

Deeps and Shallows

A Voyage with John Cowper Powys

Companions on life's twisting track,
Bent on fraught Borrovian quests,
Barnacles borne on your storm-tossed hulk,
We sail the same seas you brave,
Though soundings sometimes disconcert us.
Now the hurricane echoes pagan frenzies,
Now becalmed we see the bladderwrack float by,
Seek wisdom in the star-flecked sky.

Surging through the Celtic mists,
We hail galleons manned by motley crews,
Parley with them in quaint dialect
Or in crafted, donnish mode.
Barriers loom of class and age
As Curly enchants her doting sage.

Ancestral voices haunt the bellying sails,
A watchful chorus on the scene below,
Where ancient mariners mouth curious tales
Of feuds, the Grail, and lovers' woe,
Hobnob with spirits drawn from Greece and Rome,
Scan the pullulating Multiverse.
So the golden moments flow,
Dripping sap from Yggdrasil.

Their message, beyond the range of tongues,
Seethes in deeps that are closed to speech.
Yet the bard nears Truth in his orations.
So we make harbour, reach a gentler coast,
Where Wolf can sip his cup of tea,
Find comfort in his buttered toast.

But the final destination stays unknown.
The terminus keeps silence.
It has no answer phone.

Cedric Hentschel, *Less Simple Measures* (Garratt Publishing, 2002)

Dr Cedric Hentschel lectured in the universities of London, Innsbruck, Breslau and Uppsala before joining the overseas service of the British Council. A specialist of German Literature and of Byronic studies, he has also written many articles on JCP, and edited *Powys to Eric the Red*, 'The Letters of Powys to Sven Eric Täckmark', Cecil Woolf, 1983, as well as *Powys on Keats*, C. Woolf, 1993.