Luke,’ the portrait so derided as a mimic-Dante, by our critic.

The atmosphere loved best by the early Flemish painters was a warm diffusion of reddish light such as they must have seen through many a long summer afternoon, reflected from the well-scoured brick floors and mellow brick walls of their belfry cities.

Whence, came then, into the imagination of Adrian Isenbrant, this other, less humanised, less homely air? Who can tell? The abiding vision of any original artist, the gathered up, the winnowed out world of his explorative imagination, bears but small resemblance to the things that come and go about him or the entrances and exits that make up his personal life.

In what actual Belgian stream, for instance, glanced at casually from a white, dusty road on some mid-June evening, grew the long dark reed stem, with those embryo buds, that he placed in the hand of his Man of Sorrows?

In the city whose towers and temples are the background of these tragic masks, Gothic and Moorish and Classic Architecture blend fantastically together. The English virtuoso makes this eclecticism a sign of weakness in our painter. Surely to a sympathetic imagination nothing could be more appropriate!

There are stranger buildings than any of these in the city which forms the background today of the immortal dreamers. All human ages, all human epochs, blend and change and transform themselves in the presence of that Mother and of that Son. Adrian Isenbrant may not be one of the world's great artists; but to come out of the streets of New York into the silence produced by this picture is an experience not easily forgotten. Yes! That the painter of this Ecce Homo and this Mater Dolorosa never signed his name is a significant witness to the thing's permanence as a symbol of our human life!

One glances casually up at any window in any high crowded tenement; and those effigies, those icons, those dreaming masks of sorrow, look down at one unchanged. Still are the Man's hands tied together; still are the Woman's hands pressed against her heart. Yet try to arrest this vision in any terms that shall not trouble our nerves too much; and it will seem to many who pass by, as it seemed to Sir Martin Conway, 'pretentious, theatrical, unconvincing'!

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*Paul Cheshire*

*Marian Powys: a Life in Lace, Elizabeth Kurella*

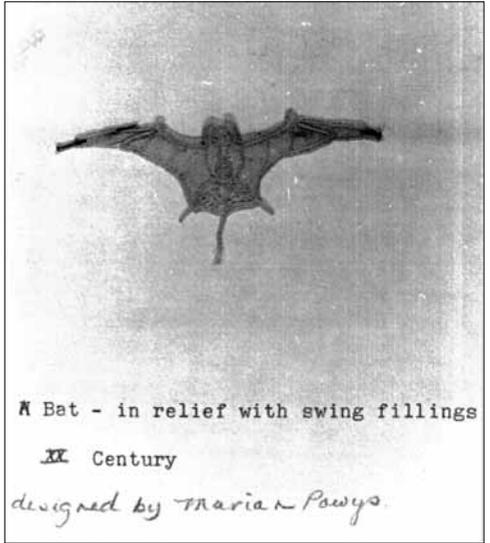
Zoom Webinar 19 December 2021, for the International Organization of Lace Inc. *A recording of this lecture complete with illustrations is available online. See **Kurella, Elizabeth**, alphabetically listed under Online Articles or Lectures on the Powyses, on the links page of the Powys Society website <<https://www.powys-society.org/Links.html>>*

Elizabeth Kurella is an eminent lace specialist. She is a lecturer, teacher and author of many books in her capacity as lacemaker, antique lace restorer, collector, and dealer, and has identified and evaluated collections of lace for several museums as well as private collectors. When an expert of this calibre, with no prior allegiance to the Powys family, presents Marian Powys as an important figure in her field, this is a judgment to be respected.

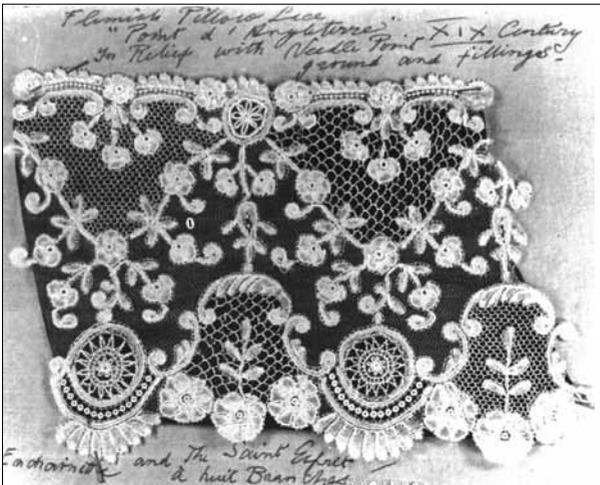
Although I am not a member of the International Organization of Lace Inc. and was woefully ignorant on the subject, I was kindly invited to hear the talk following a few friendly email exchanges with Elizabeth over vital Powysian questions such as the pronunciation of Poe-iss. Her talk, although aimed at specialists, was lively and accessible, and quickly shattered my unexamined association of lace with dowdy inherited handkerchiefs and napkins that slumber unused in bottom drawers. On this point, Elizabeth quoted Marian's forthright assertion that lace — however old and precious — should be out there and worn: 'There is a general idea that pearls



Marian Powys in her Devonshire Lace Shop at 60 Washington Square. Source - The Art World, December 1917



Devon pillow lace design of a bat by Marian Powys. Source - Scrapbook of lacework collected by Marian presented to Newark Museum, N.J and Metropolitan Museum Conservation Dept



Flemish pillow lace, 19th century, from collection of Marian Powys. Source - scrapbook of lacework collected by Marian presented to Parrisades Free Library and Metropolitan Museum Conservation Dept

are more alive and glowing when worn; the same applies to lace. Anything would rather suffer from wear and tear than from gradual disintegration in the dark'. This declaration inspired Elizabeth to change her attitude when she started out trading in antique lace, leading her to formulate her own motto: 'Better to die at a party than rot in a closet'.

The story of Marian's study of lace and her shop in New York is reasonably well covered in Powysian scholarship: it is the expert appraisal of her work as lacemaker and dealer that offers new material to Powysians. The slides illustrating the talk showed many examples of Marian's lace designs as sketches and as finished product, some of which came from Elizabeth's own collection. The earliest piece, an apple blossom design from 1900, showed how Marian at the age of eighteen already showed a 'freedom from Victorian fussiness'.

Her New York Greenwich Village bohemian milieu was illustrated with photos by Jessie Tarbox Beals, the first published female photojournalist (who is featured in NL 95 November 2018). At that time people were wearing antique lace. It was fashionable, and Marian saw she could make a living from it. Striking examples of Marian's own designs included a poppy collar with opened flower above a seed pod on drooping stem poised to make the vertical slingshot leap that never ceases to astonish. This alertness to the inner vitality of plants can't but help recall JCP's sensitivity to the consciousness of plants. A biplane motif for a lace scarf, probably commissioned for Ann Morrow, Charles Lindbergh's wife-to-be, survives as a sketch in Marian's hand, although the finished scarf remains elusive. Other samples showed Art Deco and even Cubist influence.

The other aspect of Marian's lace shop, the merchandising of antique lace, showed her delight in the anecdotal history of pieces. Napoleon's lace bed-furnishing, commissioned for his wife Josephine, passes a historical fact-check, but other attributions owed more to the romance of imagination. One fine piece monogrammed CB, which made Marian believe it had belonged to Catherine of Braganza, was identified by a later specialist, who pointed out that the full monogram on the lace was, in fact, CB BARONET and thus the collar of a seventeenth-century English cavalier with the same initials.

Affected by Elizabeth's enthusiasm, I was left feeling sad to live in an age where real men don't wear lace collars. As JCP put it so well in his foreword to Marian's *Lace and Lacemaking*:

'nothing gives a warrior, a ruler or a courtier a more seductive appeal than lace upon armour'.

## News and Notes

### ***From Kevin Taylor:***

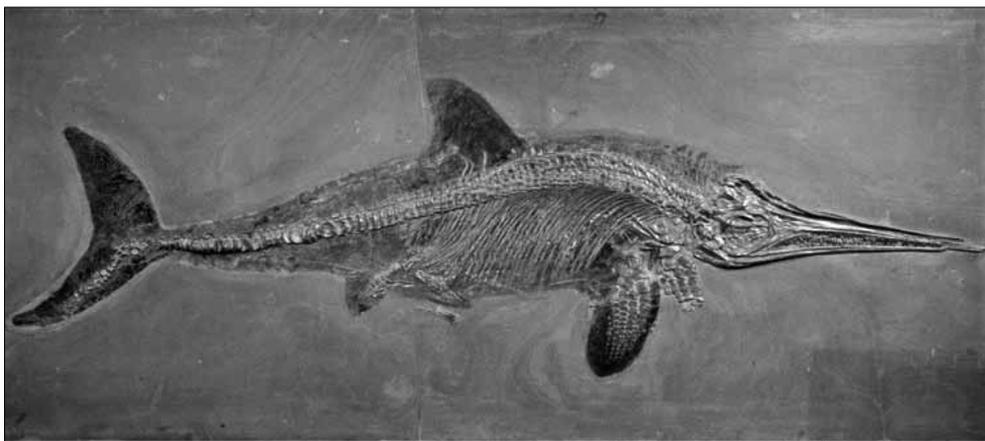
JCP would have enjoyed the news reported on 10 January 2022 of a 10-metre fossilised Ichthyosaur discovered at Rutland Water:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-59902730>

It is the second such discovery registered in the pages of this Newsletter in recent years: see Marcella Henderson-Peal's note of a similar find in Dorset in *NL* 82 (July 2014), p.41.

[CT notes that the ichthyosaur is the emblem of Street! See: [History of Ichthyosaur Fossil Emblem – Street Parish Council \(street-pc.gov.uk\)](#)

The excavation of the fossilised remains of the ichthyosaur found at Rutland Water was featured in a BBC TV programme *Digging For Britain* which was broadcast on Tuesday 11 January 2022. There are also good examples of the ichthyosaur in the Natural History Museum in London, in the Lyme Regis museum in London and in the Etches Collection in Kimmeridge.]



*Ichthyosaur. Source - Science Photo Library*

### ***From Goulven le Brech:***

#### **Le Bruit du temps**

I recently met a publisher at 'Le Bruit du temps', named Amaury Nauroy. He has written the introduction of the recent edition of *Rodmoor* in French published by 'Le Bruit du temps'. He is planning to publish more books of JCP and T F Powys with the help of Patrick Reumaux [who translated *Wood and Stone*, *Owen Glendower* and TFP's *Goat Green*]. He also wants to publish *Weymouth Sands*. I gave him some pages of the translation of Jacqueline [*Perdita Wane*].

## Jacqueline Peltier's Powys archive at IMEC

Jean-François Peltier (Jacqueline's son) came to IMEC (Institut mémoires de l'édition contemporaine) in Caen on Friday 14 January and deposited Jacqueline's Powys archive. I have started to classify them. Jacqueline had a complete collection of *The Powys Review*, *The Powys Journal* and the *Powys Newsletter*. She had also a collection of the American and German letters. Her archives have been deposited alongside the Powys archives of Michel Gresset, Armel Guerne, François Xavier Jaujard (Granit), Jean Queval, Jean Wahl, Kenneth White, éditions du Seuil, éditions Bourgeois, éditions Phébus.

### *From Pat Quigley:*

#### **Additions to bibliography of Theodora Scutt in NL104**

Theodora also wrote a short memoir, **Potocki: a Dorset Worthy?** (Typographeum Press, 1983), a fascinating account of life with her biological father in the 1960s.

Theodora's relationship with Potocki is explored in his biography – **Unquiet World, the Life of Count Geoffrey de Montalk** by Stephanie de Montalk, Victoria Univ. Press, 2001.

I wrote a short account of Theodora and the Powyses – '**The Perfect Child,**' in *la lettre powysienne* 29, Spring 2015.

### *From Anthony Head:*

#### **Ethel Mannin and Llewelyn Powys**

On the topic of the Llewelyn Powys-Louis Wilkinson letters again [see *Newsletter* 103, July 2021], I had an essay in a recent issue of *The London Magazine* (Oct./Nov. 2021) titled 'Some Hidden Sprite in Her: Ethel Mannin and her Japanese Novel'. The article focuses on *Sabishisha* (1961), a novel Mannin wrote after a visit to Japan and one that she said she had wanted to write more intensely than any other; but I introduce it by way of the correspondence, as that initial phrase comes from a letter Llewelyn wrote to Louis after his only meeting with Mannin when she visited him in Switzerland in the winter of 1938 (a visit she recorded in her second volume of autobiography, *Privileged Spectator*). Llewelyn was bemused by the contrast between what he regarded as the 'vulgarity' of her letters and her attractive and sympathetic nature in person, and told Louis: 'She is very uncommon *in herself* – some hidden sprite in her – like a perfect pearl clean and hard and undimmed in the commonest sham oyster in an artificial lake.' Louis and Ethel, as the letters reveal, had briefly been lovers at one point and it was Louis who had introduced her to Llewelyn (who claimed to find her books unreadable). I return to the letters in closing the essay by noting that although Llewelyn thought her writing could never be changed ('*It has gone too far,*' he opined), he never

had the chance to read any of her later, more mature works; and if there was one that might have caused him to reassess his judgement, it would surely have been this rather remarkable novel, a stark and vibrant tale of ‘love and death’, but alas long out of print.

***From Chris Thomas:***

### **Modernism**

In January the BBC launched a series of programmes on Radio 3 and 4 to celebrate the centenary of modernism. At the centre of modernism in the 1920s was of course the publication in Paris by Sylvia Beach of Joyce’s *Ulysses* in book form in February 1922. JCP was throughout his life a significant champion of Joyce defending the original publication of *Ulysses* in the *Little Review* at the famous obscenity trial in February 1921. JCP published a short *Appreciation of Ulysses* which appeared in the *Life and Letters* series produced by Haldeman Julius in 1923. JCP’s *Appreciation* was reprinted by the Village Press in 1975. Powys also contributed a section on Joyce to a symposium in 1932 and wrote a long essay on *Finnegan’s Wake* in 1943. The renowned Paris bookshop, Shakespeare & Co, where the Society launched the Powys/Miller letters in 2014, is also this year commemorating the centenary of the publication of *Ulysses* with a series of events. JCP’s relationship to Joyce and his defence of *Ulysses* has been discussed by Charles Lock in an essay published in *In the Spirit of Powys, New Essays*, edited by Denis Lane (1990). Ray Crozier has also written about the subject in an essay published by the *Journal of the Alliance of Literary Societies* (2016).

### **Additions to Notes on Enid Starkie in NL104**

In *Letters to Nicholas Ross*, edited by Arthur Uphill, 1971, JCP refers to Enid Starkie: ‘Well, it is Miss Enid Starkie who forced those old Dons in Oxford to give a Doctor’s Degree first to Andre Gide and then to Jean Cocteau whom I like even more than I ever did Gide! Long may Enid Starkie reign over Oxford!’ (17 September 1956); ‘My friend sent me this picture of Cocteau himself being led along the street of Oxford, by Doctor Enid Starkie. It was like a little Queen of Hearts tramping down High Street and trumping the cards of Life-Below with such a funnily begowned Ace of Spades.’ (15 November 1957).

Enid Starkie was influential in acquiring for Cocteau an honorary Doctorate from Oxford University which was conferred on him in June 1956.

### **Photo of JCP ‘sinking into his soul’ on cover NL 104**

In addition to publication of this photo in other places listed on the inside cover of *Newsletter* 104, the same image also appears on the cover of the Village Press edition of *Immortal Bard* by Henry Miller, 1973.

*Chris Thomas*

**JCP, Agnes Miller Parker, Richard Jefferies and W. H. Hudson**

The *Richard Jefferies Society Spring Newsletter* 2021 includes several notes and illustrations of interest to members of the Powys Society:

**On pages 18-19**, Andrew Rossabi writes about the wood engraver Agnes Miller Parker (1895-1980) who illustrated some of Richard Jefferies's works published by the Lutterworth Press in the 1940s (*The Spring of the Year*, 1946, *The Life of the Fields*, 1947, *Field and Hedgerow*, 1948, *The Old House at Coate*, 1948, and *The Open Air*, 1948). Rossabi notes '*Parker is now regarded as one of the greatest wood engravers of the twentieth century.*' Agnes Miller Parker also produced the wood engraving illustrations for the 1956 Macdonald edition of JCP's early narrative poem *Lucifer* (written in 1905 but not published until 1956). Parker however was dissatisfied with the printing of her illustrations and complained to the publisher: '*the hand-made paper on which [Lucifer] is printed is unsympathetic to my wood engravings*' Agnes Miller Parker declined to provide a signature for the limited edition of the book. See *Newsletter* 94, July 2018, p.42.



*Agnes Miller Parker's wood engravings for JCP's Lucifer (published 1956) – also see Newsletter 68, November 2009*

**On page 27**, in a note entitled 'South Downs, Near Lewes', the author quotes a letter from Jefferies to his aunt written in 1868 in which he recalls how he used to run about the Lewes Downs as a young boy. This note also quotes the opening lines from an essay by Jefferies called 'On the Downs' in which he describes the changing effects of light on the landscape which was so familiar to JCP during the period he lived at Court House between 1895 and 1902.

**The front cover** of the Jefferies Society *Newsletter* shows an image of the South Downs near Lewes called Chalk Paths, 1935, by the artist Eric Ravilious.



*Chalk Paths, a watercolour by by Eric Ravilious (1935)*

**The back cover** includes a reproduction of an oil painting by Lance Cattermole showing an imaginary Jefferies meeting the ornithologist, naturalist, and novelist W.H. Hudson (1841-1922) in Goring and quotes from Hudson's book *Nature in Downland* (1900). Jefferies and Hudson are both buried close to each other in Broadwater cemetery in Worthing. Jefferies's nature essays (for instance *Clematis Lane, To Brighton* and *Nature Near Brighton*) reveal an intense observation of nature that ranks alongside JCP's many descriptions of the inanimate world. There are several interesting connections between Hudson and JCP. Hudson roamed the South Downs in 1899 and 1900 collecting information for his book *Nature in Downland* where in Chapter IX, Summer Heat, he describes the bird life on Mount Harry – there could well have been opportunities at this time for JCP, walking on the Downs, above Court House, to have met Hudson although the two authors would not of course have recognised each other. In *The Saturnian Quest*, p.31, Wilson Knight suggests that Gerda's blackbird fluting in *Wolf Solent* is reminiscent of the bird-girl Rima in Hudson's novel *Green Mansions* (1904). The memorial to Hudson designed



by Jacob Epstein, carved in stone, and installed in Hyde Park in 1924 features the figure of Rima. In a letter to his friend Boyne Grainger dated 28 September 1952 JCP commented on the similarity and differences between his approach to nature and that of W H Hudson: ‘...he uses...the same kind of inspirations that I use but treats them

*Court House, Offham, near Lewes. Photographed c. 1990 by Jerry Bird*

*in an essentially different way.*’ (See *We Lived in Patchin Place and letters to Boyne Grainger* by JCP, edited by Anthony Head, 2002, p.58.) In the same letter JCP revealed how much he admired a book by Richard Bucke called *Cosmic Consciousness* (1901) in which the author discusses Richard Jefferies and Whitman and their achievement of a state of cosmic awareness.



*Epstein’s memorial to W.H. Hudson in Hyde Park – a somewhat Aztec interpretation of the delicate bird- girl Rima in Hudson’s Green Mansions Photo: Sally Norris/Art UK*

*Chris Thomas*  
**JCP in the TLS**

Three items recently appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* with references to JCP

In the issue of the TLS for 21 January 2022 in an article signed by MC and entitled ‘*Sleepy Hollow – more hollowed-out books*’, the author discusses examples of books whose internal contents have been physically removed to create a cavity in which something has been inserted. MC quotes the case of what happened to a book by JCP: ‘Jonathan Falla writes from Glenduckie in Fife to describe a hardback volume he inherited from his mother. Its bookplate suggests that she stole it from the library of Newnham College, Cambridge, in the late 1930s, when she was a student there. In a ‘roughly gouged-out’ cavity is (‘still’) a slip of paper on which she has written: ‘With my love’. Something else, presumably, came with the note. The mystery is ‘whether this was a gift to the King’s College man who became her husband, or to the other man who became her lover (and my father) rather later’. The book itself ‘was obviously carefully chosen’: it is John Cowper Powys’s *In Defence of Sensuality* (1930). Charles Lock notes that: ‘*This would seem to be a rare instance of a book not selected for its worthlessness to be hollowed out—but a book carefully chosen: its hollowing out heeds its message, might almost be a consequence of its reading.*’

On a different subject published in the correspondence columns of the same issue of the TLS Neil Cooper cited JCP’s *Art of Happiness*: ‘Reading Irina Dumitrescu’s ‘Afterthought’ on a particular form of happiness that promises ‘deeper satisfaction in return for steady, long-term commitments’ (January 14) brought to mind John Cowper Powys’s own take on the matter. In *The Art of Happiness* (1935), Powys tells of the ‘struggle’ for happiness. He argues that happiness does not depend on outside things, but ‘is born of the mind, it is nourished by the mind, it is what rises, like breath in a frosty air, from the mind’s wrestling with its fate’, a definition that, given Dumitrescu’s concentration on how political prisoners sought happiness, seems quite apposite.

For Powys himself, happiness came primarily from the feel of the earth under his feet, ‘especially when it is plough-land or grass’. He continues, ‘second to that I would put the feeling of firelight; and then the feeling of sunlight. Then I would place the look of flowing water and the feel of the blowing wind. Finally, I would name among these primary sensations, wherein my soul armours itself as it heaves itself up, the pleasure I get from reading a line or two of Homer’.

Not everything in his guide can be easily transferred to the present day: ‘as far as his solid happiness goes I think that a passion for fiction-reading, so good for a girl, is bad for a young man’. Your own reviewer at the time concluded that Powys’s ‘bold generalizations certainly have interest if they not will command general assent’ (October 10, 1935). Had he that comment in mind, I wonder?’

In the letters column of the TLS, 28 January 2022, Irina Dumitresco replied: ‘I am grateful to Neil Cooper for drawing my attention to John Cowper Powys’s *The Art of Happiness (Letters, January 21)*, particularly to the way Powys finds delight in humble experiences, such as stepping on plough-land or observing flowing water. These examples reveal that happiness is not merely a matter of attitude, but also of honing one’s senses to appreciate the minute sensations of interacting with one’s environment.’

It is good to see how JCP’s books can still provide a source and reference point for discussion by readers of the TLS.

We reproduce here the original 1935 review of JCP’s *Art of Happiness*, which appeared in the TLS, 10 October 1935, and which is mentioned in the letter to the TLS quoted above. The review was written by Geoffrey West (1900-1943), biographer, literary critic and novelist, who also reviewed several other books by JCP for the TLS (See note in *Newsletter* 96, March 2019, p.34).

### **A Technique for Happiness**

Mr. Powys believes that a good thing cannot be repeated too often. His earlier volumes ‘The Meaning of Culture,’ ‘In Defence of Sensuality,’ and ‘A Philosophy of Solitude,’ were all at bottom concerned with ‘the art of happiness’; and there is little or nothing of basic character in the present volume which cannot be found, in essence, in the other works. The actual formula, ‘Enjoy-defy-forget,’ does not appear in these pages, but it is implicit throughout as the foundation of his suggested deliberate technique for attaining that happiness which he holds to be life’s abiding aim and highest fulfilment. We are not, he acknowledges, born to be happy; pain is our lot from birth to death: ‘But deep within us is a sacred fount, from whose channel, by a resolute habit of the will, we can clear away the litter that obstructs the water of life.’ Will and habit are insisted upon throughout. Happiness can come to us unawares, but if its light is to prevail against life’s dark shadows it is necessary to make a cult of it. Away, Mr Powys cries, with all social and psychological taboos, with the voice of conscience that denies the right to happiness in a world awry. In the last resort man lives and dies alone; pain and joy are alike subjective, and it is

a man's privilege to make what he can and will of his interior existence. Moreover, he holds, happiness is a creative state, increasing life where misery but destroys it.

His technique consists in three 'acts,' which it pleases him to call respectively Ichthian, that of 'de-carnation,' and Panergic. The first, the Ichthian, is an act specifically of defiance. You 'lump together all the evils of your life, as if you turned them into one element that completely surrounds you, ' and 'leap' out of it – like a fish leaping out of water – in an unyielding revolt which is at the same time an 'embracing' of 'both life and death in a moment of predetermined intensity.' Frankly, Mr Powys is not very clear here; he will be comprehended emotionally or not at all. The second act is easier to understand; it is an imaginative projection of his consciousness to a point beyond the body, remaining 'still the centre of your awareness, but no longer the centre of your touchy animal identity.' In each what is essential is the seeing of oneself in a perspective broader than usual, in one case that of the total universe whose essence is mystery, in the other that of *all* the specific personalities and circumstances defining the given situation. The Panergic act is more personal still, yet has something of the same nature: 'It is an emphatic gathering up before your mind of those little-great compensating pleasures which make your existence bearable.' Imagine, perhaps, that you are about to die, and in a last farewell visioning recover a childlike sense of wonder in the common and universal elements of existence – earth and sea, sun and stars, 'the raindrops on your window, or the straight line of a roof against a grey sky, or a wavering column of ascending smoke, or rooks following a plough.' Be Stoic – defy; be Epicurean – enjoy; and for the rest make most of the 'negative art' of *forgetting*.

So at the end the reader who already knows his Mr Powys does find himself very much where he was before. But that is not to declare the book superfluous. There are always new readers. And Mr Powys himself is, in a sense, always a new writer, his substance not only in what he says but very essentially in his way of saying it. He has a profound awareness of the universe as illimitably rich and strange, and the power, when he cares to exercise it, of creating in his reader the very mood he is describing. Moreover there is much of detail, of direct practical advice, that is new, especially in the two long chapters on sexual relationships – principally in marriage – as they bear upon human happiness. Here Mr Powys is at his most individual, and his bold generalisations certainly have interest if they will not command general assent.

\*

*The Art of Happiness* was reprinted by the Village Press in 1975.

*Chris Thomas*

## **Strange Tales and The Book of Chuang Tzu**

In 2021 I began reading a weird and wonderful selection of beautifully crafted stories, anecdotes and longer narratives about supernatural and other extraordinary and unexplained phenomena called, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, originally compiled by Pu Songling (1640-1715). This classic work of Chinese literature is now available in an excellent modern translation by John Minford with helpful detailed explanatory notes and a useful glossary published by Penguin Classics in 2006. A major feature of the book is the frequent allusion to Taoist beliefs as well as descriptions of the role of Taoist priests, their rituals and talismanic objects (the author, for instance, refers to *a man of the Tao like myself* and *a devotee of the Tao*). This would certainly have interested JCP as would another companion Taoist volume published by Penguin in 2006, *The Book of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Martin Palmer – *A Taoist is what I really am*, JCP declared in *Autobiography*. In his essay *The Philosopher Kwang* (1923) JCP pays a tribute to his favourite philosopher who he valued for his imagination, oracular wisdom and *queer twists of humour*. JCP would certainly have appreciated the jokes, anecdotes and enigmatic sayings associated with Chuang Tzu in Martin Palmer's book such as: *There is what is, and there is what is not, and it is not easy to say whether what is not, is not, or whether what is, is.*

Chuang Tzu is discussed and quoted in *A Philosophy of Solitude* (1933) where JCP clearly links his own philosophy of life with the Taoist notion of the way of nature: *The still mind of the sage is the mirror of heaven and earth, the glass of all things. Vanity, stillness, placidity, tastelessness, quietude, silence and non action; this is the Level of heaven and earth, and the perfection of the Tao...silence and doing nothing are the root of all things.* In *Morwyn* (1937) JCP sympathises with Chuang Tzu's philosophy of non-assertiveness. He also references Chuang Tzu in *Up and Out* (1957) declaring that Chuang Tzu was the natural successor to Lao Tzu and not, as some have believed, his opponent. He furthermore gives a thoroughly Taoist interpretation of Po-Yü's sudden change of attitude and ideas late in life deriving the episode from the account given in James Legge's *The Texts of Taoism* in Max Müller's *Sacred Books of the East* (1891). (With acknowledgements and thanks to Paul Cheshire for identifying the source of JCP's story about Po-Yü in *Up and Out*. Po-Yü was a disciple of Lao Tzu.)

James Legge's translation of the *Tao Te Ching* must have also deeply impressed JCP. The *Tao Te Ching* declares: *Where the Mystery is the deepest is the gate of all that is subtle and wonderful.* On 5 August 1936 JCP noted in his diary: *Read Cranmer-Byng's wonderful Preface to a great Chinese Materiant and Sens-ist -incorporated by the Taoists and mentioned by our Kwang – praise be his for evermore! Theodore, Lulu & I are all Devotees of the Chinese Philosophers. They suit our family exactly.* (Launcelot

Cranmer-Byng, 1872-1945, was an important translator of classical Chinese poetry). Elmar Schenkel has an interesting article about the influence of Taoism on JCP, From Powys to Pooh, Some Versions of Taoism in British and American literature in the *Powys Review* 31/32, 1997. See also Cicely Hill's article The Chuang Tzu Legacy in the *Powys Review*, 7, Winter 1980. A useful translation of extracts of Chuang-Tzu's sayings and writings may also be found in *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, 1939, by the Orientalist and Sinologist Arthur Waley.

JCP would also have surely approved Oscar Wilde's long review article of *Chuang-tzu, Mystic, Moralist and Social Reformer*, translated by Herbert Giles (1889), published in *The Speaker* 8 February 1890. Selections from this translation later appeared in *Musings of a Chinese Mystic*, 1909, in the *Wisdom of the East* series of books edited by Cranmer-Byng. JCP was also familiar with the references to Chuang in essays by Wilde published in 1891 such as *The Critic as Artist* ('the almond-eyed sage of the Yellow river') and *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* ('a wise man') In *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* Wilde quoted sympathetically the Chinese sage's critique of modern life and his views on the failure of all modes of government. This is a point of view that would have resonated with JCP. For more details on Oscar Wilde, Chuang-Tzu, JCP and anarchism see David Goodway's book *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow*, 2006, which includes a chapter on Wilde; see also *The Paradox of Oscar Wilde* by George Woodcock, 1949, for a discussion of the influence of Taoism on Oscar Wilde's philosophy of life.

It is well known that JCP owned two volumes devoted to Taoist writers translated by James Legge in the *Sacred Books of the East*, edited by Max Muller (1891), mentioned above, but perhaps it is less well known that he especially esteemed these volumes because they had been presented to him by Phyllis. JCP describes these volumes in a letter to Ichiro Hara dated 8 December 1953 and told Henry Miller about Phyllis's gift in a letter to him dated 25 December 1951. JCP's cousin Alice Linton and her father were acquainted with Max Müller when they were living in Oxford. Later Alice introduced JCP to Müller's widow. (See *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXIX, 2019, pp.129-130).

It is worth observing that the editor of *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* provides a note in the glossary where he indicates that *one of the most popular exponents of 'living Taoism' in our time was Alan Watts*. In the 1950s, and 60s Alan Watts (1915-1973) was well known as a populariser of Eastern religions for Western readers. Alan Watts was also a great admirer of JCP. In a letter to JCP dated 22 October 1951 Henry Miller told him that Alan Watts had praised JCP's works. This reminded me that Henry Miller often recommended books on Zen Buddhism by Alan Watts which he urged JCP to read. JCP discusses his interest in Zen and Taoism in a letter to Henry Miller dated 25 December 1951.

*Julia Mathews*

**Remembering Theodora Gay Scutt**

*Julia Mathews lived in Mappowder as a child and remembers 'a really sweet sort of 1950s / 1960s village life where children and older generation were drawn together' – see Julia's contribution to Newsletter 79, July 2013. Julia also contributed a note on her childhood memories of T.F. Powys in Mappowder, in Newsletter 89, November 2016. CT*

When I think of Theodora as I knew her I remember her intrinsic involvement in the countryside. She worked for the local farmers Jo Candy, who had race horses and hunters, and Alan and John Hiscock. They both have memories of her now. Good figure, a hot temper but excellent at milking cows. Alan remembers when he and another farmer were bringing in a load of hay, in those days loose upon a cart. Theodora was sitting on top of the hay and as they pulled the hay down she fell with it which obviously scared her. She was furious. Turning away she grabbed a nearby two pronged pitchfork which she aimed at Alan and threw it like a spear. He quickly dodged with the result that a poor innocent nearby cow was pierced instead and the offending object had to be removed carefully from the rump of the poor injured animal.

The Jersey cow called Zlotta was her own cow, her chestnut pony called Mehelig, the two donkeys, chickens and ducks all roamed in Lovelace Copse where she had a cabin. Fashionable in these times, in the 1960s somewhat unusual. It was of course a magnet for a nine-year-old child with a bicycle so I cycled to spend time there as often as possible. There were few children of my age in Mappowder. I did not attend the local primary school but a private school in the nearby village of Shillingstone so I did not get to know those children who did live there. I imagine my mother must have complained of having a bored child on her hands and so it was suggested I 'help' Susie. In fact I did and my presence was most probably tolerated rather than enjoyed as we made butter, cleaned out the chickens and groomed ponies and donkeys. I was always thrilled when Ann, Susie's half-sister, visited and I was party to grown-up conversations, albeit as an observer rather than participant and before my presence was noticed and I was sent off to groom a donkey.

After Theodore's death we saw a lot more of Violet as she settled into her new home. Unbelievably knowing Theodora's dislike of televisions we used to visit Violet of an evening before we owned a television. Violet was one of the first people

in the village to have a TV. My mother, sister and I would take chocolates and treats and watch programmes of a young David Attenborough in Borneo or a production of Vanity Fair. Often with a variety of dogs and cats. In the daytime I used to walk Violet's collie Timmy for her, though never Phinn Susie's Alsatian, who I was rather afraid of. My sister and I spent time with Violet's Aunts, Minnie, Gertrude and Maude, under the thatch of their cosy cottage. They would show us interesting collections of china, albums of postcards, how the apples were developing or a new flower that had seeded itself in the garden.

The excitement though was the cycle ride to Lovelace Copse. Feeling that I was on adventure like a character in one of the books I had read. Some of these were given me by Theodora. Books she had read as a child. Mostly books about ponies: Silver Snaffles by Primrose Cummings Riding Days in Hooks Hollow by Marjorie M. Oliver. These books opened up a world of children and ponies having adventures, and then suddenly there I was in Lovelace Copse being allowed to ride a pony 'living the dream' of a nine year old.

These halcyon days slowly dwindled. I moved schools and travelled to the local grammar school. Got to know children at nearby farms now accessible because of my bicycle. Though I did not at that time quite understand it, the strangeness of Susie's father appearing on the scene at first caused even more excitement. This interesting figure amazed and enthralled the local village folk. A mixture of cautious wonder over a man who appeared to know about a banned book called Lady Chatterley's Lover, maybe even knew the author. Far different from Silver Snaffles. He came with interesting friends. I remember a young Polish girl of about my age, Dunoota. She lived in London and I enjoyed telling her about the countryside.

A certain darkness infiltrated these innocent days and I saw less of Susie. She went to Provence and wrote me fascinating accounts of the lavender warmth and her obvious happiness in Draguignon. We lost touch but never entirely.

One Autumn, through the crowd of heavy coated farmers, I glimpsed Theodora at a pony sale in Dorchester: she was there with Bernard and that was when I met him for the first time. I met Theodora again a few years later at the excellent little village shop in Buckland Newton. I remembered she was working at a garden nursery in Buckland Newton that I believed specialised in grasses.

When I was teaching years later in Sutton in Surrey I discovered The Powys Society via Google. Shortly after this when I was thinking of retiring back to Dorset, coincidentally our cottage in Mappowder was for sale and so I went to have a look at it. The people selling it updated me on how Mappowder had changed. I read

*Cuckoo in the Powys Nest* and I contacted Theodora, who remembered me and then began several years of correspondence between us. When I was finally settled back into a cottage in Dorset, not in Mappowder but in nearby Sturminster Newton, she arranged to return from Ireland briefly to stay at Doles Ash, a farm belonging to John Hiscock. We arranged to meet up. Sadly she had a car crash and I ended catching up with her in Bath hospital, propped up in bed, a long grey plait over her shoulder. Theodora generously said: ‘Well you’ve turned out ok, you were a pretty weird kid.’ Praise indeed!

So the sad news came recently that Theodora had passed peacefully away. I informed some of the friends of her youth who were noticeably upset by the news. Patricia Lawrence, Pat Kelly, who grew up with Theodora and remembers: ‘As a child I spent many evenings playing games or listening to Theodore reading, which was wonderful. We kept in touch until recent years. Theodora stayed here at Tripps Farm (Pat’s present home) on many occasions. Whilst living at Mappowder I had the privilege of meeting many of the Powys family. They stayed at our farmhouse, Styles Farm, as the Lodge was too small for them to stay.’

Recently I walked from Mappowder to Lovelace Copse on a sunny, still autumn day. Was it really such a short distance? It seemed so far when I cycled the route as a child. Little had changed. A bungalow had become a farmhouse at Monkwood and another house had been built at Park Farm, both on Hiscock land. The hedges on high banks where endless wild flowers grew are just the same. Gateways with views across the fields are also the same. The views are wider now as there is no longer the multitude of huge elm trees. A large modern house now inhabits Lovelace Copse but, turning slightly, it vanished from my view. Nothing had changed where I looked and this is where I remember Theodora so clearly.



*Anne Powys (daughter of Francis and Sally Powys) on Theodora's horse*

*Dachlan Cartwright*

**World's End**

As it might be the Styx dank with whispering ghost talk,  
Or a Laramied Bree, with the wilderness beckoning,  
Or a flung Finisterre, those vertiginous plankwalks,  
Or a petering out, Childe Roland's undead reckoning.

On a scale down to Wales, it's all of these frissoners,  
Broached from the south's lonely road through the glen,  
From the town of the hosts of the eisteddfod visitors  
Which brenners the ruins of Bendigeidfrân.

To the right are the thighs of the seven wise sisters  
Whose screes secrete milkstones, mitochondrial fountains.  
White ladies loom lingering, mix madness with mythmist,  
Heledd of the sorrows, Helen – Nest of the mountains.

Now a path has been Offad to hikers long-distanced.  
It extends through World's End after dipping and ducking.  
And some of us follow the steps of Sir Watkin  
Through gorse and the heather and grouse fit for plucking.

Up the long grinding road to the rock of the devil,  
And caves, stinky dripping, like thousands or more,  
Then the road reaches northwards to find its own level,  
Jeannie's gap, Siani's gutter and Minera moor.

I've slept by Ararat, in the groves outside Herat,  
In Javanese rain forests and Croatian pines.  
But, benighted, I'd be frightened here to wait the akhirat  
Where the crows break the silence just below Cynr y Brain.

**A poem from**

*Powys Fadog: Verse from Northeast Wales and Beyond*  
(Barnes and Noble, 2017)



*World's End*

### **Notes to *World's End* by Dachlan Cartwright**

As a versifier, most of my efforts record experiences, events, people, and places. I don't go in much for confessional self-reflection, or lyrical descriptions. But, although I have written free verse, I do prefer the discipline of strict metre, rhyme and all the other traditional tools. My verse collections are also supplemented by copious glossaries, preferring, unlike such as Pen Beirdd TS Eliot, who would sprinkle his masterpieces with references and allusions which would only be recognized by an elite circle of literary cognoscenti, even inventing some of them. So *World's End* comes along with loads of notes, including naming, after four feisty Welsh ladies, four of the at present unnamed 'Seven Sisters', those spectacular limestone 'aprons' north of Llangollen so strikingly visible on satellite maps. They should have names, but I don't know if the OS would accept my choices. Comments on my poem are welcome. Please send to [doccartwright85@gmail.com](mailto:doccartwright85@gmail.com).

**A haunted 'final destination'**: Like my earlier verses, this poem emphasizes the eerie remoteness of a place named, significantly, *World's End*. *World's End*, then,

lies at the head of a narrow valley, the Vale of Eglwyseg, north of Llangollen. It's famous for being the site of a manor house built on the site of a hunting lodge, whither Owain, Prince of Powys, in 1109, abducted Nest, 'the Helen of Wales', from her husband in Deheubarth in South Wales. A narrow road leads to World's End from Llangollen, parallel to the Eglwyseg River on its left. Also parallel, but on the right of the road, is a section of the long-distance Offa's Dyke Path. Overlooking and dominating the valley from the right (east) are the spectacular limestone escarpments of the 'Seven Sisters'. A moorland road runs from World's End to Wrexham via the Rhiwabon Moors and Esclusham Mountain.

**Stanza 1** mentions several final destinations.

The **Styx** is a river in Greek Mythology which formed the boundary between Earth and the Underworld; '**laramied**' is from Fort Laramie, a trading and army post on the American frontier; **Bree**, in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, is an inn in the debatable lands beyond the boundaries of the Shire; **Finisterre** ('Land's End') names both a province in Brittany and a cape in Galicia, Spain, at the extreme western ends of each of these countries; **Childe Roland's undead reckoning** is the final destination at the climax of Browning's poem, with wordplay on 'dead reckoning.'

**The seven wise sisters:** I have taken the liberty of naming five of the seven limestone 'aprons' on the western edge of the Rhiwabon moors, which show up so prominently on internet maps of Llangollen. Reading from south to north these are: **Craig Bronwen (Branwen)** opposite her brother Brân (Castell Dinas Brân), **Craig Myfanwy**, a 14th century lady who lived at Dinas Brân, the subject of tragic story involving a love poem written about her, **Craig Rhiannon**, the powerful goddess/queen who is a leading character in two of the Mabinogion stories, **Craig Heledd**, the Powys princess for whom a cycle of elegiac poetry is named, based on the exploits of her brother Cynddylan, a 7th century prince of Powys, and **Craig Nest**, The 'Helen of Wales', an adventurous noblewoman who was abducted from Deheubarth in South Wales to World's End by Owain ap Cadwgan, a prince of Powys. The other two already have names: **Craig Arthur** and **Craig yr Adar** (Rock of the Birds). There are three other 'rocks' beyond Craig yr Adar: **Craig y Cythraul** (Devil's Rock) right at the head of the valley beyond World's End (a name which reinforces the spookiness of the place); **Craig y Forwyn** (Rock of the Maiden), just north of it, and, further to the north, **Craig y Moch** (Rock of the Pigs).

**White ladies loom:** a peripheral reference to the genesis of Wilkie Collins' 'sensational' novel, *The Woman in White*.

**Now a path has been Offad...long-distanced:** wordplay with ‘Offa’ and ‘offered’; A section of Offa’s Dyke Long-Distance Path runs from near Dinas Bran to, and beyond, World End.

**the steps of Sir Watkin:** There were no less than nine Sir Watkin Williams-Wynns. At the height of their influence they were known as ‘the uncrowned kings of North Wales’. Their seat was Wynnstay Hall near Rhiwabon. There are two tracks leading from the Rhiwabon area across the moors towards World’s End. One leads due west and comes out at Craig Heledd; the other leads northwest and emerges above World’s End. The Sir Watkin of the day would have taken these paths, along with his guests and his beaters, for a slaughtering session.

**Stanza 6** bids farewell to this final destination, its haunted atmosphere now probably evanesced by Google Street Kids and Offa’s Dyke Trailheads. Lines 1 and 2 lists some places where I’ve actually been benighted.

**akhirat:** the afterlife in Islamic eschatology.

**Cyrn y Brain:** ‘Brân’s horns’ This mountain, just north of World’s End, is the highest in the area (565m). Skirted by Offa’s Dyke Path to the east, it has two summits. The eastern one contains the ruins of Sir Watkin’s Tower, where the Watkin of the day could observe seven counties (and in each of them he owned land). The western one has radio antenna on its summit. A track from here leads west to the Ponderosa Café on the Horseshoe Pass.

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*Dachlan Cartwright is a new member who joined the Powys Society in 2021. Dachlan has travelled widely, He has worked as a VSO librarian in Bandung and on several other teaching and training posts in Indonesia, as well as on contracts in Saudi Arabia and East Timor. He now lives in Jakarta. Dachlan grew up in Llangollen where, as a teenager, he often walked to many of the places well known to JCP around Glyndyfrdwy, Cynwyd, the High Berwyn moors and Corwen. Dachlan’s poetry collection Powys Fadog was published in 2017 and is available from Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Dachlan says he has an overwhelming enthusiasm for JCP and especially for Porius [CT]*