

Editorial

We look forward to this year's conference in Llangollen. It is always a great pleasure to return to the Hand Hotel. The conference booking form is enclosed with this Newsletter. You can also reserve your conference place and make a payment through our website.

Our front cover shows the ruins of Dinas Bran castle above Llangollen viewed from an unusual angle. Henry Miller, devotee of JCP, makes an appearance on the back cover.

Plans are announced to hold a memorial service for Stephen Powys Marks on 28 June 2023.

We preview two forthcoming study days to be held in Ely on *Weymouth Sands* on 22 April and in London on *Porius* on 21 October.

We report on a zoom meeting of the Reading Powyses Facebook Group devoted to *Homer and the Aether* held on 11 October last year.

Paul Cheshire reviews Kevan Manwaring's well attended talk on JCP presented on 17 November at the Dorset museum in Dorchester. We review Kevan's talk on JCP at the Atlantis bookshop in London. Paul also reflects on JCP's memories of his childhood in Shirley as described in *Autobiography*. Pat Quigley reviews Ray Crozier's book about the history of Patchin Place now available from the Sundial Press. Kate Kavanagh goes in search of JCP at Phudd Bottom and Patchin Place during a visit to

ON OTHER PAGES

Memorial Service for Stephen Powys Marks	2	A visit to Phudd Bottom & Patchin Place	22
Two Meetings	2	JCP and the Wooden Axe	23
Committee Nominations	4	Introduction to two essays by Llewelyn	26
AGM	5	African Kitchen Raider by Llewelyn	27
New Members	5	A Christmas Night in British East Africa by Llewelyn	28
Zoom discussion of <i>Homer and the Aether</i>	6	Theodora: A Lifetime with Animals	31
Atlantis bookshop event	8	News and Notes	35
A lecture at the Dorset Museum	10	A letter from Fred Perlès to Kate Kavanagh	41
Conference 2023: Draft Programme	11	Two contemporary reviews of <i>AGR</i>	43
Conference Speakers	14	JCP and The Religion of the Future	46
In Memoriam: Roger Peers	17	Review: The Religion of the Future	49
Review: <i>Patchin Place</i> by Ray Crozier	19	JCP, Portugal and Oscar Wilde	50

New York and presents a letter she received in 1975 from the author Fred Perlès, who was a close friend of Henry Miller, and shared with him an admiration for JCP's work.

Peter Foss introduces us to two early essays by Llewelyn, drawing on Llewelyn's experiences in Africa, originally published in *The New York Evening Post* in the early 1920s. These essays provide a good view of Llewelyn's early journalistic style before the publication of *Black Laughter*. Julia Mathews discusses Theodora Gay Scutt's life-long love of animals quoting from her lively personal correspondence. We investigate JCP's private and public lectures in 1905 on The Religion of the Future.

Chris Thomas

* * *

A Memorial Service for Stephen Powys Marks

Now the worst of the covid pandemic seems over the family of Stephen Powys Marks would like, belatedly, to hold a service in memory of him. This will take place on Wednesday June 28, 2023, probably in or near the vicinity of Bath. If you would like to attend this event, **please contact** Chloe Vereker by e-mail at: chloevereker@hotmail.com

* * *

Two Meetings

Saturday 22 April 2023

A meeting to discuss Chapter 4, Hell's Museum, from JCP's novel *Weymouth Sands* led by Sonia Lewis.

Venue: The Old Fire Engine House, 25 St. Mary's Street, Ely.

11.00 to 16.00 (with break for lunch).

All are welcome. The event is free with the exception of lunch which is optional and may be taken in the restaurant at the venue. A contribution towards the cost of refreshments is voluntary.

At the beginning of Chapter 4 of *Weymouth Sands* we meet Richard Gaul, one of JCP's philosophical characters: *Mr Gaul was a dodging and debouching youth dedicated to remain poor*. Gaul's 'philosophy of representation' may perhaps have been inspired by Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*. Like Schopenhauer Gaul studies world religions and the psychology of human instincts. He also provides the

ending for the novel:... *she handed him the stone which had been in the Jobber's pocket so long... "It's for my old friend, Mr Gaul. It will keep the Philosophy of Representation from blowing away!"* JCP makes good use of locations in Weymouth, evoking the places he had known in his childhood, such as the bow-windowed houses of Brunswick Terrace. Richard Gaul lives on the top story of one of these houses. This chapter provides opportunities for JCP to explore his observation of the details of everyday things such as his description of *the grey level of the sea's horizon*. We also meet Daniel Brush and his pathological institution, Hell's Museum, a place for insane people and a symbol of JCP's loathing for scientific materialism, his fear of vivisection and scientific experiments. JCP describes Magnus Muir's approach to the sanitarium: *He could not resist his sick aversion and distaste*. The chapter concludes with Magnus Muir and Curly Wix meeting amidst the ancient grassy ramparts of the *prehistoric Camp* of Maiden Castle whilst below them on the Dorchester Road can be heard the sound of a very modern car-horn: *Tirra-lirra! Tirra-lirra!*

Saturday 21 October 2023

A meeting to discuss Chapter XXXI (The Little One) and Chapter XXXII (Blodeuwedd) from JCP's novel *Porius* (complete, restored edition, edited by Morine Krissdóttir, Overlook Press, 2007), led by Chris Thomas.

Venue: Pushkin House, 5A Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2TA, The Drawing Room, ground floor.

14.00 to 17.00. The venue will also be available from 13.00 if participants wish to arrive early.

Refreshments, tea/coffee, will be available.

The event is free. All are welcome.

Chapters XXXI and XXXII of *Porius* illustrate very well JCP's attitude to *Marvels and Wonders* in *Porius*. JCP wrote to the publisher's reader, Norman Denny to explain his approach: *Nothing wd induce me, persuade me, or make me, leave out or turn into anybody's dream, the Miracle of the Owl-Girl Blodeuwedd worked by Myrddin Wylt at the entombing in that great field of the Prince and the Owl's flapping over the violated grave of Teleri that scared them all so!...To leave out Marvels & Wonders wd. be to make the whole thing false, to make it ring untrue & unreal*. Chapter XXXI in which Porius encounters a magical child, in the Druid's cave incorporates, according to Morine Krissdóttir, aspects of alchemical symbolism. The chapter was originally cut from the first edition of the novel. The editors of the Overlook edition of *Porius* have here restored one of the marvels and wonders of the book. Here we

can appreciate JCP's knowledge of esoteric mythology and hermetic symbolism as well as his dazzling display of language and imagery. Morine Krissdóttir believes that Chapter XXXI *is one of the most marvellous chapters [JCP] ever wrote* and refers to his writing at this point as *breathhtaking* and *awe inspiring*. The theme of change, metamorphosis and transformation is played out in Chapter XXXII with the description of the owl which is recreated and reborn in the form of the girl Blodeuwedd who appears from under the cloak of Myrddin Wyllt: *the creature was beyond all words beautiful. Her form hadn't only taken into itself the spring time blossoming of its first engendering it had taken into itself all the moss deep unfoldings and unsheathings of the loneliest places...all the tangled growths that hide the secret processes of new life between the dark retreats of marsh waters and the still darker retreats of ancient forests.*

If you would like to attend either or both meetings, please notify Hon. Secretary.

Chris Thomas

* * *

Committee nominations 2023-2024

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 2023.

All paid-up members, including Honorary members, are entitled to submit nominations for the committee. Nominations must include the name of the **Proposer and the Seconder** (who must also be paid up or honorary members) and should be **submitted in writing, or by e-mail, 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 e-mail to** chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk or **by post** to 87 Ledbury Road, London W11 2AG.

Nominations must be received by **Thursday 1 June 2023**.

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 20 August 2023 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 emerita*), Dawn Collins (*social media manager*), and Robin Hickey, (who all have one year left to run of their three-year term of office), Louise de Bruin (*Conference organiser*) who has two years left to run of her three-year term of service) and Marcel Bradbury (whose three year term of office expires in August 2023.) 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 2023. Marcel Bradbury has indicated his **willingness to serve for a further period of three years.**

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

* * *

AGM

This gives notice that the Annual General Meeting of the Powys Society will be held at 11.00am on Sunday 20th August 2023 at the Hand Hotel in Llangollen.

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

* * *

New Members

We are pleased to welcome 3 new members to the Powys Society who have joined since the last announcement published in *Newsletter* 107, November 2022. Our new members are located in Ware in Hertfordshire, in Hobart, NY in USA and at Balliol College, Oxford. This brings the current total membership of the Society to **242**, 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

Kim Wheatley

Reading Powyses Zoom discussion of Homer and the Aether

On 11th October 2022, eight stalwart members of the Reading Powyses Facebook Group from both sides of the Atlantic met on Zoom for a discussion of *Homer and the Aether*, JCP's paraphrase of *The Iliad*. (Page numbers below refer to the 1959 Macdonald edition.)

Dawn Collins recommended Charles Lock's article, 'Powys and the Aether: The Homeric Novels', published in the *Powys Journal* 16 (2006), pages 11-33. For Charles, the Aether, with its power of seeing into human and divine minds (as well as the nonhuman) – and looking forwards and backwards in time – is the mark of novelistic discourse and JCP's distance from Homer. Charles's article helps to illuminate the difference between Homer, for whom the gods dictate human behaviour, and JCP, who has a more interior understanding of the self. **Kim Wheatley** mentioned Gregory Alles's article, 'Aether and Ocean', *Powys Notes* 10 (2) (Fall-Winter 1996), pages 4-29. Alles writes, *given a choice – I will read the original* – meaning Homer (p. 5). A more enthusiastic account is Amélie Derome's 'En traduisant *Homer and the Aether*' in *la lettre powysienne* 30 (Fall 2015-Spring 2016), pages 2-13. Derome, who translated *Homer and the Aether* into French for her MA thesis, writes, *How could one imagine a reader of Homer and the Aether who would not have Joyce's Ulysses in mind?* She claims that the Aether resembles *the Joycean stream of consciousness* (p.5). (JCP had written *James Joyce – An Appreciation* in 1923.) See also Kate Kavanagh's appreciation of *Homer and the Aether* in *NL* 55 (July 2005), and reviews of *Homer and the Aether* reprinted in *NL* 91 (July 2017).

Paul Cheshire summarised the plot of *The Iliad* for the uninitiated. Dawn drew attention to the description of the horrible dream, Oulos Oneiros, sent by Zeus to Agamemnon, which has the ability to suck *the life out of a dinosaur* (p. 56) – a detail that signals JCP's modernity. According to Dawn, like Powys's novels, *Homer and the Aether* obliquely brings in the Powys siblings: the blond Menelaus represents Llewelyn. Further addressing JCP's self-conscious modernity, Kim drew attention to three places where he alludes to later writers without naming them, registering his historical distance from *The Iliad*: he refers twice to Tennyson's poem *Tithonus* (pp. 176 and 224); he quotes *vast formless things* from Edgar Allan Poe's *The Conqueror Worm* (p. 213); and he mentions an unidentified poet who describes the cities on Achilles' shield (p. 234). JCP also refers to the warrior Hector as *sweet war-man* (p. 258) – an allusion to Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* [NB W.H.Auden's poem *Shield of Achilles* compares ancient to modern warfare]

Kim said she thought JCP's Preface was more interesting than his paraphrase of *The Iliad*. The Preface calls *The Iliad* *more realistic and more natural* than other great poems – more quintessentially human (p. 10). JCP's essay on Homer in *Enjoyment of Literature* (1938) also stresses the ancient poet's grasp of *the monumental facts of human existence* (p. 65). In that essay, JCP concentrates on Homer's *Odyssey*, contending that *the everlasting killing and being killed in the Iliad does frequently grow very wearisome* (57). Both the Preface to *Homer and the Aether* and the separate section entitled 'The Aether Speaks' emphasize the blessedness of human mortality.

Paul commented that whereas we read Homer for his otherness, JCP finds in Homer a universal humanity. Dawn quoted L. P. Hartley's line, *The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there*, and brought up the idea that people's brains are structured differently now because of our use of technology. Returning to the Preface, Paul drew attention to the passage in which JCP claims that *we Britishers have appreciated Homer more than any race in the world* (p. 16). JCP ascribes this superior enjoyment of Homer to British people's alleged lack of intellectuality and their matter-of-factness, their ability to appreciate the numinous quality of everyday things. There is also a strange moment in the Preface where Powys asserts that *in the passionate love of Achilles for Patroclus there is not a trace of homosexuality* (p. 18). Present-day readers of *The Iliad* might disagree. **Louise de Bruin** brought up later retellings of *Homer*: Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018) and Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles* (2011), written from Patroclus's point of view, and *Circe* (2018). Despite his awareness of historical difference, JCP insists that people stay the same across thousands of years.

Paul asked us to consider the gender of the Aether: is the Aether masculine, feminine or gender-neutral? Dawn said the Aether seems elemental like Ariel in *The Tempest*. Kim connected the Aether with Powys's idealisation of virginity (p. 28), which as Paul pointed out, also appears in *The Brazen Head*. JCP expands on *The Iliad* in places and truncates it in others. For example, he develops certain characters. The captive Briseis has her "secret" – a peculiar enchantment emanating from the presence of the very simplest things' (p. 44), a habit that, Dawn noted, lines her up with Wolf Solent. Kim compared the dreamy Briseis with Netta in *Ducdame* and Nancy Stickles in *A Glastonbury Romance*. Briseis is also, contradictorily, a character of impulse: *Why don't we escape together now, at this very minute? cried Briseis eagerly, clutching at one of Astyomene's hands with both of hers* (p. 45). Homer does not give female characters this degree of agency. In addition, Powys makes the gods even more human and domestic than they are in Homer.

Paul and Dawn observed that Powys stays true to Homer's emphasis on the family and brings out the pity of war. Powys's references to Zeus, following Homer, as the 'son of Cronos', show his continuing preoccupation with 'Crooked-counselling Cronos' (p. 80), most notably in *Porius*. Paul pointed out that JCP gives the god Ares destructive speeches that are not in Homer – recalling the fantasy of annihilation in *Up and Out*. Elsewhere in the book, Powys faithfully renders Homer's scenes of violence. Kim brought up the Aether's judgmental attitude to Achilles, which seems to reflect pacifist leanings. Paul agreed and suggested that JCP was reacting against the Victorian idealisation of Achilles. We then turned to the beautiful closing scene of Hector's funeral rites and discussed the anti-didactic ending of *Homer and the Aether*. In the Preface, JCP says he wrote this book for 'youthful readers' (p.9) but the main appeal of this book today is surely to those of us already interested in the career of JCP.

Chris Thomas

A talk on JCP by Kevan Manwaring at the Atlantis Bookshop, London

On the evening of Friday 21 October last year I approached the familiar sight of the Atlantis bookshop in central London with an increasing sense of expectation and excitement. I hadn't visited London's oldest independent family-run occult bookshop for over ten years. Now I had returned to hear Kevan Manwaring deliver a presentation and was looking forward to meeting him. I did not know much about Kevan only that he had participated in the BBC Radio Three Free Thinking programme on JCP in September and was a senior Lecturer in creative writing at the Arts University of Bournemouth. I thought he probably had much more to say about JCP.

Geraldine Beskin, third generation owner of the Atlantis bookshop, which she manages with her daughter Bali, greeted me warmly. We talked briefly about JCP and Kevan's interests and his career. Geraldine told me Kevan had become a friend of the bookshop since he launched his first novel, there in 2004. His novel, *The Long Woman*, features appearances by Dion Fortune, Israel Regardie and Conan Doyle. I remembered that the Atlantis bookshop proudly announces on their website that the shop had, in the past, been visited by adepts in magic such as Aleister Crowley, Yeats, Dion Fortune, Gerald Gardner (the founder of modern witchcraft) and Israel Regardie. Looking around the bookshelves and display of magic-ware I noticed Geraldine also held a stock of books by Frances Yates, the author of amazing books about Renaissance hermetic culture, Rosicrucianism, and the history of early modern Europe. I was astonished and awe struck when Geraldine told me Frances Yates had been a close friend of her mother and often visited the shop – this felt like a portent of more good



*Inside the Atlantis
Bookshop,
Museum Street,
Bloomsbury,
London*

things to come later in the evening. Already I felt a happy and congenial atmosphere crowding in on me.

We were directed downstairs to the small Gardner room, where Gerald Gardner apparently held his meetings and covens and was now adorned with images of the great Elizabethan occultist John Dee! I was shortly joined by another Powysian, Kevin Taylor, editor of the *Powys Journal*. We were offered glasses of wine and introduced to Kevan who had already set up his power point presentation. The audience was compact but everyone was held in rapt and silent attention as Kevan traced the chronology of JCP's life and examined his novels and other books and wondered why his work is not appreciated more widely. Although nothing new was said for the dedicated Powysian, Kevan's presentation provided an excellent introduction for the first time reader. He presented plenty of material to inspire and encourage anyone interested in delving deeper into JCP's world.

The discussion that followed Kevan's talk flowed easily. There was much debate about JCP's connection with Wales, about the difficulties JCP encountered as he attempted to integrate into a rural Welsh community in the 1930s and returned to what he believed to be the land of his remote ancestors. We discussed JCP's ideas about exile, his self-confessed psychological affinity with the Welsh people and what he called *the dark troubles of the soul*. There was much discussion about the significance of what JCP meant by the Welsh word 'hiraeth' which he defined as *the fulfilment of a youthful longing and the obscure stirring of some secret destiny*.

As I walked home in the rain and reflected on the evening's events it seemed to me as if the spirit of Dee, Yeats and Crowley had in fact presided over our deliberation, stirred our thoughts and encouraged our discussion. I hope Kevan will continue to proselytise on behalf of JCP. He could win over many more new readers in the future!

Paul Cheshire

A talk on JCP by Kevan Manwaring at the Dorset Museum

Kevan Manwaring came into view when on 27 September he appeared like a new comet on the BBC R3 Free Thinking programme on the life and work of JCP presented by Matthew Sweet alongside the familiar long-standing Powys constellation of Iain Sinclair, Margaret Drabble and John Gray. It was quickly apparent that Kevan is a keen Powysian, and we learned later that he was instrumental in the commissioning of this important radio programme.

Dr Kevan Manwaring, who is a senior lecturer on creative writing at Arts University Bournemouth, had also arranged to give talks on JCP in the Atlantis Bookshop in Bloomsbury in October (see Chris Thomas's report) and at the Dorset Museum on 17 November, where, along with other Powys Society members, I went to see him. There were about thirty people in the audience. He was introduced by Elizabeth Selby, the Dorset Museum's Director of Collections and Public Engagement. The talk was in the museum's Victorian Hall which is a large high-roofed space with Roman mosaics embedded in the floor and surrounded by wrought iron pillars supporting perimeter walkways above. It looks nice, but it's not intimate and Kevan did well to surmount the difficult acoustics and connect with an audience divided between committed Powysians and newcomers.

His talk was extempore based on PowerPoint slides. He covered the life of JCP in some detail, brought in other Powys family members (the normally neglected Gertrude stood out in particular, possibly because Kevan was showing her portraits of Powys family members). If there was any particular focus it was on JCP's Wessex novels. Kevan is clearly an experienced and relaxed speaker, and was able to meet the challenge of covering so much ground. His passion was persuasive, and it was evident from audience comments from those declaring themselves new to JCP that he had provided an excellent introduction. For us Powysians, it's always a pleasure to hear from a new speaker, and however familiar the content, it was enlivened by a good choice of quotations to illustrate aspects of JCP's life and work. Well-chosen quotations never grow stale: they breathe new life into familiar material.

Furthermore, Kevan offered good critical appraisal of JCP's strengths and weaknesses as he tackled the old conundrum of how JCP can be acclaimed as a genius by major cultural pundits, and yet be neglected, dismissed, or even remain unknown to many otherwise cultured and literate readers. Kevan also brought some new framing and perspective that could stimulate those already familiar with JCP to reappraise him in modern terms, thus making JCP's work relevant for a new generation of readers. As one example, the concept of *neurodiversity* — the recognition of alternative neural

sensibilities that have been regarded as inferior or pathological rather than different but equally valid immediately modernises a theme running through all of JCP's writing: his championing of those whom, in his preface to *Wood and Stone*, he called the 'ill-constituted'. Similarly he recognised *Autobiography* as a precursor of the kind of writing now known as autofiction.

Kevan was kind enough to include a slide about the Powys Society in his talk and at the start of Q&A he invited me to say a few words about the Society. Dawn Collins also chipped in to good effect reminding the audience that the Wessex novels were all available as eBooks published by the Society. I was sitting next to Taliesin Gore, who was the only familiar face present when I arrived... when I went over to chat to Dawn at the end I said to her 'I wish I knew how many other Powys Society members were there but I wouldn't know what they look like. For example, how would I know if Jerry Bird was here?' I'd no sooner said that than Jerry, who was sitting right by us, introduced himself and an email acquaintance blossomed into a face to face. It was also good to meet Rob Phillips, another local member, previously unknown to me. Kevan lingered afterwards and we chatted as a group: the meeting had gone well and we all felt quite celebratory about our Powysian fellowship, and went our separate ways with fond farewells.

* * *

The Powys Society Conference 2023
The Hand Hotel, Llangollen
Friday 18 August to Sunday 20 August
'Into something rich and strange'

For our conference this year we return to Llangollen and the Hand Hotel, a place and venue we have not visited since 2019 when we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Powys Society. The landscape surrounding Llangollen is dominated by the ruined walls and towers of the castle of Dinas Bran constructed in the 1260s by Griffith ap Madoc, Prince of Powys Fadog and Lord of Dinas Bran. JCP gives an evocative description of this wild fortress: *The ruins of Dinas Bran tower up, jagged and desolate above the romantic town of Llangollen.* Legends and mysteries, such as of Bran the Blessed, *one of the most singular of the ancient gods*, said JCP, swirl around the *battered* and *broken* castle and the steep eminence on which it stands. JCP was fascinated by the mythical associations of Dinas Bran, its *mystic enchantment*, and its place in Welsh history. JCP writes in his novel *Owen Glendower* about his young protagonist Rhisiart with his *secret mania* and *irresistible mental vision of Dinas Bran lifting its mystic battlements against indescribable spiritual horizons.*

The subjects of the lectures at this year's conference range widely: JCP's personal

quest for a Welsh identity, the imaginary world of *Rodmoor*, with its strange images of death, destruction and madness, a discussion of Outsider characters, reflections on the meaning of eco-consciousness in JCP's writings and the significance for JCP of genre and the form of the long modernist novel illustrated especially by the example of *A Glastonbury Romance*.

The title for the conference is taken from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (Act 1, Scene ii) and suggests this year's theme. In *Autobiography* JCP often alludes to this quotation using it to help illuminate his inner world. He refers to himself at the age of nine, *a young neophyte in magic*, embarked as if on some sort of magical quest for a half glimpsed and indefinable ideal, the magical power within us, which JCP describes as *something rich and strange*. Shakespeare's words reverberate throughout *Autobiography* – JCP reflects on *the rich workings of the unfathomable Cosmos* and perceives there an *underlying world of rich magic and strange romance*. These insights find a resonance in our speaker's lectures. **Colin Laker**, who presents a talk at our conference for the first time, will explore the rich connections between JCP and Wales and how this relationship came to influence his writing as well as how his views and attitudes towards Wales, ancient Welsh history and the Welsh people transformed his sense of identity. *The idea of Wales went drumming on like an incantation through my tantalised soul*, says JCP in *Autobiography*. **Paul Cheshire** will take us beyond Wales into other Powysian places. JCP's second novel *Rodmoor* (1916) is set in Norfolk with its *chilly, salt tasting wind...old decaying boroughs on the east coast and relentless encroachments of the sea upon the land*. Paul will examine the rich and strange world of JCP's protagonist, Adrian Sorio with his unusual thoughts and dim visions. Paul will discuss Sorio's ideas about destruction and his belief in *the burning and devouring flame* that is the essence of life, as well as his vision of the possibility of *something beyond human expression*, something that lies beyond life and death. We welcome **Kim Wheatley** to the conference as a speaker for the first time. Kim explores the portrayal of Outsider figures and strange "marginalised human beings" in JCP's fiction, as well as in his *Autobiography* and diaries and investigates the significance of their relationship to similar figures in the poetry of Wordsworth. We are pleased to welcome **Mick Wood** who also appears at our conference as a speaker for the first time. Mick's talk will focus on JCP's writing from the point of view of 'green' or eco modernism. Mick will discuss JCP's strange relationship with "non-human forms and forces". **Ben Thomson**, a regular attendee at conferences for several years, explores the aesthetic, philosophical, experimental and modernist qualities of form and length with all their rich and manifold associations especially as represented in *A Glastonbury*

Romance. On our **free Saturday afternoon**, we are planning a guided tour of the region known locally as **World's End** sometimes visited by JCP and Phyllis (see NL105). World's End is situated in the mountains above Llangollen amidst impressive limestone cliffs, with extensive panoramic views, surrounded by forests, woodland, moorland, pastures and fast running streams which probably inspired *Morwyn* as well as JCP's description in *Porius of the misty ridge at the end of the world between the precipices leading to the mouth of Tartarus and the cavernous entrance to Hades*. We plan to hire Corwen's community bus. It may also be possible to visit Eliseg's Pillar and Valle Crucis on the return journey. More details of arrangements will follow in due course. **On Saturday evening** we are arranging an event dedicated to readings from the **early (pre-the published novels) works of T. F. Powys**. Some of the readings will be from *Soliloquies of a Hermit* pub.1916, probably with diary extracts taken from Elaine Mencher's *Early Works*. The **book room** will be open as usual at selected times. We will have a good range of Powys related titles on offer but please also bring your own donations of books to the sale.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

Draft Programme

Friday 18 August

16.00 Arrival

17.30 Reception and Chair's welcome (**Paul Cheshire**)

18.30 Dinner

20.00 **Colin Laker**: "“We talked of going to Wales and I was elated!”: John Cowper Powys's complex vision of Wales and Welsh identity"

Saturday 19 August

08.00 Breakfast

09.30 **Paul Cheshire**: 'Rodmoor and the Quest for 'what lies beyond life''

10.45 Coffee

11.15 **Kim Wheatley**: 'Wordsworthian figures of disability in JCP'

13.00 Lunch

Afternoon free – optional guided **tour of World's End** a region situated amid the mountains and limestone cliffs above Llangollen and the inspiration for scenes in *Morwyn* and *Porius*. Transport to the location will be provided by community bus.

19.00 Dinner

20.30 an event dedicated to TFP's early works (pre published novels) including readings from the *Soliloquies of a Hermit* and his Journals.

Sunday 20 August

08.00-09:30 Breakfast

09.30 **Mick Wood**: ‘*An Image of the Whole Round Earth*: Perspective and Scale in the Writing of John Cowper Powys’

10.45 Coffee

11.00 AGM

12.00 **Ben Thomson**: ‘*A Glastonbury Romance* and the long modernist novel’

13.00: Lunch

15.00 Departure

Conference Speakers

Colin Laker has been a member of the Powys Society for a number of years, his journey in teaching showing a geographical similarity to JCP in some ways, involving stints in Dorset, Brighton & Hove and the Staffordshire/Derbyshire border, before settling in Wales (though Ceredigion rather than Clwyd or Gwynedd). He recently successfully completed an MA in Celtic Studies at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, in Lampeter with a dissertation on the theme of his talk at this year’s conference. Colin will discuss the significance of JCP’s claim to a Welsh identity which he often made during the course of his life. Several commentators have noted JCP’s fascination with Wales and the Welsh. Few, however, have concentrated on what Powys himself meant by those concepts, and even fewer have examined how those concepts changed over time, especially once he moved to Wales in 1935 (first to Corwen and then, in 1955, to Blaenau Ffestiniog, until his death in 1963). Colin’s talk will be concerned with two main issues. Firstly, to examine Powys’s concepts concerning Wales and Welsh identity over time and to chart how and why they changed. Secondly, to attempt to show how those changing ideas were manifested in his writing and influenced the fiction he produced in America, England, and Wales. It will suggest that a crucial stage in the development of Powys’s conceptualisation of Welsh identity was his move to live in the country in 1935, opening him up to the reality of the Welsh people, landscape and culture, as well as his reading of anthropologists of Welshness. These changing conceptualisations can be detected especially in a reading of Powys’s novels *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Maiden Castle*, *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*; use will also be made of his collection of non-fiction essays *Obstinate Cymric* as well as unpublished extracts from his diaries in the National Library of Wales.

Paul Cheshire is Chair of the Powys Society. He has lectured extensively at conferences in the UK and the United States. He has written over twenty-five articles on S.T. Coleridge and his circle. His book *William Gilbert and Esoteric Romanticism* is a

pioneering study of a little-known astrologer and hermetic magician who was friends with Coleridge and Wordsworth in the 1790s when they lived near Bristol. Paul has also written on John Cowper Powys for the *Powys Journal* and the *Newsletter*, as well as on the traces of seventeenth-century hermetic philosophy in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Paul edits the Powys Society's website and is acting Hon. Treasurer. Paul's contributions to the *Powys Journal* include, JCP and William Wordsworth in Vol. XXVI, 2016; 'subhuman or super-human consciousness' in *A Glastonbury Romance* in Vol. XXVII, 2017 and *A Glastonbury Romance: Cuts and Alterations to the UK printed texts, 1932-1955* in Vol. XXVII, 2017. Forthcoming in 2023 is an article by Paul for Vol. XXXIII of the *Powys Journal* entitled Powys's Cronos: Punishment, Rebellion and the Golden Age. Paul's talk will focus on JCP's second published novel *Rodmoor*. Paul notes that Adrian Sorio, who is the protagonist of *Rodmoor*, is writing a book to show *how what every living thing really aims at is to escape from itself ... by the destruction of itself*. He rages against philosophical systems based on 'self-assertion' and 'self-realization', in favour of a perverted interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy as a wish to annihilate nature. JCP portrayed characters who engaged with this negative philosophy again and again in his fiction: Geard's embrace of death in the Glastonbury flood, and Merlin's *esplumeoir* in *Porius* are the most successful and balanced representations of this longing to go beyond. 'What lies beyond life' is usually represented in JCP's novels as an alternative non-human place of existence: a mythic or daemonic world. In *Rodmoor* JCP places particular emphasis on the destructive nature of this other world. The novel ends in death and madness. Susan Rands has recognised that *Rodmoor's* epigraph, which is taken from 'Thomas the Rhymer', a ballad of faery abduction, is a key to the work as a whole. *Rodmoor* is pervaded by allusions to ballads and poems about the dangers of faery or daemonic possession.

Kim Wheatley is a Professor of English at William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. She is the author of two books: *Shelley and His Readers: Beyond Paranoid Politics* and *Romantic Feuds: Transcending the 'Age of Personality'*. She also edited *Romantic Periodicals and Print Culture*. She has written four articles on JCP: 'John Cowper Powys and the Inhuman Wordsworth', published in *European Romantic Review* in 2017; 'John Cowper Powys on the Genius of Charles Lamb', published in *The Powys Journal* XXXI in 2021; an article on JCP's *Autobiography*, forthcoming in *Romanticism*; and "'The Poet of Fear": John Cowper Powys on Samuel Taylor Coleridge', forthcoming in *The Powys Journal* XXXIII in 2023. Kim says: 'The Blind Beggar. The Leech-Gatherer. The Discharged Soldier. The Idiot Boy. These disabled and deprived characters appear in the poetry of William Wordsworth, JCP's "great master". My lecture will explore JCP's re-imagining of these Wordsworthian "outsiders

and idiots” (as Belinda Humfrey refers to them) in his fiction and autobiographical writings. I will argue that in rewriting Wordsworth’s scenes of encounter with marginalised human beings, Powys implicitly rebukes the poet for an insufficiently ethical response and at the same time dramatizes, sometimes comically the limits of the ethical treatment of strangers. My examples will be drawn from *Wolf Solent*, Powys’s *Autobiography* and diaries, and *The Inmates*.’

Mick Wood currently works as an English Teacher at a secondary school in Doncaster. His interest in the Powys family culminated in his PhD – *The Ecological Imagination of John Cowper Powys: Writing, “Nature” and the Non-human* – which was completed in 2017 at The University of Leeds. Mick is particularly interested in the relationships between modernist writing and the environment; hence both his doctoral work and an earlier MA thesis that explored the relationship between the writings of John Cowper Powys and D.H. Lawrence. Mick says ‘My talk takes as its starting point the ongoing “green” turn in literary studies – sometimes referred to as ecocriticism – to ask after the timeliness of JCP’s writings in our moment of ecological crisis. In particular, I will discuss the ways in which Powys’s experimentation with perspective and scale shapes, and is shaped by, an ethical sensibility towards nonhuman forms and forces. Reading some of the images of earthly continuity and discontinuity, of evolutionary forces, and of material and historical entanglement between humanity and nature that we find in *Wolf Solent* and *A Glastonbury Romance*, I want to suggest that Powys deserves to be acknowledged by recent scholarly readings of a “green” modernism, in which questions of the human’s position in a more-than-human world are of central concern. In doing so, I want to push back against critical discussion that has dismissed or neglected Powys as offering a comparatively naïve alternative to a more urban modernism by emphasising his experimental literary responses to the modernity of his historical moment, and – hopefully – its relevance to our own’. Mick writes about his doctoral thesis and his interest in the Powys family in Newsletter 99, March 2020.

Ben Thomson is currently studying for his MA at the Humboldt University of Berlin, with particular focus on medieval literature, the modernist novel, and literary form. His recent essay on length and genre in the prose fiction of Dorothy Richardson was awarded the 2021 Dorothy Richardson Essay Prize. Ben says his talk ‘will apply the issue of length to John Cowper Powys’s major novels, particularly *A Glastonbury Romance*. Whilst the inordinate length of his novels is often one of the first things mentioned in introducing Powys, the aesthetic and philosophical implications of this characteristic have rarely been examined, and, furthermore, the matter of length is something that has been largely ignored in literary criticism as a whole. In light of recent work suggesting the “long modernist novel” as a distinct and important genre

– “an excessive form that attempts and fails to achieve the impossible” – this talk will emphasise the formal experimentalism in Powys’s novels, which is intrinsically connected to their excessive length. This also involves arguing for the oft-overlooked modernist qualities in Powys’s work, and places him in a select group of writers whose lives’ works were the long modernist novel, alongside Richardson, Proust, and Thomas Mann’.

* * *

In Memoriam

Roger Peers

1932-2023

Roger Peers died on Thursday 16th February 2023. Roger was former Curator of the Dorset County Museum and Secretary of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society from 1959 to 1992. He was Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, Fellow of the Museums Association, Chair of the Editorial and Publications committee of the Dorset County Museum and also co-author, with Morine Krissdóttir, of *The Dorset Year; the Diary of John Cowper Powys, June 1934-July 1935*, published by the Powys Press in 1998.

Morine says: *Roger was a close friend and colleague for many years. He was a young man when he joined the Dorset County Museum and in every sense it was his life. His extensive knowledge of the geology and landscape of Dorset (and the influential people therein) led to the acquisition of some of the most valuable artifacts in the museum and it was his familiarity with, and enthusiasm for, the literary life of Dorset that led to the establishment of the literary collections, in particular Thomas Hardy, Sylvia Townsend Warner and The Powys Family.* We will publish full tributes to Roger Peers by Morine and also by Charles Lock in the July Newsletter.

Charles Lock writes: Roger Peers was only the fourth Curator that the DCM had known since its founding in 1883. Without previous connection to the county, though with qualifications as an archaeologist, Roger became everything that a county museum could hope for in a curator. As Assistant Curator from 1954, Roger took care to learn about both Museum and County from Charles Drew, Curator from 1934 to 1956. Colonel Drew had overseen with Mortimer Wheeler the excavations at Maiden Castle in 1934-37 that inspired significant aspects and episodes of John Cowper Powys’s novel of that title (1936); in editing, with Morine Krissdóttir, *The Dorset Year*, John Cowper’s diaries of 1934-35, Roger could draw on a formidable

range of local knowledge, archaeological, historical, social, institutional, architectural, anecdotal. A range truly formidable, yet utterly characteristic, accompanied by a dedication equal to all the challenges faced and the responsibilities assumed.

Roger was of immense help to me through the 1970s when I was providing annotations to the letters of Thomas Hardy and would be in the Museum through the university vacations. What Roger knew about the Thomas Hardy Collection was unmatched and, in dozens of monographs and hundreds of articles, Hardy scholars would pay more than formal tribute to ‘Mr R. N. R. Peers’. So he would ask to be styled in acknowledgments, as though to suggest (quite unconvincingly) that he was no scholar himself. Through his extraordinary elegance and energy, Roger gave extravagantly of himself: his time, his expertise, his counsel. Under his care, the Museum was intensely alive, his



Bronze bust of Roger Peers by David Roper-Curzon 1992. Photo: The Dorset Museum/ Art UK

own self perpetually in motion, to be seen at rest only when listening to one of the distinguished performers or lecturers who graced the Museum’s programme of events. The Museum itself was unfailingly graced by its Curator across five decades, the County for even longer. No church was unvisited, hardly a lane unwalked, nor a significant stone unturned: who—or what—in Dorset will not now mourn his passing?

Jerry Bird, former Technical Editor of the annual *Proceedings of the DNH&AS*, says he first met Roger at a Powys Society conference over 30 years ago. Jerry says *Roger was always charming, polite and gracious and was exceptionally generous with his praise thanking me for my work for the Museum’s publications, often by means of handwritten postcards. Roger was a warm and caring personality who held the history and culture of Dorset at the very core of his being.*

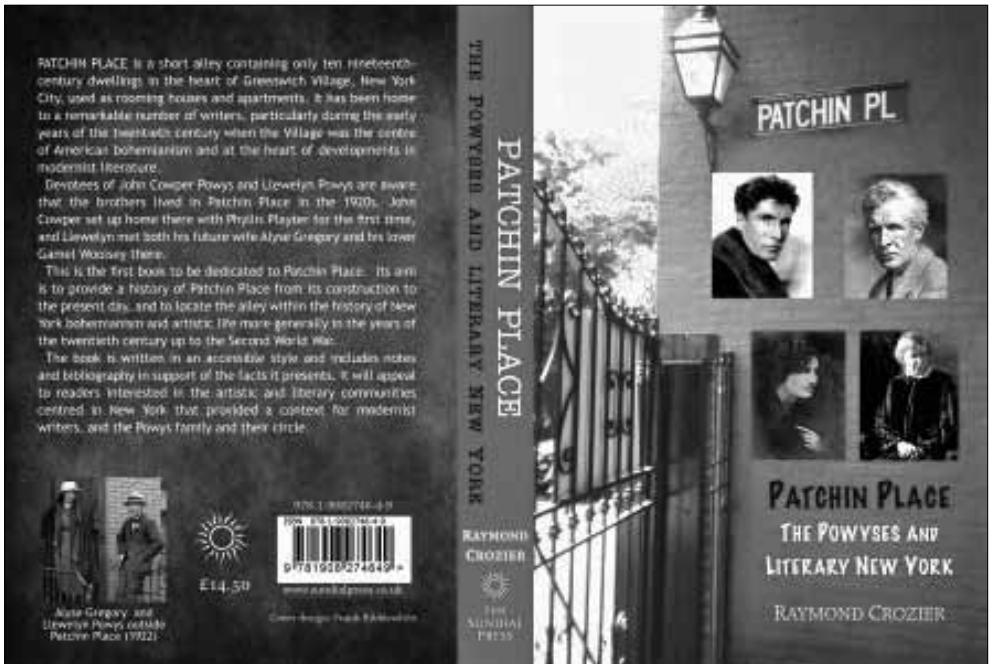
Roger Peers’ funeral will take place at Beaminster church, Dorset, at 2pm on 7 March.

Patrick Quigley

Review: *Patchin Place: The Powyses and Literary New York*, by Raymond Crozier, Sherborne: The Sundial Press, 2022, 331pp. ISBN: 978-1-9082-7464-9. £14.50

The opening of John Cowper Powys' fable, *The Owl, The Duck and – Miss Rowe! Miss Rowe!* evokes a powerful image of Patchin Place in New York, a small development close to the Elevated Railway *under whose thunder all the old three-storey houses on both sides of the little blind-alley used to shiver and shake*. He wrote the story for Phyllis Playter in 1930 to commemorate their cosy if cramped living conditions in the previous decade at 4 Patchin Place. The enclave of ten houses was an important refuge for the Powys family in New York and has become part of Powysian mythology.

Raymond Crozier has long been fascinated with the alley and its inhabitants. In his article, *Patchin Place: an 'Alsatia for the Hunted,'* (*Powys Journal* XXVIII 2018), he lamented the paucity of detail and dates in Powys family letters and other writings. He has remedied the situation with this invaluable book – the first comprehensive study of this neglected area of New York life, writing eloquently of Patchin Place, its history and the many artistic and literary figures who found refuge here in the early to mid-



Book cover Patchin Place by Ray Crozier

twentieth century. He ranges far and wide to reveal a world of connections with ‘the little blind-alley’.

Patchin Place can be found between Sixth Avenue, West 10th Street, Greenwich Avenue and West 11th Street. The visitor in 2023 will meet an iron gate, erected in 1929, but there is pedestrian access. There is a plaque commemorating the poet E. E. Cummings and his partner, Marion Morehouse, who lived upstairs in No.4, but little to indicate the rich cultural history behind the redbrick facades. A sense of place mattered to the Powys family more than most writers – place as subject matter, as refuge and source of inspiration. Their natural milieu was the village or small town; large cities were alienating and they relished the atmosphere of village closeness in Patchin Place.

Raymond Crozier begins his account in the mid-1700s with the purchase of parcels of farmland by Sir Peter Warren from Warrenstown in County Meath. Crozier is forensic in his exploration of the property transactions, wills, newspaper advertisements and census reports among many original documents to give a comprehensive picture of the development over the following decades.

In the early Twentieth Century the working-class inhabitants were joined by a bohemian contingent. Crozier documents the comings and goings of actors, architects, playwrights and others, tracing the fluid movement of tenants between addresses as leases were transferred and rooms sub-let. Occupation arrangements were often flexible and informal.

The Powys connection could be said to begin when Alyse Gregory, editor of the literary journal, *The Dial*, moved into 5 Patchin Place around 1917. When Llewelyn arrived in America in 1920, he lived with John Cowper and their sister Marian at 12th Street. In late 1921 he met Alyse for tea, now residing at No.4 and became her lover. He soon moved in, unofficially; it was a congenial place to work and he completed six books while living in No.4. In her memoir, *We Lived in Patchin Place*, Boyne Grainger, remembered him writing in front of the house beneath the ailanthus tree. Llewelyn and Alyse married in September 1924 and lived in rural New York before returning to England in 1925. Llewelyn had invited John and Phyllis Playter to stay in their apartment, but John Cowper struggled to convince Phyllis to accept No.4 as a long-term residence, describing it to her as a cave, a refuge where they would find peace and rest. He feared prosecution by the police for living illicitly together, but they might be unnoticed among the bohemians. They moved into No.4 in late 1924, making it their home until moving to Phudd Bottom in 1930. He was often on lecture tours, but Crozier believes he wrote parts of *Wolf Solent* here as well as conceiving the outline of *A Glastonbury Romance*. Llewelyn returned to Patchin Place with Alyse in late 1927

where he met his other great love, Gamel Woolsey. The chronology of the various moves is quite complicated, but adroitly handled by the author.

In Crozier's hands Patchin Place becomes a huge stage where the characters come and go, engage in affairs, write books and interact with neighbours. Some like the author of *Nightwood*, Djuna Barnes, became a recluse in a single room in No.5, only allowing the occasional visitor such as T. S. Eliot. E. E. Cummings, a long-term resident in No.4, used to periodically call across the alley from his apartment window: 'Djuna, are you still alive?'

'Even when you are living alone here, you are not really alone', remarked the photographer and model Marian Morehouse.

Greenwich Village was a centre of almost every creed where John Cowper found inspiration for his philosophical musings. One could encounter free-thinkers, Theosophists and Marxists. A chapter is devoted to the lives of Patchin residents and revolutionaries, John Reed and Louise Bryant. The list of residents who would achieve fame include Marlon Brando, Jane Bowles and composer John Cage. There were many significant visitors, including T.S. Eliot, Theodore Dreiser and Ezra Pound. Katie Powys arranged at least one visit by the writer and editor Alfred R Orage to discuss the ideas of Gurdjieff.

John Cowper tended to associate most Irish-Americans with billy-club wielding New York cops, but Crozier highlights his long friendship, shared with Llewelyn, with the Irish-born writer on mythology and folklore, Padraic Colum. There is no written record that Colum lived in Patchin Place, but the meticulous researcher quotes biographer, Andrew Field, who places him chatting close to the garbage cans, *the traditional meeting place for residents ... including John Cowper Powys*. By the 1920s the alley had achieved a distinctive identity with inhabitants described as 'Patchinites'.



Patchin Place, photographed by Jessie Tarbox Beals, c.1925

In Patchin Place – I have met some of the most interesting and singular human beings I have ever known, John Cowper wrote in the essay, *Farewell to America*.

Patchin Place is one of those rare books, complete in itself, which encourages the reader to explore the many histories and topics within its pages. It enriches our knowledge of the Powys family in the wider context of cultural life in the United States. The wide-ranging richness of the material is enthralling. My only complaint is the lack of an index, but this is mainly remedied by the comprehensive list of contents.

Kate Kavanagh
A Winter visit to Phudd Bottom and Patchin Place

On my traditional inspection of Powys sites during a visit to New York this New Year, I can report Phudd Bottom seeming in good shape (see photograph). In the city, the gates at Patchin Place are now free of solicitors' notices. I met two new residents (from the theatrical world) loading a car inside, who said that artists are returning to Patchin Place.



Phudd Bottom, January 2023. Photo by Kate Kavanagh

Paul Cheshire
John Cowper Powys and the Wooden Axe

I, for one, would sooner have almost any continuous seven years of my life, perhaps even—grim though those were—the seven years, from ten to seventeen, of my time at school—than have my early childhood over again. I would never say I had a happy childhood. (Autobiography, p.38)

A comparison of JCP's account of his childhood at Shirley with that of his younger brother Littleton's cheery account in *The Joy of It* shows how selective memory is. JCP presents himself coming out fully-formed, showing in his infancy all the *impulses of a morbid or antisocial kind* that he goes on to make the leitmotif of his self-portrayal in the later chapters of *Autobiography*. For JCP there is no innocent childhood, and the blame (if blame is the right word) is entirely his. This is who he was! He was defiant, rebellious and murderous – you could almost say Satanic – from the word go. Furthermore, his deliberate decision to exclude women from his *Autobiography* distorts his account of infancy, when his mother must have been an important formative figure. Littleton describes their mother singing bed-time hymns to him, but JCP's account of parental upbringing in *Autobiography* is centred exclusively on his father Charles Francis Powys. Dedicating *Autobiography* to his mother Mary Cowper Powys is an acknowledgement (or even an apology) for this omission, and – as Sonia Lewis pointed out when this was discussed at Shirley on JCP's 150th birthday – the feminine has nevertheless an all-pervading ghostly presence in *Autobiography* by way of the bisexual nature of JCP's sensibility.

JCP's *Autobiography* presents a number of recovered memory fragments of the kind that Wordsworth, in his autobiographical poem *The Prelude*, called 'spots of time': One particularly enigmatic episode – the incident of the Wooden Axe – that took place in the garden of the Shirley Vicarage illustrates JCP's portrayal of these complexities: namely, his precociously vice-ridden nature, his relationship with his father, and the silenced presence of his mother. Here follows JCP's account of this incident in *Autobiography*:

Another idolatrous fetish [...] was a wooden axe made for me by my father out of the trunk of an ancient laurel-bush. Well do I remember the cutting of those laurels from which this enchanter's weapon fell into my hands. I had been absorbed all the morning in the most wicked pleasure then known to me, although not the wickedest possible to me, of transferring tadpoles from the pond in the field to the puddles left by the rain at the side of the drive.

Now my father always followed, in all moral and casuistical problems, certain primitive rules that had descended to him from his father: such as, for instance, when you took birds' eggs out of a nest, to add to your collection, always to leave two; or when you caught a fish with a hook never to let it remain flapping and gasping on the bank, but always to put it out of its misery.

But that an offspring of his should derive God knows what perverse satisfaction from taking the inhabitants—luckily tadpoles were all the little boy could catch—of a dark, cool, deep pond and placing them in shallow puddles, was something so outside his experience that he had no mandate on the matter. It was therefore the merest coincidence that by noon that day, when he had so strewn the paths of the little spinney at the end of the garden with cloven laurel-boughs that a sweet savour of aromatic wood, in this cruel hewing and wounding, was carried across the lawn, my father should have been moved by a natural desire that his son should behold these deeds of devastation and glory in his begetter's skill and strength.

Thus the tall figure of the Vicar of Shirley, in black trousers and grey flannel shirt-sleeves, might have been seen that day dragging his protesting son away from his puddle-colonies and conveying him by force to his own devastated spinney. Oh, how hard it is to live in Arcadia and not meddle with some species or other of autochthonous aboriginals! But aye! that axe of laurel, whose blade and handle were both of the same sweet-smelling wood, and from whose whole entity emanated such a glamour of fairy-story enchantment, that long after, when I was a boy with catapult, butterfly-net and fishing-rod, it often used to come over me that I had lost—for ever and for ever lost—a mystery that would have guarded me all my days. To get back that laurel-axe from that garden spinney at Shirley would now be to get back the full magic power of that timeless fetish-worship by the strength of which the quaintest, most ordinary object—a tree-stump, a pile of stones, a pool by the roadside, an ancient chimney-stack—can become an Ark of the Covenant, evocative of the music of the spheres! (pp. 2-3)

JCP has combined two events: Johnny's guilty pleasure in playing with the tadpoles in the drive, and his father's pride in cutting down the laurel and carving out before his eyes a wonderful toy axe (p. 38). Biographers have interpreted this episode in different ways. Richard Graves writes that CFP

arrived and was shocked by his son's brutality. His father, angry with him for his cruelty to the tadpoles, had shown him a scene of devastation which was the result of his own violence, and had then given him a weapon for further destruction.

(The Brothers Powys, p. 5)

Is this right? Was CFP angry, or is Graves identifying with one point of view: that of the child with a sense of guilt imagining his father's anger? The multiple viewpoints make JCP's narrative unstable. This is known as the *Rashomon* effect, after Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashomon* in which successive witnesses present conflicting views of the same crime. JCP gives elsewhere many examples of his father's volcanic temper, but not in this instance. JCP — as the sixty-year-old narrator — makes it clear that his treatment of the tadpoles was, for his father, *something so outside his experience that he had no mandate on the matter* (p. 2). Young Johnny may have felt guilty when seen by his father, but his father's action does not necessarily imply anger. CFP is dragging Johnny away from an activity he is absorbed in to show him what wonders he, his father, can do in shaping for him this axe made from the trunk of a felled laurel. The axe seems like a reward: it becomes, for Johnny, *a magical Excalibur brought arbitrarily from some world of enchantment* (p. 38).

CFP's anger is also made improbable in the light of Littleton's recollection of CFP making tadpole nets for his sons:

I can see him, too, as he took us to the pond armed with a rough net which he had made, to catch for us newts, and tadpoles, dragon-fly grubs and water-beetles, so that by watching them in an aquarium we might learn something of their subaqueous habits, nor have I ever forgotten those habits and the way they devoured each other. (TJOI, p. 12)

If CFP saw his small child trying to create his own mini-aquarium in puddles in emulation of this, it would be far more in character for him to suggest taking them to a safer environment.

There is yet another point of view: that of JCP's mother. Morine Krissdóttir adds this further perspective by quoting from JCP's June 1944 diary. JCP records that Phyllis is upset by their neighbour cutting down a beech hedge, and this event reminds him of his father cutting the laurel. He writes: 'Les Lauriers sont Coupés— another trouble, for Phyllis loves as my mother did a bit of Wilderness left in gardens' (*Descents of Memory*, p. 18). This brings in the feminine point of view: the wish to

let the natural world be and save it from masculine predators. JCP's lament about the spoiling of Arcadia and how hard it is not to *meddle with some species or other* is surely an unattributed expression of this maternal voice.

This 'spot of time' in the Shirley Vicarage garden can thus be seen from four different perspectives: (1) young Johnny feels he is caught doing something wicked and is taken away by his father; (2) his father is actually taking Johnny to show his clearing work and to make an exciting new toy for him; (3) his mother (excluded from JCP's narrative) regrets masculine destructive energies and the resulting loss of garden wilderness; (4) JCP at sixty is looking back and reconstructing this event to fit his self-presentation as a precocious sadist. By the end of the film *Rashomon* we are led to believe we have got to the truth of the matter. Here, in JCP's account of his infancy, we are left in a multiverse where we can do no more than compare different illusions.

* * *

Peter Foss

Introduction to two African essays by Llewelyn Powys

When Llewelyn Powys's 'African book', *Black Laughter*, came out from Harcourt, Brace in America in June 1924, he included a hastily-written Introduction (p. ix-x) which claimed that the chapters in the book were made up of stories *in the identical form in which they were written* when they first appeared in the *New York Evening Post* in the early 1920s. This statement is untrue, but this was only appreciated when I began compiling my *Bibliography of Llewelyn Powys*, eventually published by the British Library in 2007. In the course of this work I was enabled to locate and collect (with the help of Melvon Ankeny in America) all the previously uncatalogued and unidentified items in the *New York Evening Post* (nearly 70 in all), and compare them with the chapters in *Black Laughter*. It was then possible to recognise that the original pieces written for that newspaper between October 1920 and July 1922 (Llewelyn's first attempts at journalism) were in fact quite different from the texts in the published book. What Llewelyn did was to overlay some of the same experiences with a literary and 'philosophical' gloss which, in the Introduction, he denies, but which was recognised at the time by some contemporary reviewers.

The series begins with *African Kitchen Raider* which appeared in the paper on 2 October 1920, p.5, and which Llewelyn calls (in *The Verdict of Bridlegoose*, p.12) *A Porcupine in a Kitchen* (possibly its manuscript title). This is noted in Malcolm

Elwin's *Life of Llewelyn Powys* (p.146), but Elwin didn't have access to the original publications beyond some miscellaneous cuttings. The pieces were necessarily short, as the editor at the time H. E. Dounce was trying him out, but as their popularity grew with the reading public, he was allowed more space and the articles became longer. A later one (from 24 December 1921, p.9), *A Christmas Night in British East Africa*, gives us a glimpse of the character of his brother Will, one of the early settlers in the BEA. All the articles are written from a colonial perspective, as they were bound to be, and have a visceral immediacy which reflects vividly his experiences at the time – more vividly perhaps than some of the same material in *Black Laughter*, although that book, in Negley Farson's opinion, was true also to the 'meaning' of Africa.

Llewelyn Powys ***African Kitchen Raider***

I have just returned from British East Africa and when I hear complaints from housewives about the gas or the position of the shelves or the flow of water I wonder to myself what exacting young ladies would say if they were suddenly to be transported to some of the farms I know on the African veldt.

What would they say, for instance, when they found the meat for supper literally hidden by thousands of giant ants, the flour musty and full of sand, and the mustard put into the pot as custard powder by the enthusiastic native cook? What would they say to an open fireplace without a grate, a kitchen black with smoke, where a cloth laid down becomes instantaneously dirty, a kitchen with a mud floor, and with a cook whose natural instinct when a plate is dirty is to lick it clean?

In Africa the settlers build their kitchens outside, a few yards away, so as to avoid having natives in their house. This has its disadvantages. I well remember on my arrival in the country going across to one of these little buildings to fetch something rather late in the evening when the boys had gone to bed. I found the door ajar and just as I was about to enter I heard a heavy, lumbering movement near the fireplace and the sound, as it seemed to me, of rattling keys. I shut the door hurriedly and began shouting for the cook who slept not far off. While he was coming I remained listening.

The thing, whatever it was, had evidently become nervous. I heard it rushing round and round, scattering the pots and pans and making its infernal jangling-key noise all the time. I could not conceive what it might be. I was new to the country and a thousand fantastic speculations passed through my mind. Was it a leopard, perhaps? I held the door fast and shouted louder than ever.

The cook arrived at last, naked and drowsy. He listened a moment and then calmly uttered the word ‘jeggy’. I hardly knew Swahili as that time and the word ‘jeggy’ conveyed nothing to me. The boy did not seem in the least excited. I fancy he resented having been waked. He opened the door wide and immediately I saw a dark object as large as a pig rush past me into the surrounding bush. I recognised it at once – a porcupine! As a matter of fact, I made friends with that porcupine afterwards. I used to leave a basin of maize porridge for it and it would come night after night for its supper.

Llewelyn Powys
A Christmas Night in British East Africa

It has been my fortune to spend Christmas in some strange places. The night of December 25, 1918, for instance, I passed in a hole in the ground on the shore of a remote lake in the heart of Africa.

It came about like this: My brother and I were managing a stock farm in British East Africa, and as the season of good cheer approached we determined to celebrate it by slaughtering one of our oxen. We would for once let these poor devils of black men know what Christmas Day meant, we thought. On Christmas Eve, therefore, we rode down to where the bullocks were camped and told the herder that we wanted them brought into the yards early next morning.

The animal that we had in mind to kill was a fine, plump native steer with black and white markings and a hump on its shoulders as large as a camel’s. The hump, a peculiarity of all native cattle, is a provision made by nature for supplying them with a store of fatty sustenance, on which they can draw in times of draught, when grazing is scarce.

But this particular hump was the finest one I have ever seen, a veritable mountain of good food which rocked and swayed as the beast moved. Both my brother and I were especially partial to these humps, and we decided that in the distribution of Christmas beef this part should be reserved for us. I can see that bullock to this day as clearly as anything. He was grazing along the side of an escarpment, the tropical sun beating down upon his glossy flanks, quite unconscious of the plots that were being made against his life. ‘*Letti gombi subwe sana keshu* (Bring the cattle in early tomorrow morning’), we reminded the Masai herder as we mounted our ponies.

Man proposes. The Masai was at the door of our grass hut all right on Christmas morning but instead of his saying that his cattle were safely in the yards he gravely informed us, with the simple directness that characterises his tribe, that they had all

been stampeded by lions to the four quarters of the globe – all, he added, but one, which had been killed. It meant that our cherished plan of keeping Christmas in the good old-fashioned manner was at an end. We might possibly give our boys a couple of sheep, but we certainly could not afford to give them a second ox.

After breakfast, leaving instructions that a search should be made for the lost cattle, we ourselves under the guidance of the Masai went to the place where the carcass lay, and found – of course – that it was none other than the plump steer which we had selected for the Christmas dinner.

There it was, in the middle of an open clearing, near the mouth of a small river that runs into Lake Elmenteita. The neck had been dislocated by the lion's paw. We could see where the claws had dug into the head. The hide had been partially torn off, revealing the ribs crushed and broken.

After you have been ranching for several years in Africa, you become more or less philosophic about such disasters, and I think we would have taken this one with becoming equanimity if it had not been that the very hump we had reserved for our own dinner was gone, completely devoured.

My brother was furious. 'God!' he exclaimed, 'I'd like to give that lion something to be going on with!' Accordingly, we found ourselves spending our Christmas digging a hole some few yards from the dead steer. We had plenty of boys to help us. By four in the afternoon we had it surrounded with a thick hedge or stockade. We felt pretty confident that the lion would be back after dark because, except the hump and a few ribs, he had eaten little of the kill.

Before the sun went down we took up our position in the covered-in hole. We had some whiskey with us and some venison sandwiches. The hours that followed remain vividly in my mind. It is always interesting to be out at night in Africa and in our position by the shore of the lake it was more so than ever. One after another, in a long line, with snortings and splashings and bellowings, the monstrous hippopotami made their way up the small river-bed. Even in the dim light we could make out their huge forms quite clearly. (I confess I did not at all appreciate being so near to that *primaeval* procession.) Their movements disturbed strange water birds roosting in the rushes. We could hear the wings of them in the air above us and now and again, far overhead, a shrill and unfamiliar cry. Away in the plains behind, jackals would *yap, yap, yap!* And then once more there would be silence.

After a little came the sound of galloping hooves. A herd of zebras was coming to the river to drink, each one possessed by that nervous apprehension which they always display when driven by thirst to venture into overgrown and over-shadowed

places. We could hear them galloping forward, galloping backward, whirling this way and that, as they approached their drinking place by the edge of the still-flowing and darkened river. A hippopotamus would come floundering up the muddy bank, and the sound of his heavy, slipping feet would be answered by a chorus of whinnies.

Still we waited. Suddenly my brother touched my arm. The contact made a cold shiver pass down my back, for at the same time I heard something moving about quite close to the side of the boma where I was lying. The something advanced slowly, passing at last right in front of our spy-hole. 'A hyena,' muttered my brother, and he was right. In the darkness I could just recognise the heavy, slouching gait of the animal.

He was the forerunner of others – and what a ghastly racket they made when once settled down to their meal! I had no idea that so few animals could make such a noise. They must have been audible five miles away and they growled and howled and whooped, and yelled. Finally one of them began to laugh, to laugh that parody of merriment that has become so notorious. I have never been as near to the sound as I was on that occasion. It was certainly macabre enough. It was exactly as though a lunatic woman were making the forest echo. The worst quality was the illusion it conveyed of diabolic intelligence; one felt that the animal in some ghastly half-human way knew what it was laughing at.

We began now to think that our vigil had been useless. 'These noisy devils will finish it all up,' my brother said. But as a matter of fact they had not quite time to do that. All at once not a quarter of a mile away the lion made his presence known.

We snatched at our rifles, for such was the menace in that single guttural utterance that one could not help being conscious of the instinctive misgiving which is inherited doubtless from the recurring fear of our far-off monkey-like ancestors. The very earth seemed to shake with the reverberation. One by one the hyenas slunk away.

When the lion must still have been a hundred yards off we could hear his breathing. He came straight up to the carcass. My brother knelt ready with his rifle. At first the lion stood in such a position that it was impossible to get a good shot at him. As he buried his head in the mangled body of the ox I was conscious of his tufted tail sweeping against some of the outside branches of our stockade. And what a sound of crushed and crackling bones ensued!

Still my brother held his fire, determined as he was to make no mistake. The musty, sweetish smell of the enormous animal nearly sickened me. I began to shiver and wish myself anywhere in the world but in that wretched hole. Suddenly my brother fired and the animal fell dead.

The noise evidently frightened every creature in the vicinity, because a deathly silence followed the shot. My brother was so certain that we would not be disturbed again that night that he actually had the nerve to sleep. I must own for myself I felt no such sense of security. I remained awake, a silent watcher.

There was no moon in the sky, but the stars were shining clearly. From where I crouched, I could see various constellations. The Southern Cross was there, and low on the horizon King Charles's Wain.

I looked curiously at this latter, thinking to myself how it was now, on this very night, probably visible across the seas in England, where in many a thatched cottage and timbered manor-house Christmas was being celebrated. That the pale light from those seven stars could at the same time be reflected on the mysterious poisoned waters of Lake Elmenteita and shine down upon the fox-haunted frost-cripsed meadows at home struck me just then as being exceedingly strange.

At the rising of the sun I woke my brother and, stiff and cold, we crept from our hiding place. There before us lay the dead lion. We stood looking at him for some moments, and then my brother said with satisfaction, 'Well, *that* yellow cat won't eat any more humps for his Christmas dinner!'

* * *

Julia Mathews

Theodora Gay Scutt: A Lifetime with Animals

[Julia has written about her memories of Theodora, TFP's adopted daughter also called Susan or Susie, and her childhood in Mappowder in the 1950s and 1960s, in NL79, July 2013; NL89, November 2016 and NL105, March 2022. CT]

It was of course inevitable that Theodora would have an intrinsic love of animals, growing up as she did in a rural farming community in Dorset.

In *A Cuckoo In The Powys Nest*, she recalls a conversation with her father, Theodore, while walking with him as a child. They were talking of the time when Theodore was farming in Suffolk. She referred to the Suffolk Punch as *the breed that Daddy owned and swore by*.^[1]

They talked of his farm horse, which was a cob called Fanny, who broke a leg after falling on ice on the way to Saxmundham and sadly had to be shot. Previously Theodore had always driven Fanny to market and ridden her around the farm. He did not hunt though, telling Theodora *I don't get on very well with these fine hunting gentlemen*. She learned about the sadness of animal death not only through the cob,

Fanny but also when Theodore told her about his terrier Nip who had died at the farm after eating poison: *You see Susie my dear, in those days vermin poison was not very well understood and a great deal of it was used.*[2]

There was the story Theodore told of the bull on Lodmoor near Weymouth. Walking with his father, whose senility rendered him incapable of recognising danger he assured Theodore the bull was “playing” with them. Theodore had the sense to suggest to his father they had a walking race since old Mr Powys was unable to run. In this way they escaped the bull. [3]

Perhaps in *Mr. Weston’s Good Wine*, Theodore had this memory in mind when he wrote of Mr. Grunter’s sexuality being likened to the bull. *A bull be a bull, and Grunter I do fancy be a man* [4] In Luke Bird’s preaching to the ‘beasts of the fields,’ the bull is de-sexualised so that it no longer takes any notice of the cows and young heifers.

So Theodora grew up with Theodore’s anecdotes. When they moved to Mappowder they were living in the heart of Hardy’s ‘Vale of Little Dairies’. Cows would have wandered past The Lodge and through the village to be milked each day at Styles Farm. Theodora sought comfort after a row with Violet by talking to the hunter, a gelding called Sam, which belonged to the family friend Mr. Fisher and lived in the field opposite the Lodge: *I talked it over with him and he agreed to be my friend. And then I went home, because Mummy didn’t matter anymore now that I had Sam.* [5]

Theodora was fond of The Fishers who lived at Place Farm at Mappowder and they were friends of the Powys family. Theodora was given one of their outgrown ponies to learn to ride on which sadly died of colic. Theodora now learnt how to deal with the grief of losing an animal, having heard of her father losing Fanny she must have realised there was some inevitability of death with animals. Referring to her half-brother John’s puppy being run over and his subsequent sorrow she said, *Long before I knew of loss and now when I know it well, my opinion was and is that if you count the pain as more important than the joy of life you’re a loser from the start.*[6]

At Mappowder she had her Alsatian dog Finn, who eventually died of old age. Bess, her bay pony and later a chestnut pony called Mehelig, who also died of *extreme old age in her own horse box*. She complained that Potocki [*Count Geoffrey Potocki de Montalk, 1903-1997, ed*] wanted her to get rid of these domestic animals. At her little small holding in Lovelace Copse with her Jersey cow Zlotta and two donkeys, working as a dairy maid for John and Alan Hiscock prepared her for farming with her husband Bernard Scutt.

All this farming experience and love of domestic animals stayed with her so that years later she had her own smallholding in Ireland. She often mentioned a large

barn called Kavanagh Hall. I am not sure why but I am sure if Kate Kavanagh can elaborate on this. Some of the animals, as in the case of Harriet the Cat went with her to Ireland from Henley in Dorset.

I have a collection of letters from 2002 to 2009 all of which contain anecdotes relating to her various animals and their escapades. In 2010, a letter from her in Ireland reflects on the grief of loss. Her old collie, Bencaigh, had died the week before: she says *Daddy didn't approve of having any animal one would lose because "it would die quite soon and cause one grief."* She then writes of the happiness she has had with her dogs and says *I know Daddy was wrong.* She goes on to write that *what Daddy would agree with is that most Irishmen are afraid of dogs. No burglar will face my pack!*

She told me of four tailless kittens left at her door, two died of enteritis but two black tailless survived until one was run over. She mentions another tailless that *arrived under his own steam the Christmas before last.* Then there is the cat with the endearing name of Ginger Bugger, I am hoping this was mainly limited and abbreviated to the first part of the name. He was given to her by "Cat Woman". I can only assume she was from a cat's protection society or charity. Her cat called Waif was not a fighter but was prepared to protect itself against Ginger who caused a few problems being a fighter but apparently Waif could *beat Ginger into a cocked hat.*

Theodora tells me about her horse in Ireland called Solas, an original Connemara like the one that pulled Cu Chulainn's war chariot. The fact that she makes this comparison must mean that she knew something of the Celtic legends. Cu Chulainn was a legendary hero with a black and grey horse pulling his chariot.

Problems arose if Theodora went away with so many animals to be looked after. In a letter dated 24/11/02 Theodora declares *Everything was in such a mess when I got home.* I believe she had been in hospital and writes that she had 3 stay at home dogs in the Lower Byre who were looked after by a young local man but he had not walked the dogs so they had *done some damage to the byre which acts as the fowls winter quarters. The little gentle terrier Pipit was partly starved as the others had taken her food.* She goes on to tell me that the chickens, Rhode Island Reds, were shut in the wrong place out of the way of a dog called Ceathair who had eaten some of them in the past. The ducks, Khaki Campbell breed, who are apparently difficult to get in at night had been taken home with the young man, to be looked after by his Grand-mother as he had seen a fox in the vicinity. The cats were all fine apart from poor Harriet The Cat who got into her *favourite cupboard and died.* She was not found for four months then she was found by Ceathair and later cremated.

As far as I can make out the total number of dogs were Maida a whippet, a Boxer, a three legged Collie called Peggy, Brownie a half Labrador and the aforementioned fighter Ceathair. Solas, now being schooled by someone who had trained with Monty Roberts (the Horse Whisperer) along with the cows Theodora felt were luckily independent if she went away.

She had hoped, on her return, to sell her cows but the farmer, who was going to buy them, could no longer afford to. He had a lot of hospital bills to pay after his son had a motorbike accident. Theodora managed to renegotiate the deal so that the farmer bought the cows more cheaply. In return he would sell her Kerry cattle once a year, cheaply, at six months old.

In a letter dated 18/01/04 a similar occurrence is recalled when Theodora has to go to Sligo hospital following an accident at the beginning of December. She describes it as the sort of accident that ought to go into the *Guinness Book of Records*.

She had a dairy goat called Nancy, who was lonely as her companion had been given to friends who lived up the mountain. Theodora decided to borrow back this goat to keep Nancy company. The idea being that Nancy would like the company of other goats and so could be encouraged to produce a kid. One evening at the animals' supper time, Theodora found her in Solas' loose box refusing to come out, although Solas had come out. Theodora decided to try poking her with a stick as she still would not come out. Then the visiting goat had a sudden change of mind and went rushing out of the door straight into Theodora knocking her down so that she fell under Solas, breaking her right wrist in the process. Consequently, she spent two nights in Sligo hospital and three of her dogs had to go into kennels. Not explained but I can only assume Theodora's friends and neighbours helped out with the driving. At this time she had six dogs living in the house and although friends were helping with the outdoor animals she says people were too afraid of her house dogs to help in the house so she was *putting up with the mess*.

All turned out well in the end as the errant goat was sent home and Nancy went to live with the man who had bred her. He had a herd of Anglo – Nubians including a “fine Billy” so that solved the problem of getting Nancy in kid.

It is impossible to imagine Theodora living without animals, though of course this happened when she was in a nursing home. She told everyone including, Patrick Quigley, who regularly visited her, that she would soon be going back to her animals and ended her days with that thought in mind. She had a wonderful rapport with animals and in fact with all of God's creatures. She explained to Patrick that one

evening when she was having supper a rat joined her but far from being horrified, she shared her supper with the rat.

As a child she listened to Theodore's stories of the farm in Suffolk. Later, Theodora not only worked on farms in her youth then farmed with her husband in Dorset but lastly ran her smallholding in Ireland. A life time with animals, yet truly in the style of Theodora to the end, not the traditional elderly lady with a lap dog.

References

1. *Cuckoo in the Powys Nest*, Theodora Gay Scutt, Brynmill Press, 2000, p.82
2. *ibid.*, p.84
3. *ibid.*, p.85
4. *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, Chatto and Windus, (Phoenix Library), 1928, p.126
5. *Cuckoo in the Powys Nest*, p.169
6. *ibid.*, p.198

[**Kate Kavanagh** adds: At later visits to Theodora in Ireland one met two residents in the stable, and she kindly shut her 6 dogs in the house – not that I was afraid of them, but they were a bit too friendly...After she was borne away to Boyle, a favorite remark was, 'of course I prefer visitors with four legs...']

* * *

News and Notes

From Kevin Taylor:

Rev Richard Coles and A Glastonbury Romance

The longer (54-minute) Arts & Ideas version of the BBC Radio 3 Free Thinking programme on JCP broadcast on 29 September 2022 includes Matthew Sweet quoting the Rev. Richard Coles as follows: I read *A Glastonbury Romance* when I was 16 and it changed my life.

[**CT** adds: For a review of the BBC R3 Free Thinking programme on JCP see Newsletter 107, November 2022.]

From Kate Kavanagh:

A note from a friend in Buenos Aires

Have begun re-reading Powys's incomparable autobiography. Surely it's the best that has ever been written, and not only in the English language. Am enjoying it even more than I did the first time I read it some twenty odd years ago. I suppose one evolves, expands, unfolds in such a way that appreciation of such a work hits you



Recording the Free Thinking programme about JCP on BBC Radio 3, 29 September 2022. From left to right: Matthew Sweet, Kevan Manwaring, Iain Sinclair, Margaret Drabble and John Gray. Photo by Luke Mulhall.

proportionately to your own growth. Even more enjoyable with Rafael [her father]’s pencil markings and my own when I read it for the first time. Impossible to describe the joy, the boost, the energy John Powys produces in me -- he’s a master, or as he himself said, a Magician. A boon to have inherited this amazing library. I think it’s absolutely incredible that he has not been given the place he deserves in English (and Universal) letters, albeit the efforts of the Powys Society.

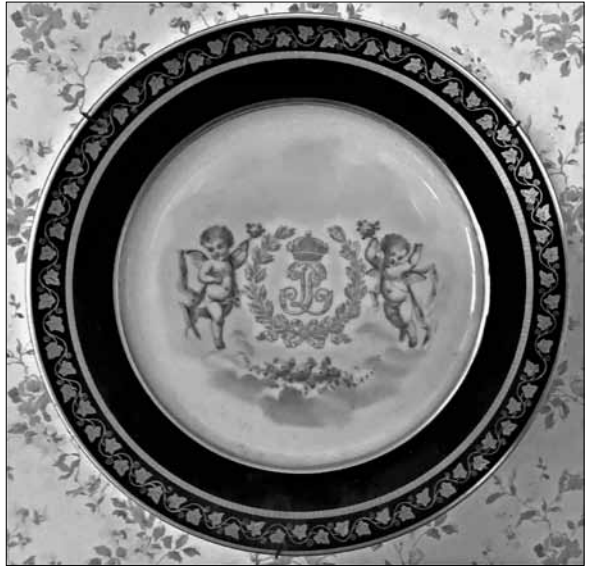
[‘The Ichthyan Leap’ by Rafael Squirru is in NL56, p.48]

From Chris Thomas:

A gift of French tableware

Amanda Powys has in her possession two pieces of French tableware from a dinner service once owned by “the last King of France” [Louis Philippe 1, 1773-1850, the Citizen King, who was forced to abdicate following the 1848 revolution]. According to a note, written by Sally Powys, attached to the back of one of these plates the items were given to Lucy Powys by JCP and subsequently gifted to Francis Powys by Gerard Casey on the death of Lucy. Amanda says that she thinks the plates had probably been acquired at some stage by Phyllis Playter perhaps by sale at an auction.

*French tableware – a gift from
JCP and Phyllis to Lucy Powys.
Photo Kevin Taylor.*



JCP at home in Burpham

The caption to the photo of sheep outside the George and Dragon Inn at Burpham (now known as The George at Burpham) in NL107, p.36, was misleading! JCP's house, though nearby, is not visible in the photo. The house is situated further down the lane. There is a good view of the house (known at the time JCP moved there as Bankside and later called Warre House) which can be seen from the top of the earthwork where JCP placed the 'No Trespassing' sign which, we learn in *Autobiography*, offended the local residents of the village – see photo of JCP's house in NL65, November 2008, p.8. The great flock of sheep that gathered annually outside the George and Dragon did of course also pass beside JCP's house. Geoffrey Winch informs me that you can also see images of the annual sheep washing event at Burpham, described by JCP in *Autobiography*, in a video on Facebook. This clip has in fact been extracted from a silent film made in 1921, directed by Cecil Hepworth, adapted from a novel by Tickner Edwardes called *Tansy* which was made on location on the South Downs and in Burpham village.

The Garden

Evidence that JCP's poem *The Garden* (included in the collection *Mandragora*, 1917) refers to the garden of his house in Burpham (see NL107, p.35 and the beginning of Chapter Eight of *Autobiography*) can be found in letters he wrote from Burpham (published in Newsletter 58, July 2006) in which he expresses his deep satisfaction with the location of the house that he had recently acquired, referring to its *access to the wide Downs, River and Sea* and declaring that he is *delighted with the house and garden* (Letter to Littleton, 9 February 1902). *This garden is like a vase of precious odours—phloxes reminding me of Northwold pouring out their scent* (Letter to TFP, 1909).

Glen Cavaliero Fellowship

On 21 April 2021 St. Catharine's College announced via their website that a named Fellowship has been established in honour of Glen Cavaliero. Professor Sir Mark Welland, Master of St Catharine's, said, *It is with great pride that I can announce the Glen Cavaliero Fellowship in English, a fitting tribute to his considerable contribution to scholarship, literature and the life of the College. Dr Cavaliero's bequests to St Catharine's chime with his generosity as a teacher and supporter of the College during his lifetime. His legacy will enable us to enrich College life and enhance the support offered to our students.*

Dr Caroline Gonda, Glen's colleague and friend, has been chosen as the inaugural Glen Cavaliero Fellow, effective from 19 March 2021. Dr Gonda commented, *Dr Cavaliero was a much loved and inspiring teacher for generations of English students at St Catharine's. He is fondly remembered and much missed by the current Fellowship as a welcoming presence in College life for new Fellows, students and guests. I was lucky to be able to count Glen as a friend, and it is a pleasure and an honour to have been selected for this new Fellowship.*

JCP and Bertrand Russell

Further to the note on JCP and his contemporaries and especially JCP's encounter with Bertrand Russell referenced in NL107, November 2022, readers may wish to note another mention of Russell in an unpublished letter, dated 17 June 1961, to one of JCP's admiring correspondents, William Gillespie:

The greatest man I live nearest to today is Bertrand Russell and quite recently I lectured him for half an hour on the lines on his face and the bumps on his head to the delight of his fourth wife, an American lady who entirely agreed with all I said. [CT adds: Russell's fourth wife was the American writer and biographer Edith Finch who he first met in the 1930s and who he married in 1952.]

The Chalice

The owner of the Atlantis Bookshop in Bloomsbury, Geraldine Beskin, told me about a novel with a Powysian connection I had not previously heard about. *The Chalice* by Phil Rickman, published by Atlantis Books in 2013 is a novel set in Glastonbury about family tensions, ghosts, spiritual evil and the conflict between the local residents of the town, New Age pilgrims and the construction of a new nearby highway. The novel prominently features Dion Fortune and her books *Avalon of the Heart* and *Psychic Self Defence*, as well as a writer called Joe Powys – the supposed illegitimate son of “Uncle Jack Powys”!

Max Dupain and Llewelyn Powys

Paul Cheshire informed me of an exchange of e-mails he has had with Gael Newton, a photo-historian in Australia who told him about the Australian modernist photographer Max Dupain (1911-1992) who Gael described as *one of the finest of our art photographers. I wrote a monograph on him in 1982 and am now revisiting some aspects of his career. Dupain was interested in the work of Llewellyn Powys and titled one of his works 'Impassioned clay'* (image reproduced in this Newsletter). Gael asks if Dupain's photograph might express any of Llewelyn's ideas. There are certainly connections that might be traced between Dupain's exultant female figure and Llewelyn's vitalistic and epicurean philosophy of life. Gael cites a Ph.D thesis by Isobel Crombie for the School of Fine Arts, Classical Studies and Archaeology, University of Melbourne, 1999, called *Body culture: Max Dupain and the social recreation of the body, c.1919-1939* which includes a reference to Dupain's interest in Llewelyn's writings: *Dupain, for instance, would have admired the Powys brothers emphasis on the need for passionate experiences as a means of approaching modern life. He also appears to have responded to their interest in sexual 'energies' as evidenced in his photograph Impassioned clay which he titled after Llewelyn Powys's book of the same name. In this photograph Dupain has montaged the naked body of a woman with a shell in direct reference to Powys's comment on the cowrie shell as symbolic of female sexuality. In Impassioned Clay, 1931, p.45, Llewelyn writes about the similarity of the shape of the cowrie shell and the sexual centre of a woman's body. On the basis of this it would be interesting to learn more about the reception of Llewelyn's works in Australia, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, and the influence of his books on Australian artists and writers.*



Impassioned Clay, gelatin silver photograph by Max Dupain, 1936

JCP en français

Reviews by Goulven le Brech of some recent translations into French of books by JCP and TFP, published by Le Bruit du Temps, will appear in this year's Powys Journal, Vol. XXXIII. The books are: *Rodmoor*, *Les Parias* [*Selected Essays*], *La Pré de la Chèvre* [*Goat Green* by TFP]. All are translated by Patrick Reumaux. Goulven will also review *La Table Ronde des Powys* by Patrick Reumaux. Another notable recent translation is JCP's *The Art of Forgetting the Unpleasant*, by Judith Coppel, published in October 2022 by Editions de la Baconnière. For a complete bibliography of works by JCP and TFP in French translation see *Powys Review*, no.24, 1989 and Newsletter No.105, March 2022.

Another accolade for JCP by George Steiner

In the *Times*, 3 May 1962 in a column called Packing Them In, George Steiner listed his indispensable reading matter to take on his travels: *We return to certain books as we return to houses in which life beats strong. We hear in them the echo of our voice as it was before it assumed its routine or waning timbre...there are things I would feel bereft of without worrying whether they are of any syllabus or eminent tradition: Cavendish's Life of Wolsey, Keynes's essays in biography, Orwell's Homage to Catalonia, Jones's Life of Freud, Graves's White Goddess (that boisterous, cunning primer of dreams) and all I can lay my hands on of John Cowper Powys and William Golding.*

TFP and Samuel Beckett

In the introduction to her book *The Selected Early Works of T. F. Powys* (Brynmill Press, 2003, Vol. 2, p.444), Elaine Mencher quotes a distinctively Beckettian statement from an autobiographical fragment by TFP (1921): *This is what I have tried to do here, living quietly and letting the moods of God blow through me as they may. I deliberately avoided Action, as the world knows it. I did nothing; I went nowhere; I met nobody.* Compare this with Estragon's comment in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot. Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes...* (*Waiting for Godot*, Act 1). If, for Estragon the experience of nothingness is *awful*, for TFP he felt that his insight into his own situation was the necessary outcome of a long period of meditation. For a discussion of the connection between TFP and Beckett see NL107. The passage from TFP's autobiographical fragment is also quoted by J Lawrence Mitchell in his *T.F. Powys Aspects of a Life*, 2005, p.2 who notes that this passage also appeared in TFP's essay "Why I have Given Up Writing" (*John O' London's Weekly*, 23 October 1936 which was partly reprinted in Peter Riley's bibliography of TFP, 1967, p.63). Larry Mitchell comments on TFP's observation about his way of

living: *While this statement does not altogether withstand scrutiny it exactly reflects the modus vivendi Theodore had consciously adopted.* In his period of silence after giving up writing TFP committed himself to a life of contemplation. Mitchell cites a Beckettian sentence from George Fox's *Journal* which TFP underlined: *I am become nothing in the world* (TFP's copy of Fox's *Journal* is located in the *ex-libris* section of the Powys Society Collection at Exeter University.) Pat Quigley comments: *I think Beckett was very dismissive of T. F. Powys, but there are interesting analogies between him and the Powyses. Beckett wrote a lot about silence, but didn't practise it, whereas Theodore did. I'm reading All or Nothing and JCP reminds me of Beckett's Molloy as he waits for death, spinning out story after story.*

* * *

A letter from Alfred Perlès, via Turkey, to Kate Kavanagh, 22nd November 1975

Introduction by Kate Kavanagh

Fred Perlès (1897-1990) and his Scottish wife Anne were living in Kyrenia, Cyprus, where we visited them in 1970 (1971?) having met them in 1968 (?) in Crete. When the Turks invaded, they lost everything and for the following years house-sat for people in England. One of the houses was in Cerne Abbas where we again stayed, and I joined a Powys Society party (I think the conference was in Weymouth) which started me off. Fred took me to tea with Lucy Penny and Mary. He and Anne ended in Wells; they came to us in the Cotswolds most years.

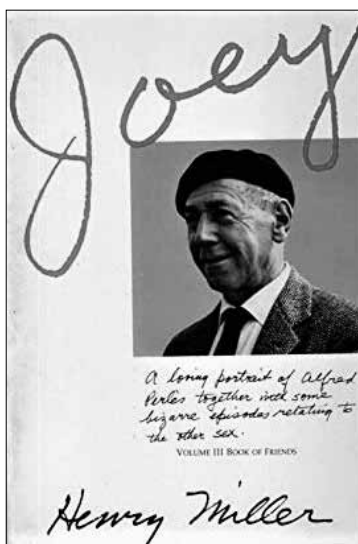
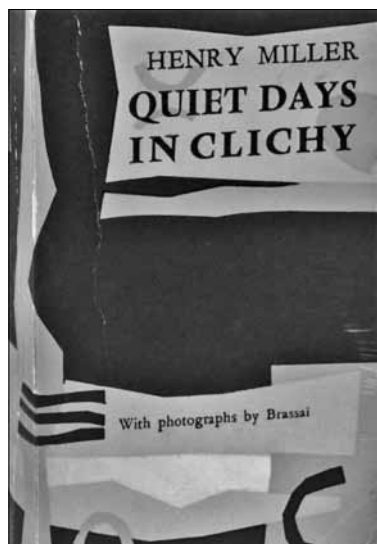
Fred, who was Czech-Viennese, had a claim to fame in one of Ezra Pound's Cantos, as a WWI conscript who refused to shoot and escaped execution by feigning madness. He moved to Paris as a journalist and shared a flat with Henry Miller in Clichy in the 1930s; their literary circle including Lawrence Durrell and Anais Nin. Several books resulted from this such as Miller's Quiet Days in Clichy in which Perlès appears as the character Carl. The novella was written in the late 1930s and early 1940s, first published by the Olympia Press in France in 1956 and later published in New York by the Grove Press in 1965. In 1979 Miller published a memoir of Perlès called Joey, Volume III of Miller's Book of Friends. Alfred Perlès produced several novels in French (Sentiments limitrophes, 1930, Le quatuor en ré major 1938) and memoirs in English (My Friend Henry Miller, 1955; Reunion in Big Sur, 1959; My Friend Lawrence Durrell, 1961; Art and Outrage, 1959; Scenes from a Floating Life, 1968; Henry Miller in Villa Seurat, 1973, (UK); and My Friend

Alfred Perlès, coda to an unfinished autobiography, 1973). *When WW2 began, he moved with Anne to England and acquired British nationality.*

Chris Thomas writes about Henry Miller:

The first edition of *Quiet Days in Clichy* was illustrated with Brassai's photographs of Parisian street-life in the 1930s that had originally been published in Brassai's first collection *Paris de Nuit*, in 1933. Miller, who was acquainted with Brassai in Paris, published an essay on the photographer called *The Eye of Paris* in 1938. Brassai's memoir of Miller, *Henry Miller: the Paris Years*, was published in English in 1995. For notes on Henry Miller and JCP see Newsletter No.82, July 2014, pp.23-33 and Newsletter No.83, November 2014, pp.30-33. See also *Proteus and the Magician, the Letters of Henry Miller and John Cowper Powys*, 2014. See also books by Henry Miller: *The Books In my Life*, 1952; *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch*, 1957 and *Stand Still Like The Humming Bird*, 1962.

Also see: an essay by Henry Miller in *The Aylesford Review*, Summer 1962, on Joseph Delteil (1894-1978), French Catholic novelist, and poet, in which Miller refers to JCP: *still with us glory be! that bard like phenomenon JCP, for whom language is a sixth sense*; *The Immortal Bard*, Village Press, 1973, 4pp. Originally published in *The Review of English Literature*, January 1963 (Volume IV, Nr. 1) and NL81, March 2014, letter, dated April 1958, from Miller to Lawrence Durrell, about AGR and praising JCP.



Front covers of *Joey* – a memoir of Fred Perlès by Henry Miller and of the first edition of *Quiet Days in Clichy* by Henry Miller, Olympia Press, 1956

Letter from Fred Perlès to KK

... I'm glad you have discovered John Cowper Powys; he's been one of my great favourites for a long time and I've even had a spirited exchange of letters with him shortly before he died at the age of over 90!

Needless to say that I'm in full agreement with his dictum that it is imperative to enjoy life to the hilt and as far as I'm concerned I don't have to force myself to do so; to me it comes quite naturally and not on the instinctual level alone.

The fascinating thing about growing old is that one incessantly discovers new things, the importance of which has eluded us earlier in life. As a near octogenarian I'm often surprised at the almost childish wonderment that grips me at the sudden realisation of certain facts of life I should have known (and probably did know in some unformulated manner) several decades ago.

My latest discovery is the oneness of all living things in the universe and our interdependence upon one another in the three kingdoms of nature and mankind. Communication is possible between all living organisms. I no longer consider a person cracked because he is having, say, a conversation with a flower or a horse. There is no man-made security; the only security we can enjoy and always rely upon is the knowledge that we are part of a whole, and thus shareholders of the Cosmos, to which consciously or unconsciously we contribute and from which we receive our dividends if only to a quintillionth part. A most marvellous feeling, I assure you, one for which the atheist has no name ...

* * *

Chris Thomas

Two contemporary reviews of A Glastonbury Romance

We preview here two contrasting reviews of *A Glastonbury Romance* not listed in Derek Langridge's *John Cowper Powys, A Record of Achievement* (1966). The reviews are not as widely read, in full, as they should be especially as one of them emanates from the Mayor of Glastonbury himself and the other was very much appreciated and admired by JCP himself. We plan to publish these reviews alongside two other contemporary reviews of works by JCP in the forthcoming July Newsletter.

Both reviews of *A Glastonbury Romance* were written just a few weeks after the first publication of the novel in the UK which occurred on 30 June 1933. The review by Henry Folliot Scott-Stokes, who was Mayor of Glastonbury in 1932-1933, is almost wholly negative in tone and point of view. The review by Frederick J Mathias however

is much more sympathetic and enthusiastic and instantly struck a chord with JCP who empathised with the writer's approach to his novel. In a letter to Llewelyn, dated 1 August 1933, he said that he was thrilled by this review: *No glory I have ever had has pleased me to the tune of this Cardiff review*. Indeed, JCP must have been cheered by the author's positive comments and philosophical remarks so soon after learning about the critical reception of his novel elsewhere in the UK *somewhat like a far-tossing battle cry over alarms and excursions in a land half lost to me* as he wrote to Llewelyn on 24 July 1933.

Sensuality in Somerset by Henry Folliot Scott-Stokes

This review of *A Glastonbury Romance* appeared in the weekly literary and political periodical *Time and Tide* on 15 July 1933. Some extracts from the review have previously appeared at the beginning of an article by Penny Smith called 'The Cave of the man-eating Mothers', published in the *Powys Review* No.9, 1981/1982, p.10. (See also *The Topicality of A Glastonbury Romance* by Susan Rands in *Powys Review* 27/28, 1992-1993, p.48). As Penny Smith notes this review followed E. M. Delafield's parody, 'Romantic Glastonbury or Happy Haunts for Summer Holidays' which was published in the 8 July issue of *Time and Tide*. Delafield's article was subsequently reprinted in Newsletter 30, April 1997. Scott-Stokes calls *A Glastonbury Romance* 'cheap and nasty' and at one stage declares 'No, no, Mr Powys it really wont do'. It is however still useful to read complete this response to JCP's novel by a contemporary resident of Glastonbury particularly since JCP himself wondered how the inhabitants of Glastonbury would react to his novel and hoped above all that it would be well received. In his diary on 8 July JCP wrote: *I do so want it to be read in Glastonbury and to be sold in the ruins to visitors and pilgrims there! What pleases me most is that it should be sold and bought in Glastonbury its wone self*. The critical opinion of Scott-Stokes anticipates another extremely negative response by Richard Aldington who later called *A Glastonbury Romance* 'a hotch-potch of realism, rather disgusting eroticism, psychism and pseudo rural clap trap'. (printed on the inside front flap of the dust jacket, 5th impression of the first UK edition of *AGR*, December 1934).

Scott-Stokes adopts a narrow parochial viewpoint, attacks the novel and claims that JCP fails to understand local institutions pointing out especially that there are deficiencies in JCP's representation of the role of the Mayor of Glastonbury and the role of the Town Council. JCP might however have been more concerned about the way Scott-Stokes attacks him for his inaccurate representation of the Glastonbury topography since JCP had gone to so much trouble to delineate the real features of the local landscape in which the action of the novel takes place. JCP refers to the review

in two letters to his brother Littleton. On 4 August 1933 he said: *They tell me that the Mayor of Glastonbury has written an attack in a publication called Time and Tide in Bristol. Someone is going to send me this work.* By 12 August he had read the review and told Littleton that he was amused and ‘tickled’ by the Mayor’s opinions. Of course, Scott-Stokes was not the only local potentate of Glastonbury to take offence – the other person was Captain Hodgkinson, the real owner of the Wookey Hole caves, who, as is well known, successfully brought a libel suit against JCP.

Although JCP appears to treat the Mayor’s strictures lightly, Nick Fenney has suggested to me that it may have been this review which in fact prompted JCP to add the *Author’s Statement and Apology* to the 4th impression of the UK edition of *A Glastonbury Romance* which appeared in September 1933 in which JCP clearly asserted that the character of Philip Crow is entirely imaginary and has no connection to the current real owner of the Wookey Hole Caves. On the other hand, Susan Rands notes in her essay *The Topicality of A Glastonbury Romance* that *it does seem probable that Hodgkinson’s activities, fully reported in the local press, may have given Powys some ideas for Crow.*

Susan Rands comments that Scott-Stokes *seems to have felt that A Glastonbury Romance was a threat to the reputation of the people of Glastonbury, and ‘the Christian Ethic’.* *He was a classicist by training and a man of some culture; no doubt his views, as expressed in Time and Tide, were entirely commendable ethically but they show a lack of literary discrimination...*

H. F. Scott-Stokes (1896-1976) was appointed Mayor of Glastonbury on six occasions – in 1932-1933, 1941-1942, 1942-1943, 1951-1952, 1956-1957 and 1961-1962. He was managing director of Morlands of Glastonbury, a well-established manufacturer of sheepskin and leather goods which still operates today. He was active in local politics standing as the Liberal candidate for Weston super Mare in 1934 and 1935. He was also the author of several books including *Perseus – Of Dragons* (1925) and produced a facsimile edition of extracts from *Glastonbury Abbey during the Crusades* by Adam of Domerham (1934).

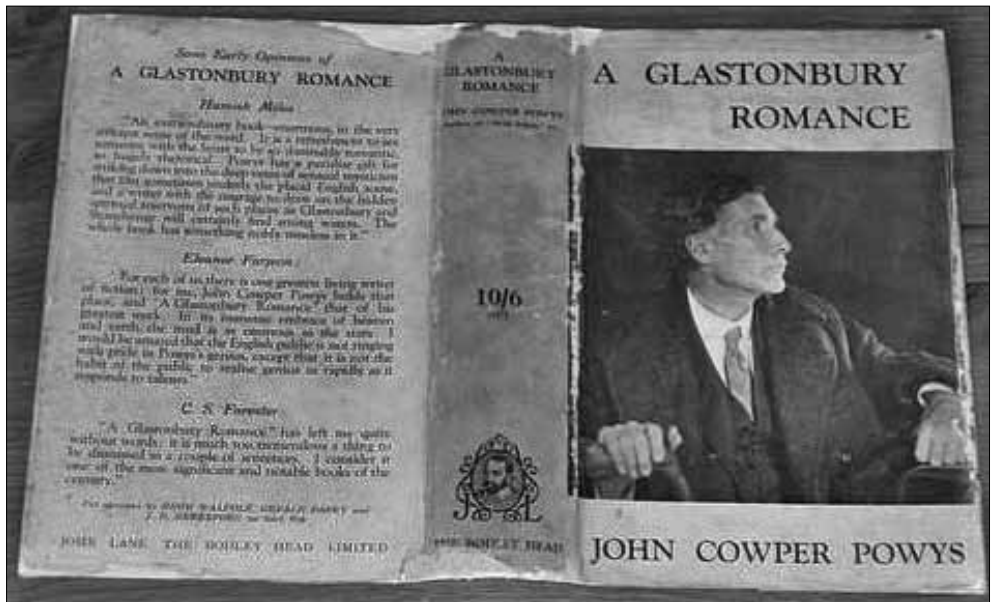
Life’s Philosophy of a Religious Pagan by F. J. Mathias

This review was published in the *Western Mail & South Wales News* on July 18 1933. JCP was greatly pleased with the review not least because he associated the name and place of the publication with Mr Evans and Cordelia Geard. But he also appreciated the reviewer’s religious sense and his insight into his personal philosophy as well as his own ecstatic prose style. JCP wrote to Llewelyn about this in a letter dated 1 August 1933: *...this review seems to be profoundly and very passionately religious and gets*

'carried away' in exactly the sort of rhetoric that I am inclined to use myself now and again! He even quotes passages from the review which had impressed him especially noting: ...that passage 'only sin mourns the vanquished darkness' – Cannot we detect here in this particular Welsh note a vein, an element, a tone, which I am not wrong in finding in our own writing?

Frederick J. Mathias (1877-1934) was a school teacher, classical scholar, and public speaker whose lectures attracted large audiences. He usually made speeches without notes. F. J. Mathias was also the chief literary critic of the *Western Mail and South Wales News*. He was first appointed to the position of literary critic at the *Western Mail* in 1927. He contributed a regular article each Thursday on current literature and new books.

Mr. Mathias's obituary published in the *Western Mail* on 5 November 1934 was full of praise for a local celebrity and declared he was: 'one of the soundest contributions to literary criticism in the daily press. He was an ideal contributor...He never write an unkind word...Almost every literary critic and author of eminence in this country had one time or another paid his tribute...Probably no individual in the city of Cardiff succeeded as well as he in bringing home to the popular mind the beauties of English literature...He was a master of English...who had such a wonderful command of words...His reviews in the *Western Mail & South Wales News* were always gems.' No wonder JCP empathised with his review of *A Glastonbury Romance*.



First UK edition of *A Glastonbury Romance*, John Lane, 1933

Chris Thomas
JCP and The Religion of the Future

Two months after arriving back in England following his first visit to America JCP delivered a public lecture giving his thoughts on religion and religious institutions which he entitled *The Religion of the Future* at the Guildhall in Cambridge on Sunday 4 June 1905. Although JCP considered his performance on this occasion was a failure, Louis Wilkinson thought this lecture was the most eloquent he had ever heard his friend deliver: *He kept us in excitement from the beginning until almost the end (Welsh Ambassadors, p.64)*. JCP does not appear to have later repeated this lecture. He had originally proposed other titles for his lecture such as *Catholic Modernism*, *Catholic Humanism* and *The Church of the Future* but finally he decided *The Religion of the Future* best conveyed his intention and meaning. The lecture was reviewed in a local newspaper, *The Cambridge Independent Press* on Friday 9 June 1905. Other than the significant testimony of JCP himself and Louis Wilkinson this review is our only source of information about the content and reception of the lecture. The review is reprinted below.

The circumstances of JCP's public lecture, his subject on the historic connection between the erotic element and religious rituals and the possibility of the reformation of religion, as well as the events surrounding JCP's previous private lecture on the same theme, which took place in Louis Wilkinson's rooms at St. John's College in Cambridge in May 1905, are described by JCP in his *Autobiography*, (Macdonald, 1967), pp. 336-342 and by Louis Wilkinson in *Welsh Ambassadors*, pp. 60-63. Wilkinson gives an amusing account of JCP's performance in his rooms at St. John's College before a small audience of friends and colleagues when he says JCP was clearly a little drunk following a dinner at High Table which JCP had attended earlier in the evening at his old college Corpus Christi when he admits he drank too much of the sacred Corpus wine! JCP was reproached by the Corpus authorities for his extravagant behaviour. JCP says he felt impelled to apologise but he was uneasy about his deference to the Corpus magnates, He thought he had paid obeisance too quickly to authority and exhibited a strain of masochistic humiliation. The subsequent public lecture JCP gave at the Guildhall, a few weeks later, was intended to be an Apologia for his 'ungentlemanly' behaviour at Corpus as well as his performance in Louis Wilkinson's rooms. Perhaps it was JCP's sense of personal misgiving that led to his conclusion the lecture fell flat; he hadn't spoken with passion or conviction and so he reports in *Autobiography* that one of his friends said he thought he had lost his vision! JCP had invited friends and colleagues to attend the lecture but Louis Wilkinson said the event was *badly* attended: *The two front rows were sparsely occupied by old ladies with prayer books (Welsh Ambassadors, p.63)*. However, the reviewer in *The Cambridge Independent Press* gives a different impression, declared that

JCP addressed a fairly large audience and that a discussion took place after the lecture.

JCP acknowledged in retrospect in *Autobiography* that the content of his lecture was undoubtedly shocking for in speaking about the relationship between sex sensuality and religious ritual he had preceded Jessie Weston's researches in the same field. The lecture originated in JCP's long held obsession about religion and especially Catholic modernism. A letter JCP sent to his brother A. R. Powys on 2 May 1905, informing him that he planned to be in Cambridge later in the month, gives us some idea of his fervent feeling and his motivation for delivering the private lecture at St. John's College: *I should have liked to have had a Religious Conclave at Cambridge – I think the hour has arrived for lifting the Dam. I think the hour has arrived* (quoted in *The Wedding of Two Powyses* by Stephen Powys Marks in *Powys Journal* XXVIII, 2018, p. 190).

One of the members in the audience at St. John's was visibly distressed by JCP's comments, tried to get him to stop and declared he was 'pained and grieved' by the lecture (quoted in *Welsh Ambassadors*, footnote, p.61) a reaction which later became a standing joke for JCP. However, JCP was working within an accepted tradition of religious studies. He may have known of earlier work in the area of religious symbolism and phallic worship conducted by writers such as Hodder Westropp, Richard Payne Knight, Robert Allen Campbell, Hargrave Jennings, Madame Blavatsky, Albert Mackey, Alfred Williams Momerie, Eduard von Hartmann and Anna Swanwick. It is likely he was inspired to develop his theme through conversations with his friend, 'The Catholic', William J Williams as well as by conversations with his friend Bernie Price O'Neil and his brother Theodore. Perhaps he was also influenced in his choice of title by the lecture on *The Republic of the Future* that he had delivered in America just a few months earlier in a course of lectures on the History of Liberty. The syllabus for the lecture on *The Republic of the Future* ends on a resounding note of affirmation and a call to action... *the human desire for liberty is so profound a passion that any tyranny of the majority which endeavours to make existence uniform, level, colourless and mediocre, is likely to arouse a spirit of resistance, the violence of which will be the more terrific, the more artificial its restraint.* (Syllabi of the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching for the Academic Year 1904-1905, Series 237-251, p.24). No doubt this revolutionary language was replicated in JCP's views on the Religion of the Future.

In fact, the religion of the future was already a popular subject for discussion at religious, occult and esoteric or spiritualist meetings at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. We know also that JCP was interested in theosophical doctrines which is where he may have encountered ideas about the religion of the future. For instance, in her book *Isis Unveiled: A master key to the mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (1877) Madame Blavatsky refers directly to *the high priest of the religion of the*

future and discusses Comte's secular and positivist religion of humanity. Annie Besant, whose book *The Seven Principles of Man*, JCP tells us in *Autobiography*, he had read, promoted theosophy as a world religion of the future. W. T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Review of Reviews*, to whom JCP once wrote for advice about a possible choice of career, defended Theosophy and championed Madame Blavatsky's book *The Secret Doctrine: the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy* (1888). Stead shared with his friend Annie Besant the vision of establishing a new non-sectarian Church of the Future open to everyone including atheists. The journalist Raymond Blathwayt's conversation with Stead and his ideas for a universal Church of the Future appeared in his *Interviews* published by A. W. Hall in 1893. This may indeed have provided JCP with inspiration for an earlier choice of title for his lecture. Samuel Weil's 1893 book about spiritual evolution, and the origin and destiny of man, is entitled *The Religion of the Future: or Outlines of spiritual philosophy*. He mentions the theosophist A. P. Sinnett whose book *Esoteric Buddhism* JCP had also read. Weil discusses the advent of a New Dispensation and quotes from *Studies in Theosophy* (1890) by W. J. Colville. At the time of his lectures in Cambridge in 1905 JCP's interest in the erotic element in religious ritual, as well as in Theosophy and Catholicism seem to have merged in his thinking about revolution, and the radical necessity for the reformation of religion in the modern world.

Readers may also wish to note that the title of JCP's lecture lives on today in the form of Roberto Mangebeira Unger's 2014 book *The Religion of the Future* published by Harvard University Press – which is a critique of religious traditions.

Review

JCP's lecture on **The Religion of the Future**

Published in *The Cambridge Independent Press*, Friday 9 June, 1905

On Sunday evening, at the Guildhall, Mr A.C. Powys [*sic*], a staff lecturer for the Oxford University Extension Society, addressed a fairly large audience on "The Religion of the Future." He described worship as the passion of love, and said that even supposing Christ never existed, but was created by the desire of humanity, and though in worshipping Him humanity worshipped not itself, but the pity of itself, still by so doing, it might perhaps create the very God that was to redeem it. Mr Powys also stated that the time had come to take religion out of the hands of the priests, and make them the servants of men, not their masters. The religion of the future, he declared, would be based on the instincts of the common people, and it would once more, as in the first days of Christianity, centre round Rome. It would be a great democracy-the City of God would be a Republic. After the address, a discussion took place.

Chris Thomas

JCP, Portugal and Oscar Wilde: Some Additional Findings

I located these citations unfortunately too late to include them in the relevant articles in *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXXII, 2022. They are included here for quick reference:

JCP and the Portuguese Connection

In *Autobiography* JCP refers to visits he made to the small Second cemetery of the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue in Greenwich Village located on W 11th Street: *I used to go to Washington Square from Patchin Place, either by way of Tenth Street, where I made a fetish - or even a totem - of a poplar tree that grew by the pavements edge, or by way of Eleventh Street, where I always stopped to talk to Rachel Phillips, who about the time I was being born at Shirley was being buried in this little Portuguese-Hebrew burying ground and to whose gentle bones I acquired by degrees a faithful and almost romantic attachment.* (Also quoted by Chris Gostick in NL 36, April 1999, p.36.)

*

‘my great grandfather from Hamburg’ – See NL37 July, 1999, pp.14-17, for references to Lisbon. Stephen notes that JCP’s statement is clearly untrue. We have to go back to JCP’s maternal great, great, great grandfather, Peter Livius, 1688-1771, who although born in Hamburg, moved to Lisbon in 1702 where he was a merchant. JCP’s maternal great great grandfather, George Livius, 1743-1816, was born in Lisbon. JCP claimed his Livius ancestors were Jewish - their original name of Levi had been Germanised.

*

In the 1950s JCP must have been thinking of his new Portuguese friend Mr Ribeiro quite often. We now know their conversation sometimes turned to music and the record player he and Phyllis had acquired for in another letter to Louis Wilkinson, dated 12/2/1958 (published in NL 76 July 2012, p.31) JCP said: *My new very youthful Portuguese correspondent has sent us a Beethoven Record for our Hi-Fi Musical Box.*

*

JCP might well have learned about the history, topography and people of Portugal from Louis Wilkinson whose mother had Portuguese antecedents. JCP wrote to Louis on 13 October 1955 and said: *‘Phyllis & I think the peculiar charm & dignity of both Oliver and his son Christopher is from your mother with her Portuguese ancestry, and goes with your peculiar long faces which are just like old Spanish Portraits!’*

JCP and Oscar Wilde

In his introduction to Wilde's essay *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* JCP alludes to the floral symbolism of the Rose of Sharon in *The Song of Songs*. Another reference to The Rose of Sharon, which is associated with the idea of beauty, can be found in *Wood and Stone: She was no Rose of Sharon, to be worshipped forever. She was a Rose of Shiraz, to be seized, pressed against his face, and flung aside!* (*Wood and Stone*, Arnold Shaw, 1915, p.140). Other examples of the image appear frequently elsewhere in English and American literature such as in evangelical hymns; in the poem *A Tale* by John Logan (1748-1788); and in poems by Michael Field (*They Took Jesus*), and Christina Rossetti (*Thou Art Fairer than the Children of Men*; and *Long Barren*). John Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath* has a character named Rose of Sharon.

*

In *Welsh Ambassadors* (p.66) Louis Wilkinson cites a public lecture JCP delivered (on Sunday 4 June 1905) at the Guildhall in Cambridge on the theme of Catholic Humanism and the Religion of the Future (see article elsewhere in this Newsletter). Wilkinson recalls how JCP made a passionate reference to Oscar Wilde: *I do remember, in that lecture, a long but brilliantly sustained apostrophic passage which culminated in the then forbidden name of Oscar Wilde. Wilde had died a Catholic: that was why he was brought in. With tropic torrential violence phrase after phrase of panegyric beat down upon us.* Wilkinson then quotes from memory JCP's words: *the most Hellenic spirit of our age, the most eloquent of all who lived, the most inspired, the loveliest of all, the most devoted and religious worshipper of beauty, the bravest, the greatest genius, the greatest lover –* Wilkinson concludes: *Who could the man be? Then at last we knew the name came like a thunderbolt "Oscar Wilde!" It was the most shocking thing that John, at that time, in 1905 could have said.*

*

Peter Foss in his notes to Llewelyn's 1910 diary: *Recalled to Life* (Powys Society, 2016) provides a reference to JCP's mother who attended a lecture by Wilde in Dorchester in the 1880s and was influenced by Wilde's strictures about the decoration of domestic interiors (See end note 257, p.155. See also Llewelyn's entry in his diary for Saturday 10 June, 1910: *Listened to mother's description of Oscar Wilde.*) In my article in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXXII, '...we anarchists of art and religion and pleasure...JCP and Oscar Wilde', p.135, I noted that Wilde's lecture was on *The House Beautiful* and occurred on 27 September 1883. For other details of the lecture in Dorchester see *Thomas Hardy, A Biography Revisited* by Michael Millgate, 2006, p.225. See also "The House Beautiful": A Reconstruction of Oscar Wilde's American lecture by Kevin H. F. O'Brien, *Victorian Studies*, June 1974.



Owen Glendower in 2022. Photo: Patrick Quigley