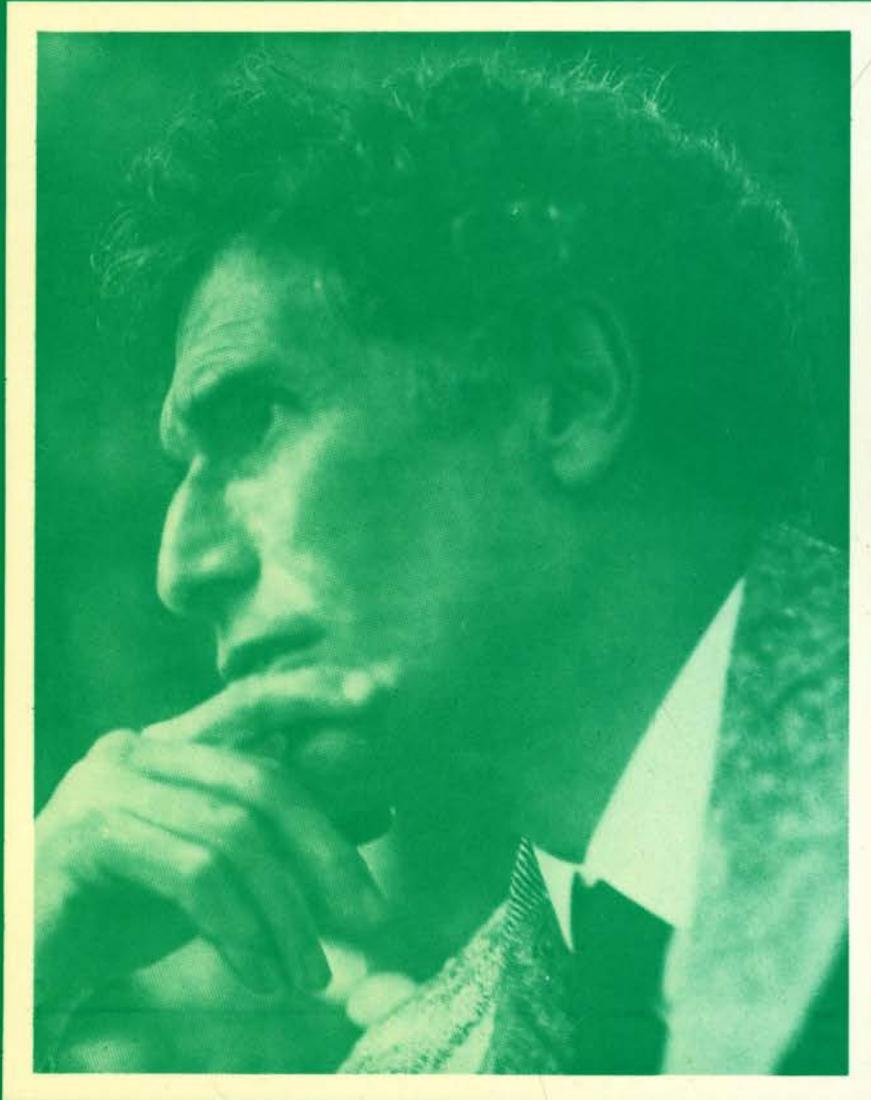


The Powys Review

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The Powys Review

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CORRECTION

In issue no 17 of *The Powys Review*, the publisher of Patrick Parrinder's *James Joyce* should have appeared as "Cambridge University Press" (p. 76). My apologies for the error to all concerned.

P.M.

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Dedicated to our greatly
beloved head of the house
G. W. Harrison,

Mordaunt ap Gryfith
Chap I
"In the days of British glory

carry your minds back
to the time when
The Romans, called back
to their country by the
invasion of the Goths,
left ~~the~~ Britain.
The ancestors of the
English were running
about, wild and savage,
in the north of
Germany; but they
were strong even then
in the art of war.

though they ~~(the two boys)~~
could not hear what he
said. Mordaunt
rang the bell and
told the slave ~~to~~ who
entered to find out
what the excitement
was about. In five
minutes he returned
saying that a
messenger had
come from the
general of the
British army
ordering ~~the men~~
everyone capable
of bearing arms
to enroll in a
~~sub~~ corps and to
join the army as
they the Picts had
again invaded
Britain, this time

The first two manuscript pages of John [Cowper] Powys's "Mordaunt Ap Gryfith. A Tale", c. 1888.

Glen Cavaliero

The Comic Spirit in the Novels and Fantasies of John Cowper Powys

The status of John Cowper Powys as a major writer does not, even now, go unquestioned; and any balanced assessment of his work has to manoeuvre between the poles of adulation ('seer', 'mage', 'towering genius' etc.) and scorn ('genius manqué', 'tenth-rate old windbag' etc.). The critic has at one and the same time to take Powys's work seriously and to question how far and in what way he took it seriously himself. To what extent is it purposive and motivated? To what extent instinctive? And how literally did Powys believe in his more erudite, occult or tendentious pronouncements? The prolonged exercise in self-denigration, self-mockery, ostentatious candour and compulsive verbalising sustained throughout the *Autobiography* and the letters written from North Wales (its natural sequels), while clearly a protective mask, also reveal his increasing reluctance to take up any fixed or formative position. But if clowning increasingly predominates in his written work, the origin of that humorous scepticism which underlies it is to be found in the circumstances of his upbringing. Powys was not a son of the parsonage for nothing.

From the beginning he was familiar with a religious ordering of life, with the round of church services, bible readings and family prayers; and he was well read in both theology and philosophy. His interests were wide. He was acquainted with Chinese philosophy in addition to the run of European thinkers from Socrates to Spengler; and for a time he came near to embracing the Catholic faith. Aware of the diversity of religious response, and also of the various forms in which linguistically and ritually, that response could clothe itself, he nevertheless did not adopt, as did his brother Llewelyn, a purely rationalist creed: the atheist's dogmatism was not

for him. When we find him asserting his own agnosticism it is usually in the humorous terms of 'you never know', rather than in the anguished outcry of a faith mislaid. His breadth of vision and understanding led him towards the contemplation of the material world, rather than towards introspection. In the late J. B. Priestley's phrase, John Cowper Powys was a 'happy introvert'.¹

Like all well-educated people of his time, he was acquainted with the writings of Dante; and if in his two essays on "the most tremendous realist in all literature",² that classic interpreter of the medieval Catholic world view, he concentrates on the *Inferno*, it is because of its relevance to his own sadistic preoccupations. But he was familiar with the *Paradiso* and was aware of the theological implications of the poems' title. *The Divine Comedy* obeys the laws of human comedy in that it is concerned with the unveiling of a benevolent reality behind appearances; but being the *divine* comedy, and thus concerned with the nature of the absolute, this unveiling comprehends pain, and not merely the laughter which the selectivity of human comedy necessarily engenders. Written within the framework of Catholic theology, the poem provides an alternation of perspective: the personalised elements of tragedy (which of its nature focuses on the particular, on a fixed point of view, on an absolute stance concerning an individual drama) are presented in the context of a divine providence whose workings are absolute but the particular fruits of whose workings are relative to each other. The essence of comedy lies in man's inability to plumb or to anticipate the providential mercies of a God who of his very nature transcends all created being, and yet who, according to Catholic Christianity, dwells in

and endures the very creation which he simultaneously creates and sustains. The whole of life, physical and spiritual, animate and inanimate, operates within the three-fold life of the tri-une God.

The Catholic comic vision, so to call it, may be summed up in the much quoted (and often too glibly and easily appropriated) words of Julian of Norwich, "but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."³ These words are preceded by the statement that "It behoved that there should be sin"—that is to say that within the encompassing providence of the divine love even sin is necessary. The fact that everyone has, in Charles Williams's phrase, to "repent of the inevitable"⁴ is comedy's answer to the self-lacerations of guilt-ridden characters such as those portrayed in Powys's early fiction. Tragedy is not an absolute—this is the message of Catholic comedy, which of its nature works through the constant demonstration of a relativity which is the ground of mercy, tolerance and laughter, and the measure of God's relationship with man. When that demonstration is towards a negative position we call it farce, and the response to that is cynicism. Powys faces the fact in his one piece of systematic philosophical writing, *The Complex Vision*, written before he attained maturity as a novelist.

The universe as the human soul perceives it, is horribly and most tragically humorous. Man is the laughing animal; and the 'perilous stuff' which tickles his aesthetic sense with a revelation of outrageous comedy has its roots in the profoundest abyss. This humorous aspect of the system of things is just as primordial and intrinsic as what we call the 'beautiful'.⁵

But when the demonstration of relativity works through negation towards a positive we call it satire; the final comic vision can accommodate both farce and satire equally.

Powys probably disliked satire as an art form because it relies on a sense of moral absolutes to give it its edge, and he distrusted absolutes, still more the unifying of absolutes in monotheism. The notion of an all-

loving, all-conquering God was anathema to him: its rejection is expressed forcefully, if a shade hysterically, in the episode from *Porius* concerning the kiss of Drom. What may be called the 'Hound of Heaven' image of God was pervasive in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' literary imagination, where it too easily degenerated into the figure of the all-wise father-headmaster forever outmanoeuvring his victims. This is the kind of God propounded in such influential books as *The Problem of Pain* by C. S. Lewis, a writer whom Powys especially disliked. "This lordly 'loving laughing' Christianity is the limit," he exclaimed to Louis Wilkinson.⁶ But so highly individualised an omnipotent God is partly the creation of Protestantism, with its emphasis on personal relationship with the Deity, and on individual responsibility. This was the religion of Powys's home upbringing: the results of the guilt attendant on belief in this God fill many pages of Powys's autobiography. And to the end of his writing days his attitude to God was liable to dwindle into something not unlike a small boy 'cocking a snook'. When he all but became a Catholic convert it may well have been because of the greater objectivity of Catholic religious experience and of its sacramental understanding of the neutral elements of the inanimate world. Above all, the personal burden of solitary religious experience could be merged in the ritual and communal experience of the Church as a whole.

But if no man's story is his own, and if no one, however contrary the appearances, can live in isolation, it seems evident in Powys's early fiction (certainly in his second, third and fourth novels) that they do. But these books, *Rodmoor* and *Ducdame* especially, are steeped in a sense of the tragic potential of their protagonists' destinies. All four books are speculative and questioning; if not exactly "hot for certainties in this our life",⁷ they grieve at certainty's not being possible. And they contain a strong element of victimisation. The male character is always in the wrong before the female. These novels are the products of an imagination still insufficiently liberated from the

ethos of a patriarchal, authoritarian religion, one which in social terms transforms the earth-mother into a mild, reproachful angel.

It is not surprising that Powys's initial world view should be dualistic. The life-illusion to be undermined in *Wolf Solent* is depicted in imagery expressive of a submerged, quiescent but potentially rebellious identity: it has all the half-buried suggestiveness of sexual reverie. To 'fight the good fight' was the protestant, late-Victorian permitted way of asserting one's identity, often against the most pressing desires of that identity: Powys's fiction may be read as a progressive liberation from that particular ideal. Indeed, he was to become an advocate of running away. His own thought develops from the positing of an absolute dualism in a moral sense to the complementary acceptance of dualities as a protection against the threat of a monadic God; and thence to the multiverse of total relativity, where safety is found not in shelter but in freedom of movement. It is the difference between the stifling clay and foliage of *Wood and Stone* and the endless empty space of *Cataclysm*.

Powys resolves the question of dualism not through his intellect but through his attitude towards the problem. He writes from an *ad hoc* position, mediated through stories told to himself; his stress on the importance of sexual, even of masturbatory, fantasy is relevant in this respect. For him, the so-called act of self-abuse was one of liberation for the self. A sublimating work of fiction, it provided mental shelter as well as physical release: there are comparisons to be made here with the novels of Jean Genet. And Powys's understanding of the obstinate retort of the repressed child to its elders is reflected in his comments on the human attitude to God.

Our secret, natural attitude is not 'holy' at all. It is not grave or pious or consecrated. It is whimsical, sly, stubborn, wayward, all by turns; it is changeable as the wind; it is essentially *profane*.⁸

Whether the origin of this insight be the enforced attendance at school chapel and

family prayers or not, it stresses a youthful rebelliousness, an anarchical irreverence which Powys was to use to liberating effect where both life and art were concerned.

II

Powys's own literary history had more than a touch of sardonic comedy. He was not a lucky writer. It took him years to find his true imaginative bearings, and, when he did, he was to have every penny of the profits from his master-work swallowed up in a libel suit, the triumphant weapon of the literal-minded. His next book had to be laboriously altered to prevent the same thing happening; while *Porius*, the novel to which he devoted more care than to any other, was rejected for the very qualities that made it so remarkable, and had to be published in an amputated, patched-up form. No wonder that in his final fantasies Powys played mayhem with the critics, and wrote to please himself alone. His whole career had been attended by a series of painful ironies.

Nor did he enjoy any great support, at any rate initially, from those whose critical opinions he most valued. His close friend Louis Wilkinson, preferring the brevity and wit of Theodore Powys's writings, in a series of squibs gave birth to the legend of John Cowper the bombastic, muddled sprawler. *The Buffoon* lampooned him as "Jack Welsh"; *Blasphemy and Religion* denigrated his first novel, and *Bumbore* satirised his second one.⁹ But if Wilkinson's satire was detrimental to Powys's early reputation it was partly justified and to that extent may have helped its object to remedy his literary defects. *Bumbore* certainly parodies *Rod-moor* to some purpose.

No less was Tushish, frantically compressing the ribs of his rabbit till the unhappy little creature squealed aloud, destined to plunge in his turn into the ghoul-ridden waters of the lethal Looney, while Belshazzar Crane—outstripping the Doctor, who was then making a protracted examination of a certain rare herb with dark saffron petals and a curious disk of faded amaranth, known to East Anglian botanists as 'hog's-bane scully'—dived

forward with exquisite elegance of motion, describing a sort of Spinthrian or Phalandrine circle, into the very blackest and oiliest and most betraying swirl of the Looney that he could discover. 'By all the gods!' he ejaculated in mid-air, 'this suits me exactly! Onanismo, do you hear, my dear, this suits me exactly!'

Powys was to retain, for good or ill, many of the mannerisms pinpointed here; but he was to forsake the melodramatic mould in which *Rodmoor* is cast. For *Rodmoor* is not alone in being vulnerable to Wilkinson's mockery; an entire tradition of popular romantic fiction lies behind it, one which lay wide open to the satirist, as the author of *Cold Comfort Farm* was to discover to her profit.¹⁰ (Did Rachel Doorm act as midwife to Aunt Ada Doom?) But just as *Cold Comfort Farm* encourages easy but ignorant laughter at the expense of a tradition its readers fail to understand, let alone explore, so *Bumbore* has merely the limited value of burlesque.

Powys himself, though he enjoyed burlesque shows, was not friendly to the robust kind of humour associated with the word.

What *is* this sense of humour of the average human animal? It is a premature explosion of the sadistic desire to hurt and to torment that which is queer and out-of-the-way. Such a desire to hurt . . . bursts out through the organs of laughter. We never laugh at anything we would not like to hurt.¹¹

Disturbing words: and certainly there is little formal 'humour' in Powys's own work, no laughing 'at' and no set-piece satirical episodes such as are found in the novels of Fielding, Jane Austen, Dickens, Trollope, Evelyn Waugh or Angus Wilson. The laughter in Powys's novels is subdued, implicit, working through irony rather than through mockery or satire. To the degree that the grotesque enters in, it is by way of self-protective mummery, just as on his celebrated last night at Sherborne School John Cowper played the lunatic to forestall his enemies. Of satire there is virtually none in his work, for to him satire was suspect ('as about as abhorrent as anything I can think

of!')¹² and to be distinguished from true humour. The latter is the product of imaginative sympathy, a laughter arising from participation in the universal human predicament. "God is a Humorist, the Devil is a Satirist."¹³ The one is self-sufficient, the other necessarily parasitic. (Powys might have gone on to note that, by definition, God can use Satan to further His own purposes.)

Humour and satire both tend to be lacking in the early novels. These have a bookish and at times a pretentious tone that betrays an anxiety to impress; they are written out of a novel-reader's consciousness rather than from the first hand experience of the author—in this being comparable with the essentially adolescent novels of Powys's popular contemporary, Hugh Walpole.¹⁴ It is true that the partly autobiographical *After My Fashion*, with its specifically contemporary post-war setting, shows that Powys may have been conscious of the deficiencies of its predecessors,¹⁵ but its suppression suggests that he realised that naturalism was not his proper field. And as much as in *Rodmoor* he is capable of producing an unintentional absurdity, as when at the novel's close, "Canyot, using his one arm with well-calculated effect, lifted the man and the sheep upon the cart he had brought from Furze Lodge." The inherent implausibility is rendered still more risible by the author's clumsy attempts to negate it by precision. In all four of the early novels we find singularly little humour as such. What there is, is implicit in such idiosyncratic characters as Maurice Quincunx in *Wood and Stone*, or more overtly deployed in the conversation of the rustics, rather than in any philosophy of life or presentation of events. It is significant that all four books portray the death of the male protagonist, symptom of the author's dissatisfaction with his imaginative achievement.

III

In *Wolf Solent*, however, Powys would seem deliberately to subvert the fictional conventions of which he had hitherto made

use; and he does so by using them yet again and pushing them to their limits, so that an effect of ironic absurdity is obtained. In an illuminating study of the novel,¹⁶ C. A. Coates highlights this aspect by providing an outline of the plot which recalls nothing so much as the celebrated re-telling of the story of Wagner's *Ring* cycle by Anna Russell; she only just stops short of the latter's comment, "I'm not making this up, you know!" The farrago of homosexuality, lesbianism, necrophily, voyeurism, incest, religious mania and murky rural doings that form the ingredients of the plot as outlined serves to indicate the essential unimportance of the plot in any major imaginative work. If *Wolf Solent* was, as is likely, one of the occasions for *Cold Comfort Farm*, it is evident that Powys was writing with as much satirical deliberation and with a good deal more subtlety than was Stella Gibbons herself.

The self-mockery extends to the treatment of many of the leading characters. Wolf, the Londoner, arrives in a Dorset which is already in part the product of his imaginative pre-suppositions; and such disconcerting oddities as Squire Urquhart (named after Rabelais's most celebrated translator?), Mr Malakite and Parson Valley, seem to have been lifted from some Gothic melodrama in readiness to meet him. So too the 'earthy' Roger Monk, Selena Gault with her cats,¹⁷ and Jason Otter, the demonic poet, are at first sight grotesques out of a fairy tale, just as Gerda Torp resembles a heroine from some Norse Saga. But these appearances are dissolved in the light of common sense (the word carrying a double meaning), just as Lent Pond, which initially is given an aura not unlike that of Auber Lake (Powys's melodramatic rendering in *Wood and Stone* of the homely Pitt Pond described realistically by his brother Llewelyn in *Somerset Essays*), becomes a mere tranquil pool in the middle of a field. Squire Urquhart and the rest are not monstrosities, but fallible and foolish mortals: Wolf's imaginings are moonshine. But Powys's comic method is double-edged—Wolf is not so much mistaken over his facts

(Urquhart, Malakite and Valley *are* sexually abnormal) as in his self-indulgent dramatising of them. The black-and-white absolutes of his 'mythology' are inadequate guides to living. The climax of this discovery comes with Mr Malakite's deathbed substitution of the word "Forget" for the word "Forgive". All attempts at moral ordering and psychological adjustment are rejected, together with the doomed, romantic shading of the early novels. The conventions of tragedy are subsumed in comic vision.

So the overtly humorous passages in *Wolf Solent* (Jason's mockery of Wolf and his walking stick, the exquisite Gerda gobbling porridge like a greedy child, Urquhart with his wig awry) all further the main theme of the book, the dissolution of absolutes in a total relativity that makes for charity and stoical endurance. The assertion of the comic spirit that things are not (wholly) what they seem is the essence of the novel, the point towards which its action moves. And the way in which it parodies those very literary techniques and traditions on which the author had previously been drawing seriously is a joke at his own expense. But at Wolf's expense the joke is cruel: the total bankruptcy with which his story ends, despite the vision of seraphic gold in the field of buttercups behind the pigsty, is a warning directive as to how this novel should be read. Its prevailing note is irony, nowhere better expressed than in the delightful absurdity of Mrs Otter's melancholy words at the end of a heated discussion between Wolf and her two sons. "It's all so confusing to most of us, Mattie dear . . . We can only hope and pray that the Judge of all the earth will do right."¹⁸ A whole world of patient, unquestioning piety lies behind the pathos of that remark; it is the kind of humorous observation one associates with George Eliot.

IV

The remark does in a sense provide the starting point and central seminal question of Powys's next novel. *A Glastonbury Romance* is governed by a sense of total relativity, though couched, ironically, in the

context of an ostensibly dogmatic mythos. But the mythological framework of the opening chapter, the “magisterial craziness” of the assertions as to sun, moon, First Cause and the rest are, it would seem, to be taken less seriously than might be at first supposed: like the plot of *Wolf Solent*, they constitute a trap for the literal-minded. (There is therefore an added irony that Powys should in the event have sprung the trap for himself.) The deliberate mistake as to the arrival of the midday train at Brandon station nineteen minutes early should (if it is noticed: most readers are so dazed by the preceding cosmological assertions as quite to overlook it)¹⁹ alert one to the fact that this novel is not to be the slave of plausibility. And so as the book proceeds the customary dualities of good and evil, strength and weakness, action and passivity, are dissolved, and even the expectation of a controlling inner theme is disappointed. No one is radically changed, there are no dramatic resolutions leading to some positive, forward-looking action. Powys, having led the reader to expect a vast prose epic, with ironic deliberation deprives him of an epic resonance. *A Glastonbury Romance* is a novel which mocks the sense of horizontal scale; it consists of an exploration of the timeless with what might be called a vertical awareness.

The comedy emerges therefore in a not unaffectionate mockery of the men of action, the controllers obsessed with linear time. We see Philip Crow in his bath like a little boy; Paul Trent inadvertently spitting on Miss Crow's black silk bosom; Morgan Nelly's Robber Band mimicking the brigandage of real life. But the humour is also at the expense of religious absolutes. The grotesquerie of Bloody Johnnie's hiccoughs after his Easter communion in his garden, the 'evil' Owen Evans with his knobbly knees and prosaic bowler hat holding forth on the Welsh origins of Merlin, are equally devoid of histrionic sublimities. And one notes that whereas Geard's religious vision is endorsed by fact (through the substantial reality of all he does and touches), Evans's

sadistic fantasies are dispelled by it—even if, again ironically, Tom Barter has to die in the process.²⁰ Nothing is quite what it seems: the ghostly atmosphere of Merlin's room at Mark's Court is dispersed by the sound of a man and woman pissing in a chamber pot; the agony of Euphemia Drew's unassuaged desire is echoed by the lowing of a cow. But Merlin still appears; there is no reductive snigger in these effects. They are not determined by a selective dualistic cynicism, but by a reverence for existence that concludes all under a single valuation transcending the purely human limits of tragic vision.

For *A Glastonbury Romance* is not so much a comedy as an anti-tragedy. Its comic effects are markedly joyous, and in none of Powys's novels is there such an effective delight in life as such. The serene content of Mr Timothy Wollop suffuses many of the pages. The exuberant nomenclature (always a Powysian characteristic), the numerous 'superfluous' characters, the attention paid to wayside grasses, lichen walls, and the tenuous effects of cloud-shadow, mist and sunlight, constitute a cosmic celebration within which the subordinate humorous effects are placed in true perspective.

Both linguistically and in narrative procedure the novel sustains its own comic vision. The language moves readily from grandeur to simplicity, with wild lurches into self-parody. Jocelyn Brooke, quoting Sam Dekker's comforting of Tossie Stickles (“... 'Don't 'ee cry about it, little girl,'” he said tenderly, laying his hand on one of the plump knees of the prostrate victim of East Anglian incontinence...”) rightly points out the affinities with Ronald Firbank, a novelist for whom the element of childish play is similarly important.²¹ Powys's stylistic tactics can alert the reader to an intensity, and at the same time warn him, through sheer over-assertion, not to take it too literally or with unbecoming seriousness.

V

The next major landmark in the development of Powys's comic art is his book on Rabelais (ironically itself a commissioned

interruption of work on his intended masterpiece, *Porius*) for the intervening novels are, where comedy is concerned, relatively static. In *Weymouth Sands* the frustration of the dreams and desires of the inhabitants serves to highlight the existence of the town which gave those feelings birth: a comic counterpoint between dream and reality is achieved. In this connection it is important that Weymouth should be a real town: call it "Sea-Sands", as Powys was forced to do for English publication, and remove the particular marks of identification, and the novel loses the final comic overtones.²² In *Maiden Castle* something similar occurs. Just as the non-person of Dud No-Man emerges as a true man, mistaken, suffering but, by comic denial of any simplistic process of conversion, still soldiering on in the life-style to which he is accustomed, so an objective Dorchester emerges out of the Dorchester of his imagination, and the hill fort Mai-Dun out of the hands of the ancient Gods. But the validity of Enoch Quirm's vision of the latter is neither endorsed nor denied; the reader is left poised in a world in which subjective and objective standards are equally valid.

A similar duality is apparent in *Owen Glendower*; but in this most atypical of the major novels the fact of historicity confuses the issue. Things are what they are known to have been; and it is the blurring of distinctions between Powysian reality and historical record which gives offence to those critics who see in the novel the misuse of a nation's traditions for purely personal artistic ends. The book terminates on a note of melancholy grandeur otherwise not found in Powys's work. For the facts of history leave him no room in which to manoeuvre: there is less formal comedy than in the preceding novels, and the ironies are necessarily tragic and on the grand scale. The comic vision implicit in an episode like the old Seneschal's fouling of the sword of Eliseg is of an intellectual kind: the attitudes of Father Pascentius, Walter Brut and Broch O'Meifod are wryly analysed and related to each other. Powys's use of bathos to

undercut the sublimities and to safeguard the reader's independence is nowhere more evident than in this magnificently written episode. But here, as before with John Geard, Sylvanus Cobbold and Enoch Quirm, he creates his most powerful effects through humour, a humour that emerges through the characters' beliefs rather than being aimed at those beliefs. The use of homeliness and bathos enables Powys to avoid the melodrama which in the early novels had neutralised the tragic effects implicit in them.

VI

The real clarification of Powys's comic vision comes in *Rabelais*, a book as important for an understanding of its author as for an understanding of its subject. In comparing Rabelais with James Joyce, Powys remarks that the former's nonsense "is not . . . a literary experiment laboriously and patiently carried through to the bitter end, but a series of exultant exuberances and reckless bubblings over." And it is his own humour he might be describing as "so zanyishly fantastical and artlessly Simple-Simonish that I can quite understand a 'responsible modern thinker', or a religious or scientific 'leader' turning from it in distaste."²³ How telling those inverted commas are! One recalls his approval of Alfred de Kantzow's "Powys, we must propitiate Magnates."²⁴ Few if any of our writers can puncture pretentiousness with such benign aplomb.

Powys's description of Rabelais's "zanyishly fantastical" style applies less to his own novels than to his letters and late works such as *In Spite Of*. In the fiction it is less style than attitude (if the two can in fact be separated) which conveys the humour; and the nature of that humour has been well defined by Powys himself as,

that particular attention of the human mind which reveals to us a certain endearing eccentricity in human character. Thus I am led to the conclusion that there is always some degree of escape from normal responsibility

in real humour, and some degree of detachment from scientific cause and effect.²⁵

Powys's major novels are written from this perspective; and in another passage he anticipates his final ones by declaring that a man can live a normally good life "without the help of the tragic founders of any of the great religions of Sorrow and Sacrifice . . . from the beginning of time until this day."²⁶ He had travelled a long way from the despairing morbidities of *Rodmoor*.

It is in these remarks on humour and this idealistic salutation of the Age of Aquarius that we may find the key to *Porius*, that great comic epic which is the crowning work of Powys's old age. And this supposition is confirmed by reference to its style. The earlier novels had been the work of a born orator. Powys was at home on the lecturer's platform; he could be 'himself' as a performer, his sincerity absolute yet relative to the conditions of its expression. Paradoxically, he could be most truthful under the conditions of play-acting and masquerade, all self-consciousness gone. Hence the self-deprecation and the self-mockery of the *Autobiography*, and the posturing in letters written even to his intimates: it was to strangers that he would write formally, with directness. And this donning of disguise, this overturning of expectations, is of the essence of the comic spirit.

We can see the same process at work in the developing style of the novels before *Porius*. In the first four a false security is evident in a recourse to mimicry, in the adoption of literary models, specific plots and thematically arranged material. Powys is being self-consciously 'a novelist'. The title, *Wood and Stone* is characteristic: it was suggested by his wife.²⁷ But with *Wolf Solent* and its three successors he harnesses the extravagance of his personality, writing not 'novels' but his own species of 'romance', in which the limitations of fictive plausibility are shrugged off in favour of a more dynamic relationship between author and reader: the latter is subjected to the former's own questioning as to the scope and legitimacy of his subject matter, often with teasing effect. With the

protective qualifications of a self-directed irony Powys comes to the full expression of his complex personality; and the result is what he calls a "transference of reverence".

By this bold transference of reverence from the *positive* awe and propitiation and sanctity of Religion, as well as from the *negative* puritanism of Rational Morality, to an unfathomable well-spring of creative force in our own soul, both the unreal systemizations of reason and the too real propitiations of religion are shaken off, and in their place there arises out of the depths the energy that destroys and creates all that exists.²⁸

And that energy manifests itself in the force of laughter. The transference of reverence being complete, Powys was free to live from the surface of things, to immerse himself in the present moment, while writing a novel whose ostensible subject was the past.

For in *Porius* the ambiguities of *Owen Glendower* are resolved: the setting being the Dark Ages, the question of historicity no longer gets in Powys's way. What he sets out to do is to subvert the reader's normal responses to Arthurian legend and mythology. The novel effects a conversion of sensibility. Arthur, Taliesin, Galahad, Mordred, above all Merlin, are autonomous figures innocent of any marks of traditional portraiture; yet they are treated without the reductive humanism of such contemporary adaptors of Arthurian myth as T. H. White or Naomi Mitchison (in *To the Chapel Perilous*). In White's case Merlin, Pellinore and Palomides become figures of farce, though never of facetiousness, thanks to the fundamental seriousness and compelling moral beauty of *The Once and Future King*. Facetiousness, like satire, was alien to Powys's spirit. The humour in *Porius* is of the same kind as found by Powys in the writings of Rabelais, evident in a feeling for the individual and idiosyncratic, which, while it effects a comic reversal of social prescriptions and imaginative expectations, is itself liable to be overturned by the superior force of the natural order.²⁹ Myrddin Wyllt embodies both these activities of the comic spirit, being opposed in his helplessness to the social

expectations aroused in the reader by his role of arch-magician; while at the same time he is a medium for those natural energies of which he is at once protector and embodiment. Moreover Myrddin (by an irony which Powys, if he did not see, could have appreciated) in his simultaneous power and weakness, in his power through passivity, resembles the crucified Christ, a resemblance furthered by the sight of his body spreadeagled on the rocks of Snowdon. But even here, in what is arguably the climactic moment in Powys's fiction, his comic sense refuses to close with a mythological absolute. The fact that Myrddin's release from bondage depends on the accident that Porius should prefer a small nipple to a large one is evidence that no single myth, metaphor or principle should be regarded as the ultimate word on anything. All possibilities remain open.

To call *Porius* a comic epic is therefore to assert its fundamental reversal-for-good of all human expectations of disaster. The distinctions that make for a sense of tragedy are ironed out; and it is Porius as he is, not as he has become, who is the liberator of Myrddin/Cronos. That liberation is not earned or even achieved. It simply takes place; it is. In that fact lies the reassurance implicit in the book's comic levelling-in-celebration, exemplified in what John Hodgson has called, "the strange impartiality" of Powys's observation "carried to such an extreme that it is often hard to decide whether, on any one page, we are most interested in myth or politics or bits of twig."³⁰

But, for all this, the seven-day saga has its share of horror, confusion and catastrophe; human endeavours are overthrown, human heroism foiled or shown up as fraudulent or wrong-headed; each person with his or her beliefs, each attitude to life, is accepted, accounted for, and allowed to be. The novel's seriousness of intent is divested of solemnity, not only by the action, so full of delays and Powysian digressions, suggesting that none of these plottings and obsessions matter very much; but also by such quaint touches as calling the old princesses "the

Three Aunties" or by making (in a passage cut from the published version) Prince Einion break wind upon his deathbed. But such bathos is always used by Powys to assert human subordination to natural forces powerful and majestic in themselves: it is not used to induce a snigger at the expense of human aspirations.

His distrust of authorities, his compassionate, collusive anarchism, rest on a belief in tolerance that stems from an appreciative curiosity as to every manifestation to human consciousness of the elements (mineral, vegetable, animal, spiritual) of what he liked to call "this terraqueous planet". And in the assertion of Myrddin's ultimate power he is exemplifying that programme for renewal which he had discerned in the writing of Rabelais.

In place of the 'Mystery of Love' with its twin-sister Hate the world would be governed by a plainer, more simple, more practical ideal, the ideal of honesty, of integrity, and of a humorous and indulgent common sense. In such a world what causes of wars and miseries would disappear!³¹

VII

Rabelais also indicates the further direction of Powys's writings, following the triumphant comic vision achieved in *Porius*.

One by one . . . these new Ideas emerge, and emerge from queer directions and unexpected quarters . . . Their movement is spiral; but it is *on and up and out*; not round and down and back.³²

"Round and down and back" might serve as a description of *Atlantis* and *The Brazen Head*; but if it describes their literary method, they do remain stories about explorers and the power of new ideas. In both novels the arch-enemy is, as ever, the authoritarian dogmatist, whether he appear in the scientific fanaticism of the ruler of Atlantis or in the bigotry of the schoolman Bonaventura (in real life the originator, ironically enough, of Powys's favourite image of the circle whose centre is everywhere the circumference nowhere). In the

novels after *Porius* Powys permits himself the license of a total, if gradual, dissolution of the bonds of cause and effect, of space and time: it is appropriate enough that the first of them should take place in a lunatic asylum.

Glint, however, is not called that: it is "a mental home". The words have in context an ambiguous sound. On the one hand they suggest a seemingly harmless euphemism, one which while seeking to avoid the denigratory associations of the older term, in fact masks an intention to experiment upon the afflicted—the kind of institution that Powys pillories as "Hell's Museum" in *Weymouth Sands*. Or the words may mean what they say, a home in or for the mind. One of the comic threads running through *The Inmates* is the way in which mad people are shown to be carrying on their lives either oblivious of, or untouched by, the institutional life which they would otherwise find intolerable. For, as Powys found while still a boy, the mad are, in that sense, free.

It is from some such awareness that Powys's fantasies would seem to have been written: the anxious dreads and compulsions of the earlier books are gone, together with the complex attitudes of the Wessex quartet and the two Welsh epics. *The Inmates*, *Atlantis* and *The Brazen Head* are oddly stationary in their development. This is in part a question of narrative method. The prose frequently resorts to the pluperfect tense, and sentences repeatedly begin with such phrases as "It was not until after . . .", "What they saw next was . . .", or "It was So-and-So who now proceeded . . .". Presented with a given situation, the reader is sent back upon his tracks. Moreover all three books conclude at the point where, in another kind of novel, one might expect them to begin. The explorers and adventurers and inventors are subordinate to worlds of which they form a part, or are inseparable from them. The fusion of ordinary with extraordinary is exemplified in *Atlantis* when the cow Babba experiences no more than a mild curiosity at being stabled beside the mythical winged horse

Pegasus; or when in the same novel we are presented with the unexpected, horrific and yet somehow comic sight of the shattered finger nails of the Furies littering the ground beneath the scarred but relatively undamaged statue of Themis, Goddess of Order. The image is so specific and yet so literal as to be at once impressive and reductive: in this novel Powys's flaunting of the laws of proportion reach their extreme pitch when we find a fly and a moth treated with as much interest and concern as the mighty Odysseus himself. Not for nothing is the laughter-loving Zeuks the bearer of the book's message: he is the son of Arcadian Pan and the proponent of the liberating effects of laughter. As John Toft comments,

Zeuks's laughter is not the laughter of bitter defiance or rejection but an embrace of life and still more life, like the reconciling fugal laughter which ends Verdi's *Falstaff* (also the product of a sublime octogenarian infant). Death is not life's opposite, but simply a part of life, one god, Aidoneus, among many

. . . ³³

Powys's delight in handling his material nowhere find more genial expression than in this novel, not least in the demure humour of the repeated references to "the blameless Ethiopians".

The mood of *The Brazen Head* is more quizzical and bitter: the book's seeming affability is skin-deep. At its conclusion both positive and negative elements, both brazen head and lodestone, are destroyed together—from now on Powys's imagination is to replace drowning with explosion as a mode of termination. The comedy consists in the absurd disparity between the aspirations of the intellectuals and the physical reality which encompasses them. (And one aspect of the physical is itself parodied: the sight of Lilith of *Lost Towers* lying provocatively half-clothed upon the grass is a ludicrous equivalent of the would-be stimulating poses found in 'girlie'—a Powysian word—magazines of the period and since.) Passages of grotesquerie abound, as when,

a very queer sound came from his body as he stood there before them, like a great black

rook come down from a nest that a quarter of a year ago has served its purpose to the limit and now awaits its dissolution, a sound that might have been an explosion of wind, either from mouth or from anus, but a sound that resembled the cry of an unborn child, that with the permission of nature had been engendered in the duodenum of an elderly man by deliberate impregnation from a super-human minotaur—³⁴

the result of which is a complete dispersal of the reader's attention from what the unfortunate Albert of Cologne has been trying to say. Underlying this interplay of beliefs and devotions and human passions there is a bedrock scepticism summed up in the mysterious song "Penglog y Baban yr Gawr",

the sort of defiance such as the ghost of a baby of a million years ago, a baby or 'baban' whose skull, 'penglog', had been discovered in the grave of an antediluvian giant, 'gawr', might have uttered to all oracles and prophets and announcers of revelations and to all deities and pantheons of deities who were already gathering in the mists of the future to claim human worship.³⁵

In "The Little One", a deleted chapter of *Porius*, a red-haired child in the Druid's burrow prophesies that "All shall be equal. All shall be one."³⁶ But in this later passage the view of the future is replaced by a grimly humorous acceptance of the abolition of all distinctions. "Where no Grail be there be no quest . . . The whole of Existence is naught but a jest". In *The Brazen Head* Powys turns for the last time to that world of earth and vegetation which, from his first novel on, had filled him with a sense of oppression; now the oppression turns to sardonic defiance. Liberation had, for him, always come from the sea; but now in his final stories he was to turn to the air.

In the nine space fantasies of Powys's final years the comedy is at the expense of the systematic reader, the critic: they are so totally irresponsible in their implausibility as to confound any consistent effort towards evaluation. They can tax the friendliest reader's patience. George Steiner has spoken of the sheer silliness that intrudes, "its giggly quality . . . a kind of fearful

childishness, of histrionic disguise, which runs through the heart of some of his great works."³⁷ It is this element which foxes the rationalist critic and annoys the humanist: it is easier to accept the occult than the wayward or ridiculous. Powys himself is impenitent in the matter.

Gibberish—the inventing of nonsense—is an irrepressible tendency of mine, and to me it is never comic or facetious or amusing. It is more tragic, more grave, more religious than intelligibility is!³⁸

But gibberish is also the weapon of the lunatic: the solemn are never proof against childish abuse. (Hurl a ripe tomato at the commissar and you'll be clapped in gaol; none the less the pulp will have been witnessed dripping from eyebrow and moustache.) Powys's late stories often read as though the author were an inhabitant of Glint. The infantile nature and vocabulary of his final writings are, in literary terms, a scandal, though more a matter of irreverent mischief than of the heavy humour he denounces elsewhere.

Avowedly and unashamedly the products of the author's second childhood, the space fantasies combine airy flights of intellectual speculation with elements of farce that are not so much the creation of a baby as of a babyish schoolboy. For, as Powys himself observes, "Children are not as sensitive to the hideously grotesque as some older people . . ."; they have "a strange immunity to the horror of ugliness".³⁹ What disconcerts the adult reader in the space fantasies is their total flouting of any accommodation to that reader's rationality. The stories have the capricious, wilful tone of very small children when making up a story with no event arising logically from another: successiveness is divorced from reason, chance rules all. The fictions are so blatantly fictive as to constitute mere acts of play; the imagination is freed from all restraint. As a result, although much of their action is comical, it does not deserve to be called comic. There is no tragic, law-abiding norm to be subjected to reversal. Only in those tales which in part take place on earth (*All or*

Nothing, You and Me, and the three last fantasies) is it possible for expectation to be outraged, or discordancies noted; when they are, laughter is the effect of shock rather than of intellectual appreciation. It is the more surprising that *You and Me* should contain one of Powys's few passages of comic social exchange.

'It's one of the chief regrets of my life, sir, that I've never been to Scotland.'

'It's of Geneva I'm talking, young man,' said the Colonel sternly. 'Geneva is one of the most remarkable towns—indeed I might almost call it a city—I have ever visited. And do you know what I found there? . . . I found,' he went on, 'that the name of many, many, many owners of shops—they have their names, of course, over the windows fronting on the street, were my own mother's maiden name before she married my father? Was not that a remarkable thing? . . . My mother's name, young man . . . was Lasseronica. She was born in Toulouse. She was extremely young when she married my father.' . . .

'Geneva must indeed be a beautiful place with such names above its shops. Were they married in Geneva?'

I shall never forget the expression in the Colonel's eyes as he replied, 'What's it to me where they were married? I was born in Scotland.'⁴⁰

There is a touch of Lewis Carroll's caterpillar in Colonel Katterventicle; and this is appropriate enough, for *Through the Looking Glass* was the first book that Powys read to himself. As he wrote to Louis Wilkinson, "I think the crazy daring of that book and the peculiar way of treating beasts birds dolls pawns (and the Inanimate as well) has influenced me profoundly."⁴¹ It certainly did: from *The Owl, the Duck, and—Miss Rowe! Miss Rowe! to Topsy-Turvy* this surrealistic streak has been a feature of Powys's work. And, as in Carroll's books, we find the inanimate objects often discomfiting, or touchy or even menacing. Powys is not really happy with the workings of magical fancy: his most persuasively marvellous creations are the transfigured objects of everyday reality.

VIII

But in their assertion of the need to fuse or to complement opposites, these final tales enunciate the philosophic harmony towards which comedy points. If it is a human need to believe in absolutes, it is necessary for sanity that that belief should be tempered by the realisation that all human absolutes are necessarily relative, including our apprehension of the absolute itself, since it is, by definition, totally transcendent. Such awareness underlies the workings of comedy. Shakespeare's Dogberry is a figure of comedy because in him the necessary belief in the absolute authority of the Law which he serves is unaccompanied by any awareness of the incongruity of its being embodied in himself. "And masters, do not forget to specify, when time and place shall serve, that I am an ass."⁴² In comedy the ascription applies to all, just as in another context, "Pardon's the word to all",⁴³ for Shakespearean comedy can even comprehend the forgiveness of the wicked. Powysian comedy proceeds from a similar width of acceptance, but, since Powys's art, unlike that of Shakespeare, is essentially undramatic, the qualifications and modifications that propel the comic action become matter for shading and observation rather than for contrast and reversal. If Shakespearean comedy may be likened to a dance, Powysian comedy resembles a panoramic painting in which the figures exist only in relation to their surroundings. This is even apparent when Powys presents his characters in solitude, or when their self-sufficiency comes up against that of others. Some of his best comic effects come from the jeering of boys like Lobbie Torp in *Wolf Solent*, and from the abusiveness of women directed not merely at each other (as in Nancy Yew's tirade against Mrs Wohntsch in *The Inmates*) but still more formidably at men: one thinks of Gerda berating Wolf, Nelly attacking Richard Storm in *After My Fashion*, Jennie Dearth setting about Dud No-Man. Powys's masochism may be in evidence here, but the comedy does in any case express the uneasy sexual

relationships obtaining at the time of his young manhood. The extreme sexual polarities, the embargo on open talk concerning sexual matters, the exalted and protected social role of women, all led to a suppressed but violent sexual antagonism which Powys makes an occasion for rueful analysis. The essentially cruel disrespect and yet naked longing of the "I'd like to" of Tom Chinnock on Mr Evans's *Terre Gastée* in *A Glastonbury Romance* embodies a terrifying incongruity, and simultaneously justifies it. But by identifying himself with the objects of hostility, especially in the characters of Wolf Solent and Dud No-Man, Powys prevents his treatment of them from being portentous.

But his richest effects concern solitary people, and depict harmony and reconciliation. John Geard and Sylvanus Cobbold and Dud No-Man carrying out their lonely rituals are not only funny but, in the case of the first two, impressive; the balance is held in the manner of the presentation. On the other hand such a scene as that in which Richard Gaul and Peg Frampton sit together watching the bathers on Weymouth sands reflects the gentler ironies of Powys's style.

As she watched these bathers now her whole nature shivered like a harp-string in response to the excited feeling they aroused. When the two of them had approached that exciting spot, she had replied by a brief, uncivil, heedless 'what?' repeated more than once as her companion spoke of the parts played in the history of mythology by the masculine and feminine principles.

Meanwhile, Mr Gaul, not reluctant to compare himself with an Emperor, did his best to bethink him of the indulgence of Marcus Aurelius towards his dissipated Faustina. There indeed *was* something just a little resembling the big round, prominent eye-state of the Imperial Stoic in Mr Gaul's look, especially when he could take off his spectacles without blinking at the sun. This he certainly could not do now, for it was still mid-afternoon, and for a person with weak eyes the pebbles had a blinding dazzlement, as they flung back the hot rays. So he had to be as tolerant as he could to his little Faustina's impassioned interest in these Weymouth glad-

iators, while he turned upon them spectacles bought in St Mary's Street.⁴⁴

The quiet mockery of this passage is redeemed from patronage or cruelty by the indulgent admission of that intalised "was". For in his readiness to use colloquialisms, non-'literary' emphases and the talking voice, Powys is always potentially smiling at himself. He does so in his depiction of Cobbold, Geard and No-Man, as any reader of *Autobiography* will recognize; and he does so here.

It is this capacity for serene self-mockery which sustains the implausibilities, the extravagances, the fantastic elaborations of John Cowper Powys's novels. If there are consciously comic touches in all of them, and if there are jokes at the professional critic's expense (as in the astonishing *Cast of Characters* that precedes the opening of *Maiden Castle*—it is pleasant to imagine it being read by both Cyril Connolly and F. R. Leavis); and if there are pages and pages of ripe (but often very funny) "Mummerset" dialogue, these are but the accidents of a substantial humour that informs the corpus as a whole, that comic vision whose personal attainment is charted in *Autobiography* and whose practical implications are worked out in the philosophical books and in essays on the great humorists. And what Powys says of Rabelais and Charles Dickens is applicable to himself.

They have contributed between them the *one single panacea* that goes to the root of our trouble; and not only so, but together they have indicated the one and only path by which humanity can become more and more itself—that is to say, more and more *humane*. The whole of Rabelais and the whole of Dickens is one vast *skit* upon the folly of our clever rulers, our clever bureaucrats, our clever lawyers, our clever generals, our clever scientists, our clever politicians, and our clever patriots. And it is a skit upon them as against the *men of good will*. It is a skit that contains the startling suggestion that only when the "men of good will", that is to say, men who refuse to do evil that good may come, *are in possession of the power*, will humanity be set upon its true path—the path not of science or

religion, for both have failed us, but of *humanity!*⁴⁵

The passage is exaggerated and simplistic, the orator stalks the platform and Queen Victoria ghosts the prose behind him, while the optimistic neglect of Lord Acton's dictum about the corrupting force of power on those who wield it robs his conclusion of validity; and yet the words make us smile assent. Perhaps it is that unconcerned use of

slang in "skit", perhaps it is the blithe dispensing with dignified appearances, perhaps it is simply the rhythmic surge of rhetoric—whatever be the cause, the passage with all its flaws exemplifies that balanced hold on how much and how little we dare allow our fallible senses to believe, which, by its suffusion throughout his work, allows one to acknowledge John Cowper Powys to be a major comic artist.

NOTES

¹ J. B. Priestley, "The Happy Introvert", *A Review of English Literature*, Vol. IV, No. 1, January 1963, pp. 25-32.

² *The Pleasures of Literature*, Cassell, 1938, p. 263.

³ *Revelations of Divine Love*, "The Thirteenth Revelation"; ed. Grace Warrack, Methuen, 1901, p. 56.

⁴ Charles Williams, *Bacon*, Arthur Barker, 1933, p. 277.

⁵ *The Complex Vision* (1920), Village Press, 1975, p. 32.

⁶ *Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson 1935-1956*, Macdonald, 1958, p. 245.

⁷ George Meredith, *Modern Love*. Meredith, a great proclaimer of certainties in much of his poetry, was another writer whom Powys disliked.

⁸ *In Defence of Sensuality*, Gollancz, 1931, p. 200.

⁹ *Bumbore* was circulated privately, and was first published by the Warren House Press, Norfolk, 1969.

¹⁰ *Cold Comfort Farm* was first published in 1932. Obvious targets for its satire were the Powys brothers, Mary Webb and Eden Phillpotts.

¹¹ *In Defence of Sensuality*, p. 35.

¹² *Autobiography*, The Bodley Head, 1934; Macdonald, 1967, p. 268.

¹³ *Rabelais*, The Bodley Head, 1948, p. 304.

¹⁴ For confirmation of this assessment see *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. V, 1936-1941*, The Hogarth Press, 1984, pp. 211-212, 274-275. In a private conversation Walpole reveals some interesting emotional affinities with Powys.

¹⁵ *Letters of John Cowper Powys to His Brother Llewelyn*, ed. Malcolm Elwin, Village Press, 1975, Vol. I, pp. 215-216.

¹⁶ C. A. Coates, *John Cowper Powys in Search of a Landscape*, Macmillan, 1982, p. 44.

¹⁷ A similar, more elaborate combination is to be found in the figure of the Countess of Gormenghast and her cats in *Titus Groan* by Mervyn Peake. Peake's grave is in the churchyard at Burpham, the remote Sussex village where Powys lived off and on for twenty-five years: a pleasant coincidence.

¹⁸ *Wolf Solent*, J. Cape, 1929, p. 446.

¹⁹ See Charles Lock, " 'Multiverse' . . . language which makes language impossible", *The Powys Review*, No. 5, 1979, to whom I am also indebted for the phrase "magisterial craziness" quoted above.

²⁰ The name "Tom Barter" also belongs to a character in L. P. Jacks's *Mad Shepherds* (1910) a book of rural stories which here and there anticipates the work of T. F. Powys. Jacks was in his day an esteemed writer on matters philosophical and supernatural: John Cowper Powys was likely to have been acquainted with his books.

²¹ Jocelyn Brooke, "On Re-reading *A Glastonbury Romance*", *The London Magazine*, Vol. III, 4, April 1956, pp. 44-51.

²² For details of these changes see Margaret Moran, "Visions and Revisions of *Weymouth Sands*", *The Powys Review*, No. 11, 1982-3, pp. 18-31.

²³ *Rabelais*, p. 304.

²⁴ *Autobiography*, p. 233.

²⁵ *Rabelais*, p. 306.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

²⁷ John Cowper Powys, in a letter to the present writer, 16 March 1959.

²⁸ *Rabelais*, p. 385.

²⁹ These two complementary aspects of comedy are found in specific form in the novels of Charles Dickens and George Meredith: it took John Cowper Powys to relate them to each other.

³⁰ John Hodgson, "On Reading *Porius*" *The Powys Review*, No. 8, 1980-81, p. 30.

³¹ *Rabelais*, pp. 311-12.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 301.

³³ John Toft, "John Cowper Powys's *Atlantis*", *The Powys Review*, No. 3, Summer 1978, p. 40.

³⁴ *The Brazen Head*, Macdonald, 1956, p. 255.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

³⁶ See Morine Krissdottir, *John Cowper Powys and the Magical Quest*, Macdonald & Jane's, 1980, pp. 153-5.

³⁷ George Steiner, "The Difficulties of Reading John Cowper Powys", *The Powys Review*, No. 1, 1977, p. 9.

³⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 65.
³⁹ *The Pleasures of Literature*, p. 126.
⁴⁰ *You and Me*, Village Press, 1975, p. 40.
⁴¹ *Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson*, p. 351.

⁴² *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act V, scene 1.
⁴³ *Cymbeline*, Act V, scene 5.
⁴⁴ *Weymouth Sands*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1934; Macdonald, 1963, p. 469.
⁴⁵ *The Pleasures of Literature*, pp. 123-4.

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In Search of the Real Glendower

Glyndŵr has been submerged over the centuries by so much apocryphal, messianic fantastic and ideological material that we have probably lost for ever the real man. One could hardly say that John Cowper Powys's *Owen Glendower*, in spite of the clarity of his historical "Argument" by way of an appendix at the very end of his book, is an attempt to penetrate the "Celtic twilight" that shrouds this figure from true understanding. Indeed, strictly speaking, it only serves to further hide him from view. This criticism has more than adequately been made by Roland Mathias to the point of almost dismissing the work entirely as a piece of historical writing, one of the reasons being the propensity "to ignore the heart and spirit of early fifteenth century Wales in favour of a deep-rooted theory of his own."¹

On the other hand, one could easily argue that to identify and define shadowy historical persons is not the duty of a novelist and certainly not that of a romancer. John Cowper Powys wanted to reveal Glyndŵr and, more aptly, the phenomenon of Glyndŵr, in his monumental work. This he does by writing from the point of view of Rhisiart, his secretary and relation. He can therefore stand back with his Rhisiart and assess what is going on. This gives an anchor to steady one in the different storms that happen throughout—perhaps excepting Rhisiart's own passion for red-haired Tegolin.

We are further assured of non-suspension of belief by the fact that Rhisiart was a real historical person. John Cowper Powys did not have to create him out of nothing. And Rhisiart is not alone. In his list at the beginning of the many characters we find historical personages listed first and non-

historical ones second. We find, moreover, that Powys had a very good grasp of the history of the period, and his "Argument" at the very end is certainly a contribution to the revaluation of Glyndŵr. In particular, he would like to refute the idea that Glyndŵr's revolt came about almost by accident—by a chance quarrel between him and Grey of Rhuthin. He was right to throw some cold water on that idea and his novel really is about explaining the inevitability, often reasoned, of the revolt of Glyndŵr, and the Welsh, and its digestion over a period of time like a great birthing. The signs were everywhere—we find that *uchelwr*, churchman, and labourer were all groaning under the English yoke, in fiction and in truth.

The historicity of his material Powys would not, perhaps, could not avoid. We are used to historical plays playing havoc with history. Shakespeare is always with us, and so is Shakespeare's Glendower. It has always been a moot point whether Schiller was right or wrong to arrange a dramatic meeting between Mary and Elizabeth in his *Maria Stuart*. In romance we are dealing with the hardened criminals of distorting or improving the truth. Some would have us believe that we transcend truth in fiction, and thus create real truth. Certainly with John Cowper Powys we are truly having history created rather than history interpreted, however imaginatively. he does not apologise for this. Tegolin is Powys's child, made as it were out of flowers for Rhisiart to follow. The two Cistercians, even though we know full well of their support, as well of that of the Franciscans, for the revolt to the point of collecting money for Glyndŵr, are completely imaginary. The 'insatiable' quality of Father Pascentius's eyes is the stuff of pure romance.

Not that the romancer's wand neglects to transform everything, historical and created. Rhys Gethin's ferocious gestures and moods for example have an almost Culhwchian or Hibernian exaggeration and intensification. The words of the dying bard, Iolo Goch, are delivered in a charged mantic atmosphere (156).² Griffith Llwyd is made to pronounce actual lines in translation on Glyndŵr's exploits in Scotland with Richard II. Interestingly enough John Cowper Powys does not want to indulge in the assumed traditional bardic verbal abracadabra and makes Rhisiart wonder that "the almost cold *intention* continued to retain in the midst of the wildest excursions of his frenzy the symphonic unity of his performance." (156) This, in part, is a reference to the Welsh system of alliteration and assonance, or *cynghanedd*, in which his praise was couched. Yet within a page the poet "had become the beating of immortal wings in a great void" (157), thus straddling the minds of mortals like a Colossus. The author, and poet, are now being 'bardic' beyond, to say the least.

In much the manner of Schiller, he brings Walter Brut the Lollard into contact with Glyndŵr, combining historical truth with creative licence. He was no doubt instinctively correct to make a Lollard the sympathiser with the cause of the Welsh people against a tyranny of Marcher lords and taxmongering kings. He would have loved Owen's declaration (467) that the Welsh would not bow the knee to any Pope. For Brut the Pope was Anti-Christ. The revolt would have been taken by Brut and his colleagues as a war against evil. He would have Brut be the instigator of the idea of two universities in Wales (448) and the defender of academic freedom (442). This need not surprise us, but Brut's avowed pacificism is one real stumbling block in the way of truth in this matter. Yet some of the most startling and creative sounding details in Powys's work are not fiction in any shape or form. Iolo Goch's hatred of the friars is well known—in Powys's words his "dislike of ecclesiastics"—for in a famous poem he

attacked the strict morality in the matter of the celibacy of the priesthood.³

The involvement of the Church in Owain's revolt is totally appreciated by John Cowper Powys. The discussion about Welsh freedom on page 110 is tinged by twentieth century hindsight when Father Rheinallt makes the declaration about the sacrifice if the Welsh being "a small price to pay for a Wales free and united as it was", followed by Rhys Gethin's retort, "As it *never* was!" Master Young represents the more cautious and diplomatic approach when he reiterates the idea that Wales should seek a settlement with England that would include fealty to the King of England. (111) Only Llewelyn the Last had had the courage or the foolhardiness to throw the expected fealty with caution to the winds. But Rhys Gethin will have none of this. The idea of bowing and scraping to the King of England is abhorrent to him. This attitude is certainly borne out by the sequence of events from 1401 onwards. He fought rather than parlied with Henry of Lancaster.

What do we make of John Cowper Powys's Glendower who is obsessed with his magic books, with portents and signs, who lapses into trances and comas, or "attacks", as the author sometimes calls them? Is this the man who challenged Bolingbroke for so long and stalked the whole of Wales in the quest of Welsh independence? There is plenty of evidence of his profound interest in divination as Glanmor Williams has observed in his book on the Welsh Church.⁴ Once more Powys is right. But when we see the author making Glendower equate Catherine and Tegolin with supernatural persons like Branwen and Armhod (929), and identifying Owen with the Prince of Annwn, where is the real Glyndŵr? Here he is more than the Man of Destiny and the prophesied saviour, the magician who could speak the language of magicians, as he appears on page 389. He is a god, incarnate, the King of the Otherworld. (934)

Then there is the Glyndŵr of the poets. A number of poems have been attributed wrongly in the manuscripts to both Glyn-

dŵr's extollers, Iolo Goch and Gruffudd Llwyd, and have mislead generations of historians. In the poems now deemed by Welsh scholars to have been written by these poets to Glyndŵr we see clearly the elegant gentleman who is apparent from scene to scene in Powys's novel. But the early poems of Iolo Goch make him a very earthy figure, a man not at all bound up with Destiny, before the years of the revolt. He is the great hero of Richard II's campaign in Scotland with his flaming flamingo plume evident in the fray—the gentlemen's gentleman, and soldier's soldier.⁵ He is also the great host in magnificent surroundings. His home is spacious and elegant and a haven for poets and minstrels alike. He is the essence of gentility in court and would never steal a plaything from a child, yet in military prowess he was the best.⁶ This ancient topos is revitalised in a dynamic Owain. In Iolo's poems we do not have any inkling of the "son of prophesy" who was to lead Wales from its bondage, but rather a portrait of a great noble-man in the peace and tranquility of his ancestral home.

Gruffudd Llwyd's poems on the other hand, even if they predate Glyndŵr's revolt, are much more an adumbration of a cataclysm. He sees in Welsh history a certain rôle to be filled, not by the *mab darogan* but by an "ordained knight" ("*marchawg urddawl*"). This particular rôle is *continuous* throughout Welsh history since the fall of Llywelyn—"parhäus yw".⁷ In fact we find that the official Welsh poets were continually looking for a leader, not the future king or Messiah, but the man who will have wrought Welsh freedom out of a definite political situation. Later on it was to be William Herbert and Henry Richmond. Just as there was a tradition amongst the court poets of the princes up to 1284 to find and to nurture *real* leaders in the present, so there was amongst the poets of the nobility up to 1485. Even though this continual search was bolstered by the prophetic tradition or *brud* about the coming of the *mab darogan*, it was distinct from it. Although divination is involved in the poem which

celebrates Glyndŵr's exploits in Scotland where the poet says that God and man had prophesied his coming there,⁸ it is not the kind of prophetic writing one can associate with the *canu brud*.

Thus, all in all, the picture of Griffith Llwyd in John Cowper Powys as a purveyor of Taliesinic vaticination, is misleading to say the least. But he can be excused for painting it. First of all, within the logic of his book *Glendower's "bards"* have to be prophetic and necromantic, and there was a long-standing tradition of vaticination in Wales. And secondly he knew of the poem to the comet as printed in Charles Ashton's edition of Iolo Goch,⁹ there attributed to Gruffudd and Iolo alike. This, according to Powys, was the work of Gruffudd. (473) If the poem is to be attributed to any one at all during Glyndŵr's revolt, and doubts have been expressed about its authenticity and dating,¹⁰ then it must be to Gruffudd Llwyd. For we do also have the poem by Gruffudd in which he states that the Welsh are "a wretched nation, like drunken crows,"¹¹ that in Wales the whole social order has been completely overturned, and the staunch Britons, who were once so predominant, are now "the debris of a hammering".¹² His cry is, "Oes farchawg urddawl, hawl hy, / Trais ac amraint, tros Cymru . . .", which means, "Is there an ordained knight of bold claim, midst oppression and the wresting of privilege, for Wales?"¹³ The tinge of prophesy is there, albeit prior to the revolt.

The comet of February or March 1402 and seen by Adam of Usk is supposed to have stirred both Gruffudd and Ieuan ap Rhydderch. There is no doubt that Ieuan's comet is much later, presumably in the time of Jasper Tudor. We cannot be sure as to the date or the authorship of the poem which is to be found in Ashton's edition of Iolo Goch. Personally, with John Cowper Powys, I would like to see it as a poem by Gruffudd. For it is *not*, in my view, an example of *canu brud*. There is nothing incongruous in my view in its reference to the people of Gwynedd, for at that time it is

likely that Glyndŵr was domiciled somewhere in Snowdonia. Powys is certainly justified in using the poem to the full. It doubtless vindicates the wizardry of Owain, be it a sincere or opportunist facet to his being, for there is a passing suggestion that Owen was using the bards for his own ends in the novel. (471) In that famous *cywydd*, the poet sings that a star was in the sky when Christ was born, and also at the time of Uthr, the father of Arthur, the portent of a great age, and now the third is above Gwynedd, the star of a new saviour for the Welsh. In the novel the talk of the appearance of the comet is timed just to follow a great speech of defiance by Glendower, and the passionate prayer for a sign. In fact the comet confirms him absolutely in his destiny to defy the English to the very last. No one would dictate to the Welsh as to what Pope they should recognise. "We shall decide for ourselves", he says. (467)

Another famous divinator of the period was Hopcyn ap Tomos of Ynys Dawy who also figures in the novel. He was well known as a "maister of Brut".¹⁴ Glyndŵr, we know, when at Carmarthen in 1403, turned to him to ask him what ancient prophecies told of his coming. In the novel Hopcyn is in

Harlech, and Powys attributes to him, rightly or wrongly, the burial of any move to seek an agreement involving fealty to the English King. (651) In any event, Hopcyn did play a part in proclaiming Owain as the *mab darogan*.

What is uncanny about *Owen Glendower*, in spite of its fictional explorations, is the "instinctive" correctness of the straight historical facts about Glyndŵr and the well-placed assumptions. Not that this really matters, one might add, in a romance. But it certainly adds to the intrinsic value of *Owen Glendower* as a revelation of Welsh history and more than mellows the rather lurid portrait of Owen as witnessed by Roland Mathias as the *roi fainéant* or the sacrificial prince who fulfills once again the mythology of escape.¹⁵ We must differentiate between the outer and the inner Owen in the novel. It is beyond doubt, however, that the supernatural played an integral part in the consciousness of Owain and of others. The *emotional* revelations on the other hand are far beyond the facts and sometimes strain the truth in far-flung fiction. Here the novel is all John Cowper Powys, not Glendower, and certainly not Owain "glain y Glyn".

NOTES

¹Roland Mathias, "John Cowper Powys and 'Wales': A Limited Study", *The Powys Review*, No. 17, p. 23.

²Page references within my text are to *Owen Glendower*, The Bodley Head, 1941 (identical with New York, 1940).

³Thomas Roberts and Henry Lewis, *Cywyddau Iolo Goch ac Eraill*, Caerdydd, 1937, known henceforth as IGE, XXII.

⁴Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, Cardiff, 1967, p. 2116; for more on Brut, p. 203.

⁵IGE XII.

⁶IGE XII.

⁷IGE XLII.

⁸IGE XLI, p. 122, 11. 29-50.

⁹*Gweithiau Iolo Goch*, Charles Ashton, Croesoswallt, 1896, p. 183.

¹⁰IGE, introduction xiv.

¹¹IGE XLII, p. 10.

¹²IGE XLII, p. 27.

¹³IGE XLII, p. 126, 11. 11-12.

¹⁴Gruffydd John Williams, *Traddodiad Llenyddol Morgannwg*, Caerdydd, 1948, pp. 9-14.

¹⁵Roland Mathias, "The Sacrificial Prince: A Study of *Owen Glendower*", *Essays on John Cowper Powys*, ed. Belinda Humfrey, Cardiff, 1972.

Belinda Humfrey

John [Cowper] Powys's "Mordaunt Ap Gryfith. A tale" (1888?): an explanatory introduction

The manuscript of John Cowper Powys's schoolboy fragment (in a small, thin notebook) was given to me by Phyllis Playter in the late 1970s, as a keepsake rather than for publication. However, prompted by articles like Roland Mathias's "John Cowper Powys and 'Wales'" in the last *Powys Review* and Meirion Pennar's in this, I consider that "Mordaunt Ap Gryfith" should be displayed as evidence of Powys's very early interest in writing fiction concerned with the history of Wales.

In putting the manuscript into print, I have standardised the spelling (except for proper names) but retained Powys's punctuation, inserting a little occasionally, in parentheses, for clarity of reading.

John Cowper Powys entered Sherborne School in the Michaelmas Term 1886, at the same time as the contemporary, apparently Cuthbert Woodville Harrison (1874-1946), whom he addresses in the dedication of his "tale" as "our greatly beloved head of the house". C. W. Harrison, almost two years older than Powys, left Sherborne in 1890, a year before Powys.¹ These dates suggest that "Mordaunt Ap Gryfith" may have been written c. 1888-89 when Powys was sixteen.

Powys describes himself on the cover of his notebook "tale" as John Powys, thus as an author ignoring the Cowperish part of his inheritance and stressing his awareness of his father's boasted descent from "Roderick Mawr, King of All Wales".² Rhodri Mawr (or Roderick the Great) reigned from AD 844 to 878. Powys only records his own investigating of his Powys ancestry when his own son was born and he looked into J. Y. W. Lloyd's *The History . . . of Powys Fadog* (1881). The first

volume of this work provides information about "Roderick the Great . . . King of Gwynedd, Powys and South Wales", an ancestor of the later Madog ap Gruffudd, who formed the limited realm of Powys Fadog in the thirteenth century, and to whose achievements were linked the emergence in the fourteenth century of another king of all Wales, Owain Glyndyfrdwy, or Owain Glyndŵr.³

But the schoolboy Powys's "tale", although it includes a Welsh self-appointed leader named Roderic, is set in an earlier century, he tells us, when the Romans had finally left Britain (which they did c. AD 410) and the Picts from Caledonia had combined with the Scots from Ireland to attack Britain. Powys says correctly that the Picts had "again" invaded Britain, but he incorrectly suggests that their being joined by the Scots was new. In the fourth century both Picts and Scots, and, on a different front, Saxons had been repeatedly driven back by Romans and Britons. (Powys seems to suggest that the Saxons were still in Germany.) Powys's generalised historical background sketch was what every schoolboy could have known in the 1880s, from a variety of available books on ancient British history. Powys's simplified knowledge might well have come from sources like the *Boys' Own Annual* (A120; 110). However, we know that equally well he could have acquired detailed knowledge of the history of Roman and early post-Roman Britain from the first volume of the most reliable of the nineteenth century works available, W. F. Skene's *Celtic Scotland* (3 volumes), 1877; this work was to be found in the Sherborne School library.

Powys's choice of names for his charac-

ters is in part surprising. "Mordaunt" seems to be a name out of period. "Ap Gryfith" may have no more special source than the Welsh connection which he gave to one of his Sherborne masters named Griffiths (A111; 102). "Arthur Ap Gryfith" is, however, quite interesting. There is some suggestion that Powys intended him to be the real military Arthur who fought the northern Saxons, being successful at the battle of Mount Badon (AD 516), but slain in the battle of Camlan (AD 537); this information was to be found in Skene,⁴ among others. Powys's Arthur dreams of being "in the hands of a wild and savage people" with "yellow hair and blue eyes". If Powys's Arthur is the real Arthur, then the events in the story take place later than a few years after AD 410 and might well be situated in the year of his *Porius*: AD 499.

Like the name "Mordaunt", there is, it seems to me, another reference which is geographically and historically inaccurate, that of the Pict's prayer to "Trinobant". I can only think that Powys was remembering something of the Trinobantes (or Trinovantes), a tribe of the east of Britain (present day Suffolk and Essex) who fought against invading Caesar in 55 or 54 BC and joined the Icenii against the Roman general, Suetonius in c. 65 BC.⁵

Of the art and style of Powys's fragment, there is little to be said. In addition to history and weaponry, the young Powys seems

mainly interested in action, a rapidly moving story. In writing this summary adventure story, he seems to have learned almost nothing from the relevant authors which he tells us in his *Autobiography* he read in his prep. school and Sherborne years: Jules Verne (A87; 78), Bulwer Lytton (A104; 96), George MacDonald (A106; 98), La Motte Fouqué (A125; 115), Harrison Ainsworth (A125; 115) and Rider Haggard (A140; 128). In the *Autobiography*, Powys tells us that at Sherborne he began to write for his younger brother, Theodore, "a romance about smugglers of which he was the chief". This story, he explains, was an attempt to "draw character" with Theodore his "first model". (A140; 128)⁶ Alas, although some differentiation between the two brothers in "Mordaunt Ap Gryfith" is just visible, characterisation is not apparently attempted.

The chapters are astonishingly brief. Some challenge is provided in the epigraphs to each chapter, or rather in matching them to the contents of each chapter. In providing epigraphs, the boy Powys is, of course, imitating the historical romancers he liked, Scott and Lytton, though they were common in nineteenth century novels. The most pleasing epigraph is the first, Powys's quotation from himself, with a dull phrase which, however, both identifies him with his Welsh heroes and provides a prophetic joke about his future as a writer.

NOTES

¹The entry in the *Sherborne Register* reads "Harrison, Cuthbert Woodville, son of C. Harrison, Dysham, Chippenham; born 1874; House: Price's; left 1890; subsequently at Clifton; Balliol College, Oxford, 1892; Malayan Civil Service 1897; retired as Under-Secretary to Government, F.M.S.; author of *The Magic of Malaya*, etc.; died 1946". I am grateful to the present Librarian of Sherborne School, John Warmington, for providing this information and information about the contents of the Sherborne library in J. C. Powys's period, which I use below. It may be noted that there is a discrepancy between the *Sherborne Register* note that C. W. Harrison was in Price's House and J. C. Powys's description in *Autobiography* of his own being in Wildman's House.

²*Autobiography*, The Bodley Head, 1934, p. 141; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1934, p. 129. Hereafter page references to these two editions are made in my text, prefaced by A.

³See pp. 64 & p. 198ff. Roland Mathias refers to Lloyd's *History* in his "John Cowper Powys and 'Wales'", *The Powys Review*, no. 17, 1985, pp. 7-8.

⁴Vol. I, pp. 152-54.

⁵One of my secondary sources for this history is M. Dillon & N. K. Chadwick, *The Celtic Realms*, 1967; see pp. 23-26.

⁶This story is also mentioned in a letter to Llewelyn Powys, where it seems attributed to the year 1886: *Letters to His Brother Llewelyn*, 2 Vols, Village Press, 1975, Vol. II, pp. 133-34.

John [Cowper] Powys

Mordaunt Ap Gryfith. A tale

Dedicated to our greatly beloved head of the house, C. W. Harrison

Mordaunt ap Gryfith

Chap I

“In the days of British glory”

J. C. Powys

Carry your mind back to the time when the Romans, called back to their country by the invasion of the Goths, left Britain. The ancestors of the English were running about, wild and *savage*, in the North of Germany; but they were strong even then in the art of war.

[pages missing]

though they (the two brothers) could not hear what he said. Mordaunt rang the bell and told the slave who entered to find out what the excitement was about. In five minutes he returned saying that a messenger had come from the general of the British army ordering everyone capable of bearing arms to enrol in a corps and to join the army as the Picts had again invaded Britain, this time reinforced by a regiment of Scots from Scotland. (What we now call Ireland; the Scots used to live there and the Picts in Scotland) “O” said Mordaunt “that means that we must go; but I’m not sorry, we have idled here long enough,” “Come Arthur” he continued seeing that his brother remained silent. “Don’t you like the thought of fighting the heathen Picts.”

“Don’t let us go” said Arthur “Not that I’m frightened but I have a presentiment of coming evil, and last night I dreamed that I was in the hands of a wild and savage people who had long yellow hair and blue eyes.”

“But” replied his brother[“] the Picts and Scots have dark hair and eyes like ours.”

“Well I agree to go but don’t let us be rash” said the younger Gryfith.

“I shall use the claymore and target as our ancestors did before they were civilized”

said Mordaunt. “I shall use the short Roman sword as our fathers did after they were civilised” said Arthur “and I think we had both better carry a spear and bows and arrows on our backs as a reserve.[”]

Chap II

“Woe to the false Etruscan who lingers in his home”

Macaulay

Next day a large number of men and youths were gathered in the market place of Bath. They were a wild looking set with no particular uniform and each with arms suited to his taste. They drew up in a long line and the messenger, whose name was Roderic and who had taken on himself to command the troop, read in a voice of thunder that anyone between 16 & 60 who did not join them should be proclaimed a traitor and should be publicly flogged. As no one else appeared they started for their march[.] Those who had horses rode them. Both the Gryfiths fortunately had [horses. S]uddenly when they were about a mile from the city they saw a horseman emerge from it and gallop off in the opposite direction. “There is one who ought to be with us and who is going maybe to warn the Picts of our coming to aid our friends on the border. Ride after him and bring him back alive or dead” said Roderic to those who had horses. Four horsemen broke from the main body and galloped after the fugitive. Two of these soon got ahead; the first was Mordaunt, the second Arthur. The fugitive’s horse was evidently tired and soon Mordaunt was very near him. But instead of yielding the man turned round in his saddle and stringing his bow discharged an arrow straight and Mord-

aunt, who was going so quick that he could not make his horse move aside, received the arrow on the target which he fortunately had. The course of the arrow was changed, and instead of hitting the master it hit the horse and wounded it so much that it sank down and Mordaunt was unhorsed; but quickly extracting himself from the wounded animal he seized his long claymore and putting his back against a tree waited the stranger's attack with the greatest "sang froid". But his case was most critical for Arthur was still a long way off, though on seeing his brother's danger he was galloping as hard as his horse would go. Then the stranger seeing his enemy unhorsed, levelled his long spear and rode straight at him, hoping to transfix him to the tree. Oh! how Mordaunt wished that he had followed his brother's advice and had a bow and arrows. Like a flash of lightning charged his enemy, his long black locks streaming in the wind; and indeed it looked as if there was no chance for him. But he quite coolly awaited his enemy's attack and when he came near he leaped quickly out of the way and, cut off the spear's point with his claymore. Then with the bound of a tiger he leaped on the man and pulled him from his horse. Then kneeling on his chest and putting a dagger to his throat he commanded him to yield and to come without resistance to where the troop had halted. The stranger who was deadly pale with fright said that he would and confirmed it by an oath. By this time Arthur had come up and the two brothers together made him get on his horse and, because Mordaunt's had died they both rode on Arthur's. They soon met the third pursuer who was a dark tall man with features muffled in his cloak and who as soon as he saw the prisoner gave a start of surprise; but instantly recovering himself he said with a friendly smile, "O, you look tired by your hard ride, get on my horse and I will share the fugitive's". Mordaunt gladly accepted his kind offer and gladly mounted his horse. Then the tall man mounted the prisoner's horse and riding a little way behind the others he whispered in the prisoner's ear "David".

"What you!" said the man with a pale face "I thought you were on the border leading our army against the wretched Britons." "What do you mean by getting caught" said the unknown without answering him. "But I suppose now you are caught, the best thing you could do would be to pretend to be a Welshman and then to betray the army into our hands. I have found out what I wanted to know; namely how many men are coming as reinforcements, so I shall soon ride north as fast as I can and announce the approach of this company." "But remonstrated the other "how can I a free Pict endure to be beaten, as I shall be if I say I'm a Welshman, for deserting." "O never mind that[.] I warrant your skin tough enough to bear twenty such floggings" answered the tall traitor laughing. By this time they had reached the company and as the prisoner said he was a Welshman and that his name was David, he was publicly flogged for trying to escape sooner than go to fight the Picts.

Chap III

"The sheeted dead did squeak and gibber".
Shakespeare

They soon got near the borders of Caledonia. One day Mordaunt and his brother Arthur asked leave of Roderic to go ahead of the company and find out where the rival armies of Britain and Caledonia were posted. Roderic gave them leave warning them not to go far if they could not find either army. At the last moment the tall mysterious man whom as the reader will remember helped Mordaunt to capture the runaway David, asked to accompany them and as they willingly acquiesced, they three started together. They went about eight miles without seeing any sign of the army. The road was getting more and more mountainous. Soon it changed from a road to a mountain track. But before I go any further I must tell the reader that Mordaunt had a letter to the general of the British army together with a pass for him and Arthur.

They had now come to a deep gorge with a steep precipice rising up on either side. Suddenly the tall man spoke for the first time. "Let me see the pass, for I want to see how Roderic can write for he is always boasting he is a good writer." "Here it is" said the unsuspecting Mordaunt giving it to him. "Then goodbye for ever to your accursed companions; and I pray to Trinobant that I may never see the face of a niggardly Welshman again." Saying this the traitor sprung from the two Griffyths [sic] and began to climb the mountain side.

"Oh that we had brought a bow and arrows with us" quoth Mordaunt. "Never mind" answered his brother[, "[We'll soon catch him"]]. Saying this Arthur began swiftly to ascend the mountain side and Mordaunt though not such a good climber as his brother followed not far behind. It was an exciting chase. The Pict, for so he was, (although he and his servant David had been acting as a spy on the Welsh army) had got a long start but the more active Welshman was fast gaining on him. Arthur's motions were wonderful to watch; he was like a wild cat. Springing from tuft to tuft, now swinging by

one hand to a branch, now holding on to the slippery face of the cliff with tooth and nail. Soon he got quite close to the gigantic Pict whose weight was a great hindrance to him; and at last succeeded to catch him by his belt. In a moment, the Pict had wrenched himself free and with a derisive laugh began to climb the cliff with renewed vigour. But Arthur encouraged by his brother's shouts again got close to the giant. This time Arthur did not stop till he was just behind him and then springing on his back he gripped him round the neck and forced him to his knee. The giant Pict sprang up. There was a flash of steel and Arthur falling backwards rolled down the mountain side, appearing mortally wounded. The Pict hurled his dagger at Mordaunt but happily missed him and ascending the mountain was soon lost in sight.

Mordaunt rushed to his brother whom he found lying insensible at the bottom of the mountain. It was clear that he had broken through some bushes as he fell which must have broken his fall for in his hand was a branch which he was convulsively clenching.



Ian Hughes

The Genre of John Cowper Powys's Major Novels*

One of the factors underlying the sharply divided critical response to John Cowper Powys's prose fiction has been a confusion about its formal nature—that is, its genre. In this article I hope to characterise the genre to which Powys's major novels belong, up to and including *Maiden Castle*. Powys, I am sure, had a clear idea of what he was trying to do. He did not always succeed, but at least he knew that he was trying to write “philosophic romance”.

If we can come to understand better what sort of creature a philosophic romance is, we may be in a better position to evaluate Powys's success and failure as a novelist. It comes down to horses for courses. We do not normally criticise the domestic cat because it does not bark or wag its tail when pleased, or the domestic dog because it does not purr or have retractable claws. It would seem just as pointless to claim that, say, *Tristram Shandy* is a better novel than *Middlemarch* as that *King Lear* is a better poem than *Paradise Lost*. Similarly, if Powys's best philosophic romances are good philosophic romances, it seems absurd to claim that, say, *The Heart of the Matter* is a better novel than *Wolf Solent*.

The seminal influence on Powys's notion of what a philosophic romance is, should be, or might become is the work of Walter Pater, and the master-key to Powys's formulation of the typical plot of philosophic romance is Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, which was published in 1885 and subtitled “A Philosophic Romance”. Powys's first attempt at a novel was an “interminable and totally unpublished story” (now apparently lost).¹ He needed a framework of ideas, a thematic structure, to give his novels shape.

*A revised version of a paper read to the Powys Society, August 1985.

He found his thematic structure in *Marius the Epicurean*, and it enabled him to write *Wood and Stone*.

Powys and Pater

According to a passage in *Autobiography*, John Cowper had no knowledge of the works of Walter Pater before he graduated from Cambridge in 1894, the year of Pater's death. When the extensive influence of Pater on the Aesthetic Movement of the 1880s and 1890s is taken into account, as well as his considerable if controversial status as academic and man of letters at Oxford, Powys's ignorance of him may seem surprising, especially in an aspiring littérateur. Powys himself remarks upon the oddity:

It is queer to think that it was not until I left Cambridge—and this alone indicates the kind of cultural lacunae which existed in our circle—that I so much as even *heard* of Walter Pater.²

It may be that Powys is doing his circle an injustice; the initial shock of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, and particularly of its notorious “Conclusion”, had long passed—the work had been published before Powys was out of his cradle. Also, Pater's popularity seems to have become widespread only after his death: certainly, during the second half of the 1890s and the whole of the 1900s, Pater's principal works were to be constantly reissued, until they were collected in the Library Edition of 1910. Moreover, in *Autobiography* Powys portrays himself as having been sheltered from contemporary literature both at home and at his public school: his reading of nineteenth century literature seems to have been restricted to the staple Victorian bourgeois

diet that included for its main course Walter Scott, Wordsworth, and Tennyson. At Corpus Christi, he read History for his degree, and augmented his English literary studies only by reading Browning, whom he learnt to detest, and, just before he left Cambridge, by reading the poetry of Matthew Arnold.³ At the end of the account of his undergraduate time at Cambridge, Powys declares:

I did not read a single volume of the least importance to me all the while I was there.⁴

During the next few years, however, Powys encountered the work of modern writers, including that of Thomas Hardy, Oscar Wilde, and Yeats.⁵ He was discovering with evident enthusiasm a literature that offered a vastly different view of art, society, religion, and morality, from that acceptable to the conventional, provincial Victorian middle class, about whose tastes and values Powys was frequently to complain. Among the writers whose work Powys first read at that time was Walter Pater. By 1902 Powys speaks of him as "the most valuable of our modern prose writers".⁶

Powys mentions his admiration for Pater in several places in his non-fictional writings. In *Autobiography* he talks of Pater as one of the "great imaginative spirits", and later describes himself in America during the years of the First World War as "a lecturing idealist who admired Walter Pater".⁷ In *The Meaning of Culture* (1929) Powys says of Pater: "No writer conveys more subtle mastery . . . of the habit of imaginative concentration". He recognises that Pater has become unfashionable, that his "methods of style and treatment" may seem "antiquated and even affected", but insists that "the stimulus afforded by [his] noble and meticulous fastidiousness is second to none".⁸ In 1939 Powys complains that "Pater is wickedly neglected nowadays", and continues: "He is still my Master. He is still to me . . . the beautifullest of all our writers".⁹

Powys's debt to Walter Pater is apparent

in many places and ways. Almost in any volume of Pater one will come across sentiments, characters, quotations, and ideas that Powys makes use of. Most of the classical allusions in Powys's novels, for instance, come not directly from the classical authors (I doubt if Powys ever read most of them), but were recalled, often inaccurately, from the writings of Pater.¹⁰ As late as 1942 Powys confessed that he was still taking many tags from Pater.¹¹

Powys's debt to Pater, however, has so far received surprisingly little critical attention. In an essay entitled "Style and the Man" Bernard Jones seeks to show that Powys's prose style owes much to that of Pater,¹² but while he establishes Powys's admiration for Pater by quoting several passages from Powys's critical and autobiographical writings from 1915 to 1934, most of the passages that he quotes suggest that Powys's admiration is primarily for other factors than that of prose style. Indeed, Jones never seriously attempts to compare the prose styles of Pater and Powys. He constantly asserts the stylistic debt without providing any evidence of it. Such an oversight is less surprising, however, when it is recognised that Powys's debt to Pater is not stylistic but intellectual. Bernard Jones is drawn towards that perception in places, in spite of the ostensible subject of his essay, but, perhaps because it lies outside his brief, he does not seek to establish the nature, extent, and significance of the intellectual debt.

I do not wish to take up space here by presenting a detailed comparison of the prose styles of Pater and Powys, but I do suggest that most readers, examining representative samples of their work will be more struck by differences than similarities. Pater's style suggests an analogy with sculpture: it has the symmetry and grace of classical sculpture, but is essentially static. Max Beerbohm summed it up rather well when he accused Pater of treating English "as a dead language", performing a "sedulous ritual wherewith he laid out every sentence as in a shroud—hanging, like a widower, long over

its marmoreal beauty, or ever he could lay it at length in his book, its sepulchre".¹³

Powys's prose, by contrast, is almost never static. It is always hurrying on, often with a hastiness of expression that derives from the urge to proceed enthusiastically with the narrative or argument: the speaking voice of the storyteller and the rhetoric of the impromptu lecturer are everywhere discernible.

But whatever the relationship between their prose styles, there was a great deal else that Powys undoubtedly owed to Pater. Fundamental to Pater's creed (as Graham Hough points out in *The Last Romantics*) is the Heraclitean flux. Hough argues that what Pater really wants to attack "is the notion of an absolute and unchanging truth; and for this he wants to substitute a theory of development or emergence".¹⁴ Powys had seized upon the same starting-point in the lectures on Pater that he gave in 1903 as part of a course offered by the Cambridge University Extension Delegacy on representative prose writers of the nineteenth century. The syllabus for the course, which was written, as was customary, by the lecturer himself, was issued in 1902, and in that syllabus Powys calls Pater the most valuable of modern prose writers "because his writings contain a philosophy of life, which . . . is the expression, through the writings of one man, of feelings and tendencies present in vague outline in the sensibilities of the most refined children of the age".¹⁵ Pater builds up, says Powys, "a new system of independent philosophy", and the fundamental concept in that philosophy is "Relativity":

He starts by pointing to the Relativity of all things, to the changeableness of all things, to the doctrine of Heraclitus . . . But upon this metaphysical scepticism, reducing all mental impressions to a sequence of dissolving fabrics, Pater superimposes a stately edifice of his own. This is a modern Hedonism, a new Epicureanism—"Follow," it says, 'each experience that offers itself—each experience will bring its approximate, its relative, Truth, the only Truth man can know.'

"Truth", he says later, "is relative to the individual".

The substance of the first lecture is concerned with Pater's concept of relativity and its implications for religious practice and belief. In the second lecture Powys develops a description of Pater's "philosophy of experience", and argues that "the use of the senses as vehicles of Truth is what he teaches, the only Truth we can reach in this life":

Truth . . . is not only relative to the general consciousness of the race, that is to say to the mind of Man, it is further relative to the consciousness of the individual, that is to say to the mind of the particular man. This relativity makes him fastidious and exacting with regard to outside objects, so that there shall be no conventional estimate, no formal barrier, between himself and the world without him, so that he should concern himself only with what has a vivid and distinct existence for him.

He goes on to describe the value to the individual of a subjective interpretation of works of art: Pater's new mode of criticism is "creative" and provides "important practical evidence of his philosophy". Pater's style is to be valued not so much for its exquisite quality, pleasing though that may be, as for its embodying "the temperament as well as the opinions which it has to express"; his style has "a concealed power which saves and protects it from the charge of preciosity" (a remark that might be taken to imply some uneasiness about Pater's style).

He then returns to Pater's "central idea":

we are to value the experience of each moment for its own sake, and with trained faculties of acquisition and discrimination to gather a richer, and ever richer harvest of memories, so that at the end of life—when face to face with the unknown—we may cry our 'Vixi!' thankfully.

Those aspects of Pater that Powys chooses to deal with in the lectures indicate clearly the nature of Powys's interest in Pater, and the importance of Pater in providing the keystones for the elaborate philo-

sophy of sensationalism that Powys was later to develop. The relativity of truth, the sceptical attitude towards religious belief, the subjective interpretation of life and art, the emphasis on key moments of experience and on the accumulated memories of them, permeate all of Powys's subsequent writings, philosophical, critical, and fictional.

Wood and Stone and Marius the Epicurean

Powys's first published novel, *Wood and Stone*, appeared in 1915. Its main theme is the conflict of two apparently irreconcilable sets of principles that are embodied in what Powys labels "the mythology of power" and "the mythology of sacrifice". The main source of the idea, and of its articulation in Powys's novel, is Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, a work that Powys, according to *Autobiography*, first read in the mid-1890s during his residence in Southwick. He did not immediately appreciate Pater's philosophic romance: "the devil a word of it could I grasp", he comments, and again complains about the poverty of his education at Cambridge.¹⁶ By the time of writing *Wood and Stone* Powys had clearly come to grasp a great deal of it, for it everywhere informs the thematic structure of Powys's novel.

Marius the Epicurean traces the philosophical education of a young man called Marius in Italy in the second century AD. It depicts Marius's progress from a simple and traditional pagan background, where religion is of importance primarily in its domestic aspects; through his first school, where he comes under the influence of Heraclitean philosophy; to his stay in Rome, where he is impressed, though not satisfied, by the Epicurean stoicism of Marcus Aurelius; and finally to an encounter with primitive Christianity, whose moral goodness he recognises, although he retains a sceptical view towards Christian dogma.

The turning-point in Marius's dissatisfaction with Aurelian stoicism comes when he witnesses a sadistic spectacle in the Roman arena, in which animals are tortured and sacrificed for the delectation of the public. Pater uses the episode as an oppor-

tunity to comment on a comparable injustice and lack of compassion in Victorian society:

The long chapter of the cruelty of the Roman public shows may, perhaps, leave with the children of the modern world a feeling of self-complacency. Yet it might seem well to ask ourselves—it is always well to do so, when we read of the slave-trade, for instance, or of great religious persecutions on this side or on that, or of anything else which raises in us the question, 'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?'—not merely, what germs of feeling we may entertain which, under fitting circumstances, would induce us to the like; but, even more practically, what thoughts, what sorts of considerations, may be actually present to our minds such as might have furnished us, living in another age, and in the midst of those legal crimes, with plausible excuses for them: each age in turn, perhaps, having its own peculiar point of blindness, with its consequent peculiar sin—the touch-stone of an unflinching conscience in the select few.¹⁷

In *Wood and Stone* Powys expresses the connection that Pater suggests between ancient sadism and modern social injustice by associating the "legal crime" of tyrannical capitalism with the sadism of the "Promoter of Companies" Mortimer Romer and his daughter Gladys. Powys's adoption of Pater's analogy is apparent in several ways. There is the name "Romer". There is Mortimer's joy in manipulating people as a demonstration of his absolute power over them:

He indeed pursued his main purpose, which was the acquiring of power, with an unscrupulousness worthy of a Roman emperor.¹⁸

There is the consistently sadistic treatment by both Mortimer and Gladys of the dependent orphan girl Lacrima (whose name is of course Latin for 'tear'). Among several passages where the Roman analogy is sustained, there is the scene at Caesar's Quarry, where Lacrima is taken by Gladys so that she can be left at the mercy of a brutish farmer to whom she is forced by Mortimer to become engaged. The farmer's name is Goring, and

the quarry is described as a "cavernous arena". (565) The implicit analogue is clearly the raping of helpless virgins by bulls in ancient Roman arenas as an enacting of the Europa myth. The encounter is watched by Gladys "with as much ease as if she had been a Drusilla or a Livia, seated in the Roman amphitheatre". (566)

In *Marius the Epicurean*, after his repulsion at the cruelty of Roman public spectacle, Marius comes to recognise, through his experience of the Christian community, the need to feel compassion for suffering humanity. Charity must be added to an acceptance of man's helpless condition. Even in a perfect society there would still be death and suffering, but "what we need in the world, over against that, is a certain permanent and general power of compassion—humanity's standing force of self-pity—as an elementary ingredient of our social atmosphere, if we are to live in it at all".¹⁹ In Chapter 8 of *Wood and Stone*, which is entitled "The Mythology of Sacrifice", Vennie Seldom, who is a young woman of strong religious leaning, makes an impassioned plea for the necessity of Christianity:

'Do you think' . . . 'that if we were able to hear the weeping of all those who suffer and have suffered since the beginning of the world, we could endure the idea of going on living? It would be too much! The burden of those tears would darken the sun and hide the moon. It is only His presence in the midst of us,—His presence, coming in from outside, that makes it possible for us to endure and have patience.' (153)

Without belief in Christianity, she suggests, there can only be despair, madness, and suicide for those who feel compassion for suffering humanity. The acutely sensitive stonemason James Andersen, who is in love with Lacrima, is like Vennie a strongly compassionate person, but unlike Vennie cannot assent to Christianity. Both Vennie and James escape the oppression of the mythology of power only by becoming sacrificial victims. After an episode in which she feels an overwhelming revulsion against the physical world, Vennie retires to a

convent, while James's despair leads him into madness and death. The problem that the novel thus poses as part of its central theme is that of withstanding the mythology of power in its extreme and morally intolerable form (as represented by the Romans) without yielding entirely to the mythology of sacrifice (as represented in Vennie's voluntary seclusion from the world or James's self-annihilation).

The Paterian scheme provides a link between two important strands of the novel, a link that Glen Cavaliero, in *John Cowper Powys: Novelist*, seems to overlook:

the two main themes of the novel, the tyranny of the Romans, father and daughter, over their financial dependants, and the mental breakdown and collapse of the stonemason James Andersen, bear little relation to each other.²⁰

In terms of the dramatic integration of the two strands in a realist fiction, Cavaliero's reservation is perhaps not unjustified, but in terms of the characters' functional relationships in a philosophic romance, the criticism is unfounded. The thematic problem set by *Wood and Stone* is precisely that faced by Marius, who values compassion and sees it exemplified in the Christian community, but whose philosophical sophistication and scepticism cannot allow him to assent wholeheartedly to Christian theological doctrine. Marius's final thoughts clearly represent Pater's own solution to the dilemma:

Surely, the aim of a true philosophy must lie, not in futile efforts towards the complete accommodation of man to the circumstances in which he chanced to find himself, but in the maintenance of a kind of candid discontent, in the face of the very highest achievement; the unclouded and receptive soul quitting the world finally, with the same fresh wonder with which it had entered the world still unimpaired, and going on its blind way at last with the consciousness of some profound enigma in things, as but a pledge of something further to come.²¹

In *Wood and Stone* there are two representatives of Pater's position. The first is the

philosopher and theologian John William Williams, whom Powys refers to in *Autobiography* as "The Catholic".²² But if the personality of Taxater owes much to "The Catholic" his philosophic position suggests an affinity with Pater. He remains outside the main action of the novel, providing, as his name suggests, a detached assessment of people and events. He is "a gentleman of independent means", and writes for philosophical journals:

Mr. Taxater's written works were, however, but a trifling portion of his personality. His intellectual interests were as rich and varied as those of some great humanist of the Italian Renaissance, and his personal habits were as involved and original as his thoughts were complicated and deep.

He was perpetually engaged in converting the philosopher in him to Catholicism, and the Catholic in him to philosophy—yet he never permitted either of these obsessions to interfere with his enjoyment of life. (18-19)

Because Taxater can easily avoid personal and economic relations with the Romers, he is never forced to compromise his independence of them, which in terms of the novel's action implies an evasion of practical engagement with the novel's thematic problem. The subtle ambiguity of his position is comfortably maintained to the end.

The other representative of Pater's position, and the true hero of the novel, is Maurice Quincunx. A quincunx, which is a pattern of points like that of the dots in the figure 5 on dice, is usually applied to architectural or horticultural configurations, but for Powys the word is associated with the structure of the personality. In *The Art of Happiness*, for instance, he writes of the required "moral unction in a man", in regard to his treatment of a woman, as "an ambiguous quincunx, compounded of one part pity, one part reason, and three parts pride".²³ The quincunx in its correct form—with the right measure of qualities in the right relationship—therefore suggests a balanced personality. Maurice Quincunx's Christian name is of course simply a modern form of "Marius".

At the outset of the novel, Quincunx rejects absolutely both the mythology of power and the mythology of sacrifice: Mr Romer and the Church are "the two subjects" about which Quincunx holds "dangerously strong views". (17) Over the course of the novel, as he becomes more and more set upon by the Romers, both because he is financially dependent on them and because he loves Lacrima, his philosophic education undergoes a development parallel to that of Marius. Though his character owes little superficially to Marius, he is taught by experience to qualify and modify his philosophy along lines significantly similar to those followed by Pater's hero.

Although Quincunx hates Mortimer Romer and all that he stands for, his philosophical scepticism, and especially his dislike of doctrine, prevent his having any sympathy for the socialist movement that is gaining support among Romer's employees. Instead, after he has been forced by Romer into an occupation that he detests, he adopts a stoical position. He is even prepared to see Lacrima married to Goring rather than to alter the equilibrium of his philosophical detachment from worldly cares:

'Of course we know how outrageous it is that such a marriage should be forced on you. But, after all, you and I are above these absurd popular superstitions about all these things . . . After all, what is this business of being married to people and bearing them children? It doesn't affect your soul. As old Marcus Aurelius says, our bodies are nothing! They are wretched corpses, anyway, dragged hither and thither by our imprisoned souls . . . You will always have, as that honest fellow Epictetus says, your own soul to retire into, whatever happens . . .' (305-6)

The sentiments are precisely those that Marius finds in Aurelius's *Meditations*: "the true interest of the spirit must ever be to treat the body—well! as a corpse attached thereto, rather than as a living companion"; and "the privilege is yours of retiring into yourself whensoever you please".²⁴

Lacrima's shocked reaction to those words makes Quincunx regret his callousness. In a flash of illumination he recognises

the need for compassion. In itself, however, a transient feeling of unselfish pity is insufficient to alter radically Quincunx's refusal to take any positive action to change his own or Lacrima's circumstances. The need to put his new-found compassion to some practical purpose is not brought home to him until near the end of the novel. In Chapter 25, which is entitled "Metamorphosis", Powys suddenly introduces new and apparently irrelevant characters to the novel. The whole episode of the circus's arrival and Old Flick's attempt to train the orphan Dolores into a dancing-girl by training her in a secluded grassy hollow is, to say the least, highly contrived and most improbable even for the improbable world of *Wood and Stone*; but the purpose of the contrivance is clear enough: it is to bring about the conversion of Quincunx from the essentially callous and self-centred creed of classical stoicism to a compassionate and outgoing New Epicureanism. He has to complete the pattern of philosophical education that is undergone by Marius and advocated by Pater in the text from which Powys takes the organising ideas of his novel.²⁵

Quincunx's "drift towards appalling moral disaster" (650) in condoning the marriage of Lacrima and Goring is arrested by the sight of Dolores, who is being led along the road past Quincunx's cottage by Old Flick:

The child's beauty struck him with a shock that almost took his breath away. There was something about the haunting expression of her gaze as she turned it upon him that roused an overpowering flood of tenderness and pity in untouched abysses of his being . . .

The child's look had indeed the same effect upon Mr. Quincunx that the look of his Master had upon the fear-stricken Apostle, in the hall of Caiaphas the high priest. In one heart-piercing stab it brought to his overpowered consciousness a vision of all the victims of cruelty who had ever cried aloud for help since the generations of men began their tragic journey. (658-60)

Quincunx is thus turned away from moral disaster first by an aesthetic response: as so

often in Pater's writings, beauty awakens ethical impulses in its percipient. Second, there is the overwhelming feeling of pity, which is a concomitant, or perhaps a component, of the aesthetic reaction. The experience is represented as analogous to the moment of religious conversion or extreme religious conviction: the girl becomes for Quincunx as powerful a symbol as the suffering Christ, and he re-enters his cottage "like a man under a blinding illumination":

So must the citizen of Tarsus have looked, when he staggered into the streets of Damascus. (666)

Quincunx then pursues the girl and her keeper. He frightens off Old Flick, and adopts Dolores. Sympathy for children, which Marius takes as a token of the Epicureanism of the very poor, and which he calls a kind of "secular gold",²⁶ thus becomes the means whereby Quincunx completes his philosophical education:

The sudden transformation of the timid recluse into a formidable man of action did not end with his triumphant retirement to his familiar domain. Some mysterious fibre in his complicated temperament had been struck, and continued to be struck, by the little Dolores, which not only rendered him indifferent to personal danger, but willing and happy to encounter it. (666)

Shortly afterwards Quincunx resolves to defy the Romans, and to escape to a new life with Lacrima and Dolores. Quincunx is rejuvenated, and Lacrima regains her joy in life; the mood in which they sail away from Weymouth is one of exultation. They quit the world of the Romans in a frame of mind that accords with the closing remarks of *Marius the Epicurean* about the aim of a true philosophy. Lacrima feels like one "liberated from the tomb" (704); her emancipation is "like suddenly becoming a child again—a child with power to enjoy the very things that children so often miss". (704) Everything that she sees around her pleases her. The uncertainty of the future does not bother her, for she has "the true Pariah tendency to lie back with arms outstretched

upon the great tide, and let it carry her wither it pleased", but she thinks it probable that they will find happiness. (705) In other words, she is like Pater's "unclouded and receptive soul":

quitting the world finally, with the same fresh wonder with which it had entered the world still unimpaired, and going on its blind way at last with the consciousness of some profound enigma in things, as but a pledge of something further to come.²⁷

Quincunx largely shares her mood, but retains certain doubts about how easily they will get on when they are married. He is aware that cruelty and vulgarity will still surround them, but he is filled with resolution to make a cheerful best of things. (701-4) In Pater's words, he realises where "the aim of a true philosophy" must lie:

not in futile efforts towards the complete accommodation of man to the circumstances in which he chances to find himself, but in the maintenance of a kind of candid discontent, in the face of the very highest achievement.²⁷

The Paterian thematic structure of *Wood and Stone* recurs in various ways throughout Powys's novels. So rich and adaptable is the pattern, that in most of the rest of his novels Powys is enabled to focus on different and sometimes alternative—but still closely related—aspects of it. Although the cult of sensationalism, whose form Powys also owes in large part to Pater, comes increasingly to reinforce New Epicureanism as the life-sustaining philosophy-religion in the succeeding novels, *Wood and Stone* remains the structural and intellectual starting-point for the other novels, as *Marius the Epicurean* remains Powys's theoretical basis for the philosophical romance: if the flesh in Powys's novels is the product of his own fecund imagination, the skeleton remains an inheritance from Pater. The typical story in Powys's novels is that of a sensitive individual learning the right philosophical standpoint both through introspection and through painful experience in a predominantly hostile social world: life is a quest, and its Holy Grail is true philosophy, the aim of

which is to allow the individual at the end of his life to shout out his 'Vixi', or at least to enable him to live in the hope that he will do so.

After Wood and Stone

Powys was much more ambitious than Pater. He felt the urge to dramatise the intellectual pattern, to develop the philosophic romance into a form of the novel. Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* is curiously lacking in drama, for all the dramatic possibilities of the scenes and conflicts that he presents. Pater's work reads more like a treatise than a novel. Pater is essentially an essayist, whereas Powys is a true novelist, as he reveals, with more success than has generally been acknowledged, in his first published novel.

After *Wood and Stone* Powys made several other attempts, with varying success, to dramatise the Paterian plot. The next three attempts are largely failures. In *Rodmoor* Powys does not sustain a consistent and convincing narrative voice. He writes in the manner of other writers: of Henry James at the beginning; elsewhere in the manner of Conrad; and elsewhere again in the manner of melodramatic Gothic romance. The explanation of the failure may lie in his very search for a new method of dramatising the pattern of ideas he wanted to express. *After My Fashion* and *Ducdame* are further failures, and in any case are essentially slight.

With *Wolf Solent* Powys finally succeeds admirably in his attempt to dramatise the philosophic education of a central figure, to dramatise the Paterian scheme of the isolated hero trying to come to terms with the conflicting, fleeting, and above all unreliable impressions that he has of the world around him. At the end of the novel, the image of the buttercup field is a version of the "secular gold" that Pater mentions at the end of *Marius the Epicurean*: that is to say, a New Epicurean attitude of mind. To reach that state, Wolf has to undergo and overcome many painful and disconcerting experiences.

The most ambitious and most remarkable expression of the Paterian plot is *A Glastonbury Romance*, where the complex dramatic action and the theoretical elements of the philosophic romance are beautifully synthesised in the perfect metaphor of the Grail quest.

Weymouth Sands, aesthetically perhaps the most pleasing of Powys's novels, can be viewed as a set of lyrical variations on the Paterian theme. With *Maiden Castle*, which some critics have seen as a falling-off of power after the previous three major novels (although it must be remembered that the text is available only in a most unsatisfactory edition), Powys completed the series of philosophical romances to which he gave contemporary settings. In his later fiction, while retaining many fragments of the Paterian plot, he developed new thematic structures. But with the abandoning of philosophic romance as he had developed it up to *Maiden Castle*, Powys also abandoned coherence.

In a letter to Louis Wilkinson, dated 5 October 1944, Powys makes a revealing comment on his method of plotting:

I . . . painfully, laboriously, lengthily build up (I speak both of my tracts *and* my long romances) a sort of foundation, and on top of that a sort of scaffolding, *both very simple*—including all the Main Characters & where they live, or all the main theses, propositions & contentions & where they end! *Then I let the chance moment* have its way—have its way with the characters, have its way with the ideas!²⁸

There is no mention of 'story', it should be noted, or plot in the usual sense. His conception at the outset involves (a) characters; (b) place; and (c) theses, propositions, and contentions, and where they end. The plots of Powys's best novels—or romances, as he is still calling them in 1944—are essentially Paterian plots, the plots of philosophic romance. After dispensing with the type of scaffolding that was so serviceable in the building of *Wolf Solent*, *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Weymouth Sands*, and *Maiden Castle*, Powys's fiction becomes diffuse: the sprawling sites may still be interesting to wander among, but they do not constitute the stately edifices of his best philosophic romances.

NOTES

¹ *Autobiography*, The Bodley Head, 1934, p. 314. Hereafter referred to as *A*.

² *A*, p. 181.

⁴ *A*, p. 201.

⁵ *A*, pp. 220-1, 224-5.

⁶ "Syllabus of a course of twelve lectures on representative prose writers of the nineteenth century", Cambridge, 1902, Lecture 10. Hereafter referred to as *Camb. Syll. 1902 (iii)*.

⁷ *A*, pp. 285, 567.

⁸ *The Meaning of Culture*, New York: Norton, 1929, p. 30.

⁹ *Letters to Nicholas Ross*, Rota, 1971, p. 9 (9 November 1939).

¹⁰ For a list of allusions in *Wood and Stone*, *Rodmoor*, *Ducdame*, and *Wolf Solent*, see the Appendix to my "The Allusiveness of John Cowper Powys in his First Four Novels", M.A. dissertation, University of Wales, 1980.

¹¹ *Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson 1935-1956*, 1958, Macdonald, p. 109 (13 May 1942). Hereafter referred to as *JCP-LW*.

¹² Bernard Jones, "Style and the Man", in Belinda

Humfrey, ed., *Essays on John Cowper Powys*, Cardiff, 1972, pp. 149-177.

¹³ Quoted in J. H. Buckley, *The Victorian Temper*, 1952, p. 178.

¹⁴ Graham Hough, *The Last Romantics*, 1949, p. 141.

¹⁵ *Camb. Syll. 1902 (iii)*, Lecture 10. The quotations that follow are taken from Lectures 10 and 11.

¹⁶ *A*, p. 232.

¹⁷ Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, Library Edition, 1910, Vol. 1, p. 242. Hereafter referred to as *Mar.Ep.*

¹⁸ *Wood and Stone*, New York: Arnold Shaw, 1915, p. 10. All further references are to this edition, and the page numbers are given in parentheses after quotations in the text. (The London: Village Press edition, 1974, is identical in pagination.)

¹⁹ *Mar.Ep.*, Vol. 2, p. 182.

²⁰ Glen Cavaliero, *John Cowper Powys: Novelist*, Oxford, 1973, p. 22.

²¹ *Mar.Ep.*, Vol. 2, p. 220.

²² See *A*, pp. 280 ff.

²³ *The Art of Happiness*, The Bodley Head, 1935.

Maurice Quincunx at first lacks the element of pity, and is accordingly too proud, i.e., too selfish. Powys undoubtedly took the word "quincunx" from Sir Thomas Browne, *The Garden of Cyrus*. Powys's use of the quincunx as a model of personality bears an interesting resemblance to Jung's model of the psyche; see for instance, Jolande Jacobi, *The Psychology of C. G. Jung*, 7th ed., 1968, esp. pp. 10-30.

²⁴ *Mar. Ep*, Vol. 2, pp. 53, 37-8.

²⁵ Glen Cavaliero is certainly mistaken in his assessment of Quincunx, who he claims is "described with such discerning humour for much of the novel's length" but is "revealed as chillingly selfish in the final count" (op. cit., p. 26). The description seems much more appropriate to Luke Andersen.

²⁶ *Mar. Ep*, Vol. 2, p. 181.

²⁷ *Mar. Ep*, Vol. 2, p. 220.

²⁸ *JCP-LW*, p. 160.

Susan Rands

Rodmoor: Aspects of its Provenance and Direction

On 29 October 1915, a week or two before *Wood and Stone* was published, John Cowper wrote cheerfully to Llewelyn, "I'm beginning another novel. Think of that. I seem to have got into the swing of writing." But on 3 January 1916 he wrote that he "dare not undertake any more writing for fear the strain would bring the dyspepsia back," and late in February, he implies that he will continue his novel when his lectures are over in April. In May he says that he is "not properly in the swing of it." Nevertheless by September Mabel Hattersley is reading the proofs. Thus most of *Rodmoor* must have been written in about three months. In the same year John Cowper also published *Confessions of Two Brothers*, *Wolf's Bane*, *One Hundred Best Books* and *Suspended Judgements*. No wonder he told Llewelyn in August that he had been "burning like a bloody flame all this bloody summer".

Not only was Powys physically ill in 1916, he was also always on the move, and he was very unhappy. "Mother dead, Lulu gone and Frances estranged nothing seems to matter very much," he had written to Llewelyn in September 1914, a month after his mother had died; and several letters written during the following year and a half express a wish that he was able to communicate with her.¹ He was separated by oceans from Llewelyn, the brother with whom he could most freely express his thoughts, and Frances, the woman he loved, was married to Louis Wilkinson, his best friend; and together the Wilkinsons had written and published in April *The Buffoon*² which, while giving John Cowper in the character of Jack Welsh due credit for his brilliance as a lecturer, lampooned and mocked him as a person. Half a century later the cruelty of

this seems almost incredible. John wrote to Llewelyn in July, "I have never in my whole life since I was at school been more miserably wretched than I've been this summer."

From these statements we see that *Rodmoor* was written at the very nadir of Powys's fortunes. It is not surprising, then, that it is about unhappiness. Although not as elaborate as in the later novels, for *Rodmoor* is, in Dr Lukacher's sense, probably the least "illuminated", the symbolism, it seems to me, is just as powerful.³ Its tone is set by the prefatory quotation from the ballad of Thomas the Rhymer,

O they rade on, and further on
And they waded rivers abune the knee
And they saw neither sun nor moon
But they heard the roaring of the sea.

Thomas the Rhymer was a real person, Thomas of Erculdene who lived in the 13th century and was known as a prophet and poet.⁴ His prophetic power was thought to be the gift of the Queen of Elfland. The ballad describes their meeting, their journey and the outcome. Some of the places they pass through show a marked similarity to the landscape of *Rodmoor*. For example, ". . . they reached a desert wide / And living land was left behind."⁵ When Adrian imagines *Rodmoor* he sees "leagues and leagues of sea-bleached forlornness, of sand-dunes and glaucous marshes, of solitary willows and pallid-leaved poplars, of dark pools and night-long-murmuring reeds" (9), and Nance felt that "some alien influence was at work here, reducing to enforced sterility the natural movements of living and growing things. The trees were stunted, the marigolds in the wet ditches pallid and tarnished." (28) There are

numerous references to the "roaring of the sea". When they first arrive at Dyke House, Nance and Linda notice "the beat, re-iterative, incessant, menacing of the waves". (27) To Brand, as he goes to look for Philippa, "the sound of the tide on the Rodmoor sands was the background to everything". (54) In Baltazar's house a silence in the talk between the friends is "broken only by the continuous murmur which in every house in Rodmoor was the background of all conversation". (67) As in the ballad there are frequent references to blood; Adrian, rather surprisingly, neither goes finally mad, nor commits suicide; he chokes on blood (458); when Brand seduces Linda by the sea, "Far off, on the edge of the horizon, a single fragment of drifting cloud took the shape of a bloody hand with outstretched forefinger but even that soon faded as the sun, sinking into the fens behind them, gave up the struggle with the darkness". (96)

Of the name "Rodmoor", John wrote to Llewelyn in August 1916, "I am alone with Rodmoor—does the name please you?"⁶ The word "allured and troubled" the novel's hero; "in an odd sort of way it had related itself, dimly, obscurely and with the incoherence of a half-learned language to the wildest and most pregnant symbols of his life." (9) Most of the name is borrowed from Lodmoor, the desolate, marshy area near Weymouth where, in the much later *Weymouth Sands*, Gipsy May and Larry Zed live. The change of Lod to Rod is interesting; it seems to imply that Powys's very desolation is the rod that must strike his creativity into action. "I must call up the resources of my soul," he wrote to Llewelyn in August 1916, "and work and work and work."

Throughout, the natural wilderness of Rodmoor is a metaphor for emotional wilderness. Nance Herrick, the normal, natural newcomer, asks herself, "Was she, too, under the influence of this disastrous place—losing all sense of moral proportion?" (411) Baltazar tells Nance and Linda that it is a "disintegrating place, . . . a place where one loses one's identity and

forgets the rules . . . all the old families . . . get queer in time,—take to drink, I mean, or something of that sort." (147) And Brand and Philippa Renshaw, the landowner and his sister, and therefore born to sorrow, are able to behave as the whim takes them with no concessions to moral or social obligations.

The rootlessness of Rodmoor both explains and is equated with the unhappiness of its inhabitants. Their

'Lares and Penates' have been invaded and submerged. The fires upon their altars have been drowned and over the graves of their fathers the godless tides ebb and flow without reverence. Fishes swim where once children were led to the font and where lovers were wedded the wild cormorant mocks the sea-horses with its disconsolate cry. (360)

We meet four of the main characters before they actually arrive in this sad place and it is made clear that all are already disposed to unhappiness. Ostensibly all go to Rodmoor for practical reasons; but, metaphorically also, it is inevitable that they go where, in the natural course of events, their unhappiness intensifies.

The heir to Rodmoor is Brand. His motto is "I do what I please" (189) and he feels that he comes of an "evil tribe"; he thinks the evil may be due to "some dark old strain of Viking blood, the blood of the race that burnt the monasteries in the days of Ethelred the Unready. On the other hand it may be some unaccountable twist in our brains." (400) He claims to have "broken the world's crust" and seen behind it "the black pools and the red stains" and to know what caused them. (191) We may compare the words of the Rhymer's ballad,

"For a' the blood that's shed on earth
Rins through the springs o' that country".⁸

His sneering, taunting ways make both Hamish Treharne, the good-hearted priest, and Adrian Sorio, the sensitive neurotic want to hit him (185, 189); this wish foreshadows Adrian's actual attack on him (401) which captures well the relationship bet-

ween cruelty and sensitivity that leads to violence.

Probably Brand Renshaw represents one aspect of Powys's conception of himself at this period. John's greatest dread may well have been, like Brand's, that his mother should know him as he was. Certainly he published no novel till after her death in 1914, and none of the novels considered his greatest till after his father's death in 1923.

Baltazar Stork, the friend with whom Adrian stays in Rodmoor also seems to be closely related to Powys's sense of identity. I suspect that he is a sort of fantasy-self invented to fight his emotional battles, and carry the can. Baltazar is an "egoist of inflexible temper" (58); he is devoted to order and to elegant possession. Might not Powys often have wished himself beautiful, correct, cold and detached like Baltazar, especially in antithesis to Frances's and Louis's representation of him in *The Buffoon*? Might he also have wished that he was no relation to his mother, so that he could have enjoyed almost a lover's relationship with her as Baltazar does with Mrs Renshaw? "I dreamt about mother last night," he wrote to Llewelyn even as late as November 1920, "I am in love with her . . . I am Oedipus . . . this is incest."⁹ Baltazar is enviably tough: even Brand says of him, "he could look the devil in the face and keep his pretty head cool," (196) and he feels in himself "the power of a mind that is capable of contemplating with equanimity that at which another staggers and shivers and grows insane." (204) But even he is vulnerable: he is possessively devoted to Adrian, and as Adrian seems likely to marry Nance he becomes so vindictively jealous that he is actually prepared to precipitate the madness that he sees Adrian succumbing to, so that he will be unable to marry. In the event Adrian does go mad without Baltazar being responsible for it. (Similarly, later in *A Glastonbury Romance* Mr Evans would bring about death without any action on his part.) Is the connection co-incidental or causal in ways that we do not understand? The final irony is that when what Baltazar

hopes for happens he finds himself too lonely to live.

The object of Baltazar's devotion, Adrian Sorio, seems to be, to a considerable extent, a self portrait; it is a brilliant one of neurotic thought processes, posturings and facial expressions. His sensitivity is expressed when he tells Baltazar,

'Every single person who meets another person and knows anything at all about him wants to show that he's a match for his little tricks, that he's not deceived by his little ways, that he knows where he gets his money from or doesn't get it and what woman he wants or doesn't want and which of his parents he wishes dead and buried!'

"I'm helplessly conscious of everything around me", he continues, "I'm porous to things . . . it's as if I hadn't any skin, as if my soul hadn't any skin. Everything that I see, or hear . . . passes straight through me, straight through the very nerves of my inmost being." (288) Powys's use of the word "porous" here is very interesting. It seems to me that there is little doubt that the title of *Porius* was chosen for its likeness to "porous" which Powys uses several times in that novel to describe his hero's state of perceptiveness, and frequently in other work to describe a certain state of being. Rather enviously Adrian remarks,

'The sentimental writers always speak of women as so responsive, so porous to the power of Nature. They put it down to their superior sensitiveness. It isn't their sensitiveness at all! It's their element. Of course they're porous to it.' (180)

In the development of Powys's thought the quality of being "porous" changes from an undesirable to a desirable one, from a source of weakness to a source of strength, and the meeting place between the impressions we receive through being "porous", and our inner response to them is where the significance of human life lies. Adrian was in difficulty because he was aware of being porous to what was destructive rather than life-sustaining in his surroundings; when Powys says so often in his letters, his

philosophy, and his novels, that life is “malleable” he means, it seems to me, that we have some control over what we are “porous” to, and the extent to which we are aware of what we are “porous” to. Porius’s ego is strong enough to bear what he feels, Adrian’s not; he is a very thin hero in this sense, Porius a much sturdier one, a contrast that is reflected not only in their physiques but in the different length and density of the two novels. *Rodmoor*’s light and fast flowing style contrasts vividly with the heavily laden style of *Porius*; it seems almost to reflect the ebb and flow of the sea whereas *Porius* mirrors the piling layer upon layer of leaves and humus.

The ever present sea in *Rodmoor* is the metaphor of the ebbing and flowing of the desirability of release from sorrow and its washing away. Thus Linda, a very unhappy child, is both fascinated by it and frightened. On the night Baltazar drowns himself in the Loon, the “tide had just turned and the full-brimmed current of the river’s out-flowing poured swift and strong between the high mud-banks”. (428) On the night Adrian dies, the tide of the river was again “Running seaward, fast and strong”. (454) Figuratively his boat was carrying him towards release and when he reached the shore “the dark line of waves broke calmly and indifferently at his feet and away—away into eternal night—stretched the vast expanse of the sea, dim, vague, full of inexpressible, infinite reassurance”. (458) To Philippa, too, even before she takes Adrian from the hospital, it seemed that it was the sea that had “mingled their souls” and was “the accomplice of their love”. (448) Is this not an echo of the poem that John had written to Frances Gregg four years before:

Out of the depths have I caught thee, O my
beloved
 And never again
 Though all the curses of all the heavens fall on
us
 Drowning us, drowning us, drowning us
both together
 Shall thou and I be torn from each other.¹⁰

At the same time, Mundham with its tea shop, dress shop and brewery seems to represent some of our more *mundane* and *human* ways of easing our troubles. At the end of the story when Adrian and Phillipa will soon be dead, the two cheerful characters, Dr Raughty and Hamish Traherne, entertain to tea in Mundham, Nance who is naturally cheerful and Linda who just might be coaxed into it; significantly Linda leaves the party; Nance, we feel, might live to be happy one day.

Powys’s use of place as metaphor for emotional condition is seen again in Brand’s “workshop”, “the old private chapel of Oakguard, disassociated, however, for centuries from any religious use”. (395) The stained glass windows show armorial insignia rather than biblical scenes. In place of the altar is a carpenter’s table, and the nave is empty except for a few cane chairs.

Certain broken flower-pots on the ground, and one or two rusty gardening implements, combined with the presence of the wicker-chairs to produce the impression of some sort of “Petit Trianon”, or manorial summer-house, into which all manner of nondescript rubbish had in process of long years come to drift. (396)

This perfectly indicates the coreless, aimless, degenerated existence which Brand’s inheritance, genetic and material, has brought him.

The character and use of buildings to represent states of mind is also in evidence when Nance and Adrian attempt to go Ravelston Grange, “the abode of one of the famous East Anglian painters of the celebrated Norwich school—a painter whose humorous aplomb and rich earth-steeped colouring rivalled some of the most notable artists of Amsterdam and the Hague”. (303) But it is too far; and Adrian becomes fascinated by the County Asylum on the way back. The sense of humour and enjoyment of natural beauty which he just might have attained with Nance will give way to madness.

One place in *Rodmoor* is the scene of some hours of “indescribable and tremulous happiness”, (118) and that is the church

and garden of the priest Hamish Traherne, where,

[t]he grass of his own lawn and the leaves of the trees that over-shadowed it breathed the peculiar sweetness—a sweetness unlike anything else in the world—of the first hot days of the year in certain old East Anglian gardens. Whether it is the presence of the sea which endows these places with so rare a quality or the mere existence of reserve and austere withholding in the ways of the seasons there, it were hard to say, but the fact remains that there are gardens in Norfolk and Suffolk . . . which surpass all others in the British Isles in the evocation of wistful and penetrating beauty. (119)

As the priest “crossed his garden in the early morning and entered the church, the warm sun and clear cut shadows filled him with that sense of indestructible joy to which one of the ancient thinkers has given the beautiful name of monochronos hedone—the Pleasure of the ideal Now”. (118)

Already in *Rodmoor* Powys turns from Christianity and looks to the ancients for his deities. At the very beginning of the story Adrian asks himself why he should not dream that “the gods were helping him out and that the generous grace of his girl’s form was symbolic of the restorative virtue of the Great Mother herself”. (12) At the end “his girl” is asking herself “Restorative forces? Were there such things in the world at all?” (413) That Nance does not naturally belong to the desolation of Rodmoor is indicated by the “retreat” that she finds for herself:

a low grassy bank overshadowed by alders as well as willows and bordered by a field of well-grown barley . . . Already amid the blades of young corn could be seen the stalks and leaves of newly grown poppies . . . corn-flowers and succory . . . promising a revel of reassuring colour as the summer advanced . . . a sort of symbol of hope. (78-9)

The story of *Rodmoor* covers just over half a year from April to November during which the lot of each of the characters goes from bad to worse. Hence the year and men’s affairs with it do not in any sense come full circle; this is unusual for Powys,

and yet in keeping with the mood of the book’s subject, and his own mood; it is the characteristic of unhappiness that the sufferer sees no end to his troubles.

The women in *Rodmoor* represent clearly defined causes for female grief; Nance, the maiden fears that she does not understand her lover and that he loves another (Phillippa) who will harm him; Linda is seduced by a man who has no tenderness for her; Mrs Renshaw’s marriage was very unhappy, and she cannot understand the apparently lawless, heartless children who result; for years Rachel Doorm has been consumed by sexual jealousy; and Phillippa Renshaw suffers from feelings so mixed that in the age in which she lives she can never find fulfilment. Four of these women, moreover, seem to represent aspects of the Earth Goddess as she has appeared in myth through the centuries. Nance is the maid, Mrs Renshaw the mother, Rachel Doorm the hag or witch, and Phillippa the muse.

Rachel Doorm grows up in Rodmoor; thus she is accustomed to sorrow; it is her element and she its agent. When, at the beginning of the story, Nance realizes that Adrian’s friend lives where Rachel’s inherited house is, “Rachel Doorm was indeed a witch”, she thinks, “was indeed working things out for her favourite with the power of a sorceress”. (8) Later when they get to Rodmoor, “Linda was seated on the river bank, her head in her hands, while Miss Doorm, like the black-robed priestess of some ancient ritual, leant against the trunk of a leafless pollard”. (37) Rachel is motivated by every aspect of jealousy. Away from the scene of the youthful heart ache that caused it she can live; returning to it she dies. People like Rachel were probably quite common in the days when maiden ladies were expected to work as subordinates in the households of their married sisters; often they were sinister figures of unreliable temperament and unchecked power, who fell in love with the men they didn’t marry and bullied or favoured the children of the household according to their own emotional bias.

Linda's response to Rodmoor and the morbid characters she meets is deep and immediate; for example, she is delighted by Baltazar's ill-intentioned flattery to the point where Nance is driven to remark, "I seem not to know you you to-day. You're not my Linda at all," (149) and, at the moment when Linda first meets Brand, Nance is aware "that there had leapt into being, majestically, mysteriously, irresistibly one of those sudden attractions . . . that so often imply . . . the emergence of tragedy". (93) That Rachel Doorm's cruelty was excessive is made plain by the fact that even after Rachel dies Linda still has nightmares about her and is so disturbed that she sleep walks. (337-8) The disturbance is probably aggravated by Brand's treatment of her, intense interest alternating with deliberate unkindness, very similar to Rachel's, and fascinating to Linda's neurotic nature; this is a perceptive portrait of an adult relationship repeating the emotional pattern of childhood.

Mrs Renshaw seems to be a portrait of Mary Cowper Powys; all the minor characteristics described by Mary Barham Johnson in her valuable essay on Mary Powys are there;¹¹ the love of plants and of books, the flowing conversation and the unwillingness to take care of herself. There is, too, a characteristic of John's portrayed in *The Buffoon*, an exaggeratedly humble way with servants. Above all Mrs Renshaw has the two salient characteristics of his mother that John mentions in his letters to Llewelyn at the time he was writing *Rodmoor*, an "illuminated smile" and "submissive irony".¹²

We know from Mary Barham Johnson's account that Mary Powys was frightened of childbirth, as everyone is to some extent, and must have been even more so in the days when complications and death from it were so much more likely, and pain so much less alleviated. Yet Mary Powys had eleven living children, and probably several miscarriages, and a still birth or two. She was therefore, almost always in danger, and often in discomfort. Inevitably John knew some-

thing of what she felt. In *Rodmoor* he attributes to Nance "the eternal irony of the woman as she submits to the eternal misunderstanding of the man embracing her without knowing what he does". (358)

Why was Mrs Powys so "submissive"? Would any woman be these days? Part of the answer is, I think, that the church teaches that marriage symbolizes the union of God and his church, the woman being the church and the man God. If physical union is such a symbol, a great deal can be justified that it would not be possible to justify in purely human terms. It seems probable that she coped with her situation as Mrs Renshaw does, as she indicates to Nance, "What we women have to do is to make some one need us—need us with his whole nature. That is what is meant by loving a man. Everything else is mere passion and tends to misery. The more submissive we are the more they need us . . . When a person needs us we love him.'" (253) That Mrs Powys was successful within these terms of reference is proved by Llewelyn finding his father, after her death, weeping over a flower bed because "There is nobody now to . . . see what I do."¹³ But the price was high: "What we suffer," says Mrs Renshaw, "seems to me like the weight of some great iron engine with jagged raw edges—like a battering ram beating us against a dark mountain. It swings backwards and forwards and it drives us on and on". (428) The extreme pathos of Mrs Powys's resignation to suffering was the result of a literal acceptance of Christian teaching, and probably the main reason why most of her children rejected it.

The most dynamic character in *Rodmoor*, both in herself and in relation to Powys's life and work, is Philippa Renshaw. Quite obviously she is inspired by Frances Gregg of whom John wrote to Llewelyn in 1913 that he sometimes thought her, "even more rare, unusual, and terrifying and tragic than we have supposed". Three years later we have a curious situation in which John was writing about Frances in *Rodmoor* while Frances was helping Louis to write about John in *The Buffoon*. Frances as Philippa is

desirable in person, a good walker and swimmer; John as Jack Welsh is grubby and clumsy. Frances as Philippa is inspiring; John as Jack is inspired.

“‘Rose au regard saphique plus pale que les lys’” (43), Philippa has the classic form and colouring of the White Goddess of myth as identified by Robert Graves, over thirty years later, “a lovely slender form . . . deathly pale face, lips red as rowan berries, and startlingly blue eyes”:¹⁴

. . . the boyish outlines of her body gave her the appearance of one of those androgynous forms of later Greek art . . . her scarlet lips quivered as she gazed at herself, quivered into that enigmatic smile challenging and inscrutable which seems more than any other human expression to have haunted the imagination of certain great artists of the past.

Permitted for a brief moment to catch a glimpse of that white figure, an intruder, if possessed of the smallest degree of poetic fancy, would have been tempted to dream that the dust of centuries had indeed been quickened and some delicate evocation of perverse pagan desire restored to breath and consciousness. . . . she resembled some priestess of Artemis invoking a mocking image of her own defiant sexlessness. With her sorrowful inhuman eyes she suggested some strange elf-creature, born of medieval magic. (49-50)

“The Queen of Elfland in Thomas the Rhymer,” writes Graves, “was the Mediaeval successor of the pre-Celtic White Goddess . . . the story of the prophet Merlin and the enchantress Nimue has the same origin”.¹⁵ Philippa is of the woods,

One would have thought, to have watched her as she flung herself . . . on her face under one of the oldest of the trees and liberating her arms from her cloak, stretched them round its trunk, that she was some worshipper of a banished divinity invoking her god while her persecutors slept, and passionately calling upon him to return to his forsaken shrine. (51)

And she is of the river:

a slender dusky figure that had been leaning against the edge of one of the numer-

ous weirs that connect the river-tides with the streams of the water meadows, came suddenly towards them and revealed herself as Philippa Renshaw. (477)

She tosses “her elfish laugh upon the wind among the oak trees.” (427)

Philippa is tragic because she is post-Christian and all her pagan instincts conflict with Christianity; and she is tragic because she has boyish feelings and yet is a girl. Thus she is both too late and too early for the age in which she lives.

All the descriptions of Philippa’s charms are the narrator’s; they explain why Adrian is drawn to her but they are not how he consciously sees her. This dichotomy seems to me true to the subtle reality of life. To Adrian Philippa is almost less than human:

She had flashes of diabolical insight that could always rouse and astonish him. Something radically cold and aloof in her made it possible for her to risk alienating him by savage and malicious blows at his pride. (313)

Therefore he feels free with her to the extent that he also risks “savage and malicious blows to [her] pride”. For example, when she is feeling and trying to be loving and seductive, “A sudden impulse of malice seemed to seize the man who bent over her. ‘Your hair isn’t half as long as Nance’s,’ he said turning abruptly away and hugging his knees with his arms.” (110) Or when she suggests playing “Ducks and Drakes”, “‘You can’t even throw a stone out of pure innocence. You only threw that just now—because I did and you wanted me to see you swing your arm—and because you wanted to change the conversation’.” (112) He is angry when she refuses to let him pull her up to the first floor of the old windmill dangling from a rope, and when she declares her love he feels nothing. In no way except in seeking her company does he submit to her will. When he feels it his duty to escort Linda home to Nance he coldly ignores Philippa, despite “the provocative spell” and the “witchcraft from the North” with which she tries to make him stay with her. It is a strange way to treat a goddess, and stranger still that the

goddess drowns herself tied to the corpse of the human she loves. Just as Porius reverses myth when he frees Myrddin Wyllt from under Yr Wyddfa, Philippa reverses it when she drowns with Adrian.

Rodmoor reflects all Powys's current and recent emotional problems; his mother whom he often wished was still alive is portrayed in fine detail; the virtues and limitations of his wife, Margaret Lyon are reflected in the character of Nance Herrick, and the charm of Frances Gregg in Philippa Renshaw. These two stayed at Montacute during either or both the summer Mrs Powys died and the summer before. Conversations like the ones between Mrs Renshaw and Nance Herrick on Rodmoor sands might well have taken place between Mrs Powys and Margaret Lyon on Weymouth beach; Mrs Renshaw, as she appears to Nance and Linda when she calls on them, has the look, the manner and the sentiments that give one the feeling that they are Mrs Powys's exactly. Thus *Rodmoor* is bursting with autobiographical interest. And it probably tells us more about the essential nature, coloured by Powys's feelings and guided by his intuition, of his mother, his wife and his girl friend than anything else written about them.

Like Porius, a hero created thirty years later, Adrian resists, with significantly less difficulty, the deliberate, power-testing attempt to seduce him. Whereas Robert Graves, who had many interests in common with Powys, serves the Muse in his poems,¹⁶

Powys in his novels accompanies her but resists her power. The Queen of Faery takes Thomas the Rhymer not to heaven or hell but by "that bonnie road that winds about the fernie brae."¹⁷ This is Powys's destination: ". . . the deserted sheep-folds, made without mortar, that lie hidden in incredible fastness of whinberry, crowberry, 'hard' fern, bracken and swamp pools, these last bordered by red bog-moss and full of queer weeds" where he sets himself to "disentangle the deep inanimate mysteries of enjoyment beyond enjoyment".¹⁸

As a reward for the pains of following her, the Queen of Faery gives Thomas an apple that will give him "the tongue that can never lie". He grumbles that he can then neither,

. . . buy nor sell
At fair or tryst where I may be.

I dare neither speak to prince or peer
Nor ask of grace of fair lady.

Likewise Powys serves neither market nor establishment nor fashionable wooing. His interest is in the emotions connected with the Muse alias the Queen of Faery alias Robert Graves's White Goddess¹⁹—conflicting feelings of enchantment, loneliness, dread and frustration, often beyond our power to cure, control or express. In *Rodmoor* he shows how the personal unhappiness which they cause can be fatal; but for survivors such feelings provide a stage in the journey to a reward of such "enjoyment" as he describes in *Obstinate Cymric*.

NOTES

Rodmoor, Macdonald, 1973, the first English edition, is identical with the first U.S.A. ed., New York: Arnold Shaw, 1916. Page references are made within my text.

¹ *Letters to His Brother Llewelyn*, ed. M. Elwin, Village Press, 1975, Vol. 1, pp. 172, 179, 181.

² *The Buffoon*, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1916.

³ N. Lukacher, "Wolf Solent's Metaphysical Legends", *The Powys Review*, No. 6, 1979-1980, p. 73.

⁴ F. J. Child, ed., *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Harrap, 1904, p. 64.

⁵ H. Gardiner, ed., *New Oxford Book of English Verse*, Oxford, 1972, p. 354.

⁶ *Letters to His Brother Llewelyn*, p. 211.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁸ *New Oxford Book of English Verse*, p. 355.

⁹ *Letters to His Brother Llewelyn*, p. 285.

¹⁰ Oliver Marlow Wilkinson, "John Cowper Powys in Love", *The Powys Review*, No. 2, 1977, p. 62.

¹¹ Mary Barham Johnson, "The Powys Mother", *The Powys Review*, No. 8, 1980-81, pp. 57-63.

¹² *Letters to His Brother Llewelyn*, pp. 181, 204.

¹³Llewelyn Powys, *Love and Death*, The Bodley Head, 1939, p. 257.

¹⁴Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (1947), Faber, 1961, p. 24.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 432.

¹⁶See Martin Seymour Smith, *Robert Graves: His Life and Work*, Hutchinson, 1982.

¹⁷*New Oxford Book of English Verse*, p. 355.

¹⁸*Obstinate Cymric*, Carmarthen: Druid Press, 1947 (Village Press, 1973), pp. 174-5.

¹⁹*The White Goddess*, p. 432.

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Jacqueline Peltier

American Landscapes in John Cowper Powys's Letters to His Brother Llewelyn

"But taking my life as a whole and hovering with the flight of a hawk over its variegated landscape, I believe I detect certain quite definite 'streams of tendency' moving towards the unknown future."

(*Autobiography*, 1932, p. 449)

In critical writings devoted to John Cowper Powys very little attention has been given to his long residence in the United States. Kenneth Hopkins is among the few to regret that Powys did not use his extensive knowledge in some great American novel on the scale of *Glastonbury*, with a full cast of the extraordinary people he writes of in the *Autobiography*.¹ Most critics emphasize the English or Welsh landscape as the only suitable background for the "Old-Earth Man", the "Solitary Giant".

R. P. Graves, in his otherwise well-documented biography, *The Powys Brothers*, takes John Cowper's American environment for granted and does not linger on the importance of this self-chosen exile for his future career as a writer. A. Thomas Southwick, in his study of J. C. Powys's "Letters to Marian", acknowledges the fact that they throw light on "one of the most crucial and yet least documented periods of his life".² Peter Easingwood seems to me to have been among the few to give searching and thorough attention to this problem³ and I fully agree with him when he says that "this participation in the American scene determined the strength of the *Autobiography* and of the other main writings which flow from the same creative effort."

There is no doubt that the thirty years in America were important for Powys's development and have still to be carefully studied and assessed. The crusading nomadism which bore John Cowper to all except two States, preaching "after his fashion" up and down the country, was of tremendous importance in many ways. In the course of

attempting to weigh the delicate problem of the relationship between J. C. Powys and America, I have given particular attention to the manner in which he apprehended and described the environment which was his from 1904-5 to 1934, when he left for good.

The study which follows bears mostly on his *Letters to Llewelyn* because they are strikingly distinctive. Our chief 'documents' about John Cowper's judgments on America are first and foremost the last three chapters of *Autobiography* where we are given a dazzling picture, mostly positive, as befits John Cowper's determinate standpoint of "lavishing praise and praise only" as he tells Llewelyn.⁴ The same, I think, may be said of a long article he wrote in 1935, "Farewell to America"⁵ which is a sparkling summing-up of his long residence, with the sincere and inspired voice of the lecturer:

And it was in these eternal walks about the towns of half a hemisphere, that I acquired the mental habits of isolating myself as a perambulating skeleton-shape moving betwixt zenith and nadir.⁶

An Englishman Upstate, published in 1966, is a little piece mostly centred around his life in Columbia County and probably written around 1931-32. It is of a lighter vintage and rather Arcadian in mood. It is important to keep in mind that all were written towards the end of his thirty years exile; they are all "farewells" in different keys.

Quite different is the impression we gather as we follow John Cowper along the trail of the *Letters to Llewelyn*, written from

1902 to 1939, and which cover in detail that part of his life, the years 1906-1933 which gave birth to *Wolf Solent*, *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Weymouth Sands*, to name only the major works of fiction, and to the *Autobiography*. These Letters, apart from the Diaries which will, we hope, soon be published, are among the most important and probably the most important of all the collections of his Letters to close relatives and friends so far published.

Since those two volumes of the Letters, edited and published by Malcolm Elwin, are only a selection, it is difficult for anyone who has not had access to the originals to make an estimate of the number. But they are in their published form already quite impressive in bulk and length. The average rhythm seems to be one letter a week, but in times of crises they follow closely⁷ and are nearly always full of information. John would write from all sorts of places, hotels, trains, coffee-shops, railway stations, or his own lodgings, in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and would confide to his brother freely, whatever his moods, entertain him with the little scenes of his daily life, especially the people he happened to meet, or noticed from the corner of his eye, and sometimes he would express the impressions he received from strange and "quaint" or squalid places he discovered during his long and—to him so indispensable—walks.

These Letters have a tone of their own in which we seem almost to hear John Cowper's voice; they record day after day his innermost thoughts and reactions, and, through them, we watch a certain landscape emerge slowly from the thousands of miles accumulated along those years. They were really meant to be private and had no literary ambition. But Llewelyn was well aware of their immense value and prized them very highly.⁸

We wrongly assume that John Cowper, because of the aura of his lecturing career and the length of his stay in America, was very happy to live there. This impression is probably based on the cheerful and positive atmosphere of the last chapters of the *Auto-*

biography. The Letters give a very different picture. There was passion but there was also much despair and misery, and even, at times, a strong-worded hate. It was not an easy-going affair, and we shall see that the peaceful landscape which eventually emerges does not come into existence until the last five years in America, when Powys slowly comes to terms with the world within him.

These two volumes of Letters, among their many other fascinating ingredients, make us aware of the metamorphosis which took place within Powys during those thirty years or so, and how, after the Twenties, we witness the emergence within him of a stronger mind, open to the objective world and discerning the possibilities of this "New World" with the features of a very old world, its rocks, stones and trees, and on which it is possible to pray to the "Earth-Spirit under her ancient names of Demeter and Cybele".⁹

Although John Cowper started his lecture tours in the Autumn of 1904-5, no letters from that time have been published by Malcolm Elwin. It is not, therefore, possible to know what were John's very first reactions to his new environment and we have to believe his somewhat startling declaration that he could remember nothing of his first impression of the New York skyscrapers.¹⁰ A close study of the Letters shows that there are few interesting descriptions until around 1920, where they gained in weight and awareness for reasons that we will give later. There is one noteworthy exception to what has just been said in the very first American letter of Volume 1. This letter John Cowper wrote from Philadelphia early in 1908, relating his impressions on the lecture on Thomas Hardy he had just delivered, in Newburgh, N. Y., a little town north of New York:

That if you please was on the Hudson River, a noble Hiawatha-like water—granite cliffs and Pan-puk-keewis—on the shores of Gitchee Gumees in the land of the Ponemak where the heron the Sku-shu-gah dives and shoots and plays the devil—and the place was

called Newbug, and the absurd newspaper reporter said under the heading "A Dandy Stunt", "DR POWYS DELIGHTS THE NEWBUGGERS. Dr Powys oratorised in the quaint dialect familiar to us of the late Dan Daly. He fixed up Richard Harding as right away weird. The Newbuggers showed they could make difference between good and bad talk".¹¹

This fascinating little piece of writing calls for particular attention. There is on the whole a tone of mischievousness and amusement. He makes a deliberate and obvious pun on the name of the town which reminds us of Dylan Thomas's "Llargubb" in *Under Milk Wood*. Although we cannot be sure of the existence of the "newspaper reporter", the few lines attributed to him sound true in their American journalese style so well rendered. More important still, we already find here, even though it is done through H. W. Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha", a genuine interest in and even fascination for the Indian theme which will come back in force in Columbia county. The poem was a favourite of Powys's and is mentioned twice in the *Autobiography*.¹² Secondly, he indicates, his keen interest in the Red Indians of the East, an attraction examined in "Farewell to America":

As I thus wave my farewell to America I cannot help recording what seems, at least to some deep vein of superstition in me, to be a definite occult influence exercised upon my nature by the psychic aura, diffused through that whole vast land, from the life of the aboriginal Indians.¹³

Lastly we notice that even in this mock-parody of a classic poem there are two elements which are ever present in all of John Cowper's works and which we find in the Letters: stone, mud and water. There seems to exist a great affinity between Powys and another great writer, Henry David Thoreau. There is a certain "Powysian" flavour in *Walden*, such as this use of landscape elements as metaphor:

Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudices, and trad-

dition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through Church and State, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place . . .¹⁴

This passage brings to mind the magnificent comparison John Cowper makes between the human soul and a fountain, at the beginning of the *Autobiography*:

But I sometimes feel as I survey my turbulent life that a human soul resembles a fountain whose native spring is choked up by every kind of rubble and constantly invaded by a tidal estuary from the salt sea. Not until the fountain has banked itself up with great stones against this dead-sea invasion, not until it has pushed the sticks and leaves and gravel and roots and funguses and mud and cattle dung out of its way, can it draw upon the deep granite wells of its predestined flow.¹⁵

In the Letters written in America we follow the course of that strong current fighting its way through all sorts of obstacles to the freedom of the open sea.

Many of the Letters until the Twenties are mostly centred around John Cowper's psychological reactions to his environment; there are hardly any descriptions of landscape or people:

You will be glad to hear that I have now recovered from my temporary alienation and am back again in the condition of resisting those perilous calls of the lower lord which lead to so bleached and jaded a landscape.¹⁶

It is well worth noticing that this is the only Letter where the word "landscape" is used, and characteristically enough, only to describe his state of mind. "Bleached" makes one think of desert and scorching sun, and "jaded" comes from the Spanish word "ijada", colic stone; it is a word also used for a vicious horse! It is indeed an abstract, a Satanic world, which irresistibly evokes Dante's *Inferno*, the beginning of which is quoted—with some inaccuracy—in the very next Letter.¹⁷ It is the world of

sexual misery and sordid lewdness which he describes in the *Autobiography* in terms evoking Hell in all its aspects.¹⁸ The Letters are quite explicit:

These American cities are the very devil for opportunities. Boston worst of all . . . Do you ever know that dreadful depression of spirits when all paths seem to lead to dust heaps?¹⁹

The outer world such as can be glimpsed from the particulars revealed to Llewelyn is grim, sordid, made of Burlesque shows, “wretched little periodicals” and “naughty puppets”.²⁰ The Letters of that time give us the picture of a feverish man, blindly groping for ways and means to assuage his mad pursuit of erotic emotions, to the exclusion of any external descriptions. Apart from the “opportunities” mentioned, all we can visualize is the ludicrous picture of him and Louis Wilkinson singing hymns with their landlady on Sunday nights! No attention is paid to his surroundings, not even Philadelphia, “one of [his] favourite cities”, not even Boston which he loathed and is saved from total abhorrence only because of the hospitable library of the Hotel Tourraine.²¹ I think it is possible to say that the landscape is purely mental, it is indeed “una selva oscura”, and John Cowper is groping for “some open gate”²³ in the dark forest of his complicated meanderings, not for a “landscape” in fact, but for an escape.

The Frances Gregg epoch, around 1912, did not bring any release from anguish, on the contrary, and America, after she had left with Louis Wilkinson for England, became the Land of the Dead:

O impenetrable and merciless Future, I am ready to suffer deep and cruel scratches from Sphinx claws, but I cannot endure to leave my Egyptian desert, my Jungle of the Great Dangers, for cold obedience among Hyperborean corpses.²³

The years 1913-1918 were probably the worst in John Cowper’s life and when he wrote “Really one longs for some overwhelming earthquake or catastrophe to bring about some change”²⁴ he might have had some premonition of what was lying

ahead. Soon there was War, death, physical and moral suffering which culminated in that terrible year of 1916 when, as he said himself, he was on the verge of madness.²⁵

But these years, years of misery, loneliness and anxiety, are of tremendous importance for another reason: they witness the emergence of his true status as a writer, slowly but with an increasing force:

But I must write—something—anything. Enormous visions stir the waters of my mind—huge, wavering, obscure. I would give pounds to be now permitted by Fate to retire with you to some place (even if it weren’t sunny) and to write rapidly, feverishly—such amazing things!²⁶

Then again in October 1915:

Writing’s my obsession and my heart hardens itself in its loneliness.²⁷

Nevertheless, parallel with this impetuous but fertile undercurrent, his obsession with writing, there was in John Cowper’s mind at that time a very strong tide of hate, especially towards American people and the country at large:

Only the greyness and dreariness of these present days of my existence are beyond words and my hatred for America grows daily, though they are good-natured enough and free from spitefulness—these staggering illiterates. (12 January 1916)

. . . When I am free from these unspeakable people and hideous streets and dreadful hotels—I may be able to do something. Here’s a demon by me wagging his legs, in spats, to the tune of some vulgar American dance. They all jerk and jab and chatter and shove themselves about like galvanised puppets. They are not human . . . I feel as I should willingly give my soul for one single day where there is a hill or a road where there have been celandines and sheep for a thousand years and where real trees have real roots in earth-mould and real people utter intelligible words. (20 January 1917)

This letter is particularly saddening and dispirited and distressing to read. The pain, that never left him now, made him unfair to America and he had the impression that he

was trapped in “an undignified life”. His only salvation lay in writing.

However, in spite of this depression due in great part to his ailing body, there is a passage at that time about New Orleans which offers a striking contrast, in its colourful and lively lines:

I came here through Arizona and Texas from new Orleans. Ha! New Orleans is a place; but wicked, languishing, indolent, lotus-scented, an exotic dreamy ghostly drugged sort of a city, with lichen on the ilexes as if the whole thing had been under deep seas for years. ‘I have pulled down the moss as I saw it hanging from a live-oak in Louisiana’. It was, I think, in New Orleans that Walt Whitman kept his favourite girl—and well he might. I went into old Creole houses and was cursed by queer old women for picking roses in courtyards that might have been in Algiers. (San Francisco, 21 April 1917)

By the end of 1917 John Cowper wisely decided to risk an important operation. Although it was a success, for a long time he was prostrate and weak. It was a difficult time for lecturing, and he came to dim conclusions:

I have lived, really, an easy and protected sort of life, and somehow this sensation of being out of work is curiously agitating to me. I can only forget it by falling into a sort of drowsy coma. This very talking about ‘a job’ is pain and grief to me. I am an artist, not a shrewd fellow—and if my particular kind of art is not wanted, where the devil can I go? I am sick of travelling, I want to lecture in one fixed place and write a book worth writing and this I shall do—you will see! (8 January 1918)

But very soon he was on the road again. From now on we hear much more about these lecture tours, and through the Letters we come to realize the strain these “mean jumps” represented:

I am in the middle of a month’s tour in the middle west—if you can call it a tour when at most I have only two lectures a week—but I have colossal journeys between, so I am saved a sense of idleness. For instance I have now come seven hundred miles from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Joplin Missouri—and I go

straight back to St. Paul—700 miles—1,400 miles for one lecture. (23 January 1918)

(From St. Louis:) . . . I am waiting, for the New York train. It will be two nights journey—and an upper berth. I was delayed twelve hours by floods in Southern Missouri—but there it is. I’ve just been walking, walking thro’ melancholy squalid slums and now this great clean luxurious gaudy hotel is as unlovely in its vulgar modernness as the streets were sinister and evil and menacing. (1 November 1919)

(From Springfield, Missouri:) The raw bleak and characterless melancholy of the “country” over here passes imagination. Can it be the same planet and can this be the moon I have seen from Chanctonbury Rings and Lufton and Laon? Bricks over here don’t seem bricks, trees don’t seem trees; mud is not mud but some kind of dreary chemistry and the automata who nod and talk and get in and out of cars, kind and modest and well-washed as they, seem hardly to have those skulls and cross-bones within them that used to belong to the human race. (January 1920)

These excerpts selected from the Letters of that period show an obvious change in the tone, and the matter-of-fact particulars he gives Llewelyn are most valuable, since they point to a growing awareness of the outer world, including the political atmosphere of these post-war years, which were “an era of conformity and of intolerance with non-conformity”.²⁸ Powys remarked on it:

The anti-radical wave of reactionary suppression is very depressing. There is a feeling of angry panic in the air which makes it difficult to refer to anything but the very narrowest literary topics without exciting violent hostility—though now and then one has an opportunity of a protest which has some good effect. (Chicago, 11 January 1920)

There was a definite change of vision towards a much finer apprehension of the Res Americana. It was a bewildering, shockingly crude and at times ugly but also stimulating country, and he came to recognize the benefit Llewelyn might gain by coming to the States:

But it does rather begin to look to me as if you did require the invigorating effect of this dry

hard chaotic brilliant aggressive atmosphere to rouse you from the humiliating inhibition of this misty coma. (New York, 26 February 1920)

Was he aware that this diagnostic applied to him too? At about the same time he was intent on writing *After My Fashion*. In this book we can read this challenging statement made about the main character, Richard Storm who, like John Cowper, lives in the "Village" in New York:

Like some great wedge of iron this tremendous new world bored its way through the thick sensuousness of his nature and laid his deeper instincts bare. It was a process of spiritual surgery, painful but liberating.²⁹

There is no denying the cheerfulness and intensity of this newly-born Salute to the world around him. Significantly it is as a man set out of bondage and feeling the first effects of unlimited freedom that he hails his brother thus:

I am like one who from the top of a tower—I don't mean my own existence is anything like a tower, I speak figuratively for the nonce—watches a wayfarer crossing a marsh towards firm land. The onlooker can see how firm and secure that land is, with what a firm white road it rises over the hills, but the one in the marsh, brother Christian, can see nothing of this—can only feel his ankles mud-deep in abominable morass . . . Drink up every drop of the situation and be fully aware of every shade and ripple of it. Put writing for a time out of your thoughts and absorb the stream of existence. (36 February 1920)

By 1921 the time of trials was almost over. The presence of Phyllis Playter was going to shed its beneficent influence over John Cowper's life and writing. In one of the first letters mentioning her, we find the metaphorical use of "mud" and "heat" but, here, we are far from the satanic lands of the beginning:

I've had as lovely a time as possible in this awful heat, this scorching sun—bathing every day in the river or wading through tropical marshes the very mud of which was hot and the water that covered it hot too . . . but I looked at *Cassiopaea* calmly enough and saw

about five separate dawns. (Kansas City, Missouri, 3 September 1922)

The last ordeal was nevertheless awaiting him in the guise of the long year he had to spend in California, from September 1922 to the summer of 1923. He had already shown his strong dislike for the place in several letters in 1916 and in 1917. There is probably no scenery in the States so averse to John Cowper's sensibility than the Pacific Coast and his feelings were exacerbated by his loneliness and the continual bickerings he had with his new manager, over his finances and badly organised lectures. Wretchedly he confesses:

I hate this damned place, for I so long for the country—for real trees, for real falling leaves, for real mud, for real grass. Invented! All California is invented, I say invented! I took the car to the Beach—it was more awful than words can say! I thought can this be sand and are those real waves, made of salt-water older than cities, and is that red thing actually the setting sun? I tell you all the old newspapers that there are in America hung about those shitten posts and stumps! And things that were not trees but something else, scrapers for the privy of Proserpine, stretched away from the sham sea towards the sham land! (San Francisco, 7 November 1922)

He repeatedly comes back to the "unreality" of California. He was not the only one to feel this deep uneasiness on the West Coast. William Faulkner was to confide some thirty years later: "This is a nice town (L.A.) full of very rich middle-class people who have not yet discovered the cerebrum or at best the soul".³⁰ But in his frantic efforts to find decent walks, John Cowper managed to uncover a different and almost bucolic reality hidden in these—at first—unpromising surroundings, and this comes as a startlingly refreshing surprise:

But I helped an old woman drive heifers thro' a fence out there, and heard ducks quacking in a backyard, and saw a couple of hawks, and a rainbow opposite a sunset, and the straight line of the ocean, like a purple tightrope between hills. And I met lots of separate groups of drifting children in that out-lying

district going for milk to a great white-washed dairy farm. (San Francisco, 3 December 1922)

That Llewelyn eventually came to New York, in the summer of 1920, was momentous, both for himself and for John Cowper. He brought with him something of their common childhood, of Montacute, of other places which they had visited together and his sunny presence certainly helped John in his recovery during that year 1920-21, which was such a turning-point in his life. In *The Verdict of Bridlegoose*, Llewelyn offers an interesting, first-hand view of their life together, in California and New York.

Of all the cities John Cowper came to know with the close understanding that came from his prolonged walks—Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, among others—the only one of which we get more than glimpses is New York. It seems interesting here to compare the two brothers' style by setting side by side their reminiscences. Here is what Llewelyn wrote:

We left for the East some time in the beginning of October. How magnetic is the appeal of New York at this season of the year, when, like rooks returning to their king rookery, everybody comes crowding into the great city, into this perpendicular modern Babylon, with its proud, hard, dog-tooth outlines! . . . I could never find it in my heart to curse this town, which, like some vast battery, is capable of recharging with eager electricity the most inert brains, the most weary thighs and ankles.³¹

Eight years later, John Cowper would devote a long passage to—in his words—“the proud city of New York, that air-hung, sea-washed, weather-white Megalopolis”, celebrating “her” in lyrical tones:

But as I kiss my hand in everlasting farewell to this dazzling wave-washed, marble-frocked cosmopolitan baggage, ‘kept’ by these industrious rogues, this iridescent harlot of the nations, to whom all the mountebanks and all the peddlers of the world flock with their antics and their wares, this tireless courtesan with her white skin, her cold eyes, her dazzling tiara, her trailing unwashed skirts . . .³²

In that huge city, almost a “persona prop-

ria”, if we judge by the bulk of the reference to it in the Index of the *Autobiography*, Greenwich Village was certainly the area he knew best. He had been living there, on and off, ever since the beginning of his lecturing in America. But the one important place of all was 4 Patchin Place, where Llewelyn and Alyse Gregory let John and Phyllis have “the upper room” in the early summer of 1923. Many allusions or fairly lengthy descriptions of his immediate surroundings begin to appear in his Letters at about that time, mentioning walks along the docks with Phyllis.³³ the sparrows “acting like long-tailed tits might do”.³⁴ and the Ailanthus boughs, which “float over / The houses and the roofs, a wild-geese throng”,³⁵ and through these passages we begin to glimpse and hear a more familiar—to us—John Cowper:

Monsieur Henri the barber I often talk to outside the Brevoort where they are taking away that flight of entrance steps . . . But think of those steps disappearing, up which Frances and Louis went and up which I went carrying the manuscripts of Theodore’s first book for Arnold to type before he left that Music Office to become a Manager . . . But those steps of the Brevoort—what partings, what encounters they must have known . . . (25 September 1925)

They’ve gone and put up iron gates at the entrance to Patchin Place—in the middle of the entrance—leaving the little openings by the new brick posts free. And they’ve pulled down the Prison—but so far not the Clock Tower. In the foundations of this fallen Bastille from where of so many Sundays we heard the imprisoned Baggages sing about heaven, is an iron clutcher with a dragonish dew-lap scooping earth and hissing with a steamy vibrant roar. I am deaf of one ear—but the noise is very strident. But do you know we can now see the Woolworth tower and also the Singer Tower from the entrance of Patchin Place—think of that! and a great sign “Personene’s Italian medicines” with a tossing ship on murky waves—Medicines for what? (. . .) No mandragora can ever medicine any quiet old people in this quarter to sweet sleep unless they’ve learnt as I have to be deaf as an adder when I choose. (14 November 1929)



John Cowper Powys and Phyllis Playter, c. 1922.

At the time of this last Letter they were about to leave “the upper room” for a little house in Columbia County, but the mention of the “quiet old people” reminds one of the short story he wrote, perhaps at that time, called *The Duck, The Owl, and—Miss Rowe! Miss Rowe!*³⁶ which, without doubt, is set in Patchin Place.

Because New York, to my mind, has held such an important place in his life that it is almost one of the characters of *After My Fashion*, I would like to quote this passage, taken out of his one and only American novel:

As he swung down Varick Street brandishing his stick—a stick bought under the shadow of

Selshurst Cathedral—he actually exulted in all the sights around him. He exulted in the rawness of the iron frameworks, in the great torn-out gaps, like bleeding flesh, that were being laid bare in the sides of the old Dutch houses, in the subterranean thunder and the whirling puffs of air and dust that came up through the subway’s gratings. He exulted in the huge grotesqueness of the gigantic advertisements, in the yells of the truck drivers, in the flapping clothes lines, in the piled-up garbage, in the hideous tenements and vociferous children. He suddenly became aware that in all this chaotic litter and in all this reckless, gay, aggressive crowd, there was an immense outpouring of youthful energy, an unconquerable vitality, a ferocious joyousness and daring.³⁷

This passage offers a striking vision, that of a vigorous and buoyant man waving his weapon (a stick) in the face of a huge, defiant organism, throbbing with life and blood, New York. We feel a definite atmosphere of “war”, or at least a challenge between the Man and the City. It reminds one of Powys’s avowal, regarding New York:

I regard it . . . as a terrifying chaos in which by the use of a certain crafty sagacity and a few magic tricks you can build a transient nest . . .³⁸

But at the time he was writing *After My Fashion*, Powys was not thinking of building a nest.

Before J. C. Powys could finally give up lecturing and settle in the country in order to write, as it had been his wish for a long time, there were a few more years of “mean jumps” across the States with a new manager. This renewed series of lectures is for us the occasion to get extraordinarily vivid descriptions of rural customs, especially from the Middle West, which are fascinating in themselves. This time John Cowper was not engrossed in his own thoughts and sensations; he had his attention whole and his curiosity is aroused as well as his sympathy. It may have been these “vignettes” which attracted Kenneth Hopkins’s eye and made him deplore the fact that there was no American equivalent to the great Wessex romances.

I am off to Shreveport, Louisiana, on Thursday and from there, with five days at my disposal, towards Palm Beach. There’s a ‘Convention’ in this Hotel of what do you suppose? Of Firework-Men, organisers of ‘Open Air Amusements and Attractions’ . . . I was glad to see Peoria again, the home-town of Edgar Lee Masters. I walked along the edge of the Illinois river and watched a couple of ramshackle Huckleberry Finns get a boat out into the open water through melting blocks of ice. (Chicago, 18 February 1925)

In this important letter he confides to Llewelyn that he has started a new novel, “less smooth and with a greater number of

characters” than *Ducdame*, and cannot refrain from mentioning “a beggar with what Theodore would call a ‘shocking face’”. Thus do we have the first lineaments of *Wolf Solent*.

A few days later he is in New Orleans, a place which had already thrown a spell on his imagination:

The swamps thro’ which the train passed were extraordinary—black mud that looked as if it went down thousands of fathoms to some level where plesiosauruses and diplodocuses and dinosaurs and ichthyosauruses might still grope and gurgle and wallow and butt against each other and have each other, in pre-historic antedeluvian slime—and this funny grey lichen hanging down from dead trees like the withered grey hair of superannuated Cybeles, this lichen which they so absurdly call “moss” as though it had any connection at all with the moss under the beech trees at Bate-moor or Park Cover! . . . I have always known that Louisiana was of all places on earth, and New Orleans especially, prolific of queer and even traditional devilries. It’s a growth started from the spawn of some African Lake Elmenteita conveyed to these kindred estuaries and groves of devils by some crippled vulture caught in the top-mizzen rig of some old pirate-brig-stick white mist. (New Orleans, 22 February 1925)

This is the queerest place—the Colorado Chautauqua³⁹—and today there’s a great picnic here of all the Colorado farmers from miles round addressed by the Governor and the Senator. (Boulder, Colorado, 24 July 1925)

But I think once I head for the South (not that I adore it, for I always fear Lynchings), which will be on the 30th or on the 1st February, this dyspepsia will clear off. But the papers said ’twas sixteen below Zero yesterday in Chicago and the whole country is heavily covered with thick white snow—in the towns a queer greyish tint it is, like the flakes of the flesh of a vast sea-kraken. (Peoria, Illinois, 19 January 1930)

Five years later, John Cowper in “Farewell to America” would give due and tender praise to that Middle West which for him was the symbol and hope of the best America could offer to the world in the future:

“the equality of all souls”, and goes on to say:

the rich drawling accents of their speech even, not melodious with the full-throated languor of the South, yet not in the least ‘Yankee’, remain, though my ear could never really catch the exact tone of those broad prairie-sounds, full of a heart-to-heart insouciance, a nonchalant affability, which, like the sun-baked door-yards of those ramshackle dwellings, levels human consciousness to a certain homely acceptance of the common lot that gathers dignity from its mere simplicity, and solemnity from the mere presence of its vast-stretching background.⁴⁰

On 10 May 1929 John Cowper had exciting news to communicate:

Arthur Ficke has lent us no less than two thousand dollars and with this has purchased for us, to be paid for during the next couple of years at our convenience, a clean tidy oldish small house, about fifteen miles from Edna’s farm—clean and ready to be entered, with a piece of rough hillside and a rapid stream and a miniature orchard and an old lilac bush and one round flower-bed—six acres unless I am mistaken in all.⁴¹

Less than a year later, they were settled there and Powys had started *A Glastonbury Romance*. By that time he had decided to give up lecturing and to live on his royalties. This was a courageous move, for John had known—and was to continue having—severe financial problems and his choice meant a very simple life, with just enough to survive. But it was the beginning of a new era, made up of long walks, the writing of some of the most important of his books culminating in the *Autobiography*, continual contact with a land old enough to nourish his imagination and where he re-named places and put in practice his exacting rites. The Letters abound in precise and evocative particulars of his everyday life in Phudd Bottom, and we begin to see the emergence of the John Cowper of the last chapter of the *Autobiography*:

I have saved four trout from death by transporting them from my pool in the drying up river. It’s a lovely grotto—a regular ‘Numen-

quest’ sort of place, of sleep and liquid rest, and I like going there. (4 August 1930)

I do love carrying that stick you gave me, but I fear to hurt the feelings of my other sticks, so I try to take them all out every day. I take yours before breakfast, the Miss Rowe one at noon, and my old Hickory one before tea . . . (6 August 1931)

All human contacts are full of ricochets and shocks and undercurrents and agitation. It’s ever so much better to go along as I do and call various stumps and posts and stones and dead trees and thorn-bushes and hillocks and valleys and escarpments by particular names, and I have named every stone and post and hedge and stream and spring around here. Old Wordsworth himself didn’t name so many! (23 March 1932)

I started my walk today at nearly five. It was nearly dark, but I go up that sloping field to the south of Phudd over Mr Stein’s hill southward, southward, till I reach a hill where I can look down on the river and far away. (30 November 1932)

From now on, all the elements are in place and the pattern of his life is more or less what it will be in a few years, back on the Old Continent: a little house from where he can escape towards the hills, walks, work, and the “Rites”. These were going to become one of the main features of his “Philosophy”, as he makes it clear in *Obstinate Cymric*.⁴²

Professor Gresset, in his penetrating analysis of John Cowper Powys’s “Rites and Humour” is right, I think, when he points out that for Powys “the only possible salvation lies in de-civilization, in the reconquest, by the cult of the minutest sensations, of the primitive state of complete surrender to the natural world” and the fish, for instance, is a complex symbol in Powys’s thought, linked not only to a primitive Christianity, but also to life before birth and after death.⁴³ The ritual salvation of fish has a penitential connotation, “invested with a sort of mythological solemnity”.⁴⁴

A few years later, John Cowper, in Corwen, was going to take up this point and attempt to make it clear to his readers:

What my "philosophy" is struggling gropingly and obstinately towards is a *mysticism of Nature* quite as *awe-struck* and perhaps not less *ecstatic* sometimes, and almost always as *enjoyable*, as the sort that makes us feel we have especially "elevated" feelings, above the reach of "the average sensual man", when we drag in God.⁴⁵

So, in 1933, John Cowper has come back full circle, since as he describes at some length in the *Autobiography*, the landscape of this district of Upper New York reminds him of his native Derbyshire.⁴⁶ And by August 1933 he was contemplating new vistas in his imagination, where an "enchanted land" combined with ideal feats of writing:

Yes, I have thought of selling this house if possible—advertising it as to be sold just as it is with all books and furniture and bric à brac in it; and then going to live for the rest of my days in Wales at some place on the Welsh sea—or Irish sea is it?—like St David's, and there compose my real Masterpiece in the form of a really thrilling and powerful Romance, with all the Welsh Enchantments behind it! (29 August 1933)

And less than a month later he concluded thus:

My feeling is that now at sixty having finished, or at sixty-one having finished, my *Autobiography*, as I shall by then I hope have done, I shall only set sail from these shores for the last time. I mean if I go, I shan't come back. (20 September 1933)

John Cowper's awareness of the arresting quality of American landscape—a beauty *sui generis*—came rather late in his life and was made possible by the fact that, at long last, he had achieved his deep-rooted aspiration to retire to the country, that upstate country which had significance for him because of its close association with the past and the dead, "that poetic sense of *human continuity*"⁴⁶ he speaks of in the last chapter of his *Autobiography*. His private landscape was pacified, he had come to terms with himself and felt that through his reminiscences—"emotions recollected in tranquility"—he had almost returned home.

He strikes us, here, on the eve of his departure, as poised in a fairly delicate balance as he carefully evaluates his appreciation of America. On the one hand he has accumulated in his memory a long vista of intolerable urban ugliness, the "American horror" of Babbit-like existence, exacerbated by the hellish sun of the Pacific Coast, the evils of modernity and the abyssal violence detected in the South. It is quite characteristic of him that he was perfectly conscious of the strong resemblances that existed between himself and some of the "feverish", "the fantastical writers from the South"⁴⁷ (a group that necessarily included Faulkner) but these are links he repudiates because such bold experiments came from the South, "where the mere presence of the wicked lynching-spirit seems to evoke a sadistic magnetism all its own".⁴⁷ On the other hand, he is clearly fascinated by the possibilities evoked through the large expanses of the Middle West, that "majestic monotony" which would bring out "a certain bare drab dusty primordial human grandeur".⁴⁷

The influence of Spengler on John Cowper is not to be neglected. Powys often mentions him in the *Autobiography* and again refers to him in an article which he wrote in 1929, à propos of the Sacco-Vanzetti case, where he draws an extraordinary and science-fictional picture of the Future which is awaiting us:

But the particular epoch of a 'Winter' Civilization (all iron and stone and machinery) in which it is our present fate to live is not, we may be thankful to learn, destined to survive more than a couple of hundred years (a mere bagatelle in the vast aeons at the disposal of the forces of life) and is to be followed, according to this 'physiognomic morphology' by an epoch corresponding to the Theodorics, Attilas, Caesars, Odoacers; when the invisible power of money will be broken by the arbitrary will of conflicting conquerors; when the hordes of ordinary men and women will subside into a 'fellaheen' state of international endurance; when we shall wander amid grass-grown cities that have lost their wealth, amid remnants of scientific mechanisms that have lost their inventive secret; and

human existence, returning, for thousands of years, to a patient, historyless monotony of a natural struggle with the elements, will attain the mystic wisdom of the Second Religiousness!⁴⁸

America has, through its interminable horizons and scorching suns, elevated John Cowper to a cosmic awareness, where he has gained enough strength and distance to think in terms of elements, stars, planets. Like Dreiser, that “great Middle-Western writer”⁵¹ to whom he felt so closely allied, he deals with cosmic powers, as befits the Magician he dreamed, in his boyhood, of

becoming. Thus he came to be able to declare:

This is the surface of the earth upon which I, an anonymous individual, am walking in time surrounded by space.⁵²

Ready to launch into *Maiden Castle*, where we follow him, under his guise as Dud-No-Man, in the haunted grounds of Stonehenge, he is already making plans for his escape to remoter and remoter worlds and, like Owain Glyndŵr, Prince of Wales, his vanishment from our earthly residence, “Up and Out”, to other planetary landscapes.

NOTES

¹ *The Powys Brothers*, (1967), Warren House Press, 1972, p. 94. At the time of Hopkins's biography, Powys's novel which deals with America, *After My Fashion*, was not known, or published. I surmise from J. C. Powys's letter to Llewelyn that it was written during 1918-20, but there is no hint from him that he considered it a success, and the book had no title.

² *The Powys Review*, no. 14, 1984, p. 17.

³ *The Powys Review*, no. 6, 1979/80, pp. 7-15.

⁴ *Letters to his Brother Llewelyn*, ed. M. Elwin, 2 Vols., Village Press, 1975, 24 July 1933. Dates in parentheses within my text refer to these volumes.

⁵ “Farewell to America”, *Scribner's Magazine*, XCVII (April 1935), repr. *The Powys Review*, no. 6, 1979/80, pp. 54-63.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁷ Cf. Vol. 1, pp. 197-200 and pp. 316-329.

⁸ Cf. Vol. 1, p. 362.

⁹ *Autobiography*, The Bodley Head, 1932, p. 650.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 461.

¹¹ *Letters to Llewelyn*, Vol. I, p. 38.

¹² *Autobiography*, pp. 284 and 548.

¹³ “Farewell to America”, p. 59.

¹⁴ *Walden or Life in the Woods*, ed. G. Landré-Augier; Aubier—Editions Moutaigne, Paris, 1967, p. 204.

¹⁵ *Autobiography*, p. 39.

¹⁶ *Letters to Llewelyn*, Vol. I, p. 38.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁸ *Autobiography*, pp. 471-77, for instance.

¹⁹ *Letters to Llewelyn*, Vol. I, p. 40.

²⁰ *Autobiography*, p. 469.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 598.

²² *Letters to Llewelyn*, Vol. I, p. 41.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 114 (8 December 1912).

²⁵ The *Letters to Llewelyn*, Vol. 1, pp. 200-10, give an absolute proof that John Cowper was mistaken when in the *Autobiography* (pp. 593-4) he ascribed his depression to 1917.

²⁶ *Letters to Llewelyn*, Vol. I, p. 135.

²⁷ *Wood and Stone* was published in November 1915 and was followed in 1916 by no less than five books!

²⁸ A. Nevins & H. S. Commager, *A Pocket History of the United States*, New York: Washington Square Press, 1962.

²⁹ *After My Fashion*, Picador, 1980, p. 172.

³⁰ Letter to Joan Williams, 4 March 1951, *Selected Letters of W. Faulkner*, ed. J. Blotner, New York: Random House, 1977.

³¹ *The Verdict of Bridlegoose*, J. Cape, 1927, p. 58.

³² “Farewell to America”, p. 55.

³³ *Letters to Llewelyn*, Vol. I, p. 359.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 52.

³⁵ “The Ailanthus”, a poem, *The Dial*, New York, February 1926.

³⁶ Village Press, 1975.

³⁷ *After My Fashion*, p. 185.

³⁸ *Autobiography*, p. 573.

³⁹ This word is an Indian name and means a “circuit” which brought culture to the rural areas in the 1900s.

⁴⁰ “Farewell to America”, p. 57.

⁴¹ *Letters to Llewelyn*, Vol. 2, p. 100. Arthur Ficke, American poet, is described at length, in *Autobiography*, pp. 608-612. Edna is Edna St Vincent Millay, the poet.

⁴² *Obstinate Cymric*, Carmarthen: Druid Press, 1947. Cf. the chapter, “My Philosophy Up to Date”, p. 137.

⁴³ *Granit*, no. 1/2, November 1973, pp. 166-67.

⁴⁴ *Autobiography*, p. 633.

⁴⁵ *Obstinate Cymric*, p. 164.

⁴⁶ *Autobiography*, p. 617 (and see pp. 616-621).

⁴⁷ “Farewell to America”, pp. 57-8.

⁴⁸ *The Lantern*, Boston, Jan./Feb. 1929, repr. *The Powys Review*, no. 9, pp. 37-38

⁴⁹ “Farewell to America”, p. 57.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

John Cowper Powys

Drought and the River Bed

I

Will this hard, dry Light be never through?
Or the drip of the super-stellar dew
Never fall on our valley-stone
Or our heron find fish to feed upon?
Or the Fish Itself, the rain-child elf,
That was Holy Jesus' very self,
The Sacred Fish, the sperm o' the sprite,
Flap its fins to put out this Light?

A scorched and a glittering thing
Like a snake's skin in the wheat
Or the dazzling light of the swing
Of a scythe in the summer-heat
Was our dried-up River Bed.
It throbbed; it ached like a vein
Of thirst in a dragon's head;
Or a fevered counterpane
On the mid-noon sheet of one
That has tossed and turned all night
Or a snail's slime i' the sun
When the road-way's sick with light.

Water! Water! gasp the grasses
From their restless-rustling stalks;
Water! sighs each air that passes;
Water! Water! the frog quawks.

II

Thunder!

Thunder! Over our Hill's shoulder—
In reverberating shocks—
Thunder! Over bush and boulder—
Thunder! Over roots and rocks—
///// Rain /////
///// Rain /////
///// Rain /////

Bubbling, gurgling, rippling, swirling,
Down the dry bed of the stream,
Past the withered alders whirling,
Past the dusty wood-drift purling,
Rush the waters of our dream!

And the moss-spores feel that liquid Dark
And the fungus-wombs are its thirsty mark;
And the tiny lichen-phalluses
Stir in their crystal palaces,
And the lost dolls near the children's school
Think every puddle a heavenly pool,
And every fir-cone a Noah's ark;
And there's water in the Baron Ficke's Park.

III

And the oldest of frogs lifts a grass-green back
Out of the rain-wet sod;
And a thousand years are in the quack
Of the Duck by Master Stein's wood stack
As he renders thanks to God!

Oh, sweet green milk from the Mother's nipples
That answers the cool grey rain!
Oh! heavenly bubbles; oh magic ripples,
Oh worms come forth again!

All grey and green grow the little ferns
That drink such water-drops;
All green and grey grow the mossy urns
Where my lord the Toad-Prince hops.
'Tis the milk of Demeter's very breast
That rises to meet this water!
The river's ripple ends her quest
And gives her back her daughter.

IV

Dry Light has reigned for thirty suns
Like a Corncrake in the stubble
Now dust turns mud and a river runs
Where glittered spikes of rubble.
Darkness and coolness and greenness now
Over those jags of Light
Roll with the old Cimmerian flow
From the aqueducts of Night.

Rain and a river;
A river and rain;
The chord a-quiver
Relaxed again!

In darkness and water are all things born—
 Let the Corncrake croak in the glittering Corn!
 Let the Snake's skin gleam in the stubbled wheat!
 —With dripping tresses and wild wet feet
 The child of darkness and hidden water,
 Green-black Chaos's youngest daughter,
 Slides over quartz and slippery stone
 And the dizzy dry Light is drowned and gone.

V

The dark-veined mosses that swim and sway
 In the green night-caves of the Milky Way,
 The blue-black petals of nenuphars
 That rise and sink in the pools of the stars
 The vast black pansy-petals strewn
 On the Limbo-side of the waning Moon
 Their liquid dew in our hearts is found
 For the Demon of Light is drowned, is drowned!

Only the rainy roads my dear
 To the land of heart's desire draw near
 At every turn those roads lead on
 To a greener valley, a mossier stone!
 It is always raining where Mill-Pools hide
 The Eternal Fish and his Mystic Bride;
 For we that live are a River-Bed
 With a glittering Drought above our head.
 May that dry and dazzling serpent's skin
 One day let the Waters in!

"Drought and the River Bed", hitherto unpublished and now printed without alteration, comes from Mr E. E. Bissell's manuscript collection. It seems appropriate to publish it here, for it connects with references to John Cowper Powys's up-state New York landscape in Jacqueline Peltier's article.

The manuscript poem is one in a binder with several more which Mr Bissell believes were all written when Powys was living at Phudd Bottom, Hillsdale, up-state

New York (1930-34). Five of the poems, like "Drought & the River Bed" relate to Powys's friend and neighbour, the poet, Arthur Davidson Ficke (1883-1945). Two of these are dated: "To Arthur & Gladys Dec 8 1930" and "To Arthur on the occasion of his giving me The Home Books of Poetry Sept 3 1931".

The poem is actually placed and dated by references within it: to "Baron Ficke" (II) and to another neighbour, "Master Stein" (III) (who is referred to, for example, in a letter to Llewelyn Powys, 30 November 1932). The river which flowed near Phudd Bottom is described by Powys in prose, such as the essay *An Englishman Upstate* (1966), the last chapter of *Autobiography* and letters, especially when it is affected by August drought. For example, in a letter to Llewelyn (4 August 1930) he writes, "I have saved four trout from death by transporting them from my pool in the drying up river. It's a lovely grotto—a regular 'Numen-quest' sort of place, of sleep and liquid rest, and I like going there." In the final chapter of *Autobiography*, he describes the same transporting of fish to a pool which "shows signs of surviving the drought" as an example of his good "thought".

The poem, written in 1930 or 1931, rises above these prose accounts of the conscientious, self-absorbed, self-mocking Powys. This relaxed, occasional and local poem is touched throughout with an outgoing humour, from its whimsical observations, tending even in parts to nonsense, to its amusing and comic rhymes. Within the poem, ancient Greek, Christian and fairy-tale imagery combine with Powys's own mythical inversions, here born of an actual situation. (In drought, Light becomes a Demon that must be drowned; Water brings redemption.) Through this broad-ranging imagery the poem carries a variety of universal and quite serious significances, beyond the personal. But finally "Drought and the River Bed" is a love poem, as emerges in part V, not only clearly in the expansive lyricism of its second part, but in the probably personal allusion to those nymphs, the waterlilies ("nenuphars") which swim in the poet's ecstatic verbal blending of the river with the liquid night sky.

B.H.

T. J. Diffey

A Visit to Mrs Lily Brooks, 5 June 1985

In the autumn of 1984 I was invited to contribute a lecture on John Cowper Powys to the undergraduate lecture course *English Rural Communities* given in the School of Cultural and Community Studies at the University of Sussex. The subject I was asked to speak on was "Landscape in the Novels of John Cowper Powys". Not surprisingly, I included in my lecture some account of the Sussex background to Powys's *Autobiography* and his novel *After My Fashion*. I quoted, for example, passages from the "Burpham" chapter of the *Autobiography*. Afterwards, a postgraduate student working in history, Mick Reed, introduced himself. He has lived all his life in West Sussex and knows "the Powys country" around Burpham very well. Indeed he knew the places referred to in the passages by John Cowper which I had quoted in my lecture, places such as Lee Farm and Gibbet Wood, but he had scarcely heard of Powys, whereas for me many of the Sussex places (but not all) that Powys describes were but names on the page. We thus had an animated conversation in which he talked about Sussex and I about Powys. A few weeks later Mick Reed told me that he had discovered that a woman who had worked as a maid in the Powys household at Burpham, Mrs Lily Brooks, was still living in the village.

My friend Raymond Brown, his wife Ann, and I arranged to call on Mrs Brooks, who by the time our visit took place had moved from Burpham to nearby Littlehampton. Here we were made very welcome when we called to see her in the afternoon of 5 June 1985. Mrs Brooks gave us a very kind reception. Several times she regretted that she could not be more helpful, and more than once said rather diffidently,

"I can't tell you anything useful". But it was wonderful to talk to her and to hear about the past regardless of the bearing it may have on understanding John Cowper Powys; and in fact her account of him is, I think, more useful than she seemed to imagine.

Lily Brooks, née Stevenson, told us that she was born in Galloway in Scotland on 10 January 1895. She became housemaid in John Cowper Powys's household at Burpham early in 1914, she said, and stayed there until around 1929 when Margaret Powys sold up. Thereafter Mrs Powys lived with her son Littleton to whom she was devoted. Indeed the affection was mutual and they made their home together wherever Littleton's duties, first as a clergyman in the Church of England and later as a Roman Catholic priest, took him. He was Rector of Wiston near Steyning in West Sussex for a period and went over to Rome, Lily thought, during the Second World War. Littleton, like his father, was very much liked. He was an outgoing man. There was regret in Burpham, she told us, when he became a Roman Catholic because people thought that the English church could not afford to lose men like him. Lily said that he died in Bath from multiple sclerosis. Margaret Powys died there too.

I had thought that Littleton had been killed in a motorbike accident and so was surprised to hear that he had died of multiple sclerosis. I put this point to Lily. She knew that he had had an accident but she did not think that it had killed him. He was paralysed at the end, she said, by the disease, and had to have a male nurse to attend him. Lily of course was right. As Glen Cavaliero subsequently reminded me, Littleton's multiple sclerosis was the result of the motorcycle accident. The crash caused it.

In the years immediately before Margaret sold the house at Burpham she was in the habit of letting it to tenants and during those tenancy periods would move around with Littleton, making her home with him wherever he happened to be. Lily would look after the temporary residents, and during those periods lived out, that is, at home with her mother in Burpham. But she lived in when she attended the Powyses. After she left Margaret's employment she did not see John Cowper again.

Margaret Powys gave a brooch that had belonged to her sister Mrs Pearce to Lily. Mrs Pearce was the wife of Ted Pearce, Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and afterwards Bishop of Derby. The brooch was given as a keepsake after her death.

Lily kept in touch with Littleton after he had left Burpham. For example, in 1948 he sent her a photograph, which she showed us in the course of the afternoon, taken of him seated on his motorbike outside a church. Here was a recognizable Powys face, belonging to a man of quite large build and wearing a clerical collar.

Lily went to work for the Powys household through an introduction from her sister Fanny, and indeed took her place. Fanny, who died in the nineteen sixties, had been nanny to Littleton. She had worked for the Powyses when they lived at Court House at Offham near Lewes in East Sussex and then moved with them to Burpham in West Sussex (where Littleton was born in 1902). I was interested to notice that Lily, like John Cowper himself, was quite punctilious in specifying which part of Sussex, East or West, she was referring to. Lily said that Fanny had known the family much better than she did. Fanny for instance had travelled with the young Littleton to Montacute. The mother of the Stevenson sisters was a Sussex woman from the Lewes area. She had married a Scot and later she came back to her native county with her daughters, settling in the vicinity of Court House. Fanny was thus living in the locality when she was taken into service by the Powyses.

Although Fanny had known the family much better than Lily did, Lily could remember John Cowper speaking of his friends such as Bernie O'Neill (and always using their Christian names even when speaking to her, a familiarity Margaret would never have shown in her address to a servant). When John Cowper spoke of Dr O'Neill he'd say Bernie to everyone and never Dr O'Neill. Lily also remembered Arnold Bennett coming over to lunch one day from nearby Amberley. "Did he live there?", she asked. On one occasion Gertrude Powys did a sketch of Lily.

John Cowper was a very friendly outgoing man. With him there was no class distinction. He was, she said, very good with uneducated people but he could be impatient with educated people who failed, as she put it, "to talk up to his level". Margaret was conscious of her good family. After returning home from a visit to a family of newcomers to the neighbourhood she said: "Their family is almost as good as mine".

Lily was rather shocked by my question: "Did he have a dog?" I asked this because I seem to remember J.C.P. somewhere saying that he used to take this dog on journeys from Sussex to Montacute in the guard's van of the train. (If there was such a dog perhaps it belonged to his Southwick days in Sussex before his marriage.) Her reply was emphatic: "He was not that sort of man. But he was humane". "He had funny ways." But she couldn't be specific when I asked her to elaborate on this. She seemed to mean that he would come and go as he pleased and that he was very free and easy in his conversation. Littleton, she said, was more conventional. At the time I thought she meant J. C. P.'s brother, commonly described in the Powys literature as the conventional brother (whether fairly or unfairly does not matter here). But she must of course have meant J. C. P.'s son since she had already told us that unlike her sister she did not know the Powys family.

John Cowper was much liked in Burpham. On his walks he would empty his pockets for tramps. They would call too at

wide open. I found John Cowper sitting on the couch reading. He told me Phyllis had gone shopping. I stayed talking to him for about ten minutes, then, as Phyllis hadn't returned and some friends were waiting in the car, I left. The book he was reading was Littleton Powys's *The Joy Of It*. On my previous visit I had found John Cowper reading *The Girl of the Limberlost* by G. Stratton Porter.

John Cowper, in his old age, had taken to reading again the children's novels he had read when he was a child. Several times he had asked me why I did not try my hand at writing a story myself. Eventually, I said jokingly I would write a children's story for him to read. He did not let me forget. The following two visits he reminded me of what he had taken to be a promise and suggested I bring what I had written each week and read it to him the following Sunday. Thus motivated, I began writing a novel for children—the first attempt at original work I had ever made. Each Sunday I read to him what I had written during the week: sometimes only a couple of pages, sometimes several. I can still hear his strong, deep, warm voice interrupting me to exclaim: "O I like that, Frederick! I *do* like that!" or "*Imagine* that! O that was good! *Very* good!" I was still reading it to him in Blaenau Memorial Hospital when Phyllis had joined him there to recuperate after her operations at Llandudno Hospital. But I did not finish it in time. He never heard the ending. After he died, I made the effort and finished it. It was published in 1965 under the title *The Lucifer Stone*.

At the end of July 1963 I took a school party to Switzerland and Italy for three weeks. Phyllis was then still convalescing in Blaenau Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital but expected to be able to return to 1 Waterloo in about a week's time. On my return from abroad I wrote suggesting that—as I would be driving to Salisbury the following week—Phyllis, if she was well enough, might like to come with me and I would drive her on to stay with Mrs Penny at Mappowder and

Miss Gregory at Morebath in Devon. I had visited both of them the previous summer. Phyllis replied:

1 Waterloo
Blaenau Ffestiniog.
August 22nd 1963

My dear Frederick,

I was very glad to have your letter this morning, and the card you wrote from Venice came a day or so ago.

I have been home about two weeks and it is getting a little easier as time goes on. I really feel quite well—in health if not in spirits—and I am looking forward to going with you next week. I can be ready on Tuesday—but Wednesday or Thursday would be the same so you must decide as it suits you best. Could I make it any easier by meeting you somewhere else? Say the Junction—Llandudno Junction—or Rhyl or Colwyn Bay? There is a 9 o'clock train that leaves here for the Junction. I have no idea how you travel south—but if it is very much out of the way to come to Blaenau and you could suggest a better meeting place on the way, let me know.

I have written Lucy¹ and Miss Gregory² of the possibility of my coming next week—and they are very pleased and grateful to you for making it possible.

But *how far* is it to drive to Miss Gregory? It seems to me it would be an enormous distance though I know Lucy and Katie used to drive there and back on one day.

Really Frederick—you have been more kind and have done more than any one else in all these tragic months. It is always in my mind. You don't say anything about your own health—your eyes? *Are you all right?*

Let me know which day you will start.

Yours always,
Phyllis

Would you look up in the Liverpool Directory the address of a cargo ship line I once saw advertised. The Ben Line. They had a new ship called the Bengloe which carried ten passengers.

¹Mrs Lucy Amelia Penny, John Cowper's youngest sister.

²Phyllis always referred in conversation to Alys Gregory as Miss Gregory. She said it was one of her "peculiarities" to be so addressed.

Cowper Powys's philosophy. *Wood and Stone*, John Cowper's first novel, was published in New York in 1916, a few years after Lily had joined his household in Burpham. I was pleased to see that that book has a maid in it called Lily.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to Ray and Ann Brown, Glen Cavaliero and Mick Reed, and not least to Mrs Brooks herself, for all the help they gave me in producing this account. They are not of course responsible for any errors that may remain.

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Angela Blaen

The Wisht Hound Tradition and T. F. Powys's *Mark Only*

Found mainly in the West Country, the term "wisht" is of obscure origin and is defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as (a) dreary, dismal, melancholy, wretched, (b) uncanny, eerie, wierd, and (c) sickly, wan and by *The English Dialect Dictionary* as (a) unlucky, uncanny, eerie, awe-inspiring, horrible, (b) affrighted, wild, mad (c) physically weak, sickly, ill, haggard, white-faced, (d) dreary, dismal, lonely, melancholy, sad, wretched, (e) bad, sorry, poor, unsuitable, and (f) very, exceedingly (generally used with "poor").¹ It appears in the work of several authors from as early as 1829;² a few examples will demonstrate its usage:

' . . . the wisht winter evenings, when the dimpsy comes down grey an' the air be offering to snow, an' the mind be full of old sad tales of the dead an' gone.'³

For the house was haunted, and since Mrs. Benjamin Bamsey had seen a 'wishtness' peering through the parlour window on two successive evenings after the death of the last tenant, none could be found to occupy the house.⁴

'A storm be coming, and the church tower, hers a wisht old place when the lightning be bout.'⁵

References to the Dartmoor wisht hounds, often connecting them with winter and darkness, are common from the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; for example:

. . . the Yeth-hounds, the wild dogs of the heather, who are engaged in hunting the spirits of unbaptized infants, so that they can find no resting-place in their graves. Their howlings have been reported as frequently heard—naturally enough in stormy weather—and their presence witnessed always after the setting of the sun.⁶

From the bitter cold of the winter fog and snow, from the wild winds that sweep down the valley, and howling round Bel Tor and Hound Tor, echo the yell of the Wisht hounds.⁷

. . . packs of 'wisht hounds' used to sweep howling over the moor on stormy nights.⁸

Curlews have been linked to wisht hounds in folklore, especially in Devon,⁹ because of their plaintive cry. The supposed purpose of the hounds is various. Theo Brown states "wisht hounds existed only to chase the unprotected children to hell",¹⁰ whereas Eden Phillpotts relates that they hunted the devil over Dartmoor:

. . . the little heath hounds were well known to hunt the Evil One through the darkness of winter nights and along the pathway of the storm.¹¹

Often the wisht hounds are connected with a demoniac huntsman, such as in Phillpotts's reference to "heath-hounds and the awful Black Hunter"¹² and Sabine Baring-Gould's description of:

. . . a black Sportsman, with black fire-breathing hounds, called the 'Wish Hounds'. They could be heard in full cry, and occasionally the blast of the hunter's horn on stormy nights.¹³

The wisht hounds have strong local connexions but also form part of European traditions of ghostly packs of hunting dogs sometimes accompanied by a huntsman. R. N. Worth rightly connects them with:

. . . the 'Gabriel Hounds' of Durham and Yorkshire; the 'Wild Hunt' of Germany; the 'Yule Host' of Iceland; the 'Hunt Macabe' in parts of France.¹⁴

Various origins of the hunt have been given, perhaps the most interesting being that sug-

gested by the similarity between the wisht hounds and their wild huntsman and Arawn, Lord of Annwn or Hell, who in the Mabinogion rides a horse and hunts with a pack of dogs.¹⁵

T. F. Powys uses the hounds as the key theme of his novel *Mark Only*. Although not given any of the traditional names, the hounds which increasingly pursue Mark throughout the plot, firstly in his mind and perhaps eventually in the flesh, are supreme symbols of death. Powys does not give the dogs explicit supernatural qualities, which is in keeping with his ostensibly down to earth style. However, the hounds belong to evil, personified by their master, Sir Silas Badbury, significantly a huntsman, who:

... began to lead a sinner's life. He got to be so bad and wicked that he hunted on Sundays. And the hounds, it was said, owing to this un-Christian behaviour, became fierce and unruly.¹⁶

Not only are the hounds specifically set up in opposition to Christianity in the village of Dodderdown but they also fall into the traditional wisht hound pattern of being associated with storms and death:

It was said that these dogs could still be heard if one listened long enough on a windy or a gloomy day. Dying folk were always sure to hear the scamper of their feet in the lanes, even though the windows of the cottage were fast-closed; and the healthy even, and especially those who had more than an ordinary fear of death, were troubled at certain times by the sound of the dogs running. (64)

Mark Only and his sister hear the dogs just before the little girl dies. Like corpse candles, the dogs travel to the churchyard to symbolise the girl's imminent death:

'They be got to churchyard,' whispered Mark. 'They be on to I,' screamed May. She lay back and the thin hand that Mark held became clammy and cold. (65)

Later Mark hears the sound of the dogs at his father's death. (99) By now the dogs are symbolic, representing death to Mark, who describes their sound as being *like* that of

dogs, as if he realises no actual dogs are present:

'... 'tis a noise like dogs' feet a-pattering. Noise do come silent at first, it do come soft. When all be quiet I do listen and do hear. Soft they do come, as though they be treading on moss-ground. They dogs do come like thunder that do sound first far off . . . I be afeard of they dogs.' (105)

As the novel progresses, an explicit parallel between the dogs and death is drawn, Dodderdown becoming symbolic of the whole Earth:

Without death, how would Dodderdown prosper? But sadly, we fear. Only now and again some one would turn and see this named thing . . . walking under the dark trees. Mark . . . had seen it there, and its sound and smell followed him always. Those dogs' feet pattered behind, it was hard to forget them. (117)

During the ceremony of his ill-fated wedding, Mark hears their ominous sound:

'Twas they dogs' feet a-pattering . . . I did think—they dogs be shut up in church tower. Parson Hayball 'ave shut up tower door so that dogs shouldn't get out at I . . . Up and down tower steps they did scamper same as I heard they about in lane when father died.' (149)

As both his marriage and sanity gradually fail, the dogs' presence is more incessant. Mark's wife is recognised as a vehicle of his destruction, both symbolically, since she wants to draw him from the hills—the only place he experiences security—down to the village where he hears the dogs, and also factually, her infidelity causing his eventual death wish. By the time Mark's mother dies and he hears the hounds again, he can also describe them visually and gives them the appearance of traditional wisht hounds:

'I do know now what they do look like, they be long dogs wi' red tongues a-hanging.' (195)

Mark's increasing familiarity with the hounds and his desire for death—a reassuringly peaceful oblivion in T. F. Powys's works—lead to his going to seek them once

his wife has left him. As in traditional tales of wisht hounds, the event takes place in winter. However, it is stressed that the dogs no longer terrify Mark, who needs the peace they offer:

'Where be they death dogs now? . . . I would pat an' stroke they bad dogs if they was to come.' (236)

And nearer his death he changes his view of them from "bad" to "good"—an indication of his willingness to die and their usefulness to him:

'They be good dogs . . . they be gotten quiet, they do want to lick I now, they good quiet dogs.' (266)

T. F. Powys ends the novel with an epitaphic statement reiterating the ultimate benevolence and release of Mark's death, symbolised by the nature of the dogs:

The dogs had him, the good dogs. (267)

It is worth noting that the wisht hound motif is as central to the plot of Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* as it

is to *Mark Only*. Described as a "hell-hound", the hound of the Baskervilles has all the traditional attributes of the wisht hounds until it is revealed to be alive and Conan Doyle records that he bases his plot and location firmly on traditional tales of Dartmoor wisht hounds.¹⁷ T. F. Powys's use of the dogs is more general however and may be connected not only with Dartmoor wisht hounds but such related death dogs as those described in Somerset by the folklorist Ruth Tongue:

At Young Oaks, near Wellington, I was told that the nearby lanes were haunted by a pack of large white hounds which rushed along with mouths wide open, and flame issuing from between their jaws. If anyone was unlucky enough to meet them, he either died on the spot, or soon after . . . As it is considered dangerous in this area to name either the fairy-people or the Devil aloud, the term 'fairy-hunt' is not used; it is wiser to refer to the pack as the 'Hounds of Hell', or better still, to call them simply 'They Dogs';¹⁸

as Mark Only does in fact.

NOTES

¹ *The English Dialect Dictionary*, Joseph Wright, ed., Frowde, 1905, pp. 517-18.

² *The Oxford English Dictionary*, J. A. H. Murray, ed., 1933; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961, Vol. XI, p. 200. The first reference to Wisht Hounds is in *The Athenaeum*, 27 March 1847, p. 334, col. 2.

³ Eden Phillpotts, *The Farm of the Dagger*, George Newnes, 1904, pp. 39-40.

⁴ Eden Phillpotts, *Orphan Dinah*, 1920; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1921, p. 31.

⁵ Beatrice Chase, *The Heart of the Moor*, Herbert Jenkins, 1914, p. 263.

⁶ John Bowing, "Devonian Folk-Lore Illustrated", *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 2 (1867-68), p. 81.

⁷ B. F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor and its Surroundings*, 1899; rpt. Homeland Association, 1903, p. 26.

⁸ Chase, *The Heart of the Moor*, p. 86. See also O.E.D. Vol. XI, p. 200.

⁹ E. and M. A. Radford (ed., Christina Hole), *Superstitions of the Countryside*, Arrow, 1978, p. 39.

¹⁰ Theo Brown, "Post-Reformation Folklore in Devon", *Folklore*, 72 (1961), p. 397.

¹¹ Eden Phillpotts, *The Virgin in Judgment*, 1908; rpt. Cassell, 1927, p. 106.

¹² Phillpotts, *The Farm of the Dagger*, p. 9.

¹³ Sabine Baring-Gould, *A Book of the West*, 1899; rpt. Methuen, 1902, p. 183.

¹⁴ R. N. Worth, *A History of Devonshire*, Elliott Stock, 1895, p. 339.

¹⁵ E.g. W. P. Witcutt, "The Black Dog", *Folklore*, 53 (1942), p. 167.

¹⁶ T. F. Powys, *Mark Only*, Chatto and Windus, 1924, p. 64. Subsequent page references in my text are to this edition.

¹⁷ Arthur Conan Doyle, Dedication to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Newnes, 1902.

¹⁸ Ruth L. Tongue, "Traces of Fairy Hounds in Somerset", *Folklore*, 67 (1956), pp. 223-24.

EDITOR'S OBITUARY NOTE

Among the too many deaths of outstanding literary men in 1985-1986, readers of *The Powys Review* will have observed with deep regret, in addition to G. Wilson Knight's (recorded in *P.R.* 17), those of the major poet, Philip Larkin and the critic, H. P. Collins. Both writers contributed to *The Powys Review*. Whereas Philip Larkin's reviewing in national papers showed his reading of three Powyses, he was an admirer of Llewelyn Powys's works especially, as shown, among other writings, in his recent introduction to the Redcliffe Press edition of *Earth Memories* (1983).

H. P. Collins (b. 1899) affected the course of studies and appreciation of the works of J. C. Powys with his *John Cowper Powys, Old Earth Man* (1966) which with *The Saturnian Quest* (1964) by his friend and contemporary, G. Wilson Knight, initiated the publication of critical books on Powys, a second wave of books beginning in the 70s with *Essays on John Cowper Powys* (1972) to which they both contributed amongst younger generations of critics. H. P. Collins, a literary journalist from the early 1920s, the literary editor of the *Adelphi*, 1925-1927, was involved with many important literary figures from Middleton Murray to Henry Williamson. He talked fascinatingly about them and their writings, in a consist-

ently controlled, humane and sophisticated style until the time of his death in his mid-eighties. (From at least 1972 much of this talk was provided in long telephone conversations (many fondly remembered by the Editor) because in latter years Harold Collins was largely confined to his London flat(s) by illness.)

Although he did not publish his book on J. C. Powys until 1966, H. P. Collins began to appreciate the writings of the Powyses in the mid 1920s and met Llewelyn Powys in 1926/7 at the house of their friend, Louis Wilkinson (as is recalled in *Recollections of the Powys Brothers*, 1980). He was also somewhat involved with the Imagist/Ezra Pound group (which touched J. C. Powys's life in this period), especially with H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), the American poet—and thereby with her friend, Frances Gregg. It is to be hoped that H.P. Collins's long memoir of H.D. will soon be published.

Sheila Whitehead, who informed the Editor of the death of H. P. Collins (11 November 1985) said that although in his last months he had seemed to be in increasing pain, "he was as courageous and alert and thoughtful as ever". Her description is obviously as appropriate to H. P. Collins as a literary critic as it was to the man.

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In his friendly notice of Gamel Woolsey's poems (*The Powys Review*, 17) John Harris expresses the hope that her poems might eventually be presented in chronological order, and with details of periodical publication where this occurred. Alas! Gamel's habit of not dating letters extended also to her other compositions, and dating is made even more difficult because almost all of the poems that I received when Mr Gerald Brenan was good enough to pass her copyrights into my care were typed fair copies; I have a few holograph manuscripts, but none with a date; and there are few corrections which suggests that these, too, were fair copies. All this makes an editor's task very easy, for no task is presented, much. But it does not make for scholarly editing. In the matter of

periodical appearances, this also is complicated because many of Gamel's early poems were published in the United States in the early 1920s, and not in New York only; and a search for these requires time, a large library of files, and one's physical presence in America, none of which I am blessed with. I have notes of a fair number of these periodical appearances, but there must still be a lot to find. In later years Gamel only occasionally sent poems to magazines, and of these I have notes on quite a few, but again, probably not all.

Kenneth Hopkins,
Warren House Press,
12 New Road, North Walsham, Norfolk

Reviews

Ingrowing Thoughts,
R. S. THOMAS.

Poetry Wales Press, 1985, £3.95 (paperbound).

The works of visual art which form a counterpoint to the poems in R. S. Thomas's new collection have all been selected, as the acknowledgments relate, from two classic books by Herbert Read, *Surrealism* and *Art Now*. This gives his selection a certain unity of tone, even a period flavour. Under what other rubric than the benevolent commentary of the English midwife of modernity could we have expected to find a series that begins with "Guernica" and ends with a sophisticated "Drawing by a Child", making room for Ernst, Dali, Magritte, Di Chirico and many others in between? Perhaps appropriately, these images are reduced to a uniform register of blacks and whites and greys. The poem's the thing, and it would not do for a blatantly beautiful Matisse to upstage the meticulously clipped lines of the printed text.

So R. S. Thomas has positioned his points of reference very carefully beside his poetic commentary. But is it a commentary? The recent vogue for "poems on pictures" (neatly epitomised in the recent special issue of the magazine *Word & Image*) has brought clearly into view the different kinds of infidelity which poets manifest before the image. One of the clearest of these is the kind of complicity with real life which the poet asserts, short-circuiting the painter's level of representation. On Derain's "Portrait of Madame Renou", Thomas declares:

It is not the observer
she pouts at, but life itself.

. . . Art like
this could have left her tagged surname out.

Substitute for Madame Renou the Mona Lisa (certainly one of the visual prototypes for Derain's haunting portrait) and you will see the effect of Thomas's anti-conventional trope. "Art like this" can do without the tags, not because it is ideal or generalised, but because there is a real woman striving to get out. In the case of the sadly washed out Matisse—"Portrait of a Girl in a Yellow Dress", indeed!—the

painter is also invoked into this complicity with the real:

. . . hands
that, after the busyness
of their migrations between cheek
and dressing-table, lipstick
and lip, have found in the lap's
taffeta a repose
whose self-consciousness the painter
was at pains not to conceal.

But Matisse, in particular, would have resisted this insinuation. When someone once told him that he didn't see women in the way that he represented them, he replied forcefully: "If I were ever to meet such women in the street, I would run away terrified." First of all, I do not create a woman, I make a painting." For Matisse, whose objective was precisely not to fetishise a part of the body but to invest with sensuality "the lines or special values that are spread over the entire canvas", the poet's proffered complicity is inappropriate. Arguably it is much more suitable for an expressionist painter like Soutine, whose "Maid of Honour" is more plausibly represented by the poet as "sitting life's dance out". The expressionist painter leaves a certain space which the interpreter can legitimately fill, as does Charles Tomlinson in his particular version of a Soutine landscape:

The painter chose his landscape all too well
To fix the flux and turmoil of his hell,
Deaf to the steady counsel of the rocks
And their refusal, anchorages firm,
To liquefy to the impasto of his brush-
strokes.¹

Perhaps the distinctions that I am making here may appear over-ingenious. The poet too has the right to say: "I do not create a woman (or a painting), I make a poem." But my purpose is really to distinguish different strategies of correlating a picture and a poem, and it does seem relevant to suggest that certain forms of painting resist certain strategies, to the point of making them seem bizarre and ill-judged. In a more general way, I would suggest that the approach of complicity with the real is less suitable for the painted image than for the



“Composition” by John Selby Bigge, from R. S. Thomas’s *Ingrowing Thoughts*.

photograph. The later work of Roland Barthes, and more recent studies like Jean-Louis Schefer’s wonderful commentaries on the photographs of Jean-Philippe Charbonnier,² have demonstrated the forceful effect of what Barthes calls “punctum”—the urgent solicitation of the interpreter by a particular detail which rivets his attention, and does so without any claim to central significance. Yet this effect is inseparably bound up with the special status of the photograph as a “trace” of the real. In Thomas’s series, only one image qualifies, since it is (so far as I can make out) a photomontage. Paul Eluard’s “La Nuit Vénitienne” certainly owes far more to art than to photography, but for the poet the advantage lies in the gift of one or two fragmentary details—photographic excerpts in abrupt conjunction:

. . . Behind their backs
the excavations must go on,
the past filling the prams
full with the consequences
of its indiscretions.

Those “prams” are all-important. They are there, and the rather ponderous figure depends on the fact that they are there. Otherwise, Thomas often has to make do with the painter’s mediated language of forms, saturated already with secondary significance. He rises to the occasion most successfully when he is able to tease out a new narrative, while remaining aware that there is something in the image resisting such recuperation. A fine example is the poem on Gustav de Smet’s “The Meeting”, which turns the innocent encounter into a dubious confrontation of man and woman, but then admits as much:

I translate the encounter.
But the flag at attention
at the house corner prefers
the original: Vive la France.

Another success is the change wrought upon a similar scene in the naively evocative "L'Abbaye de Chartre", by André Bauchant. Here not only the wooden figures in the foreground, but also the snake-like path are transformed: "Adam / and Eve in sham tunics / waiting for the serpent / to turn into a road . . ."

This capacity to extract and reinvent a narrative content reaches its high point in the series of poems which relate to Di Chirico and Magritte. It is as if the deliberate creation of "enigma" in the presentation of appearances had liberated the poet from all literal commentary, and allowed him to delight in permutations that are essentially semantic in character. So, with Magritte's "On the Threshold of Liberty", the cannon aimed at a patch of delicately textured sky breaks through the barrier of representation:

What it means is
you must accede
to the invention. Flesh,
trees, dwellings, the grain
in the wood
are vulnerable and not
to be shot at;
only the sky is
target.

STEPHEN BANN

NOTES

¹ Charles Tomlinson, "Soutine at Céret", *Word & Image*, 2, i (1986), 94-5.

² Cf. Jean-Philippe Charbonnier, catalogue of exhibition at the Maison de la Culture et de la Communication de Saint-Etienne, October-November 1985 (commentary by Jean-Louis Schefer).

George Orwell and the Problem of Authentic Existence,

MICHAEL CARTER.

Croom Helm, 1985, £17.95.

Michael Carter is of the opinion that it is superficial simply to see George Orwell as a "socio-

political writer". What he is really concerned with in all of his novels and what accounts for their popularity is that he is overwhelmingly concerned with "the problem of authentic existence". Orwell developed from school and from his experience in the Burmah police a terrible case of "inauthentic self-for-other", so he consequently pursued like a guilty adulterer (the helpful simile is mine, not Mr Carter's nor yet the late Professor Heidegger's) "a double-life", hence he could invent so effectively—or therapeutically externalise—"double-think": but in the Spanish War he finally resolved his doubleness and became authentic and free. (I've followed the blurb very closely so far, which is very helpful and obviously an authentic creation by the author; no one in Croom Helm could have done it).

So empirical, commonsense old George is turned into a modern version of Jean-Jacques Rousseau interested in nothing (I am moved to conscious polemical exaggeration) but his own rotten self. But Rousseau, who has a lot to answer for, as I hint, at least wrote well and, even when he would contradict himself, clearly. But the modern solipsistic, narcissistic mania for *authentic self* demands that Orwell's five novels should be analysed in terms of Jean-Paul Sartre's "bad faith", Martin Heidegger's "mine" and "they" and Martin Buber's celebrated "I", "thou" and "it". "In every case" these are seen "to be crucial explanatory notions within the Orwell novel". "Crucial" must mean, I think—and Mr Carter is rarely so clear—that without these notions one cannot really understand the novels. Alas, so many of us have been in the dark for so long. It is hard, indeed, to account for their popularity, although "I" think, which is to say that through my conscious selfhood I now must necessarily form the conception that the reality is, that he means that all of us modern readers are totally obsessed with this somewhat adolescent problem (it has always seemed to me) of "who am I really?", even though we are not conscious of it, which makes it far worse, and so are drawn to the apparent but wholly deceptive simplicity of Orwell's writing, like moth to the smell of old trousers.

Now as a Hannah Arendt fan, in my political philosophy at least, I'm not so philistine about existentialism as I'm trying to sound; and her relationship with the master was closer in all ways, according to Elizabeth Young-Bruel's fine biography, than anyone had hitherto supposed. But I do think Mr Carter fails to make his point

that such an approach to Orwell is “crucial”; and existentialist presuppositions need to be shown to be more obviously present before his particular methodology is helpful even, let alone *crucial*. Some kind of situations it can illuminate greatly, some somewhat, others not at all. Why pick on Orwell? I fear that Mr Carter would apply this same mechanistic-metaphysical analysis to any writer, so the answer is why not pick on Orwell?

Does this reading throw new light on anything? I’ve honestly hoped and tried, as a resolute eclectic, but I cannot find it. It seems to me a perverse reading of Orwell’s psychology, both the person and the character of the author. Now George Orwell was a creation of Eric Blair. And “George Orwell” is by no means as simple a man as he seems, just as the famous “plain” style is, like any conscious style, a highly contrived piece of rhetoric, contrived, as Professor Hugh Kenner has recently suggested, in the manner of Defoe’s use of a fictional or sometimes semi-fictional first person (an “inauthentic ‘I’” presumably), and for much the same reason as Defoe: deliberately to blur any clear distinction between fact and fiction, journalism and romance (“The Politics of the Plain Style”, *New York Times Book Review*, 15 September 1985). No, George Orwell is not a simple man telling the plain truth, he is a highly self-conscious writer reshaping experiences imaginatively whose major writings became more and more (to use a phrase of Jennie Calder’s) “highly crafted”. But Mr Carter instead of examining *how* Orwell used for the purposes of writing the ambiguity between fact and fiction, seizes on this disjunction as if it is pathological to claim that he must have been, self-evidently must have been, like his self-deceiving and deceived readers, *really* concerned with the problem of the authenticity of self that tortured so creatively his existentialist three.

So sure is he of what was Orwell’s problem that he naively accepts, completely ignoring the doubts that David Lodge has sown by a close reading of the texts and I by boring biographical labour, that the stories “Shooting An Elephant” and “A Hanging” tell us about Orwell’s own direct experiences. The poor fellow, it is assumed, was incapable of making up a brilliant fiction to embody a moral truth and a polemical argument. He actually has “Orwell” attending the hanging, which is not even in the text. The name “Orwell” only occurs as author under the title of the story or reminiscence (or perhaps

account of somebody else’s reminiscence, just as some of the old boys from St Cyprian’s told me that somebody else was flogged in front of the school for bed-wetting, not little Eric). When it was published in John Lehmann’s first wartime edition of *Penguin New Writing*, all the other stories but one were written in the first person and raise similar problems of how much fact, how much fiction! This was a fashionable genre and device of the time. Of course, as David Lodge argues—and I agree—their truth is irrelevant to their virtues as writing. It just makes some books hard to classify on the library shelves. The first wartime Penguin edition of *Down and Out in Paris and London* appeared in its first printing in the old orange fiction wrappers, a “mistake” hastily remedied; but I have some sympathy for whoever made the mistake. You cannot tell truth from fiction from the syntax—nor simply by reading the book. Partly from reading the book and partly from biographical evidence, I would have put it in the non-fiction blue covers but with some large orange stripes.

Not for Mr Carter any doubts that these two essays and “Such, Such Were the Joys” cannot be read directly as true autobiography. And not having such doubts, he can then examine them “principally from the point of view of existentialist psychoanalysis as developed by the Sartrean analyst R. D. Laing”. And he adds that “I hope to make clear a connection between the experiences recorded [sic] by Orwell and the crisis of inauthentic existence which characterises the schizophrenic”. And he does, if you grant all his card-castle of assumptions, the least of which is (leaving aside all doubts about psychoanalysis of the dead, and all the scepticism that Richard Ellmann has so well aired about psychoanalytical interpretations of literature in general) that to both a literary critic and a biographer these essays cannot simply be assumed to be autobiography. Mr Carter does use some biographical evidence, but only when it suits his own argument. My own tortured doubts about the status of “Such, Such Were the Joys” he simply ignores utterly. That at least is simple. He prefers reminiscences by a friend of Orwell, the late Tosco Fyvel, who was very prone to bits of amateur psychologising. He repeats Anthony West’s wild surmise that Oceania is a regression to St Cyprian’s, that prep school was the model, not Hitler’s or Stalin’s dark lands.

Obviously this isn’t my kind of a book. But it is a printed book in the public domain, so fair

game. I cannot even say, "it is a good kind of a dog if you like that kind of a dog". I find it wholly arbitrary: a preconceived woolly straightjacket, not the kind of free and authentic reading of a text that the author should by his principles admire. I leave us with one enigma: "The predominant ontological characteristic of man under Ingsoc is thrown being-for-others", and one marvellous piece of decoding. Never before had I understood the real meaning of George Bowling's disgust at eating the ersatz sausage:

In such a world of belonging, it is not surprising that Bowling can recall a mode of eating in which falseness and alienation are absent, a type of eating which is natural and authentic because food is not severed from its origins and anonymized by the transformation necessary for social consumption.

Well, it makes a change from Marxism, I say, but it puzzles me deeply to think of this as literary criticism.

BERNARD CRICK

Black Laughter,
LLEWELYN POWYS.

Redcliffe Press, 1983, £5.95.

Llewelyn Powys had one inestimable advantage when, in response to a commission from the *New York Evening Post*, he began in 1921 to write about Kenya: he had lived in the country for nearly five years, working undistractedly as a sheep farmer. The length of stay, and his natural day-to-day absorption in the landscape, set him apart from deskbound expatriates, to say nothing of professional tourists busily forcing their literary impressions. He belonged more to the settler class, as did Karen Blixen whose classic *Out of Africa* (1937) also owes much to a Rift Valley settlement, hers outside Nairobi. Powys worked further north, first helping his brother Will manage a farm in remote Gilgil, then himself taking over 30,000 acres further north, on the shores of Elmenteita, a Rift Valley lake set between the more accessible Naivasha and Nakuru.

Powys had gone to Africa in October 1914, hoping that a change of climate might cure his tuberculosis. An outcome was to have been marriage to Mary Lintot but within a year of his

arrival she wrote of her intention to enter a nunnery. Llewelyn makes no mention of Mary, nor of his employer, the Hon. Galbraith Cole, who overawed him at work but proved something of an intellectual equal in their hours of relaxation. No mention either of the contact with John Cowper Powys, though the brothers' literary endeavours and regular correspondence helped sustain Llewelyn through his years of exile. *Black Laughter* is teasingly selective in what it chooses to communicate, even if the anecdotal approach, the matter-of-fact narrative of events on an up-country farm, suggests straight autobiography. In the introduction to the book Powys alludes to this shaping of content: the earlier *Ebony and Ivory* had been more literary and aesthetic than personal, while the present book offers its raw material "unmitigated by any but the faintest literary effects". Too much should not be made of this; *Ebony and Ivory* may have greater artistic burnish but the skills of *Black Laughter* are those of the short-story writer as well as the diarist's.

Landscape dominates the book, and never has the potency of the East African plains been better conveyed. "The vastness of Africa" is a writer's cliché that Powys avoids by that rare combination of tellingly precise physical detail and a poetic apprehension of the forces that lie behind landscape. It needs high imagination to project the awesomeness of the Rift Valley at Elmenteita and Naivasha.

And between each gleaming inland sea, lying like the forgotten shields of heroes on the emerald veldt, sprang sharp, jagged volcanoes, volcanoes whose outlines resembled, as they rose out of those wide expanses of pastureland, the pointed broken fangs of gigantic buried wolves.

The menace of landscape is all-pervasive: cactus trees have python-like trunks, mimosas the scaly bodies of serpents, and the cold leaves of laurel bushes are as "the limp hands of dead men".

In its ceaseless routines of killing, the animal world unlocks the hostility. It is the motivating force, this eternal quest for blood. Powys is arresting in his descriptions of the elemental blood lust.

Kill! Kill! Kill! that was what one had to do to keep in tune with the African rhythm, with that inexorable rhythm, the sublimest cadence of which is only to be heard when backbones are being snapped and throats cut.

Arresting, and disturbing also; exultancy in brute strength suggests a quasi-fascist impulse often associated with literary intellectuals whose own physical frailty is a recurring worry. Llewelyn first began to cough blood in 1909. His sadistic tendency he did not hide: the agony of a white-breasted hawk, skinned alive by laughing farmhands, excites him mysteriously. Like all great travel literature, *Black Laughter* explores an interior landscape as well.

Powys struggles to penetrate the palpable external sequences. At base the terrestrial world is cruelly indifferent; the sun which drives the system a malign force, its terrible rays drawing out everything of the sensitive, the religious, from "all these greedy, vulgar, white settlers, all these hapless, casual negroes, all these savage and sly animals, these hungry birds, and vain flowers of the mid-African plateau". Human beings, black and white, are brutalized by this environment. African farmhands satisfy their craving for meat by pouring boiling water down the throat of a cow, or by rupturing its intestines with a sharp stick thrust into the anus; Llewelyn thwarts them by poisoning the carcass with prussic acid. His are the settler's intense reactions to Africans, overtly racist, mostly unflattering but ready to acknowledge qualities deemed remarkable by any standards. Himself described by Leonard Woolf as the most aristocratic of men, Llewelyn responds freely to Masai aristocracy. "Deep in his heart every Masai feels nothing but contempt for Europeans." The feeling is understandable, to go by the appalling gallery of white men here presented: a dairy farmer, sentimentally transposing a bit of old England to his White Highlands cottage, deliberately starves his calves so that the milk might go for cheese; a Conrad adventurer baits animal traps with dead natives and lines with skulls the path to a frightening three-storey house on the edge of a ravine; and a crass American slaughters game by the thousand ("I sees you, I sees you, you son of a bitch." Thus and not otherwise did the coke millionaire address the King of the Forest.") On the battlefields of Europe is carnage of a different kind. The War took Will Powys to fight at the German East African border; here the toll on Africans was appalling, with bearers dying in multitudes through the ineptitude of their masters (officers "with the confined brain-pans of a set of strutting poultry"). The cold-hearted butchery of Europe gives a perspective to endemic African

violence, which seems by comparison purer, more elemental.

Black Laughter has its tender moments and informs on a variety of matters. No more literate stockman has written on farm routines (two thousand cattle and fourteen thousand sheep) and on animal behaviour—Llewelyn's attempts to domesticate an orphan baboon would interest a Jane Goodall. But the tendency is to transfigure the natural world, to desecrate its central message. Thus for Powys the quintessential African creature is the hyaena, an erratic choice at first glance, though in fact an animal well fitted to symbolic function on account of its unsettling characteristics. Supposedly hermaphrodite, at once fearsome hunter and insatiable scavenger (East African tribes put out their dead for *fisi*), possessed of a chilling nocturnal laugh, the hyaena is feared for its supernatural powers and takes a central place in African witchcraft. *Black Laughter* plays on these resonances, particularly in the interrelated episodes culminating in the title story. Here Powys is at his best, the prose formal and sonorous, yet atmospheric and sharply exciting. "Drought" begins the sequence, describing an interminable poisonous aridity that blights vegetation and decimates man and beast. Powys learns of water at the end of a fabled cave in a distant valley. With mounting fear he penetrates the cave and at its furthest point discovers the skeleton of a large buck.

The horns, though discoloured, were in good condition and the bones were still encased in a hide which was stretched over them like tight parchment. Behind the buck lay the dust-covered form of another animal . . . What terror had driven that sun-loving animal to take refuge in so strange a place, and when the hyaena followed, what dread subterranean miasma had stricken them both dead? Had they been there for a hundred, for a thousand years?

At the heart of the legend, flight and pursuit, predator and prey, "the boarhound and the boar".

"Black Laughter", the riveting title episode, takes the crazed transmogrified whooping of the hyaena as all Africa's sufferings monstrously sounding. Powys pits his will against a middle-aged Kikuyu with the face of a Benjamin Disraeli and the powers of a witch-doctor. Horse-whipped to a high rock this African priest gazes down on the white exile. Llewelyn escapes to bed early.

It must have been in the small hours of the morning, for the waning moon had risen, that I found myself wide awake, listening. It had not been a laugh that I had heard and it had not been a shriek, but it had seemed in its wavering undulations to have combined something of both. There it was again, long and loud, whining and wailing from the forest, up the gully, so I judged. I tried to reassure myself. Surely it was the howl of a hyaena feasting on the remains of the dead buck. But even as my mind was suggesting this, my subconscious self knew well that it lied. That criminal human outcry could issue from no animal's throat! It had in it, so it seemed to my distraught fancy, all the tortured anguish, all the lunatic misery of the debased, outraged soul of the African negro. It was as if some insane inhabitant of the frightful continent had suddenly become articulate under the swinging frantic moon and had found himself impelled to give appalling utterance to all that his doomed race had suffered. Somewhere out there where the hispid branches swayed I knew there was a man with white canine teeth bared giving vent to BLACK LAUGHTER.

My nerves gave way. I could stand it no longer. I pressed my fingers to my ears. Unless my hands should be actually dragged from my head I should never listen to that sound again. A long time passed and I still lay on my back with my eyes closed. Then gradually I began to realize that the room had become filled with an extraordinary odour, an odour of putrified blood and rotting flesh, the odour of the breath of a hyaena!

By summer 1919 a far tougher Llewelyn was back in England, "destined to carry upon his back to the day of his death the shocking striped brand of Africa". (Hyaenas too are striped as well as spotted.) Experience of its landscape, one that admits no physical ease, intellectual succour, nor love of close companions, had reinforced the pagan in Powys that Mary Lintot earlier found so shocking. Maybe it was a coarser paganism, but then Llewelyn Powys had come to see that comfortable feelings about our natures and the universe we inhabit rest ultimately upon our civilized social conditions; that societies create men as much as men create societies.

Black Laughter has proved the most popular of its author's books, warranting four editions

since 1924. This latest is an attractive photo-reprint from a publisher to whom we should be additionally grateful for the companion reissue of *Ebony and Ivory*, with its seven equally compelling African pieces.

JOHN HARRIS

Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race,
T. W. ROLLESTON.

Constable, 1985, £9.95.

The first part of Rolleston's book outlines the history and religious beliefs of the Celts. He begins by stating that many English counties are ethnically just as "Celtic" as many parts of Wales, Scotland and Ireland, for the Saxons did not by any means exterminate the Celtic or Celticized populations where they settled. He quite rightly makes a strong case for designating the population of Britain by the term Anglo-Celtic in preference to Anglo-Saxon.

Following the conclusions of Rice Holmes, Rolleston takes the view that the true Celts were a tall, fair race, warlike and masterful, originating from the region of the source of the Danube, who spread their dominion by conquest and infiltration through Mid-Europe, Gaul, Spain and the British Isles. They did not exterminate the native races of dolmen builders and workers in bronze, but formed an aristocratic caste ruling over them, imposing on them their language and arts, but probably taking other things from them in return, especially in the matter of religion. Rolleston supports this argument from descriptions in the old Celtic legends, which include references to yellow, red, and black hair. The true Celts were fair-red rather than yellow; black hair belongs to the more ancient races of Mediterranean origin. Thus the term Celtic as it is generally used, does not designate a single ethnic group; it denotes a mixture of races brought together, originally under a pure ethnic leadership and aristocracy, with one language, and a common culture of heterogeneous origin.

In the matter of religion, Rolleston sees Druidism as deriving from the Megalithic dolmen builders, that is to say, as something adopted by the true Celts. He suggests a possible link between the religion of the Megalithic peoples and that of ancient Egypt, regarding some of the former as having migrated into Europe from

North Africa. In support of this view, he compares illustrations of solar ship carvings from Megalithic sites with ones from ancient Egypt. Rolleston thus sees an Egyptian-Megalithic link via North Africa as a possible origin for the Druidic Tradition. He sees pre-Christian Celtic religion as being made up largely from the latter, with the addition of personalised deities brought by the true Celts themselves. Although, in the matter of religion, Rolleston is enthusiastic about an ancient Egyptian link, albeit pre-dynastic, he passes over a jade axe-head from a Megalithic site in Brittany with the single comment that jade is not found in its natural state nearer than China. Perhaps this should have warranted at least a mention of the ancient Daoist legends of China, which include a few references to voyages across the "Western Ocean to far-distant islands". Although there is no definite historical evidence to support the Chinese legends, Rolleston does mention later in his book the importance to the Celts of triads, something which is also characteristically Chinese.

Rolleston is a secularist. He clearly dislikes the idea of a society in which a priesthood has jurisdiction over secular affairs. He regards this as the weakness of the Celtic polity, and as the cause of the eventual downfall of the old Celtic civilizations.

In the second, and major part of his book, Rolleston concentrates on the great cycles of Celtic legend; the oldest non-classical literature of Europe. He adds useful footnotes to help with the pronunciation of names. He begins with the Irish invasion myths; the tales of the people of the God Dana, and the invasion of the Milesians. These parts of Irish legend, being the most ancient, are the most difficult for modern readers; it is a help if one has read legends of comparable antiquity from elsewhere, such as the Ramayana. If Rolleston's accounts of the people of Dana and the Milesians are somewhat heavy going, he becomes highly readable when he moves on to the two other great cycles of Irish legend; the Ultonian and Ossianic cycles.

The Ultonian cycle centres around Cuchlain—the Hound of Cullan—so named because, as a boy, he slew the famous hound. The legends of this cycle are re-told in a way which holds the reader's interest. In one of the legends, Cuchlain accepts a challenge from a "demon" to a contest of reciprocal head chopping. Cuchlain accepts the challenge and chops the demon's head off. Next day, the latter reappears and takes three swipes at Cuchlain's head, missing and striking

the block, so that the latter rises unhurt, champion of Ireland. This tale is so close to the beginning and ending of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" as to have warranted some comment. The legends of the Ossianic cycle, centring around Finn Mac Cumhal, are likewise retold in an exciting and readable sequence. Rolleston's choice is necessarily selective, for he points out that a complete collection of all the tales belonging to this cycle would fill about twenty-five volumes. This cycle brings us into the historical period, to times when life was gentler and softer; times when men lived in settlements and towns. In these tales, the Christian influence has resulted in the Gods of the people of Dana being relegated to the status of fairies. Towards the end of this great cycle of adventure stories we see references to the "small stature" of the people of Ireland. Rolleston makes no comment on the latter; it should not so much be taken literally as metaphorically, comparable with the statement "we are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of the ancients" variously attributed to St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas. Rolleston ends the Ossianic cycle with the legend that Finn and many of his companions did not die, but lie in an enchanted cave where they await the appointed time to reappear and clear the land from tyranny and wrong. In this there is clearly a link with the legends of Arthur and his knights, and also with that of Owain Glyndŵr.

Rolleston concludes his account of the Irish legends with an example of one of the many stories which do not fit in with the three great cycles. This is the "Voyage of Maeldún", which can be compared with the voyages of St Brendon, and of Sinbad the Sailor. In this early Christian story, which has a mythological character, considerable respect is shown for the Druids.

The last part of the book deals with the "Myths and Tales of the Cymry". Rolleston begins by pointing out that there is no creation or world-myth in early Celtic literature, the Druids having kept their oral tradition secret and never committed it to writing. Rolleston considers the sixteenth century "bardic philosophy" to be of interest, even though anything from such a late date cannot be authenticated as coming from ancient Druidic times. The latter "philosophy" is clearly oriental in character; whether it is "authentic" or not, it is likely that the Druidic philosophy had a similar oriental flavour.

Rolleston gives a very readable account of the Mabinogion, regarding the "Four Branches of

the Mabinogi" as the most ancient and authentic. He sees the legends of the Arthurian Cycle as derived in part from the Celtic deity Artaius, and in part from the historical Arthur, the whole having been elaborated in France with strong influences from the legends of Charlemagne.

Like most modern scholars, he dismisses Geoffrey of Monmouth as having fabricated history to please the English monarchy. Since the time of Rolleston's book, one serious critic, Markale, has suggested that Geoffrey of Monmouth should not be dismissed so lightly, for he claimed access to a book or books which may since have been lost. In discussing the origin of the grail legend, Rolleston looks to pre-Christian stories of the grail as a "stone of abundance" as well as a vessel. He sees the tale of Peredur, from the Mabinogion, as the earliest version of the grail legend. Rolleston comments on the lance and the chalice in the grail legend, but he does not mention the possible symbolism of the former as the "axis mundi", and the latter as representing the "heart of man" in the spiritual sense.

Rolleston aptly concludes his survey of Celtic literature with a quote from the Voyage of Maeldún: "What we see here was a work of mighty men".

This is a scholarly work. It could be heavy going in parts for those with only a mild interest and who simply wish to be entertained. It is, however, a "must" for those seriously interested in the subject, including the serious beginner for whom it will provide a useful survey of myths and legends. Although first published in 1911, any disadvantage from its age is in part compensated by the fact that the writer had personal contact with some of the last representatives of the living oral Celtic tradition. Being an Irishman, it is natural that Rolleston devotes a major part of his book to Irish legends; this should be of no detriment to those readers in Wales who already have a greater familiarity with the Welsh legends.

DEREK BRYCE

Insurrection in Wales,
D. HELEN ALLDAY.

Terence Dalton, 1981, £6.95.

John Cowper Powys's interest in Owain Glyndŵr (c.1354-c.1415), the subject of his ninth novel in 1940, was doubtless aroused by Shakes-

peare's depiction of the Welsh warlord in *Henry IV (Part I)*—a necromancer ("not in the roll of common men"), who could "call spirits from the vasty deep". The source of much of his material was Sir John Lloyd's biography *Owen Glendower* which appeared in 1931; he alludes to the scholar thus in "Argument", a short essay appended to the novel: "The safest authority on the 'documented' events of Owen Glyn Dŵr's life is Sir John E. Lloyd, the historian of Wales". This biography, based upon a series of lectures delivered at All Souls College, Oxford during 1920, remains the standard work on Glyndŵr the man, but a number of scholars have analysed more fully the background to the rebellion—most notably Rees Davies in his article "Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Welsh Squirearchy" (*THSC* 1969, 150-69). The charismatic figure of Glyndŵr has, naturally enough, attracted the attention of the popular historian: one thinks in particular of Ian Skidmore's account of the revolt in *Owain Glyndŵr Prince of Wales* (1978); Helen Allday's *Insurrection in Wales* (1981) is another such work—aimed at the general reader rather than the professional historian.

Much of Glyndŵr's career is shrouded in mystery: his dates of birth and death remain a matter for speculation, whilst the motives behind his rebellion in 1400 have yet to be satisfactorily explained. He was born c.1354, connected with the royal house of Powys on the paternal side, and with that of Deheubarth through his mother. He may have studied law at the Inns of Court in London; he was certainly involved in the Scottish campaign of 1384/5 at Berwick, and in the naval battle of Cadzand in 1387, serving in the Earl of Arundel's retinue (a Bolingbroke supporter). His marriage with Margaret, daughter of Sir David Hanmer, seems to have taken place c.1383, and the serene nature of his domestic life at his court in Sycharth (near Oswestry) is recorded by the poet Iolo Goch towards the close of the fourteenth century. The immediate cause of the revolt in 1400, declared on 16 September at Glyndyfrdwy, was a quarrel between Owain and his neighbour Lord Grey of Rhuthun over common land, but its continuance over a period of 10/15 years testifies to the depth of anger in Wales among the "unfree" at the social upheavals of the fourteenth century. The revolt was initially confined to north-east Wales but quickly spread throughout the country; the rebels used guerrilla tactics in the main, and avoided the king (Henry IV) and his armies on

their campaigns of retribution in both north and south. The most notable victories achieved by Glyndŵr and his captains were at Mynydd Hyddgen (in Pumlumon) in 1401, at Bryn Glas (near Knighton) in 1402, and at Craig y Dorth (near Monmouth) in 1404; the defeat at Pwll Melyn (near Usk) in 1405, however, was a severe setback—with the death of Owain's brother Tudur, and the capture of his son Gruffudd. During the early years of the rebellion and its later stages Glyndŵr's life resembled that of an outlaw—his homes at Sycharth and Carrog were burnt by Prince Henry in 1403; however, during the period 1404-7 his behaviour was that of an independent princeling, with castles at Harlech and Aberystwyth—a presider over parliaments, notably at Machynlleth in 1404. His standing had grown considerably in 1402 with the capture of Grey and Edmund Mortimer, and he remained in contact with disaffected members of the English barony; this resulted in the Tripartite Indenture of 1405—a division of England and Wales, granting the north to Northumberland, the south to Mortimer, and Wales and the marches to Glyndŵr. Owain had sought help from the Irish and Scots in 1401, but of greater significance was his treaty with Charles VI of France in 1404, in consequence of which some 2,600 French troops landed at Milford Haven in 1405. Their march across south Wales with Glyndŵr to the outskirts of Worcester may be seen as the high-water mark of the revolt. Owain's reputation as a statesman belongs to this period and rests upon the work of his chancellor Gruffudd Young in formulating the Pennal policy of March 1406—a manifesto of sorts for the new state—which included the setting up of two “*studia generalia*” (universities), one in the north and the other in the south. The rebellion, however, had lost its momentum, and gradually petered out with the fall of Aberystwyth and Harlech in 1408/9; the last major attack was on Shropshire in 1410 when the rebels were completely routed. Glyndŵr, himself, though named as the captor of Dafydd Gam in 1412, seems to have disappeared shortly afterwards; according to tradition, his last years were spent with his married daughter at Monnington Straddel in Herefordshire. J. R. S. Phillips has recently suggested September 21, 1415 as his day of death; the only Welsh source for the revolt concludes thus: “Very many say that he died; the seers maintain he did not”.

Such then in outline is Glyndŵr's story—the centrepiece of Helen Allday's book *Insurrection*

in Wales; an introductory section deals with the Welsh princes and the kings of England (1066-1399), whilst a postscript considers the background to Henry VII's rise to power in 1485 and the state of nationalism in Wales today with the rejection of devolution in 1979. The author has attempted a narrative account of the rebellion, much in the manner of Sir John Lloyd (to whom she is greatly indebted): she writes well and with charm as an admirer of Glyndŵr, and has sought to present an accurate picture of his “bold adventure”; one's reservations about the book stem from its lack of originality—it is not the product of independent research and adds little or nothing to our knowledge of the period. However, as an introduction to a difficult subject, the work will be of interest to the layman if not to specialists in the field.

There are a number of matters which need to be raised in connection with Mrs Allday's account of the rebellion. She discusses at length the history of Wales during the Age of the Princes, setting Glyndŵr in the tradition of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Llywelyn Fawr, and viewing his revolt as an attempt at re-establishing the values of the past; the tendency now among historians is to dismiss such a view—as with Professor Gwyn A. Williams, they see the uprising as indicative of a complete break with the past: “The Rebellion of Owain Glyn Dŵr was not the last stand of an old Wales, but the explosive entry into history of a new one”. One notable omission in the author's account of Glyndŵr's youth is the discovery made by R. Ian Jack c.1968 (*BBCS XXI*, 163-6) of a roll of debts (owed to the Earl of Arundel) dated 1370/1—a document which clearly implies that his mother “*Elene . . . le Femme Gruff de Glindourde*” was a widow. The connection between Glyndŵr's family and the earls of Arundel raises another point—Owain's affiliation during the struggle between Bolingbroke and Richard II; all the indications are that he was a Bolingbroke supporter, but Helen Allday is right to query this assumption (p. 48): is it coincidental that the revolt occurred within a year of Henry IV's coronation? Richard II was very popular in Cheshire and north Wales. There is no way of resolving this issue, but an *englyn* in a sixteenth century MS (Peniarth 94, le) contains all allusion to Dafydd Gam (Glyndŵr's hated adversary) as “*vradwr Richard vrenin*” (traitor to King Richard), a description which suggests that Owain's rebellion was conducted (nominally) on behalf of the deposed king. Though Mrs Allday, as an

Englishwoman, writes with a refreshing understanding of Welsh aspirations, one is slightly uneasy at the use of terms such as “patriots” (p. 57) in reference to Glyndŵr’s followers, and at the characterization of Owain as a “great patriot” (p. 155), with “his belief in a Free Wales” (p. 77). It is not helpful to view the conflict simply as a struggle for liberation, though in fairness to the author she is only reflecting the standpoint of such authorities as Sir John Lloyd and (to some degree) Professor Gwyn A. Williams. It is often forgotten that the “rebellion” had something of the character of a civil war: thousands of Welsh troops fought on behalf of the Crown, and many of the Welsh nobility were bitterly opposed to Glyndŵr. Moreover, what of Owain’s own motives? We tend to draw a discreet veil over his early career as a loyal servant of the Crown, fighting against the Scots and the French. There are signs that his capture of Mortimer in 1402 awakened a desire to play the role of kingmaker—the latter’s nephew, the Earl of March, had a stronger claim to the throne than did Henry IV; again, what are we to make of a “patriot” who wished to annex much of western England according to the terms of the Tripartite Indenture of 1405? It may be an extravagant notion, but one wonders whether

Glyndŵr’s ambitions extended to the throne: the chronicler Elis Gruffudd seems to have thought so, with his story of Owain having risen too early, a hundred years before his time; Gruffudd, writing c. 1530, alludes here to the Earl of Richmond’s success in 1485: the landing of French troops at Milford Haven in 1405 and the subsequent march to Worcester seems to presage Henry’s own landing near Milford, with French support, and the march through mid-Wales to Bosworth Field. This identification with Henry VII is not a comforting one for the Welsh Nationalist.

Mrs Allday’s book, though reliable (in the main), is not without error: “Gruffydd of Gwenwynwyn” (p. 3) should read “Gruffudd ap Madog” *ob.* (Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Powys, *ob.* 1286/7, was Llywelyn ap Gruffudd’s adversary); Cunedda’s men (p. 37) had migrated to Gwynedd from Manaw Gododdin (a kingdom in the south-east of Scotland) not Northumbria (cf. p. 41), and were scarcely Celts of a different stock; Owain’s “wizard” was “Crach Ffynnant” not “Crach Ffynant” (p. 57); “Vrynwy” (p. 60) should read “Fyrnwy”; though attributed to Iolo Goch, the *cywydd* dealing with the comet of 1402 (p. 79) is not his work: “Trefelo-y-Clawdd” (p. 81) should read



The grassy mound of Sycharth near Llansilin, site of Glyndŵr’s fortified manor house.

“Trefyclo” (Knighton); the Cistercians were on the whole sympathetic to the revolt, not antagonistic (p. 91); the treaty between Llywelyn and Henry III in 1267 was the Treaty of Montgomery, not Shrewsbury (p. 118); “Hwiffordd” (pp. 119, 165-7) should read “Hwlfordd” (Haverfordwest); the story concerning Glyndŵr at Coety Castle (pp. 127-8) may confidently be dismissed as one of Iolo Morganwg’s fabrications; “Dorey” (p. 129) should read “Dovey”; Glyndŵr’s son Gruffudd was captured in 1405, not 1404 (p. 139); the date of the Act of Union is usually given as 1536, not 1535 (p. 156), but cf. *BBCS XXIII*, 346-6; the translation of a section of *Brut y Tywysogion* (p. 174) is unreliable.

One of the most attractive and valuable features of the book are the many photographs (38 in all) which depict castles, abbeys and sites, associated with Owain Glyndŵr. Not all perhaps merit inclusion, but it is particularly interesting to see the hillside on which the battle of Bryn Glas (Pilleth) was fought (scene of the grizzly mutilation of dead soldiers by Welsh women of the locality—an incident mentioned by Shakespeare and by Powys in his novel); Plas Penmynydd, the ancestral home of the Tudors, is also shown, as indeed is the mound at Sycharth on which Glyndŵr’s fortified manor house once stood. There are in addition a number of appendices, a short bibliography, and a useful map; the book is well-indexed, but the absence of footnotes makes it difficult to assess the value of certain of the author’s statements.

DAFYDD HUW EVANS

Work in the English Novel: The Myth of Vocation,

RUTH DANON.

Croom Helm, 1985, £17.95.

Ruth Danon’s book addresses the well-researched field of “work” in eighteenth and nineteenth-century fiction with an original hypothesis. The comprehensive form of the novel did not, as has often been supposed, encompass and incorporate the massively growing experience of labour, and articulate in its representation of society the Protestant work ethic favoured by Victorian prophets, economists and sociologists. Danon argues that the novel form was in practice mobilized by a specifically bourgeois intelligentsia towards the construction of a socially-signifying

myth, a “myth of vocation” which represented the possibility of work as the shaping structure of an integrated personal life, involving love, home and labour, and linking the personal and “private” with the social and public. We should no longer examine Victorian fiction in terms of its representations of working-class life and activity; but rather understand it as the expression of a middle-class ideology, concerned not with the utilitarian sacralizing of work as an end in itself, but with the individual’s potentiality for structuring and validating experience through the non-alienated activity of “vocational” labour. This ideology, it is argued, informs the novel *genre* by determining its content and shaping its structure: realized, as in *Robinson Crusoe* and *David Copperfield*, the myth bestows aesthetic as well as ideological coherence; unrealized, as in *Great Expectations* and *Jude the Obscure*, its failure fissures the form with disjunctures and contradictions. In some ways this study breaks promising new ground. It challenges some established assumptions of traditional criticism; draws some of its methods of enquiry from sociology and historiography, and from the historically—and theoretically—informed cultural criticism of Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson; and in a necessary and welcome move away from mimetic and representational criticism, acknowledges the importance of literature as ideology or myth.

The book’s weaknesses are equally manifest, and perhaps honestly acknowledged in an authorial admission that it represents a narrowing of a larger project: “a systematic overview of work and its treatment in nineteenth century fiction” (p. 199). That larger context haunts the study with unexplored issues and unanswered questions: and there is about it a narrowness of vision and a single-minded persistence of focus which resembles the attenuated argumentation of a thesis rather than the complex and open-ended explorations of a book. Explicit attention to sociological and historical questions is edged to the periphery, and too much of the book is laborious and punctiliously-detailed “close reading” of a traditional kind. The choice of canonical texts can be justified strategically, but their familiarity gives too much of the “practical criticism” a sense of *déjà-vu*. An ambitious theory needs a much wider range of illustration. There is no reference to working-class fiction: one would like to know whether Danon sees that *genre* as sharing the

assumptions of the fiction of vocation, or offering an alternative perspective. Above all, "work" itself receives attention only as a sociological concept: and although that methodology can be justified in terms of Danon's thesis, it confers a strangely abstract and phenomenal quality upon the treatment. While it may well be possible to distinguish the middle-class myth of vocation from the great economic and social changes of the period—the growth of empire, industrialization, urbanization, the development of an organized working class—it is surely clear that this restructuring of "vocational" ideology took place in some (probably competitive) relationship with the primary developments of bourgeois society. These criticisms are intended as constructive suggestions: the author herself would be the first to admit that her study is ground-breaking rather than definitive, and that much work along similar lines remains to be done. A more particular criticism is that the book is not well-written, and would have benefited from a sterner editorial policy. The occasional transatlantic howler (such as the engaging reference to Jude Fawley's trade in "Christminster Cookies") can be forgiven more readily than monotony, repetition, and awkwardness in the handling of prose.

GRAHAM HOLDERNESS

Pound,
P. N. FURBANK.

Open University Press, 1985, £12.50 (hardback);
£3.50 (paperback).

The intention of the series *Open Guides to Literature*, in which this slim volume appears, is "to provide short introductory books about major writers, texts, and literary concepts for students" in suitable courses. Openly pedagogic, the series incorporates three-way tutorial exchanges between the author, the text and the reader, a kind of Socratic method which, the Series Editor assures us, is based on the assumption "that literary texts are 'plural', that there is no end to interpretation"; the *Guides* claim to offer "such relevant biographical, historical and cultural information as bears upon the reading of the text", and "to point the reader to a selection of the best available critical discussions of it".

A worthy aim, and, in the complicated case of

Ezra Pound, Furbank achieves it fairly successfully by offering what one might call a "minimalist" reading of the poetry. It must be said that the low pitch of his claims may make some students wonder what all the fuss was about. Such a sane approach only falters when it comes to *The Cantos*, which is, of course, the real nut for critical teeth. It also fails to explain the somewhat surprising, but continuing, fascination of Poundian studies, particularly notable last year which saw the hundredth anniversary of Pound's birth and numerous critical fêtes in his honour. The Tate Gallery, for instance, put on an exhibition of Pound's artists, and, in the U.S.A., conferences on his achievements were held from Maine to California. Italian newspapers hailed him almost as a native son.

Furbank's seven chapters are headed: "Ezra Pound and 'Modernism'"; "Imagism"; "Early Poems"; "Cathay"; "Homage to Sextus Propertius"; "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley"; and "Approaching *The Cantos*". The first two are unexceptional and succeed in packing a great deal of literary and biographical information into a very short space, not without some firm moral judgments about Pound's public career.

The chapter on Pound's Early Poems was bound to be subjective, given the limitations of space, but Furbank manages to introduce the beginner to at least three important aspects of Pound's *oeuvre*: his entirely new approach to translation (characterized unfortunately as "eccentric", p. 20); his metrical innovations, and his use of the *persona* in his writings. There is also a very brief glance at the satirical side of Pound, which is an area of Pound's work that has been consistently neglected by critics, although it is in this mode that most of his general political and economic views may be seen at their best advantage.

The chapter on *Cathay* explains how Fenellosa's misapprehension of the nature of the Chinese written character could nevertheless provide a plausible theory of poetry and lead to Vorticism as well as certain poetic techniques used in *The Cantos*. Furbank does well here, as elsewhere, in offering relevant illustrative material. In this case he prints two other translations of the original on which Pound's *The Beautiful Toilet* was based; nothing could better substantiate Eliot's judgment that "Pound is the inventor of Chinese poetry for our time".

Regrettably, Furbank leaves the impression that the ideogrammic method was just a lingering stage in Pound's own development. It should

have been pointed out that its influence on later American writing has continued, not only in the work of William Carlos Williams, but also in the "Objectivism" of Louis Zukovsky and the "Projective Verse" of Charles Olson, who guided the other Black Mountain poets, Robert Duncan and Robert Creeley. The influence is also there in the Beat poetry of Allen Ginsberg and the *Riprap* of Gary Snyder.

In discussing the *Homage to Sextus Propertius* Furbank is able to show the theory of the *persona* in its best application, here at the service of political objections to British imperialism. Interestingly, Furbank argues that a further dimension of this critique is Pound's use of comic classical "howlers" to subvert the ideals of the traditional public school education for empire builders. Nevertheless there are some opportunities lost in this section, since it was the obvious place for an extended discussion of Pound's theories of translation, particularly from the classics. One certainly misses some allusion to his controversial rendering of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, for which H. A. Mason had provided some intelligent guidance. More importantly, perhaps, it would have been the place to evaluate the strong influence of Greek and Latin literature and mythology on Pound's poetry and even on his modes of thinking. This has some consequence for Furbank's discussion of *The Cantos*.

With *Mauberley* Furbank does the best he can and he is particularly useful in illustrating the poem with some of its original models. He sticks to his guns in the face of Donald Davie's contradictory stances about "Who is Mauberley?" and whether the whole sequence has any sort of unity. He wisely refers the student to Leavis' discussion in *New Bearings*, a discussion which has the advantage of generating an excitement in the reader about the poem, which Furbank's intelligent hesitations somehow fail to do.

Finally, we come to the big test. What does Furbank make of *The Cantos*? He confesses his own puzzlement and so he tentatively suggests a *frame of mind* in which to approach them. Indeed *The Cantos*, above all, plead for the General Editor's argument that literary texts are "plural" and that meaning and value have to be discovered in them—whether or not one is tempted to dance to the Gallic pipings of Roland Barthes.

Furbank insists rightly that the reader must first be familiar with the earlier work of Pound, even though this will not solve all the problems

of the "epic", since there would be for Furbank no over-riding solution; for him the poem was "conceived of as open-ended" and with "no central plot or action" (p. 75). One may reasonably doubt this—changes of plan in major literary works (e.g. *Lady Chatterley's Lover*), even such philosophical works as Plato's *Republic*, are not uncommon, and if Pound contemplated that new sources, fresh experience, and even further reading could in theory be successfully absorbed without affecting the ultimate thrust of the planned poem, then the *Pisan Cantos*, based on an episode obviously unpredictable in 1915, does not prove that there was no basic plan which Pound tried to follow with greater or lesser degrees of success. The same may be said of the "economic" *Cantos* of the thirties; Pound did not hear of Van Buren's *Autobiography* until 1932.

Furbank is right to point to the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, and Dante's *Inferno* (and even Browning's *Sordello*) as models, and he quite properly stresses as a model of technique Ovid's great counter-epic, the *Metamorphoses*. But if this latter poem does indeed achieve a unity in diversity, it shows how an ambitious poem can succeed *without* a central hero. If Change itself is Ovid's theme, then Pound's voyage through the centuries in quest of "The *forma*, the immortal *concetto*", symbolised by the rose in the steel dust (to which Furbank draws attention on p. 80) surely can serve through all the metamorphoses of person, place, and time as the unifying theme of *The Cantos*. This then makes sense of the eclectic assemblage of periods, ancient and modern; cultures, classical, Chinese, Renaissance, and American, and the subordinate heroes, whether Malatesta, Jefferson or Mussolini, not to mention the assorted villains.

Furbank seems to offer all the materials for a plausible description of *The Cantos* in these pages, but does not draw them together for the necessary conclusions; this may be due to his reluctance to reduce the poem's complexity to something simpler than appears on the page. And yet he is fully able to discern other subordinate structural principles in Pound's "palette-mixing", his collection of "exhibits", and his battery of conceptual rhymes and poetic echoes.

A description of course is not an evaluation and one cannot fault Furbank's sober judgment of *The Cantos* as a poem with brilliant sections which does not succeed in general, although one might, naturally not here, offer different grounds for agreeing with it. One does, however,

have to disagree with his concluding verdict on Pound the poet: "all his deepest beliefs were bound up with aestheticism as a philosophy of life . . . Nevertheless it is a constricting outlook, and it may be that his political madneses sprang from a desperate attempt to escape from its constrictions". On the contrary, it was his mature political and economic convictions, so seemingly wrong-headed now, which distorted the aesthetic achievement of *The Cantos*. They were so strongly felt and so central to his life-work between 1920 and 1945 that his pre-war aestheticism had no chance, except in detail, to withstand their force.

Doubtless this useful introductory book will run to further editions. I detected no errors of fact about Pound and his work, but Ibycus was a Sicilian, not a Cretan, poet (p. 19). There are a very few minor misprints, but the two Chinese characters dropped from p. 33 must be restored and note 3 on p. 33, referring to the same page and paragraph, should be eliminated.

J. P. SULLIVAN

The German Poets of the First World War,
PATRICK BRIDGWATER.

Croom Helm, 1985, £18.95.

Professor Bridgwater's title offers a challenge to the many books which, representing themselves unqualifiedly as studies of First World War poetry, stick chauvinistically to English-language compositions. Even so, confidence in his material is apt to slip. He rather too readily acknowledges English supremacy, and adopts the self-validating procedure of assessing the German work by criteria evolved from study of the English war poets. Further, the trenchancy of "The German Poets" suggests that anyone not included need not arouse our curiosity; especially when we are told that the German second-raters tend to lack the imagination of the English.

War poetry, it is argued, is a special category in that "more unambiguously and perhaps more so than with other forms of poetry, the morality has to be 'right' before the question of . . . poetic quality can arise". The poets worth attention must not only come up to scratch in aesthetic terms, but must adopt a suitably anti-war stance. And if we object that moral judgments may be as subjective as aesthetic ones, the

point is clinched by the declaration that "it is one of the most soundly based facts in history that the Great War for Civilisation was a barbarous atrocity". But it won't do to reduce something so vast and complex as the First World War to a rhetorical flourish. History, after all, is a synthesis of viewpoints. If it needed something as cataclysmic as this war to destroy the power of the czars, and perhaps the Hapsburgs, there must be those today who would see its destructive progress as not wholly wasted.

Worryingly present in this notion of the war as "barbarous atrocity" is the implication that previous wars were something else. Gilbert Frankau had it right in 1918 when he wrote of "War,—as war is now, and always was: / A dirty, loathsome, servile murder-job". But Professor Bridgwater seems less certain. He begins his discussion with the paradox that whereas for centuries the bulk of war poetry had idealized or glorified its subject, "from winter 1914 onwards most war poetry worth the title has been anti-war poetry written by poets in the line of death". Now, runs the argument, those old chivalric notions founder in the face of mechanized warfare. But, whatever kind of watershed the First World War might represent, it is not that between the chivalric and non-chivalric possibilities of war. To suppose that it does is to mistake the essential nature of chivalry, which is elitist and practical rather than idealistic. The idealism is only foisted on retrospectively, as happened in the Renaissance when chivalry was already outmoded. Nonetheless, twentieth-century man, like his sixteenth-century predecessor, could play his games of chivalry. We see this operating amongst those cavalry officers who transferred to the flying corps; chivalric lusts satisfied, ironically, by the new technology. Thus Biggles. In the modern era of cultural stratification, the heroic-chivalric mode has always been popularizing (or Tennysonian nostalgia).

Nor is it the case that the First World War initiates the powerful anti-war response amongst poets. Malvern van Wyk Smith has shown how the Boer War anticipates most of the more striking attitudes found in First World War poetry; and, in pointing to the 1870 Education Act and the consequent spread of literacy, locates the real reason for the shift amongst British poets. For the first time most of the fighting men were able to write.

But it is the First World War's supposed destruction of the chivalric ethic which predisposes Professor Bridgwater to see war poetry,

“especially modern war poetry”, as a special case, one which “obliges us to think through our aesthetic criteria to the point where they merge into moral ones”. If, on the other hand, we see war as only a stepped-up version of peace, man’s enemies remaining the same, we must also see that there are no special cases: it is all one to the victim whether he dies of malnutrition or during a bombardment. Further, aesthetic judgment itself is a compound: nothing is more political, for instance, than the doctrine of “l’art pour l’art”. Professor Bridgwater’s position is startlingly exposed in his remarks on Yeats’s notorious exclusion of British poets from the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. Yeats’s silliness, he avers, “arises from an exclusive concern with aesthetic qualities and criteria and therefore from a failure of the imagination”. This, despite Yeats’s coming clean with the declaration that “If war is necessary, or necessary in our time and place, it is best to forget its suffering”. It is hard to see how this, uttered in 1936, could be mistaken for an exclusive concern with aesthetics.

In the same way, Professor Bridgwater’s own inclusions are politically directed. Half of his text is devoted to poets associated with *Die Aktion* and *Der Sturm*, especially the former with its bold anti-war stance. His detailed analyses are a good deal better than his theorizing, especially as rigid adherence to the Wilfred Owen yardstick proves impossible. Thus he is enthusiastic about Stramm’s compact, expressionistic utterances, conceding of one that it “is not an explicitly anti-war poem”. Indeed, he must go so far as to note the “unholy fascination” which war held for Stramm. Stramm’s poetry, like Dix’s painting, exposes the inadequacy of the categories pro- and anti-war in artistic discussion. Characteristically, the tumultuous complexities of war force a plurality of responses, often widely inconsistent, from virtually everyone. Yet Professor Bridgwater is puzzled by the worker-poet Lersch’s oscillation from anti-war posture of blood-and-thunder. Andrew Rutherford has shown how even stars of the anti-war team such as Sassoon and Owen subscribe to diametrically opposed ethics, though their commitment to soldiering was largely filtered out of their poetry. Failure to confront the full range of evidence can only trivialize any investigation of war art. No one better illustrates the paradox than Stramm who, according to Professor Bridgwater, only fully achieved some sense of harmony “in the hell-on-earth of total warfare”:

It’s odd, life and death are the same . . . fighting and sleeping and dreaming and being busy: all the same! There’s no distinction! Everything boils down to the same thing, merging and unmerging like sun and horizon. It’s just that now one thing gains the upper hand and now another. So we fight go hungry die sing. All of us . . . I drift through everything. Am everything. Me!

Perhaps the closest parallel to this letter of Stramm’s is to be found in Dix’s *Self-portrait as Mars* where there is the same sense of surge and recoil, of war’s ripping the whole fabric of life apart, and of the artist’s total absorption of the extremes of experience. In both cases the dimensions are psychological and cosmic rather than moral. Where morality is detected in Stramm, it turns out to be triteness. Thus another letter, said to confront the antitheses of duty to humanity and to country “with rare insight and honesty”, is a tissue of commonplaces and rationalizings: warring for peace; the homeland as sole present source of enlightenment. It would have been a “rare insight” had he, in early 1915, been able to penetrate the prejudices of the latter view.

The hackneyed view slips past presumably because Professor Bridgwater had not investigated enough hack writers. In similar terms it would be helpful to know that Trakl’s “des Volkes . . . Zorn” was common currency in 1914, though used more sparingly thereafter. Although they are both rooted in Revelation, Hölderlin is a doubtful point of reference for the present anger; more direct is the link with the 1813 poets, or those of the Frederician era. Indeed, there is Old Fritz’s own “Ode an den Deutschen” where, addressing his heroic people, he refers to “dem Wetterschlage Eures Zornes” (the weather-blows of your anger). Trakl’s phrase comes out as “peoples’ wrath” instead of “nation’s wrath” in the discussion, lending false emphasis to the cosmic idea of war suggested by the allusion to winter storms. But this doesn’t invalidate Professor Bridgwater’s point about Trakl’s cyclic view of history, war being as necessary as winter.

The Expressionists were viewing war in this way long before Trakl, and the latter’s relationship to Heym is noted. The mood is so widespread round 1912, that it is hardly necessary to invoke Hindu demonology for iconographic links with Heym’s personification of War. But—Schlegel showed the way—Kali’s

creative-destructive functions integrate perfectly with such favourite sources as the *Eddas* or Book of Revelation. Heym's starting point may well be the *Eddas*; there is much food in them for those of a vitalist disposition. They tell of war's first coming to the earth, and of the birth of a new era out of the wreckage. Heym's most striking image—of War crushing “the moon in his brute black hand”—may well derive from the wolf's seizing the moon after the sun has been devoured. But broader contemporary parallels are rife. The image of the war-god towering over pygmies had pervaded European caricature since the turn of the century. Amongst recent examples had been cartoons drawn for *Simplicissimus* by Thomas Heine. That on the Morocco crisis shows a naked, muscular Mars on a pale horse accompanied by Death as a wizened crone. They enter Tripoli over a hideous tangle of corpses. In “Der Ausweg der Konservativen” (conservative response to a swing leftwards in the Reichstag) the parody-message is: If Germany is to turn red, let it be from the torch of war. Death towers in martial armour, a horde of tiny voters pouring from an urn threatened by his torch. Some of them wear the “Zipfelmützen” described by Heym. If the Sergeant-King's “lange Kerls” wore this headgear, Professor Bridgwater's identification of it with the 1914-18 soldiers' Pickelhauben is mistaken. As Hans Golcher's “Ein Lied vom Deutschen Michel” puts it, with the coming of war “Es musst die weiche Zipfelmütz / Dem Lederhelme weichen” (The soft, pointed hat must yield to the leather helmet.)

At any rate, discussion of these Expressionists, like that of Schnack, is thought-provoking. Professor Bridgwater rates the latter's collected war poems as the outstanding batch on the German side. His technical approach is at its most fruitful in dealing with Schnack's fractured sonnets. (Elsewhere he can fall into the odd fancy of identifying Lersch's trochees and feminine endings as, respectively, soldiers and mothers.) As he remarks, Schnack's poems neither look like nor behave like conventional sonnets. The extraordinary line-length may owe something to Stadler. But, like so many other features of modernism, its roots lie in the seventeenth century. Something like Gerhardt's “Neujahrslied aus dem 30 jährigen Kriege” not only uses very long lines but exhibits most of those devices—internal rhyme and near rhyme, assonance, alliteration, reduplication—favoured by Schnack. Whatever parallels one cares to draw between his work and that of Owen, the

latter managed nothing like “Der Überläufer”. Professor Bridgwater declares that the moral issues surrounding desertion “do not concern us directly here”. This is something of a surprise after so much insistence on the total fusion of moral and aesthetic concerns. But the deserter's action is such “as to offend even those of moderate views”. It might be thought that the only true anti-war response at the battlefield would be to walk away. But the British seem more resistant to such logic than the Germans. Schnack's poem belong to a tradition running back to the Franco-Prussian War, which has been associated with protests against conscription. Although Kipling shows some sympathy for the deserter in “Wilful-Missing”, a Boer War poem, attitudes hardened decisively during the Great War. This, too, probably connects in a different way with the mobilizing of a citizen army. *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Manning's *The Middle Parts of Fortune* offer a total contrast in their treatment of the deserter. Read's “The Execution of Cornelius Vane” has something in common with Schnack's poem; but, like Montague's *Rough Justice*, it shows a quite distinct concern with the deserter's miserable fate.

Desertion is an anti-war gesture, just as the sympathetic portrayal of it may be another. Cynicism is a third, and already in the first month of war—he was killed in the second—Lichtenstein was providing some extraordinary examples. He would prefer to be at home, “getting tight” and “stuffing girls”, content to see any of his comrades go under if only he might be spared. This has something in common with that anti-recruiting number, “The Conscientious Objector”, sung by Alfred Lester in *Round the Map*, the hit show of 1917 at the Alhambra Theatre:

Send out the boys of the old brigade
Who made old England free.
Send out me brother, me sister and me mother,
But for Gawd's sake don't send me!

Lichtenstein's spiky irreverence is influenced by cabaret, well-practised in replying to Wilhelmine constraints. In similar fashion British soldier-songs fed on music hall and revue. The accents could be so close that Brophy and Partridge, in their collection, actually print this chorus as a soldier-parody. Professor Bridgwater thinks the German troops had no equivalent to the jingles of the British soldier. But they are a recorded feature of armies since the time of

Caesar; it is inconceivable to imagine the Germans doggedly confining themselves to “Die Wacht am Rhein” or the canned patriotism of de Nora. Daniel Horn quotes “a jingle popular among the enlisted men”: “Gleiche Lohnung, gleiches Essen / Und der Krieg wär längst vergessen”. (Equal pay, equal food, and the war would long have been forgotten!). And they also have their “Marmelade” ditties which, despite affinities with Popeye’s “Spinach” song, are a counterpart to the Tommy’s “Plum and Apple”: though whereas Tickler’s jam was runny (sometimes with mysterious lumps), the German variety had the consistency of stale boot polish. “Bald bin ich im Kittchen”, a parodic version of “Bald gras’ ich am Neckar”—“Soon I shall be back in Neckar” resolving significantly into “Soon I shall be in clink”—cynically regards the harshness of military life and derides promotion in a way anticipating that of the Second World War favourite “Sod ’em all”.

Had Lichtenstein survived into 1917, he might well have been writing in the vein of Carl Zuckmayer. For the latter war means hunger and casual murder, while the great cheat of comradeship is reduced to a drunken brawl:

Ich habe sieben Tage nicht gegessen
Und einem Manne in die Stirn geknallt . . .
Bin ich besoffen, han ich in die Fressen
Den Bleichgesichten.

But if one of the sacred cows of the war gets short shrift, this poem is embedded in his autobiography, *Als wär’s ein Stück von mir*. The title comes from that favourite marching song, “Der gute Kamerad”, the dead comrade lying at the protagonist’s feet “as though he were a piece of me”; so here is just one more example of those contradictions which abound in responses to the war. But Zuckmayer concludes by violating one of the strongest taboos of the period, which explains why the poem took some fifty years to see daylight. As he nears twenty-one (by an unsurprising coincidence both poet and persona), sexual outlet means masturbation into a murky, toad-infested shellhole:

So nehm ich meinen Samen in die Hände:
Europas Zukunft, schwarzgekörnter Laich—
Ein Gott ersäuft im schlammigen Krötenteich!
Und scheisse mein Vermächtnis an die Wände.

Like Lichtenstein he is saying something pretty sharp about the unnatural disjunctions to which war leads; breaking taboos to imply a vastly

graver offence. Human potential drowned in a shellhole becomes a paradigm of war’s creative-destructive confusions. This becomes all the more striking in contrast to that cyclic process of decay and regeneration, that fecund pattern in which even the war could be found a place by the German poets. If many of the English poets have “a weekend-cottage view of nature”, the Germans belong authentically to the world of Herrick’s “Corinna’s Going a Maying”. A war-poem by Albert Schutze, “Ein Burschenlied” (1918) is built around a student May-song. Those flowers which girls placed in the rifle-barrels of departing soldiers belong to the same tradition, romanticism having formed the bridge between folkloric and high-art manifestations. From the start the romantic movement, concerned to recover the past and reconstruct it through a profoundly German oneness with the soil, had overlapped with the nationalist impulse. The völkisch strain colours the bulk of German war poetry. For Professor Bridgwater it is “a very considerable handicap”; perhaps because it was so completely assimilated to Nazi doctrine that it has still to be fully decontaminated. But it is difficult to engage wholeheartedly with German poetry of the period without assessing the function of the völkisch element. In the first year of the war, after it became clear that Christmas was not going to see an end to hostilities, poet after poet placed his hopes first in the spring, then the season of roseblossoms, and eventually in an autumn harvest. To follow this pattern though the second year of war would have been too crass. Seasonal images continue in use, but less specifically. However, Karl Klemse, writing in the newspaper of the Fourth Army in early 1918 (“Du fragst mich immer”), finds a way to refurbish when he has a soldier’s wife ask if peace will come in the spring, or when the rosebush, heavy with blossoms, perfumes their garden, or indeed when the heather has turned to autumnal gold. But the soldier bleakly replies that neither he nor anyone else can tell. Some good poems emerged out of the original cycle of such sentiments. In Hans Blunck’s “Nächtlicher Ausritt”, a cavalry squadron rides through a darkened village, a lantern casting grotesque shadows on the wall. Further on, the open door of the smithy throws a fire-glare on pale faces and lance-tips. But beyond the village the riders enter a spring landscape. F. B.’s “Mädchenlied”, about the prospect of peace when the roses bloom, concludes on a note of delicate urgency:

transformation of propositional meaning into syntactic form and the ways in which sentences cohere into a text. "Extra Structure, Extra Meanings" considers foregrounding and parallelism as two processes which convert text into socially significant discourse. "Text and Context" moves away from textual patterning to show how language use responds to various types of context, the situation in which the utterance takes place, the context of social conventions, and the context of the subject matter; whilst "Some Aspects of Dialogue" focusses on sequencing, illocutionary acts, and H. P. Grice's notion of implicature, all ways in which speaker and addressee interact through language. The two final chapters of this sort, "Point of View" and "Meaning and World-View", broaden the argument by showing how language structure refers directly to the way in which the world is perceived.

Since *Linguistic Criticism* is intended as an introduction to a linguistic approach to criticism, it understandably avoids delving too far into contentious areas, and there would be little sense in raising here some of my reservations about the consistency of Fowler's argument. Nevertheless, there are two related points worth making regarding its success as an introductory text.

The first is that *Linguistic Criticism* is more of a book by Roger Fowler than a comprehensive introduction to the use of linguistics to literary criticism. In other words, the strength of the book lies primarily in the particular stance taken by its author, his conviction that the language of literature has to be related to an overview of language as social practice, and not in any role as a compendium of linguistic technique. *Linguistic Criticism* thus needs to be read alongside other introductions to the field, a fact Fowler himself draws attention to in his preface, and indeed, he not only supplies a usefully annotated bibliography, but often uses texts analysed elsewhere to show the distinctiveness of his own approach. Yet even if readers must go elsewhere for an elementary grounding in linguistics, it is a pity space could not have been found to include examples for readers to practise the variety of techniques Fowler does discuss, as can be found in other introductions to what I still prefer to call stylistics.

This comment is perhaps the result of the slot the book is intended to fill as one of a range of OPUS introductions to various disciplines. My other point, however, though related, has more to do with an aspect of linguistic technique which could have been more strongly stressed, the comparative nature of stylistics. Central to *Linguistic Criticism* is the notion of defamiliarization, to the degree that defamiliarization underpins the concept of creativity, creativity being the way in which language as social practice can implement social change. Defamiliarization in turn depends upon foregrounding, the manner in which certain textual structures are emphasized through unusual regularity. Fowler quite rightly points out how difficult it is to give any general guidance upon what constitutes an unusual regularity, since, in the absence of a normative use of language, context is all important, but his abandoning the problem to his reader's intuition is unsatisfactory. The notion of comparison is vital to stylistics, and what one chooses to compare a given text with very largely determines what textual structures one would be interested in. For example, I might justifiably compare a diary entry with another by the same diarist (to compare textual cohesion, say), with a letter by the diarist dealing with the same event (to compare modality), or with a diary entry by another diarist, contemporary (to compare lexis) or of another period (to compare syntax). Stylistics, in short, is easier to demonstrate than to practise, and though Fowler draws attention to the comparative nature of language use, those readers without access to supervised discussion are likely to succumb to a certain vertigo as the text they try to analyse shifts according to what they compare it with. Again, provision of examples for the reader to analyse might have helped demonstrate that stylistic analysis depends upon choice, and that choice in turn depends upon a certain closure of the text.

But these reservations apart, it needs to be stressed that *Linguistic Criticism* is a forceful introduction to a systematic and socially directed approach to literary studies, and though not self-contained, its appearance in paperback on publication ought to assure it of its distinctive place alongside other introductions to both linguistic and stylistics.

ANDREW HASSAM

German side needs challenging. Also worth engaging is the asserted inadequacy of folk ballad to deal *poetically* with modern war. If exponents seek “to recapture the directness and naiveté” of the mode—overlooking, that is to say, its frequent indirection and subtlety—their failure should not surprise us. The exceptions produced by Professor Bridgwater are held to prove the rule—a notably unconvincing piece of proverbial wisdom. This is to brush aside that strong German tradition which brought high and popular art into fruitful conjunction, not least in the sphere of war poetry: on the premise that this war is hugely different rather than just the latest “Great War” (a term used until at least 1915 for the Napoleonic conflict). But Professor Bridgwater’s relationship with folk elements is an uneasy one. Take, for instance, Klemm’s picture of shell-damaged buildings as half-eaten gingerbread houses. Does this offer a contrast: present horror against “the cosy world of childhood and peace”? Or do the grotesque proportions assumed by social hardship and violence in the one case reinforce those in the other? Those gingerbread houses never had belonged to the land of Cockaigne.

A good example of the possibilities of a folk style is provided by Paul Friedrich’s “Pferde” (Horses) of 1915. His subject is basically that of several hundred horses passing on their way to the mustering point. The British soldier sang “We’re ’ere because we’re ’ere”. The German poet has arrived at a similar perception that the men’s plight is little different from that of the horses, as they step “in ihr Schicksal stumm, / Nicht ahnend wofür, wozu und warum” (silently into their fate, not knowing for what, whither and why). They will die, most of them, and he pictures them as

steigen sie auf

Aus ihren Grabern in ruhlosem Lauf

Die Pferdekadaver, Skelett, bei Skelett.

Und drangen sich eng auf der Schadelstätt.

(They rise out of their graves running restlessly, the horse-corpses, skeleton by skeleton, and crowd around the Place of the Skull.) Beyond the folk- and front-line preoccupation with the supernatural, this is a vision of sacrifice, of the Passion.

The horse appears much more interestingly in German than in English writings. The latter treat the shift from farm-work to gun-team (Moberley), or sentimental leave-takings (Cyril Horne). But even Spiegel’s brash *Kriegstagebuch ‘U202’*

(1916) includes a horrible account of the sinking of a shipload of horses unparalleled in English. Remarque shows the terrible effect of a dying horse’s cries of pain, and this is the subject of a poem by Kurt Münzer, “Das Kriegs-Pferd” (1915). The cries disturb the protagonist from his sleep upon damp straw:

Aus tiefster Qual hervorgepresst,
Verzweiflung, die selbst Gott verlässt.

(Despair that even God had abandoned him is forced out of the deepest torment.) It sounds as if the agonized cries are those of a wounded man, but they turn out to be a horse’s. Although distressed, the man shoots the beast:

Was sagst du mir? Ein Tier ist’s nur?
Auch du und ich sind Kreatur.
Den gleichen Schmerz hat Mensch und Pferd.
Auch sein Blut fließt für deinen Herd!

(What are you saying to me? It’s only an animal! But you and I are creatures too. Man and horse feel the same pain; his blood too flows for your home!) This appeared in the *Liller Kriegszeitung* and, a couple of weeks later, the newspaper carried an article on the proper way of putting wounded horses out of their misery. But this was a pretty feeble response to a poem in which the horse, as in Frey’s *Die Pflasterkästen* (1929), symbolizes “the dumb shrieking agony of all the war-racked creatures of Europe”. The poem’s effect is somewhat akin to that in the final *Mash* episode where Hawkeye is tormented by recollections of a chicken killed to prevent its cries alerting the enemy. It requires the ministrations of a psychiatrist to release the unpalatable truth that the chicken was in fact a baby killed by its mother. There are hints of a similar psychological displacement at work here.

This poem is not written in folk idiom. But it is one of many which might be adduced to dispel the idea that, compared with its British counterpart, “run-of-the-mill” German poetry (Professor Bridgwater’s epithet) lacks imagination. In this way, the point can be effectively contested even from poems published in avowedly patriotic sources, and during the first year of war. Poems on German occupation can show remarkable imaginative involvement with the predicament of an oppressed people. Fritz Reinhardt’s “Der Schwan von Goyencourt”, with its evocative use of the swan—symbol of rebirth in much nineteenth-century art—is a case in point; or Lieutenant Ranker’s group of poems, “Bilder

aus Flandern" (Pictures from Flanders). One of these, in sonnet form, fills the octave with a simile of crows, restless with winter hunger, disturbed by a walker in the fields. The sestet clarifies, and moves to a conclusion where the German fear of defeat breaks through. But there is a complexity of emotion here, the warning note only possible in these terms because of that sympathetic concern for a presently defeated people which Ranker shows in other of his poems:

So um besiegten Volkes dumpfe Seelen
Den dunkeln Vögeln gleich die bangen Sorgen
schweben:
Der Winter vor der Tür, bald wird es schneien,
Wie lange noch, dann wird das Brot uns fehlen!
Und ihre Stimme drohend sie erheben:
Weh den Besiegten, warnt ihr heis' res Schreien.

(Around dull souls of conquered people fearful cares hover like the dark birds: the winter before the door, soon it will snow; how much longer before our bread runs out? And ominously they raise their voices: Woe to the conquered, warns their passionate cry.) Another sonnet—"Die tote Stadt" (the dead town), by the reservist N.C.O. Etienne—describes how the town's secrets are ripped open by shellfire "Wie jäh entblösste Frau" (like suddenly exposed women). The sestet shows an old woman who squats among the cooling ashes

und murmeit irre Worte.
Sie reckt den Arm, greift in ihr welches Haar
Und stiert verbissen nach dem grauen Bosch.

(. . . and murmurs crazy words. She raises her arm, touches her faded hair, and goes sullenly into the grey thicket.) Like Orpen's *Mad Woman of Douai*, this shows the whole degradation of the war, a degradation going beyond grief or horror to destroy the very souls of nations.

The point is that amongst the literary detritus of the war, there is a lot more genuinely worthwhile poetry than the anthologies and critical discussions tend to allow. While we may welcome Professor Bridgwater's book for opening up new terrain to the English reader, it is precisely because it stands pretty well alone in the field that serious issue needs to be taken with it. English readers should be discouraged from an insular approach to German poetry, or from assuming that little of interest lies outside the scope of the present book. The book is valuable for its discussion of Expressionist writing, which only really entered English poetry with Eliot. His

relationship to the German vitalist movement is crucial. Professor Bridgwater suggests that Stefan George's "contempt for his time is matched only by Ezra Pound". But Eliot matches it. Indeed both the props and much of the imagery of George's "Der Krieg"—opening quotation from Dante and the people responding to the rain sweeping down from the heights of the world—irresistibly recall "The Waste Land". But that was 1917. Eliot's poem, following hard upon the almighty upheaval of the First World War with its plea for a breaking out of the prevailing torpor, has its own sublime lunacy. No wonder Philip Hobsbaum expressed dissatisfaction with this American modernism as the way forward for English poetry. And is Eliot's modernist attempt to shore up the ruins of our cultural heritage any less incongruous than the German war poets' use of traditional modes to articulate the experience of the war? Precisely because their modes, and still more their habits of mind, frequently differ from those of the English poets, the need is to urge open-minded confrontation. Taking them on their own terms will certainly expand the literary consciousness of the reader; it might even contribute its mite to the cause of peace.

GORDON WILLIAMS

MacDiarmid,
RODERICK WATSON.

Open University Press, 1985, £12.50 (hardback);
£3.50 (paperback).

This book is an expanded and updated version of a unit which Roderick Watson produced for the Open University in 1976. The original unit, part of a course on twentieth-century poetry, was an admirably clear and considerate presentation of an undoubtedly difficult poet, but much has happened during the decade since it appeared: the death of the poet himself in 1978, the publication of his *Complete Poems* in the same year in two hardback volumes (now in Penguin Modern Classics at a more accessible price), the appearance of a large selection of his *Letters* (1984), and the first salvoes of what is evidently ordained to be a continuing battery of criticism and interpretation—Ann Edwards Boutelle's *Thistle and Rose* (1980), Alan Bold's *MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal* (1983), Catherine Kerrigan's *Whaur Extremes Meet* (1983),

Harvey Oxenhorn's *Elemental Things* (1984), Nancy K. Gish's *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work* (1984), and a revised edition of Kenneth Buthlay's indispensable *Hugh MacDiarmid* (1982). Despite these books, there was still obviously a need for a simple, step-by-step, carefully compressed introduction to the poet on a more elementary level, and this is what the present volume most satisfactorily provides. Graham Martin, the general editor of the series of "Open Guides to Literature" in which it appears, states in a preface that the series, although designed for students and readers in general, and not only for those taking Open University courses, "adopts a pedagogic approach and style" but is nevertheless "open" in a double and indeed punning sense: first in offering a "three-way tutorial exchange" between the writer of the *Guide*, the texts being discussed, and the reader, and second in keeping an openness of interpretation where the student is encouraged to ask questions as he learns.

On the whole this works very well. General readers of an independent cast of mind may chomp at the bit when they are told to "make this an exercise for yourself" or "you might like to read these poems now" or "you may care to debate the issue yourself". But the claim of "openness" is well backed up by Dr Watson's discussions of individual poems, where he will often recognize that conflicting views (especially with this poet!) do exist, and will set out the opposing evaluations or interpretations almost as a dialogue between himself and his unseen reader ("If you object . . . my only defence would be . . .", etc.). The basic text sticks fairly closely to the original unit, but (in addition to the necessary updating) it considerably expands the biography, and adds new discussions of the sea-serpent symbol in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, of MacDiarmid's water imagery in general, of "The Gaelic Muse and Epic Art", and of the later "poetry of fact" which received a bare mention in the 1976 book. All this is interesting and helpful. (Unfortunately a fair number of misprints and misspellings have crept in. "This book was written on a word processor", we are told. Hm.)

How important is MacDiarmid? Watson points out that although the poet gained much recognition and many honours in the last years of his life, this seemed to happen everywhere except in England. His work "was granted less status and almost no serious analysis whatsoever, from critics and literary historians in

England, and this situation has still not changed very much". Indeed it has not, despite the fact that the poet has a few English champions scattered here and there. A Scottish reviewer need not tell readers of a Welsh magazine that we sometimes have problems with the English. In MacDiarmid's case, Watson suggests several causes of the reluctance of the English literary establishment to take this writer to their hearts: "his use of Scots, his nationalism and his communism, have all, at different times, seemed like good reasons for mentioning his 'importance' before passing on to other things". This triple self-disadvantaging by a poet not known for making accommodations to either the ignorant or the inimical cannot be washed away, and can be dealt with only through the exercising of a little patience and goodwill. The rewards are surely there.

The language of a poem like 'On an Ill-Faur'd Star' (on an ugly or scurvy-looking star) seems equally to repel and to attract—repel because of lexical unfamiliarities, attract because the vigorous sound-effects and suggestion of bizarrely compressed meaning make one want to know what is really happening to the words that are clear: mountains, trees, seas, land, time. The fact that a Scottish dictionary has obviously been open at the letter R (ribie, roostin, rimpin, riach, ringle-een) will either repel or attract according to the linguistic interests of the reader.

Far aff the bawsunt mountins jirk
Their kaims o' ribie trees.
Like howlets roostin' roon' about
Are a' the seas.

Ae rimpin i' the riach lan'
Glowers at the lift revure:
An' yont its muckle ringle-een
Time scuds like stour.

Watson comments:

The landscape of this poem is portentously, even violently, animated and the rough, alliterative Scots gives it an added harshness. The mountains are streaked with white (snow), like the white on the face of animals and they 'jerk' the trees on them like a cock shaking its wattles. The seas screech all around like owls. The only truly living thing here is a starved and wall-eyed cow which glares at the sky while Time lashes past like dust in a storm. The animate and inanimate interpenetrate to such an extent in this poem that the cow and the mountains seem equally

active components of a tormented and Gothic world. In fact, every aspect of this 'ill-faur'd' place has been steeped in the poet's own sense of dread and unfocused intensity.

This comment is perceptive and original, and comes in the context of a useful discussion of MacDiarmid's "expressionism" of the 1920s. Whether it will persuade those who take a revue view of riach rimpins, or perhaps catch a whiff of Cold Comfort Farm not too far away, is another matter. The latter objection is really taken care of by the fact that MacDiarmid's deliberate employment of the grotesque includes an element of wild black humour as well as anything more portentous. For the former objection, based possibly on a (mistaken) belief that the Scots words are mere alternatives to well-known English words, the only appeal would be to the reader's admission that an adventurous strangeness must always be a part of poetry, and may demand the tribute of a jolt to the sensibilities.

If the problem is one of politics ("What matters't wha we kill?" in order to produce communism) or of fact and science as opposed to lyricism ("Or in cut-gem clearness surpass even Huxley's/Prose account of the endophragmal system of the crayfish"—something poetry ought to do), each poem or passage has to be taken on its merits and has also to be fitted into any overall pattern that the whole *oeuvre* presents. MacDiarmid loved paradox and the play of opposites, but this does not mean that he does not express strongly held beliefs which can challenge any reader's tolerance. Watson can frankly say that the chilling Stalinist directness of "What does it matter who we kill?" loses his assent, even if it comes in a context (in "First Hymn to Lenin") where the 1917 revolution in Russia is seen against a background of cosmic evolution that is even richer in death, and where the old ends v. means dilemma is at least not shirked, since the executions are done "To lessen that foulest murder that deprives/Maist men o' real lives". What may be unacceptable as statement or argument, however, can overcome all resistance when imagery is employed, especially in the imaginative and magisterial "The Skeleton of the Future":

Red granite and black diorite, with the blue
Of the labradorite crystals gleaming like
precious stones
In the light reflected from the snow; and
behind them
The eternal lightning of Lenin's bones.

Watson's comment that in poems like that he can "understand what Leninism means to MacDiarmid" and can accede to the fascination gives the right defence; the suspension of disbelief in communism, if one has that disbelief, is willing.

In some other examples, there might be argument. Watson gives the highest praise to "The Seamless Garment" as one of the few poems to "combine successfully both polemic and poetry", but this is perhaps an over-comfortable judgment. The poem can seem rather bland and paternalistic in its attitude to the mill-workers, and its Marxism seems dubious at best. The neatness of the poem is attractive, but what would happen to that neatness if the low-paid mill-workers were advised, as they are absolutely not, to strike for better pay? It is a poem which in my experience has great appeal but over the years (and to use an economic metaphor) yields diminishing returns.

As for the "poetry of fact and science", with its long catalogues, its extraordinary range of reference, its plagiarism (or intertextualization!), its awesome vistas and baffling details, Watson rightly refuses to give it the statutory rejection it still receives in some quarters, and probes it in a way that most readers will find helpful. A central interest in language itself, "both the world-as-language and language-as-the-world", combines with an insatiable and optimistic desire to bring non-art and art together, with all the troublesome multiplicities information cannot but add to culture, to deliver a truly remarkable poetry in a "selfless and timeless epic mode", post-metaphor, prosimile, anti-irony, non-alienated, all-embracing, and perhaps endless.

EDWIN MORGAN

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Samuel Beckett: Nayman of Noland,
RICHARD ELLMANN.

Library of Congress, 1986, free.

The thirty or so pages of this pamphlet makes available a lecture by Richard Ellmann delivered at the Library of Congress on 16 April 1985 in anticipation and celebration of Beckett's eightieth birthday on 13 April 1986. The good offices of the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Poetry and

Literature Fund have extended beyond the sponsoring of the lecture to its publication in an edition of two thousand copies notable for a cool elegance of production in terms of paper quality and typographical standard which does great credit to the pamphlet's designers. Half a dozen photographs enhance the presentation further (including Beckett as a schoolboy; as a young man; with Buster Keaton; and the last page of the manuscript of *Waiting for Godot*). The pamphlet, moreover, is available free of charge from the Library of Congress, Central Services Division, Washington, D.C. 20540. This particular lecture is only one of a series available free of charge by such writers as Mark Van Doren, Stephen Spender, Anthony Hecht, Karl Shapiro, Allen Tate, A. Walton Litz—and indeed Richard Ellmann, who has previously contributed on Wilde, Yeats and Joyce.

The latter three writers provide Ellmann with an intertextual matrix for reading Beckett. Ellmann's title, *Nayman of Noland*, is itself taken from *Finnegans Wake* and sets the note for the enterprise of cross-reference and analogy which characterizes—but does not oppress—the lecture. The force of the intertextual enterprise emerges in the contention that Beckett's writings cause the works of his predecessors to take on "a different aspect". Beckett's Irishness is necessarily reasserted, despite the claims on his nationality from both France and Noland, but the corollary to this is an emphasis upon that experience of cultural dislocation paralleled in the careers of Wilde, Yeats and Joyce. In turn Ellmann explores Beckett's links with each of his predecessors, such links appearing occasionally unsurprising, sometimes most surprising. To take in *De Profundis* and *Krapp's Last Tape* in the same sweep of the eye could hardly not be thought-provoking.

What is singularly apparent is that Richard Ellmann here proves himself as much a master of the telescope as he is of the microscope; writing for an audience which may or may not be already well informed on the subject of Beckett, his stylishness re-clothes the familiar with interest while his capacity for phrase-making offers fresh formulations: "The urge to write seized him convulsively rather than on some Trollopian schedule", "Beckett has encouraged us to think of his life not as a well-filled chronicle but as a patch of dark colour"; "He acquired the courage, that Baudelaire prayed for, to contemplate his own nature without disgust"; "To say no in thunder is one thing, to say no in vaudeville is another".

Plans are afoot to issue revised versions of Ellmann's lectures on Wilde, Yeats, Joyce and Beckett in a book to be called *Four Dubliners* which will be available later this year.

Reading Poetry: A Contextual Introduction,
JOHN WILLIAMS.

Edward Arnold, 1985, £3.95 (paperbound).

This is a little book of admirable clarity and firmness of purpose. Pillaging the usual publishers' categories might unearth a label describing this as a publication aimed at sixth-form and first-year higher-education students of English. Such a description would not be wrong, but would risk complacency in a number of ways—a complacency which the author certainly does not share. John Williams recognizes that "reading poetry" is a minority occupation, and that it may even be so among students of English who would, were it not for the examination syllabus, rather be doing something else. If he is indeed writing for the audience I mention, he does not do so with any comfortable assurance of having a responsive (or even a captive) audience. His acknowledgement of this state of affairs runs to the blunt concession that "comparatively few people read poetry by choice"; his implied audience runs to the figure of "the reluctant student of literature" seeking "alleviation" of the "unpleasant task" of reading poetry. For John Williams, Coleridge's Ancient Mariner is notable for his problems in securing an audience willing to listen, and he finds himself—like the modern poet—in a similar situation. Yet if this acknowledgement is depressing for the academic reader over the author's shoulder, it is a tactic on which Williams can be seen to build subtly. Confronted with a frank, even pessimistically overstated, assessment of his own situation as poetry-reader, and being led to understand that situation as to some extent culturally induced, the student is drawn into understanding other historical contexts of poetry and its reading. While all poetry may initially be distant to the modern student, Williams explores how questions of distance and closeness between writer and audience are perennially present in acts of writing. For the ideal reader of this book, an apprehension of distance may cease to be a matter of absolute alienation and instead take on the colour of cultural relativity, a relativity capable of at least being put into perspective through

knowledge and sympathy. Exclusion from poetry may not necessarily be replaced by a discovery of inclusion but perhaps, at least, by an imaginative projection of the self into the role of included reader. The student is enticed: the poetry of Adrian Mitchell offers its services here alongside that of Tennyson and Shakespeare. The delights of Edwin Morgan's "Pomander" are not easily rejected. Close formalist reading is reassuringly deployed by the author, as also is a sense of context in terms of the resonance of transitory cultural reference-points used by poets. But what is principally offered the student in this book is a sense of the different conditions through time which shape writing and reading from the age of the sonnet through to *vers libre*. Understanding his own place in that succession of conditions could amount to a significant liberation for the student: in order to possess what one does not possess, an awareness of dis-possession may be a promising route.

The Future of the Word,
Edited by JOHN OSMOND.

Welsh Union of Writers, 1985.

The Welsh Union of Writers was founded in 1982, seeking to provide a forum and pressure-group for "all writers in and of Wales who work through the English language". Its primary objectives include "bringing constant pressure to bear for more public money to be spent on the literary media and arts, and encouraging more business sponsorship", as well as seeking "to reorganise the Writers on Tour Scheme and the residencies programme". Further information about the Union—and how to join it—is available from Nigel Jenkins, 124 Overland Road, Mumbles, Swansea, SA3 4EU.

This publication doubles as the Union's 1984/5 *Register* and as a presentation of its first Annual Conference in 1984. (A second conference, anticipated here by Duncan Bush's article, took place in 1985 on the subject of censorship.) John Osmond's preface traces the formation of the Union as a response to the disappearance of *Arcade* in 1982 and as an expression of the continuing felt need for a magazine. The resurrection of *Planet* is an event very much in the minds of contributors as they write, and, reading between the lines, by no means an uncontroversial one.

Variation in tone and focus characterizes the contributions as a whole. John Morgan reports on the nuts-and-bolts politics of the formation of the Union and its uneasy relationship with the Welsh Arts Council—particularly over the Peter-and-Paul problem of finance for magazines *or* bursaries. Robin Reeves is also at the coal-face of cultural politics in recounting the Union's negotiations with the Council and its Literature Committee in his article "The Patronage State in Action—Welsh Style". John Tripp narrows his eyes to take in the experience of the life—indeed the spirit—of the Harlech conference, displaying his characteristic blend of humour, acerbity and battle-hardened distrust of academics, bureaucrats and mandarins of all kinds. As spokesman for the poor bloody infantry of the Union Tripp's piece is rich in character-sketches. He also joins others in contributing poems to the publication (some of which have since appeared in, for example, *Planet* and *Poetry Wales*). Anthony Conran Steve Griffiths, Terry Hetherington, Jaci Stephen, Janet Dubé and Duncan Bush (with his fine "Summer 1984") are represented. Sadly, as this notice goes to press, news of John Tripp's death must also be recorded. Welsh writing loses a loved poetic voice and a character larger than life.

The theme of the conference is pursued in a more wide-ranging fashion by John Arden, Owen Dudley Edwards and Dafydd Elis Thomas. Arden probes the pathology of the corruption of the word in western culture from the ideal state of affairs described in the first verse of St John's Gospel to a modern Orwellian situation in which the appropriation and obfuscation of language becomes the instrument of power-seeking and strategies of domination. (Strange, in this context, that Arden should take so much exception to the recent penetration of literary-critical discourse by the idea of "hegemony" when the term is concerned to describe the very processes of domination which exercise his anger. Edwards's highlighting of the dangers of a complacent consolation in theory at the expense of action is, however, salutary.) If there is much that is dispiriting in this volume—expressions of powerlessness, records of exclusion, perceptions of manipulation and domination through the word—the Welsh Union of Writers is clearly a kind of action.

P.M.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

STEPHEN BANN is Reader in Modern Cultural Studies at the University of Kent at Canterbury. His recent publications include *Heroic Emblems* (with Ian Hamilton Finlay) (1977); *The Clothing of Clio* (1984); and a special number of *Word and Image* on "Painting as Sign", I, ii (1985).

ANGELA BLAEN tutors part-time in English at the University of Exeter where she recently obtained her Ph.D. on West Country Authors and Folklore. Her publications include *Devon's Sacred Grove* (Toucan, 1983).

DEREK BRYCE has held research posts at the Universities of Sheffield and Reading, and has lectured at the University of Reading and North East London Polytechnic. He currently works in West Wales as writer, translator and publisher. His most recent translations include L. Wieger's *Wisdom of the Daoist Masters* (Llanerch, 1984) and F. M. Luzel's *Celtic Folk-Tales from Armorica* (Llanerch, 1985).

GLEN CAVALIERO, a member of the Faculty of English at the University of Cambridge, is the author of *John Cowper Powys, Novelist* (O.U.P., 1973), *The Rural Tradition in the English Novel, 1900-1939* (Macmillan, 1977), *A Reading of E. M. Forster* (Macmillan, 1979) and *Charles Williams, Poet of Theology* (Macmillan, 1983). His latest publication is an edition of Beatrix Potter's *Journals* (Warne, 1986).

BERNARD CRICK has held chairs in Politics at the University of Sheffield and Birkbeck College. He is author of *The American Science of Politics, Political Theory and Practice*, and *George Orwell: A Life*. Joint Editor of *Political Quarterly* from 1965-80, he has also been a frequent contributor to the *Observer*, *New Statesman* and *Guardian*. His world-wide lecture-tour in 1984, which included visiting Lampeter, is reflected in his contribution to *George Orwell & Nineteen Eighty Four: The Man and the Book* and in a recent essay in *Granta*.

T. J. DIFFEY is a Reader in Philosophy at the University of Sussex. He is the editor of *The British Journal of Aesthetics* and has published articles in, among other periodicals, the *British Journal*, the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* and *Ratio*. He is the author of *Tolstoy's 'What is Art?'* (Croom Helm, 1985).

DAFYDD HUW EVANS lectures in Welsh at Saint David's University College, Lampeter. He has written on the Welsh outlaw Twm Siôn Cati and has edited the works of a number of poets of the *cywydd* period; his articles have appeared in *Studia Celtica*, the *National*

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