

Powys Notes

A Publication of the Powys Society of North America: Spring, 1985

Edited by Denis Lane

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I speak for all members of the executive committee when I say how pleased I am with the progress of the Society and of Powys studies in North America. Our membership is higher than I thought it would be after the first round, new editions are being published, the Conference at Colgate in June is already in the advanced stages of planning, and we now have Powys Notes. Its first purpose will be to keep all of us informed about activities, events and accomplishments in the various areas of Powys studies, but I hope also that it will set the foundation for the development of a journal. There is so much material to work on, so much to enjoy, and so much to say.

The Society will do well to continue, "on this side," the excellent work of the Powys Society in the U.K. We cannot hope to rival Belinda Humfrey's Powys Review, at least for a while. We hope that our members will keep in close contact with both the U.K. Society and the Review. Like our U.K. counterparts, our Society and publication must represent the diversity and the broad range of interests which the Powyses have generated. I hope that we can stimulate a particular interest in the American connections.

In preparation for the June meeting, the executive committee will be working on proposals and projects which will define, and make practical, our interests. Of course, we want to have your views, too, and Powys Notes will provide a forum for the exchange. Our beginnings are modest. All members of the committee are tough-minded realists, but I think I am safe in saying that we all have in us something of that special excitement and enthusiasm which the Powyses had whenever they started on something new.

Ben Jones
Carleton University
Ottawa, Canada

BY WAY OF MINUTES

Members may be interested to learn how the Society came into being, and to receive some informal minutes of actions taken thus far. The Powys Society of North America was founded December 31, 1983, by Ben Jones (as President) and Denis Lane (as Executive Secretary) in response to what was perceived as a growing revival of interest in North America to the literary output of the Powys family. There had been a movement toward organizing a society as far back as the MLA Powys seminars run by Bob Blackmore in the early seventies, but perhaps the immediate impetus was provided by the special session on the

achievement and reputation of the Powyses led by Ned Lukacher at the 1982 MLA Conference. News that Glen Hartley at Harper and Row was working on the production of important new reprints of John Cowper Powys was an additional spur to action.

Peter Powys Grey (as Vice President) and A. Thomas Southwick (as Treasurer) were subsequently to join the executive committee, the first formal meeting of which took place on April 8, 1984, at Chappaqua, New York, with Anthony Low also participating. At the meeting, the following decisions were either made or set in motion:

- * to formulate a Constitution and Bylaws for the Society on the lines, where applicable, of the Milton Society (a common template for literary societies in North America). Such Constitution and Bylaws to be subject to ratification at the first general meeting of the membership.

- * to name Robert L. Blackmore as the first Honorary President of the Society.

- * to nominate the following individuals to serve on an Advisory Board to the Society:

Bruce Brown, The Library, Colgate University
Glen Hartley, Harper and Row, Inc.
Belinda Humfrey, Editor, The Powys Review
Eddie Jenkins, Washington, D.C.
Anthony Low, New York University
Ned Lukacher, University of Illinois
Lawrence J. Mitchell, University of Minnesota
Michael Seidenberg, Brazenhead Books, New York.

- * to seek tax-exempt status for the Society.

- * to convene an Inaugural Conference.

- * to publish, in the first instance, a bulletin of information to be called Powys Notes, and, in the later instance, as the Society developed, a fully-fledged journal.

- * to fix membership dues for an initial period at \$6.00 U.S.

- * to generate a mailing list of prospective members.

In June, 1984, membership invitations were sent to 110 individuals in North America with a known Powys interest, and to 26 libraries with significant holdings of Powys manuscripts. Some time later, invitations were sent to an additional 40 individuals. Almost half of those contacted have thus far joined the Society. With the current publishing activity of the Powyses, prospects for the continued growth of the Society's membership look extremely promising.

Finally, it should be noted that start-up funds for the Society's activities came from a grant of \$250.00 from the Dean of Arts, Carleton University, and from matching funds for duplication and mailing provided by the Provost, John Jay College, City University of New York. To each our thanks.

GREETINGS RECEIVED

"With all good wishes for the future of the P.S.N.A."--Cedric Hentschel, Chairman, The Powys Society (U.K.).

"Rest assured that you will have, as does the Society here, my support."
--Gerald Pollinger, Laurence Pollinger Limited, London.

OF WOLF SOLENT: ANCIENT AND MODERN

The following item is reprinted, with permission, from Peter Schwed's Turning the Pages: An Insider's Story of Simon & Schuster 1924-1984 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984; Copyright © 1984 by Peter Schwed), pp. 147-48.

Sometimes a publisher's problems are attributable to certain authors who, irrespective of how well they write, are unable to stop writing at some point and as a result turn out manuscripts so lengthy that they can't possibly be published for any sort of retail price per volume that can work. The earliest case of this sort on record at Essandess came in 1929 when Max Schuster fell in love with novelist John Cowper Powys's work and, as a result, gave him a contract for one of the very first books the house ever acquired in England. When that book, Wolf Solent, finally arrived here in manuscript form in the hold of an ocean liner, it was found to be tightly packed into a huge and completely filled trunk. Had an attempt been made to print and publish the novel in its original form, it would have had to be issued in ten volumes. Never a man to be discouraged, Schuster set about cutting the manuscript himself. Finally he acknowledged that his brilliant young editor, Kip Fadiman, could probably do it better and much faster. Approximately 80 percent of the book was eventually hacked away and the balance issued in two volumes. There is no entry in The Guinness Book of Records for the most massive job of cutting a book, but surely Wolf Solent would have a good claim.

The background to the Harper and Row reprint of Wolf Solent is recounted by Leonore Fleischer in her column, "Talk of the Trade," Publishers' Weekly, November 23, 1984, p. 77.

"Love at First Read

If you long for a draught of the pure clean air of literature, here's a tale that will take you back to the reason you entered the business in the first place. At the last ABA [American Booksellers Association Convention] held in Los Angeles, a 26-year-old publishing employee named Glen Hartley went browsing through a second-hand bookstore, picked up an old novel called Wolf Solent and fell irreversibly in love with the writing of John Cowper Powys. Wolf Solent was published in America by Simon & Schuster and was that new house's first major fiction bestseller. It sold 20,000 copies, big numbers in those days--and in two volumes yet; then another 23,000 copies in the later Garden City one-volume "cheap edition." Cowper Powys, a descendant of two great British poets, Cowper and Donne, lived in the United States from 1904 to [1934] and made his reputation from 1904 to 1928 as a lecturer. Author of many novels, Cowper Powys was published here by Arnold Shaw and Doubleday as well as S & S. But as the decades rolled by, John Cowper Powys became a writer's writer, known to very few, though recently, in an essay in the New York Book Review about writers undeservedly ignored for the Nobel Prize, George Steiner named him as supreme in English fiction

after Thomas Hardy.

But let's get back to that 26-year-old who's just shelled out for a 50-year-old copy of Wolf Solent. Glen Hartley's fascination with Powys had begun; as any reader would do, he tried to locate copies of the author's other novels. Books In Print yielded up only British imports and library editions priced at \$40. Hartley did manage to secure a copy of A Glastonbury Romance, and it only confirmed his determination to bring the works of Cowper Powys back to a larger readership. In 1980 he went to London with the sole idea of tracking down the publishing rights and met with Gerald Pollinger, literary executor of the Powys estate. Pollinger gave Hartley the agency for the sale of North American paperback rights. The first publisher Hartley took the books to was Simon & Schuster, who said no. North Point Press and David Godine told Hartley that Cowper Powys's novels were too long and too expensive to produce (they run anywhere from 600 to 900 pages). Yet two publishers did show interest, and after a spirited mini-auction, the rights to Wolf Solent and Weymouth Sands went to Peter Bejger and Hugh Van Deusen at Harper & Row's Colophon. The Colophon editions will debut November 21, [1984], with first printings of 10,000 each. Meanwhile, there is a potential Masterpiece Theatre option on A Glastonbury Romance, which, if it should be resolved in a sale, might make John Cowper Powys the next Trollope. Which would make Glen Hartley very happy indeed."

Favorable mention of the Harper releases has been noted in numerous quarters, but especially in The Washington Post Book World, The Philadelphia Inquirer, and The San Francisco Chronicle, whose reviewer's opening words--referring to Wolf Solent--are: "Without question, the finest novel published in 1984 was written in 1929." We look for more of this kind.

A GREYMITRE - BRAZENHEAD CONNECTION

By arrangement with Greymitre Limited, Michael Seidenberg's Brazenhead Book Shop in New York is now offering exclusively virtually all of the famed VILLAGE PRESS Powys editions put out by Jeffrey Kwintner over the last ten years or so, as well as other Powys items. This major development for Powysians in Canada and the U.S. means that we now have available such important titles as JCP's Porius (long since out of stock in the U.S.), The Meaning of Culture, and the two-volume Letters to His Brother Llewelyn. A complete listing follows. Items priced are in stock; items unpriced are available by special order. Prices to Canada slightly higher. BRAZENHEAD also carries a collection of Powys first editions and reading copies.

JOHN COWPER POWYS

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Ducdame.....	\$11.00
Mervyn.....	\$ 7.50
Porius.....	\$12.50
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You & Me.....	\$ 6.50
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Nicholas Ross.....	\$ 9.50
Llewelyn Powys - Volume I.....	\$12.50
- Volume II.....	\$12.50
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TWO ENTIRELY NEW TITLES BY JOHN COWPER POWYS

When that fine British outfit CARCANET (publishers of C. H. Sisson and Christine Brooke-Rose, among others,) announced the opening of a New York office, that was good enough, but when their 1985 Catalogue contained an entirely new title from John Cowper Powys, then that was even better. Carcanet announces the publication of THREE FANTASIES, with an Afterword by Glen Cavaliero. Contains: Topsy-Turvy (1959), Cataclysm (1960), and Abertackle (1960). A description reads: "Three Fantasies are the 'juvenalia' of John Cowper Powys' old age: he creates stories free from restraint. Space fantasy allows his ideas and obsessions free range. And range they do, broaching directly subjects which even his mature novels had fought shy of. . . .The fantasies are about relationships conducted without moral or social inhibition, in a world of unbridled imagination and naked impulse." Price in cloth: \$14.95, though a discount may be available to those identifying themselves as members of the Society. Address prepaid orders to Carcanet, 108 East 31st Street, New York, N.Y.10016.

Adding to their many previous successes in the publication of John Cowper Powys, Jeffrey and Jacqueline Kwintner of Greymitre Books Limited, announce the publication of PADDOCK CALLS: A PLAY, with an Introduction by Charles Lock, who writes: "The publication of Paddock Calls is an important event for it fills out, probably to completion, the range

of John Cowper Powys's literary achievement. In any assessment of that achievement this play will have to figure, not as an oddity that compromises the novels but, rather, as an accomplished and major work that adds to Powys's stature." Paddock Calls is available from Grey-mitre (White Ladies, The Warren, Radlett, Hertfordshire, England) at 8.95 pounds for overseas customers [price as of January, 1984], or by special order from Michael Seidenberg, Brazenhead Books, New York City.

THEODORE FRANCIS POWYS

Readers may be aware that T.F.Powys's Mr. Weston's Good Wine was re-issued last year by The Hogarth Press, with a new Introduction by Ronald Blythe. This very attractive edition is now available in the U.S. from MERRIMACK PUBLISHERS' CIRCLE, the premier importer of British books in the United States, at \$7.95 (paper). Orders should be addressed to Ann Sweeten, Merrimack Publishers' Circle, 47 Pelham Road, Salem, NH 03079; reference: The Powys Society of North America. Mr. Weston's Good Wine is also published in Canada in a fine new Penguin edition.

Of his study entitled T. F. Powys:1875-1953 (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Libraries, 1982), J. Lawrence Mitchell writes: "There are still copies of my booklet available from Austin McLean, Special Collections Librarian, University of Minnesota Libraries, 309 19th Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55455. They are free to members of Friends of Special Collections. Catch 22 is that it costs \$15 to join!"

LLEWELYN POWYS

Hailing "The rediscovery of an important West Country writer," REDCLIFFE PRESS of Bristol, England, presents a raft of titles by Llewelyn Powys. [My thanks to Peter Powys Grey for this information].

IN PRINT

From the Dorsetshire countryside to the baked plains of East Africa; from New York in the 1920s to life in a Swiss sanatorium. Virtually unavailable, for many years, Llewelyn Powys' books are now being brought to a wider audience by The Redcliffe Press. The following titles are in print, and more will follow.

Dorset Essays

Thirty-three chapters on the Dorset countryside, villages and 'characters' that Llewelyn Powys knew and loved. A fascinating evocation of a vanished way of life. 168 pages, 16 black & white photographs by Ann Clarke Hardback £6.95.

Earth Memories with Introduction by Phillip Larkin

This collection contains many of Powys' finest country essays, including 'The Partridge', 'The Other Side of The Quantocks' and the author's first visit, in search of family memories, to the Dorset village of Stalbridge. 144 pages Hardback £6.95

A Baker's Dozen

Very strong Dorset and Somerset interest, with descriptions of The Village Shop, Childhood Memories, Haymaking, Tintinhull, The Harvest, a Somerset Christmas, etc. 125 pages, with line drawings by Gertrude Powys Paperbound £1.25.

Glory of Life

'Let us learn to gather sloes in their season, to shear sheep, to draw water from the spring with grateful happiness, and no longer vex our hearts with impossible longings.' 125 pages Paperbound £1.25.

The Verdict of Bridlegoose

A graphic account of how Llewelyn Powys, desperate to make a living as a writer, lands in New York with little in the way of money, friends or prospects, and by determination, luck and cunning establishes himself as a man of letters without compromising his integrity. The book offers a fascinating evocation of New York in the 1920s - 'a modern Babylon, with its pointed, hard, dog-toothed outlines'. 143 pages Paperbound £1.75.

Skin for Skin

First published in 1926, *Skin for Skin* recalls West Country life in the Edwardian era, against the background of a spell in a Swiss sanatorium.

Chapters on Montacute, the Dorset and Somerset countryside, a stay with brother T. F. Powys in the village of East Chaldon and recollections of Christmas and New Year's Eve.
152 pages Paperbound £1.75.

Thirteen Wortbries

From Chaucer to Thomas Hardy, a collection of delightful vignettes of men whose lives the author found admirable and interesting - including the Dorset poet, William Barnes and Tom Coryat, born in the Somerset village of Odcombe in 1577 and later the eccentric chronicler of travels on foot in Europe and Asia.

192 pages Paperbound £2.50.

Ebony and Ivory

Powys' first 'Africa' book, the Ebony chapters being based on the young Englishman's response to the Dark Continent in the early part of this century. An uncompromising honesty required Powys to portray brutalities that even today shock with their callousness.

128 pages Paperbound £2.50.

Black Laughter

The story of life on an East African sheep farm during the First World War, and Powys' response to a harsh and pitiless regime which contrasts sharply with the gentle vicarage life he had left behind in Somerset.

220 pages Hardback £5.95.

Ordering information: Redcliffe Press Ltd., 49 Park Street, Bristol BS1 5NT, England. Send payment with order. Overseas orders, add equivalent to 3 pounds for carriage. Trade enquiries are apparently welcome.

Before leaving Redcliffe, we should also point out that in 1984 they published Klinton Top, a novel written in 1927 by our good Powys friend, G. Wilson Knight. Now in print for the first time, Klinton Top is offered at 3.50 pounds (paperback).

OF NOTE

Ben Jones is presenting a paper entitled "The Look of the Other in John Cowper Powys's Wolf Solent" at the Twentieth-Century Literature Conference on "The Self and the Other," University of Louisville, Kentucky, February 20-22.

Sir Angus Wilson, Diversity and Depth in Fiction: Selected Critical Writings of Angus Wilson, edited by Kerry McSweeney (Viking, 1984). Contains two chapters on JCP.

Due in 1986 from Associated University Presses: H. W. Fawkner, The Ecstatic World of John Cowper Powys--a provocative study of JCP (by the author of The Timescapes of John Fowles) that is likely to turn the Powys world, ecstatic or otherwise, on its ear.

A John Cowper Powys television credit. There is a brief mention of JCP in "King Arthur and the Legends of Glastonbury," introduced by Roger Hamer-Evans in the series These British Isles recently shown on PBS.

The new Penguin History of Modern Literature: Volume 8 contains a substantial and serious treatment of JCP.

The new General Secretary of The Powys Society (U.K.) is Paul Roberts, 38 Gaskell Road, Altrincham, Cheshire, England. The Treasurer and Membership Secretary is Susan Rands, Victoria Farm, Bradley Lane, Nr. Glastonbury, Somerset, England. At last word, dues were 7.50 pounds, which includes a subscription to The Powys Review.

Back on this side, the Executive Secretary of the PSNA would be pleased to hear from anyone knowing the current, verified address of any of the following prospective members: John Bennett, George Baty Blake, Daniel Booth, Clive Clark, Isabelle Ebert, Walter Eden, Gwyneth Evans (Gwyneth F. Miles), Samuel Gadd, Mrs. Darwin S. Luntz, Donald L. Mann, John Matson, Jody Visage, F. W. Weeks.

THE INAUGURAL CONFERENCE, JUNE 7 - 9, COLGATE UNIVERSITY

Complete details of our opening Conference are being mailed to all members. Please feel free to make photocopies of the announcement for distribution or display.

The Conference promises to make for a highly rewarding weekend. We have five papers being presented on John Cowper Powys, and two on Theodore Francis Powys. In addition, there will be a tour of Colgate's impressive collection of Powys manuscripts, a feature on JCP bibliography, and news of yet more Powys publications ahead. And on behalf of the Society and the Powys family, Peter Powys Grey will be making a presentation to Robert L. Blackmore in recognition of outstanding contributions to Powys studies in North America.

Single and double accommodations are available. Dinners will be full-service affairs; breakfasts and lunches cafeteria style. A reception and barbecue are also planned. The fee for all of this is a very reasonable \$75.00 U.S. (which includes \$5.00 registration).

It will be early summer in the Mohawk Valley; good spirits will be in the air. We look forward to meeting you there.

AND FINALLY...

Seen at the Antiquarian Book Fair, New York City, April 1984: A first edition of Rodmoor, with dust cover and long autograph inscription by John Cowper Powys. Price: \$700.00. Recognition moves in mysterious ways.

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