

Editorial

At last year's end and the beginning of 2018 the Society lost three valued members. Gilfrid Powys, son of Will, the brother who took the family to Africa, was killed on 27th December 2017 by an elephant on his ranch in Kenya. And his sister Rose Dyer, last of the children of the eleven Powys siblings, died at her Kenyan farm on February 6th. Nearer to home, Chris Wilkinson, son of Oliver, grandson of Louis Wilkinson and Frances Gregg, died on 11th January 2018, in hospital, after a short battle with cancer. We include an account of the memorial service for Gilfrid, an obituary of Gilfrid published in the *Daily Telegraph*, and a brief tribute to Chris that will be extended next time; with sympathy to the families from all in the Society.

JCP and *Wolf Solent* emerges as a main theme in this edition. The 1930 review by Max Brod (friend of Kafka) sees Wolf's romanticism as an antidote to the false romanticism of the political extremes then coming to power. *Wolf Solent* is a favourite JCP book that has been much written about. One recent example is an essay by a new member, Mark Hudson.

Also included is the report in *PJ* 2003 of Chris Woodhead's talk at the 2002 conference (the full version is in his book of essays – see **News and Notes**).

Jacqueline Peltier reports on a meeting in Brittany with Christine Jordis, a writer on Blake, and quoter of JCP in her own book, *Automnes*, on the Art of Growing Old.

The December meeting in Hampstead dealt with JCP's *Religion of a Sceptic*, first published in 1925. Excerpts from the book give the flavour of this early work and its ideas which followed in the next decades.

KK

Donations continue to come to the Powys Society collection in Exeter. Five original letters, written by Phyllis Playter on behalf of JCP and sent to the author and literary editor Neville Braybrooke between 1959 and 1962, have been presented to the Society by a member of Neville Braybrooke's family. This is reported in **News and Notes**, and we have reprinted Braybrooke's warm and generous tribute on the occasion of JCP's 90th birthday, first published in the *Sunday Telegraph*, alongside an interesting letter to the *Telegraph* from Symon Gould, who once played a significant role in the lives of JCP and Llewelyn.

CT

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Two Powys Days

Ely, Saturday 28 April 2018

Aspects of *A Glastonbury Romance*

Kevin Taylor will lead a discussion of *A Glastonbury Romance* Chapter 15, *Mark's Court*, with a discussion of the character of Cordelia as she appears in selected passages throughout the novel.

According to his diary JCP started Chapter 15 of *A Glastonbury Romance* in early January 1931: *Wrote my Mark's Moor Court chapter about Mr Geard in Merlin's chamber and Lady Rachel and all. This is because the T.T. required a certain element of Romance which so far had not appeared among the solid bourgeois characters of this book!* (diary, 7 January 1931) This is one of JCP's 'clue' chapters providing some deep insights into Mr Geard's complex identity and his unorthodox Christian beliefs. The chapter, which is set on Easter Day, has been called by one critic, *one of the great climaxes of the book*. Our President, Glen Cavaliero, has also described Mr Geard as *one of JCP's supreme creations* – a judgement which is perfectly demonstrated in this chapter. It is also a chapter which demonstrates JCP's genius for comedy and irony. Our discussion will give us an opportunity to look in detail at JCP's ability, through the figure of Mr Geard, to evoke the shifting margins of human consciousness and how this affects his character's perceptions of the world. We will examine the significance of Mr Geard's apparent encounter with the supernatural, the meaning of his *Christ supported nature*, his powers of psychic projection, his double nature – he blesses the unquiet spirit in the haunted room of King Mark: *Christ have mercy on you*, yet JCP also refers to the *diabolic intensity of his dark eyes*; also Mr Geard's sudden sense of illumination and his recognition of the Grail at the conclusion of the chapter. We will look at how JCP realises his intention for Mr Geard as outlined in his diary: *Mr Geard must think of the secret of real life beyond the spectacular world*. Other diary entries in early January 1931 (see the complete diary published by Jeffrey Kwintner in 1990) provide some very useful references to the evolution of JCP's ideas about Mr Geard.

In our discussion of **Cordelia as a character**, we will examine some selected passages about Cordelia throughout the whole book, referring to JCP's psychological insights into her personality: for instance, in **Chapter 7**, 'Carbonek', the scene on Chalice Hill and at the great oaks; in **Chapter 25**, 'Conspiracy', the scene of Cordelia's marriage to Owen Evans where she overhears the murder plot discussed in the ruined chantry; and in **Chapter 29**, 'The Iron Bar', the scene in which she exorcises a worm.

Kevin Taylor joined the Powys Society in 2014 and became a committee member in 2017. A publisher by profession (at Cambridge University Press), he has an interest in rights and publication issues, with a particular mission to help bring about e-book

editions of JCP's Wessex novels. His account of how he came to Powys can be found in NL No 88.

A comprehensive reading list, with page references, of selected passages about Cordelia has been prepared by Kevin Taylor and can be provided in advance of the meeting to help aid discussion. Please contact Hon. Secretary for a copy of the reading list if you wish to attend the meeting.

The meeting will take place at **The Old Fire Engine House**, restaurant and art gallery, at 25 St Mary's Street, Ely, which is located near the Cathedral. We will meet in the upstairs sitting room at **10.30** for coffee and welcome. Discussion of Chapter 15 will begin at **11.00**. **Lunch**, which is optional, will be available from **12.00 to 13.00**. We will recommence our discussion after lunch with a study of Cordelia as a character.

Saturday 7 July 2018

The Library, Dorset County Museum, Dorchester

At **10.30 for 11.00** start, **Ray Crozier** will present an illustrated talk on 'The Powyses and Patchin Place, New York'. Refreshments will be provided. Ray will look at JCP's relationships with Phyllis, Llewelyn, Alyse Gregory, and Gamel Woolsey during his five year residence at Patchin Place as well as the wider historical background of this locality of New York, including the social and cultural context of Patchin Place, its place in the history of New York bohemian artistic and literary life in the 1920s, and its significance in JCP's biography as a place of refuge and retreat for writing. Ray will also refer to other neighbours, writers, friends, colleagues and relatives who either made visits to the Powyses or were residents there. There are memorable descriptions of Patchin Place in JCP's *Autobiography*, *An Englishman Upstate*, *Farewell to America*, JCP's letters to Phyllis and Llewelyn and in his short story *The Owl, the Duck, and Miss Rowe*, *Miss Rowe!* Members may also wish to consult *We Lived in Patchin Place* by Boyne Grainger, edited by Tony Head, a useful booklet in the Powys Heritage series, published by Cecil Woolf in 2002. See also Patrick Quigley's article on Patchin Place in *la lettre powysienne*, No 19, printemps 2010.

Ray Crozier is a Society member, Honorary Professor in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University and visiting Fellow in the School of Social Work and Psychology at the University of East Anglia.

After **lunch at 2.00pm**, **John Williams** will lead a discussion entitled 'First Impressions: A Parallel Reading of two short stories', 'Nor Iron Bars' by T.F. Powys, and 'A Friend in Need' by W. Somerset Maugham. John asks, *Have you ever been caught out (for better or for worse) by discovering that your first impression of someone was ill-informed?* He says that 'Nor Iron Bars' and 'A Friend in Need' are

very different stories by two very different kinds of writer. What these stories have in common is the way they set out to surprise us with unexpected and thought-provoking aspects of the characters of their major protagonists, Joseph Turvey (TFP) and Edward Hyde Burton (Somerset Maugham). By sharing our responses to these stories we will be able to appreciate ways in which both writers are masters of the genre. We may also discover that Powys and Maugham have more in common than we might first have thought. Although you may end up with a preference for one or other of these stories, the intention is not to decide which is best, they are too different for that to be helpful!

TFP's story 'Nor Iron Bars' was first published in the collection called *The House with the Echo* in 1928. Somerset Maugham's story has a more complicated history. It was written under the title 'A Friend in Need' in 1924 and published in Hearst's *International Magazine combined with Cosmopolitan* in April 1925 (USA) and in *Nash's Magazine* (UK) in August 1925 under the title 'The Man Who Wouldn't Hurt a Fly'. It subsequently appeared in book form in a collection of magazine stories called *Cosmopolitans* in 1936 under the original title of 'A Friend in Need'.

John has compiled a list of subjects for discussion at the meeting. If you would like a copy of this list please notify Hon Secretary who will also send you a pdf file of each story. 'A Friend in Need' is widely available in the *Collected Short Stories of Somerset Maugham*, Vol. 2, published by Vintage.

John Williams was Professor of literary studies at the University of Greenwich from 2006 until his recent retirement. He has published numerous articles on TFP which have appeared in past issues of the Newsletter, the Powys Review and the Powys Journal. John has written a biography of Wordsworth as well as books on English poetry. He presented talks on TFP at our conferences in 1995 and 2004 and led a TFP study day in Dorchester in 2005. John was editor of the Powys Journal between 1997 and 1999 and was Chairman of the Powys Society in 2000/2001.

Both events are **free** and **everyone is welcome**. A charge will be made for optional lunch at Ely and Dorchester. A contribution towards the cost of light refreshments at both events would be very much appreciated. If you plan to attend either or both of these events please **notify Hon. Secretary** in advance.

Chris Thomas

Committee Nominations

Nominations are invited for **Honorary Officers** and **Members** of the Powys Society committee to take effect from August 2018.

All paid-up members, including Honorary members, are entitled to submit nominations for the committee. Nominations must include the name of the **Proposer** and the **Secunder** and should be submitted in writing, or by e-mail, including a statement confirming the **Nominee's agreement**.

Nominations should be sent to the Hon. Secretary by e-mail to chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk or by post to 87 Ledbury Road, London W11 2AG.

Nominations must be received by **Friday 1 June 2018**.

Current Honorary Officers of the Powys Society committee are:

<i>Chairman</i>	Timothy Hyman
<i>Vice-Chairman</i>	David Goodway
<i>Secretary</i>	Chris Thomas
<i>Treasurer</i>	Robin Hickey

Nominations are sought for the **four** positions of the **Honorary Officers** from August 2018.

Current **members** of the Powys Society committee are: **Kate Kavanagh** (*Newsletter editor*) and **Dawn Collins** (both of whose 3 year term of service expires in August 2018); **John Hodgson**, **Michael Kowalewski** (*Collection Liaison Officer*) and **Kevin Taylor**, (who have 2 years to run of their 3 year term of service); and **Louise de Bruin** (*Publications Manager and Conference organiser*) who has one year to run of her three year term of service. **Jacqueline Peltier** continues to serve as honorary committee member; **Anna Rosic** (*joint conference organiser*) serves as co-opted member of the committee and **Charles Lock** (editor of the *Powys Journal*) serves as *ex-officio* member of the committee.

Nominations are sought for **two** vacant positions on the **committee** from August 2018.

AGM 2018

This gives notice that the **Annual General Meeting** of The Powys Society will be held at 11.00am on Sunday 12th August at the Wessex Hotel, Street, near Glastonbury.

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

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

The Powys Society Conference, 2018

The Wessex Hotel, Street, nr Glastonbury

Friday 10th to Sunday 12th August

‘A wild activity of thoughts’

In *A Glastonbury Romance*, Mr Geard declares, *Thought is a real thing. It is a live thing; it creates; it destroys; it begets ...*. Mr Geard seems to reflect JCP’s own conception in *Autobiography* that *Thoughts are of the utmost importance and have the power of projecting impalpable eidola*. The title of this year’s conference, which has been adapted from one of Coleridge’s letters to his friend Tom Wedgwood, is intended to convey the intensity of the creative lives of JCP, TFP, and Llewelyn. There is indeed much passion, wisdom and humour, as well as thinking, in all the writings of the Powyses. The mysterious transition from inner thought and idea to concrete word and image is a repeated theme that will be explored in the talks at this year’s conference as well as at our earlier Ely and Dorchester meetings. Our conference speakers will focus on specific works by JCP, as well as TFP and Llewelyn, to elicit the primacy of thinking and imaginative forces in their writing, and also closely scrutinise the structure and meaning of individual passages and paragraphs in the fiction and non-fiction of the Powyses. **Charles Lock** will analyse some key passages in the chapter *Maundy Thursday* in *A Glastonbury Romance* and will discuss differing responses to JCP’s style of writing; **Anthony O’Hear** will examine questions of illusion and reality, including the relation of the subjective mind to objective reality in *Wolf Solent*; **Nicholas Birns** will delve deeply into selected passages in works by JCP, TFP and Llewelyn; and **Taliesin Gore** will present the findings of his undergraduate dissertation on ideas about pan-psychism in *Wolf Solent* and *A Glastonbury Romance*.

On Saturday afternoon, there will be an opportunity to explore places associated with *A Glastonbury Romance* that are located within easy walking distance from the centre of Glastonbury. Ray Cox has devised a guided tour of the town visiting places named in the novel, including the Tor, with readings *in situ* at each place. Alternatively members can either begin at Stonedown, following in the footsteps of the Dekkers, or take a tour by car to Pennard Lane, and Redlake Farm, and then join a guided walk to Whitelake river, ‘*the marshlands of Queen’s Sedgmoor*’, and the possible location of Whitelake Cottage, near a tow path and small river weir, which are all described in chapter 5 of *A Glastonbury Romance*. Members will be provided with local maps and a list of references to the readings.

On Saturday evening we have arranged a panel discussion of *A Glastonbury Romance*. The event, chaired by Timothy Hyman, will include short presentations by Paul Cheshire, John Hodgson and Anthony O’Hear. Members are invited to participate in the discussion and contribute their views of JCP’s novel.

Giles Dawson, the son of the artist, sculptor, and poet, Patricia Vaughan Dawson (1925-2013), has organised a small display of his mother’s sculptures, prints and coloured

etchings, inspired by JCP's novels, which can be viewed during the course of Sunday. Giles will also present a short introduction to Patricia's work after the AGM on Sunday morning. The works on display will include Patricia's illustrations to *The Brazen Head* and *Porius*. Some of these works have been reproduced in the *Powys Society Newsletter*, No 33, and in articles in the *Powys Review*, Nos 4 and 21.

The book room will be open, at selected times, so please bring your donations for the book sale which will be very much appreciated.

Chris Thomas

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Friday 10th August

- 16.00 Arrival
- 17.30 Reception
- 18.30 Dinner
- 20.00 **Charles Lock**: 'What happens when we read JCP?'

Saturday 11th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Anthony O'Hear**: 'Solent Solipsist – an interpretation of *Wolf Solent*'
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.15 **Nicholas Birns**: 'Close-Reading the Powyses'
- 13.00 Lunch
- Afternoon free – optional guided walks to places associated with *A Glastonbury Romance*
- 19.00 Dinner
- 20.30 A panel discussion of *A Glastonbury Romance*, chaired by Timothy Hyman, with Paul Cheshire, John Hodgson & Anthony O'Hear and the participation of members

Sunday 12th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Taliesin Gore**: 'Pan-psychism in *Wolf Solent* and *A Glastonbury Romance*'
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.00 AGM
- 12.00 **Giles Dawson**: 'Introduction to the art of Patricia Dawson and the inspiration of JCP'
- 13.00 Lunch
- 15.00 Departure

THE SPEAKERS

Charles Lock is Professor of English Literature at the University of Copenhagen. He is the editor of the *Powys Journal* and *ex-officio* member of the Powys Society committee. He has been a regular contributor to Powys Society conferences since 1978, and last gave a presentation at our conference in 2013 in Llangollen on ‘*Wolf Solent* and World Literature’. Charles organised a symposium at the University of Copenhagen, January 26-27, 2018, dedicated to Patrick Leigh Fermor (1915-2011), author of *Mani*, *Roumeli* and *A Time of Gifts*. The symposium was attended by the Queen of Denmark and her sister, formerly the Queen of Greece. Charles’s talk was on Leigh Fermor’s distinction in Greek culture between the Hellenic and the Romaic. In February Charles was invited to give a series of lectures in Moscow, and in March he will speak on ‘the idea of the apocryphal’ at a symposium in Bad Homburg. In April he will take part in a symposium on the *topos* of the beach in European literature, making much of *Weymouth Sands*, and in May he will speak on bones, skulls and ashes, with particular reference to JCP and James Purdy – whose correspondence he co-edited in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXIII.

In his talk Charles Lock will make a detailed examination of selected paragraphs from a chapter of *A Glastonbury Romance*. Charles reflects that *We who are gathered here evidently enjoy reading John Cowper Powys, even to the end of A Glastonbury Romance. Why does not every reader respond to his writing as we do? To address this perplexing problem I shall take a paragraph or two, or three, from a single chapter of A Glastonbury Romance, ‘Maundy Thursday’.*

*

Anthony O’Hear is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Buckingham. He is Honorary Director of the Royal Institute of Philosophy and editor of the journal *Philosophy*. He is also co-editor of *The Fortnightly Review* and has been a special advisor to the government on education. Publications include: *Plato’s Children* (2006) and *The Great Books: From The Iliad and The Odyssey to Goethe’s Faust: A journey through 2,500 years of the West’s classic literature* (2007). Professor O’Hear presented a talk at the Powys Society conference in 2010 in Street on ‘A Philosophical Interpretation of *A Glastonbury Romance*’.

Anthony O’Hear’s subject at this year’s conference is *Wolf Solent*. ‘*According to Wolf Solent,*’ he says, ‘*there is no such thing as “reality” apart from the mind that looks at it ... no living thing has seen reality in itself.*’ Even stronger, *Wolf* also says that ‘*there is no reality but what the mind fashions out of itself. One of the things Wolf’s mind fashions is his mythology, his “life-illusion”.* So do we ever understand anything else? How might we be able to say that it is an illusion? Does *Wolf* contrast the illusion with “reality”, given that “reality” is what his mind fashions? How (to use his own mode of thinking) do we penetrate beneath the skulls of others? Can we? *Wolf* thinks that, in contrast to the passively childish-sensual Gerda Torp, Christie Malakite is a kindred spirit, but she admonishes him: “Everything that happens is only something to be fixed up in your own mind ... (yet) events are something outside any person’s mind.” How far does *Wolf* reach beyond his own mind? How successful is Powys

in resolving the contradictions in Wolf's character, and indeed in his own portrayal of Wolf's situation?'

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Nicholas Birns is Associate Professor at the Center for Applied Liberal Arts, New York University. He is the author of *Understanding Anthony Powell* (University of South Carolina Press, 2004). His *Theory After Theory: An Intellectual History of Literary Theory from 1950 to the Early 21st Century* appeared from Broadview in 2010. Other books include *Barbarian Memory: The Legacy of Early Medieval History in Early Modern Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), *Contemporary Australian Literature: A World Not Yet Dead*, (Sydney University Press, 2015). His co-edited *Options for Teaching Australian and New Zealand Literature* was published by the MLA in 2017. He has contributed to *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Hollins Critic*, *Exemplaria*, *MLQ*, and *Partial Answers*. Nicholas Birns gave a talk at the 2015 conference in Llangollen on *J.C. Powys's radical medievalism: Porius and Owen Glendower*.

Nicholas says that '*Close reading is a literary strategy focusing on scrupulous, minute examination of the actual text of the literary work, focusing on concrete touchstones, phrases, words, or motifs. It is perhaps more often talked about as a strategy than actually performed in literary criticism, but it is still an invaluable reading tool. Both because of the Powys brothers' commitment to provocative and expansive subject matter, and in the case of JCP's novels, their voluminous and crowded plots, close reading has not been dominant in Powys criticism. This presentation will close-read passages of all three brothers, including passages from Wood and Stone, Weymouth Sands, The Art of Happiness, Unclay, Ebony and Ivory and Somerset Essays, in order to canvas how and whether the concrete pattern of their words matter. But, given the interest of the Powys brothers in place, we will also assay another dimension of close reading: as a palpable, observant response to place. In comparing JCP's and Llewelyn's embrace of a focused attachment to place as well as Theodore's existential rejection of place, we will see if close reading, in the first, verbal sense, can entail a more precise and nuanced close reading, in the geographical sense.*'

*

Taliesin Gore is currently taking his MA in English Literary Studies at the University of Exeter, where, last summer, he wrote his undergraduate dissertation on the subject of pan-psychism in JCP's philosophy and fiction. Taliesin plans to further his study of JCP in his MA dissertation this summer. '*For John Cowper Powys*', says Taliesin, '*the "material" world was simply the outward manifestation of a primary psychic reality. The world his novels depict is not simply permeated by the psychic. It is essentially psychic; or, to borrow JCP's own phrasing, everything is "personality". Within philosophy, this position is known as pan-psychism. Nowhere in literature has the idea been realised so fully as in JCP's novels, Wolf Solent and A Glastonbury Romance. This talk will examine the different roles played by pan-psychism in these novels.*'

In Memoriam
Christopher Umfreville Wilkinson
1941-2018

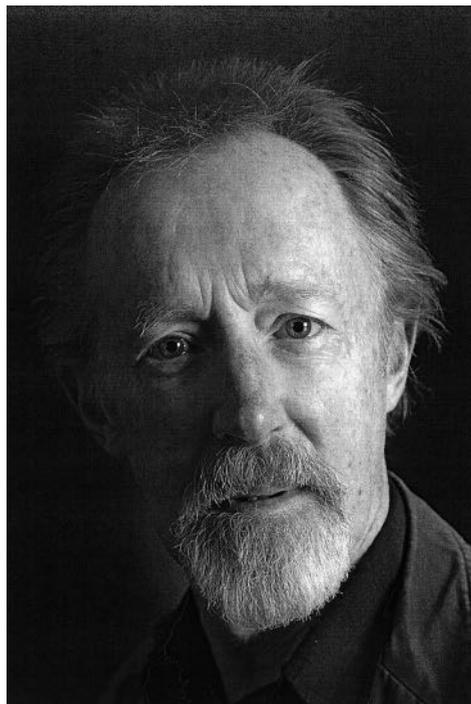
Chris Wilkinson died on Thursday 11 January 2018. The news of Chris's unexpected death will shock and sadden many members of the Powys Society. He represented a direct link with the generation of JCP. He was the grandson of Louis Umfreville Wilkinson (1881-1966) and **Frances Gregg** (1885-1941), and the son of Oliver Marlow Wilkinson (1915-1999). Oliver was a pillar (or guardian angel) of the Powys Society as Chris also was. Chris will be greatly missed as both a friend and colleague.

We hope to publish a full obituary in the July *Newsletter*. In the meantime we include some happy memories of his contributions to the Powys Society.

For over 10 years Chris organised 'entertainments' for our annual conferences, based on skilfully adapted selections from the diaries, letters and unpublished works of the Powyses and their friends. Much of this material came from the Wilkinson family archive.

In 1994 (at Cirencester) he produced, with Oliver, a dramatised reading of JCP's 1905 play *The Entermores*. In 1995 (at Kingston Maurward) *Ghosts on the Roof* was dramatised from JCP's diary in Morine Krissdóttir's recently published *Petrushka and the Dancer*. This was followed in 1997 (at KM again) by: *The Powys Clowns – A Reading*, with Kate and P.J. Kavanagh joining the Wilkinsons; and in 1998 (also KM) *In Our Free Way – Readings from the Correspondence of Llewelyn Powys and Louis Wilkinson*, with the Wilkinsons and Christopher Kent. In 1999 (KM) Chris directed *Whispers of the White Death*, Peter Foss's 'play for voices' from Llewelyn's Clavadel diaries, which also featured Oliver Wilkinson.

Then, with Oliver gone, at Llangollen (first time) in 2003 Chris gave us *Lost to the Common World – Llewelyn, Alyse and Gamel*; and in 2004 at Sherborne school (only time) a dramatised sequence of words and music, written by Peter Foss, called *The Unreturning Morning – the Powyses at Sherborne*. In 2005, at Llangollen again, and again with Peter Foss, *Player Kings*



Chris Wilkinson

was a compendium from letters by Louis Wilkinson, Oliver Wilkinson, Frances Gregg, and JCP. In 2008 (Chichester) *The Bride Who Pays the Organist* was based on diaries and letters relating to the Gregg-Wilkinson marriage in 1912; and in 2010 at the Wessex Hotel, Street, with Louise de Bruin, came *The Untold Privilege: With Will in Africa*, the story in letters by the Powys sisters of visits made to their brother Will the Kenyan sheep farmer.

Chris often contributed articles and reviews to the Powys Society *Newsletter*, and the *Powys Journal* (Vol IX, 2009) published an article by him, 'These Honeysuckle Rogues – The Friendship of Llewelyn Powys and Louis Wilkinson'. In 1999 Chris produced an audio tape for the Powys Society of selections from the works of JCP, T.F. and Llewelyn Powys, read by Freddie Jones, Oliver Wilkinson and Christopher Kent. In collaboration with his father, Chris also collected, transcribed and edited the invaluable correspondence between JCP and Frances Gregg (2 volumes, published by Cecil Woolf in 1994).

Outside the Powys Society, Chris Wilkinson had a long and successful career in the theatre as an actor and stage director. He graduated with a BA Hons in drama from Bristol University in 1962 and later appeared in roles on TV in programmes such as *Jane Eyre*, *Coronation Street*, *Emmerdale*, *City Central*, *Hetty Waintrupp Investigates*, *Heartbeat*, and *Brookside*. He was a leading player in Yellow Leaf touring theatre productions in the north of England. He appeared in roles for other theatre companies in plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Blithe Spirit*, *An Inspector Calls*, *Jumpers*, *Equus*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Ghost Train*, *Macbeth*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *Death of a Salesman*. Chris toured with the RSC and also had wide experience performing in radio plays, story reading, as well as providing commercial voice-over parts. He was twice nominated for the *Manchester Evening News* Best Actor Award.

CT, with KK and PJJ

Tributes to Chris Wilkinson

I am truly sad. I liked him very much. He was a fine, sensitive being.

Timothy Hyman (Hon. Chairman)

Chris was one of the warmest and most generous and positive people I have ever known.

Tony Head

Chris Wilkinson was not only a living link with the Powysian past he was also a most valuable member of the Powys Society in his own right. He made a huge contribution to a number of the entertainments that we have traditionally arranged on Saturday evenings during our annual Conferences, and in himself he was a delightful companion and a shrewd and witty observer of human nature. I had hoped to enjoy his company for many more years, and I know that he will be much missed by many of us.

Richard Graves (Past Hon. Chairman)

I met Chris a few times and he was a delight.

Anna Rosic (Conference Organiser)

I am much saddened. I knew Chris Wilkinson a little, and he was always very kind to me. It is a most untimely demise, and I feel much sympathy for his wife and daughter.

Jacqueline Peltier (editor *la lettre powysienne*)

This is extremely sad. We had quite a long e-mail friendship, and he and Patrick, with theatre in common, got on famously. He was a very, very nice man, worthy of his father Oliver.

Kate Kavanagh (Newsletter editor)

I only met Chris Wilkinson once and this was very briefly but, over several years, I had many exchanges with him by letter and e-mail about the Powyses. He was very friendly, helpful, kind and very generous with his time. He always answered my numerous questions about Oliver and Louis as well as theatrical matters with patience and great courtesy.

Chris Thomas (Hon. Secretary)

Chris Wilkinson was such a lovely chap – a real loss. I so looked forward to seeing him again.

Frank Kibblewhite (Webmaster)

Chris Wilkinson still seems, in my mind, to be a very young man – probably largely because of knowing his father, Oliver. He remains in my memory as an enthusiastic and very able “‘young” actor’.

Sonia Lewis

I very much enjoyed Chris Wilkinson’s Conference ‘entertainments’. He was a vigorous and loyal tender of the family flame, and conveyed an impression of youthful energy and concentration into old age, because I think he was considerably older than he ever appeared.

John Hodgson (past Hon. Chairman)

Chris was an important contributor, with his own records and letters, to our knowledge of the Powyses. I would like to give one example from my own contacts with him. Just at the time when I was preparing my article for the next issue of the *Powys Journal* (Vol. XXVIII, 2018) on the really unknown photo of the Wedding Breakfast at Wapping of my grandparents Bertie Powys and Dorothy Powys in 1905, Chris found online a crucial piece of the jigsaw to unravel several puzzling features of the location of the photo in the pub, The Prospect of Whitby. This was an etching of the river scene around the pub with barges lying on the foreshore, dated 1903; nothing could have been closer in date and location. We progressed in an exchange and also discussed the rather strange assembly of those particular people celebrating the wedding ceremony. The photo is a remarkable survival, a miracle indeed, and I owe it to Chris that I could get so far with my exploration.

Stephen Powys Marks

I will greatly miss Chris’s kindness and sense of humour. Not one of my emails with a query stayed long without an answer that was helpful and full of fun.

Louise de Bruin

*If anyone would like to add to these tributes, please notify **Chris Thomas**.*

Memorial Service: Gilfrid Powys

From Julia Danaher, a friend of the Powys family in Kenya, to Louise de Bruin:

Gilfrid's Memorial Service was yesterday [20 January]. The service was remarkable. Very well attended with a variety of eulogies. He really was a greatly loved and admired individual and each speaker, from botanist Dino Martin; farmer Sean Outram; employee Brian Heath; Patricia's [*G.'s wife's*] nephew, Willie Potgieter; old colleague David Stanley; almost nephew Ian Craig and grandson Ciaran revealed how special and important their relationship with Gilfrid had been. Ciaran spoke the longest and gave a full and at times lyrical summary of Gilfrid's life, including a mention of the lows. Anne [*one of G.'s daughters*] and Michael [*G.'s oldest*] nephew said thank you to everyone at the end. Brilliant of Anne to be able to stand up there with a dry eye and to be the one woman who spoke. Nicky [*Michael's wife*] had chosen a few lines from John Cowper for the cover of the service sheet: 'Light the fire, put the candle in the window my dear; that all the souls of all the Dead may gather near. They are all equal. They are all good. Give them some candle light; they don't need food!' Little Elsa Dyer read from 'The Glory of Life' by Llewelyn right at the end. She did really well. It was chosen by Charlie [*G.'s youngest nephew and father of Elsa*]; I liked it, especially the lines 'For at the end of it all – what are we? A herd of dream cattle, images of breath, passing shadows that move swiftly across the world's pastures to a graveyard where, at a single clap, eternity is a day and a day is eternity.'



Gilfrid Powys on his ranch

Obituary

John Gilfrid Llewelyn Powys (15 January 1938 – 27 December 2017)

[This obituary was first published in the Daily Telegraph, on-line and printed version, on 15 January 2018. Another obituary also appeared in The Times on 6 February 2018.]

Gilfrid Powys, who has died aged 79 after being trampled to death by an elephant, was director of the 43,000 acre Suyian Ranch in northwest Likipia, Kenya, and a leading conservationist.

His family ties with Laikipia went back more than 100 years to 1914 when his father, William Powys, the 10th of 11 talented children of the Reverend Charles Francis Powys and his wife, Mary (his siblings included the authors John Cowper Powys, Theodore Powys and Llewelyn Powys), moved from the farm where he was working in Somerset to Kenya, where he found employment as a farm manager on Kekopey Ranch, bordering Lake Elementaita in the rift valley, 80 kilometres south west of Laikipia.

The ranch's owners then leased Suyian from the Kenya colonial government to provide alternative grazing for their sheep, which were suffering from tick-borne diseases at Kekopey. In 1920 William herded the sheep from Kekopey to Suyian and remained there for five years. He also took advantage of a soldier settlement scheme and got his own first parcel of land, Kisima Farm on the eastern slopes of Mount Kenya.

In the latter half of the 1920s he married Elizabeth (née Cross), the granddaughter of a viscount, who had served as an ambulance driver and nurse in Europe in the First World War, when she had won a Military medal after rescuing scores of people after a bomb scored a direct hit on the hospital in which she was working, blowing off the soles of her feet.

After the war she had taken advantage of a settlement scheme to become a cattle rancher in Kenya, where she entered a short-lived marriage to another cattle rancher, Alec Douglas.

She met William Powys while out hunting a rogue baboon that had been terrorising local livestock. She had lost her pistol scrambling after the animal and had no idea where it was until Powys, touring the area on horseback, came across it in a ravine and, spotting her in the distance, returned it to her. They started talking and ended up married.

Eventually William was able to buy his own land on the north west slopes of

Mount Kenya, where he and Elizabeth lived happily with Delia, her daughter by her previous marriage, and their three children, Rose, Charles and John Gilfrid Llewelyn, born on January 15, 1938.

In later life Gilfrid would tell stories of how, as a 12 year old boy, he would ride round the ranch on horseback, rifle in hand, to round the sheep and cattle or hunt lion or buffalo. As a young man he served in the Kenya regiment during the Mau Mau uprising. In 1963 William purchased Suyian Ranch, and shortly afterwards Gilfrid moved to the property to manage it.

Over time the ranch farmed cattle, some camels and a small flock of sheep and goats. Suyian also became known for its honey production, yielding an annual harvest of two tonnes of organic honey, harvested traditionally from locally made log hives just before the rains when the Acacia trees bloom. As well as being an expert in Boran cattle, a popular Kenyan Zebu beef breed, Gilfrid was also a keen conservationist, serving as a founding chairman of the Laikipia Wildlife Forum, a conservation body founded in 1992 which grew rapidly under his inspired leadership and now includes 6,000 members.

As head of his family's various enterprises – Kisima Farm at Timau, at Borana, and Ngare Ndare (now mainly a tourist destination), and on his own ranch, he combined an astute business sense with altruism, working with local people whom he sought to enrich through the protection of wildlife and environmental sustainability initiatives, and providing schools, health clinics and skills training.

A keen botanist, Gilfrid Powys would sometimes spend weeks searching for and discovering new plant species and recognised no borders in this quest. In 1984 he was arrested by the Ethiopian Mengistu regime when he strayed over the border while collecting plants in northern Kenya. He was a lone white man with a camel, two locals, a rifle, a flower press and a bag of posho (maize meal). For several weeks he languished in jail in Addis Ababa. His release was secured when the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew provided evidence that he collected arid plants for them.

Powys was in the forefront of efforts by Laikipia's 48 large ranches to re-establish a population of elephants in the region. The animals had disappeared completely from Laikipia in the 1920s, but careful husbandry lured them back and Laikipia now boasts Kenya's largest concentration of big mammals outside the Masai Mara national reserve.

Powys often flew his own aeroplane and on one occasion, when asked by his mother to get some sausages on his way to Ngare Ndare, he forgot, so landed his plane on the main street in Timau and went to the butcher.

He had many close shaves, surviving at least one brush with death when he ended up on crutches in his 70s after smashing his hip diving out of the way of a charging

buffalo. On another occasion he became involved in a lengthy gun battle involving a party of heavily armed ‘shifta’ bandits on his farm. Luckily he was entertaining the local police chief to lunch at the time.

In recent years Powys had spoken out against local politicians who were inciting armed Samburu herders and their cattle to force their way on to white-owned ranches in Laikipia, damaging property and devastating pasture, killing elephant and buffalo and threatening the future of one of Africa’s most important areas of wildlife conservation.

In 2016 herdsman began invading his Suyian ranch, and last year they attacked properties on the farm, burned down a tourist lodge run by his daughter Anne and pillaged her house and her son’s cottage. Farmers and local officials in Laikipia claimed that the attacks were politically motivated, driven by powerful local political leaders stirring up their kinsmen in order to mount a land grab and drive out other tribes. ‘It is Poko-Samburu expansionism’, Powys told the *Daily Telegraph*. ‘It is political, 100 per cent political, no question.’ Although ranch owners had always given grazing rights to the herders, there are fears that the farm invasions are an ecological disaster in the making.

Powys was killed near a dam which serves as a watering point for wild animals. According to local police, an elephant charged and trampled him to death. In 1963 he had married Patricia Holyoak, who survives him with their two daughters.



Suyian Ranch, Likipia, Kenya

News and Notes

From Nicholas Birns

News of a recent book called *Beyond Spring: Wanderings through Nature*, by Matthew Oates, published by Fair Acre Press (Oswestry), 2017. This has some faintly Powysian touches. It's a really nice example of sensitive, introspective writing about nature, place, and spirit. The author describes visits to places well known to JCP such as Norfolk, Dovedale and West Sussex and quotes passages from W.H. Hudson and Richard Jefferies. [CT]

From Peter Foss

Two interesting and unusual Powys references: (i) in the selected letters of Dylan Thomas edited by Constantine Fitzgibbon (1966), in a letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson, dated 1933 (p. 58), Thomas mentions A.E. (Bert) Trick, a new (and later) friend in Swansea, who was *a communist grocer with a passion for obscurity & the Powys family* (p. 62). Quite early for such a reference! (ii) in D. Parry-Jones's excellent memoir *A Welsh Country Upbringing* (1948), p. 133, the author refers to Llewelyn Powys as a writer who *penetrated to the inner citadel of the cymric character and describes the Welshman from the inside*. He quotes a passage from Llewelyn's essay 'Welsh and English' which appeared in *The Welsh Review* Volume 1, No 3, in 1939. Quite a statement to come from a Welsh-speaking farming boy brought up in the hills of Carmarthenshire in the 19th century, and who became a notable cleric in Wales and author of several popular books on Welsh culture and traditions.

I also noticed that, in the December 2017 issue of the *Oldie* magazine, there is a reference to the *mysterious Powys brothers* in Giles Wood's column called *Country Mouse*.

From Richard Simonds

I am in the process of developing an *interactive* guide to *Wolf Solent* for a reader with access to modern technology. It contains mostly internet links to open source and non-copyrighted photos of plants and paintings, articles and other materials, and to YouTube and other videos.

This is an open guide and work in progress. If you would like to comment on my draft, or collaborate with me on the guide and participate in the project please get in touch. In the first case please e-mail me at: quarmix@yahoo.com.

[*Richard's draft guide is a personal initiative and is not a Powys Society project. CT*]

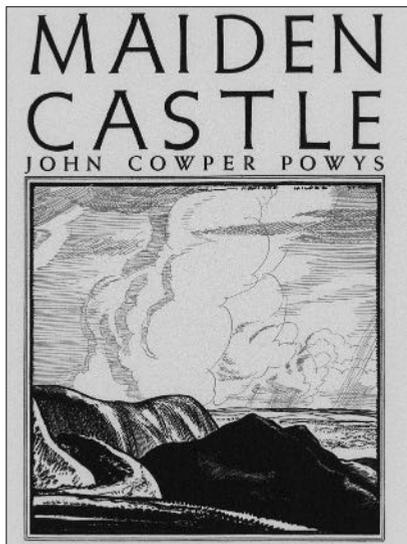
From Stephen Clarke, Clearwater Books

I have a list of 43 items of books by JCP for sale. If you would like to find out details of titles, condition and prices please contact me, Bevis Stephen Clarke, at: Clearwater

Books, 213b Devonshire Road, Forest Hill, London, SE23 3NJ, telephone 07968 864791, e-mail: clearwater_books@yahoo.co.uk, website: www.clearwaterbooks.co.uk.

From Rose Arkle (Google Arts & Culture Curator, English Heritage)

A new website: www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/partner/english-heritage, located at Google's on-line Cultural Institute, enables visitors to explore detailed high resolution digital images, associated with 29 sites and properties managed by English Heritage (now called Historic England). The website aims to provide information in a fun and dynamic way. The section devoted to Maiden Castle, for instance, brings together artist's reconstructions of the original Iron Age use of the site, panoramic views of the surrounding landscape, contemporary photographs of Sir Mortimer Wheeler's excavations, images of artworks by Paul Nash and a reproduction of the dust jacket of the first English edition of JCP's *Maiden Castle*, published by Cassell in 1936. [Cassell's cover for *Maiden Castle* was designed by famous landscape artist and book illustrator Rowland Hilder (1905-1993) who also illustrated editions of *Moby Dick*, *Treasure Island*, and *Precious Bane*, and produced illustrations for the covers of the *Shell County Guides*. Rowland Hilder's signature can just be seen at the top edge of the picture of Maiden Castle on the cover of JCP's book. CT]



From Douglas Weiland

For anyone in the Powys Society who might be interested I can provide the recording of the premiere of my composition, *Octet 'Winterreise'* Op.55 (2015), [described in *Newsletter 92*, November 2017, p. 35, CT], which was, in large part, inspired by *A Glastonbury Romance*. (The standard copyright only should be observed, i.e. **for private/group listening only**, no commercial situ. If you would like a copy of the recording please contact **Hon. Secretary** who will send a zip file attached to an e-mail).

From Robin Wood

A reference to the favourite reading of classical pianist Glen Gould (1932-1982) spotted in: *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glen Gould* by Kevin Bazzana

(OUP, 2004): *He was widely read in modern literature. His professed favourites included T.S. Eliot, Christopher Fry and Franz Kafka, though he gave time to Borges, Camus, Capek, Gide, Hesse, Ionesco, Joyce, Malraux, Mishima, Santayana, Soseki, Strindberg and much else. His friend Ben Sonnenberg, thinking back to 1959, gave a more recherché list of Gould's then favourite writers, W.H. Hudson, R.B. Cunningham-Graham, and John Cowper Powys. And at the head of the pack was Thomas Mann.*

From Paul Weston

My book *Glastonbury Psychogeography: History, Mythology, Occult, Literature, Harmony and Horror. The Living Presence of the Past*, was published by Avalonian Aeon Publications, in 2016 and includes a section devoted to John Cowper Powys and *A Glastonbury Romance*. [Paul gave a talk to the Powys Society at our conference in Street in 2010 where he originally presented some of the material, published in this book, about his personal encounter with *A Glastonbury Romance*, CT]

From Elmar Schenkel (Advisory Board, The Powys Journal)

I am now a warden at Nietzsche's birthplace at Röcken near Leipzig. JCP would love it. There is the grave, the parsonage, his dad's Church, and other things. We have started a society to protect the ensemble and to organise activities. Our President is a Powysian, my doctoral student, Stefanie Jung. She lives in Nietzsche's parsonage with her family. So Powys is now in Nietzsche's birthplace! (See the website for Nietzsche's birthplace and Nietzsche's birthplace Society at: www.nietzsche-gedenkstaette.de/)

From Chris Thomas

JCP and Wittgenstein

I was astonished to read in *Wittgenstein in Ireland* by Richard Wall (Reaktion Books, 2000) that Wittgenstein *thought highly of the poetry of John Cowper Powys*. Really? Mr Wall does not provide a reference or source for this amazing claim. In fact he appears to be misquoting *Ludwig Wittgenstein – Personal Recollections*, by Rush Rhees, 1981, (cited in his bibliography), and which includes a memoir of Wittgenstein's conversations by his former student and friend, Maurice O'Connor Drury, who states that Wittgenstein's two favourite English poets were Cowper and William Blake. I can find no reference anywhere in any of the literature on Wittgenstein and his literary interests (including F.R. Leavis's essay, *Memories of Wittgenstein*) that Wittgenstein had any knowledge at all of JCP or his poetry. Let us hope this error will be corrected in the next edition of Mr Wall's otherwise excellent, book. [Wittgenstein makes a brief appearance in P.J. Kavanagh's *Voices in Ireland* (p. 241): he spent several summers in the 1940s at a village by Killary Harbour in

Connemara, complaining of earwigs and lack of the right kind of detective fiction in the village shop. KK]

The Magic of Detachment

In *Newsletter 92*, November 2017, News and Notes, we reported the sale at auction of JCP's manuscript of his essay *The Magic of Detachment*. This essay was most recently published in *la lettre powysienne*, No. 29, printemps, 2015.

Chris Woodhead

Chris Woodhead's talk at the 2002 conference at Millfield School, in Street, 'Wolf Solent: The enduring appeal', has been printed in a collection of his essays, entitled: *What Matters Most*, published by University of Buckingham Press, 2017.

University Challenge

In a first round contest between Corpus Christi College, Cambridge and St Anne's College, Oxford in *University Challenge*, broadcast on BBC television in October 2017, Jeremy Paxman (who was once a pupil of our President Glen Cavaliero) introduced the teams and referred to the alumni of each college including John Cowper Powys at Corpus Christi. On this occasion the winner of the contest was Corpus Christi College. In the second round of the quiz Corpus Christi lost to St John's College Cambridge.

Tremendum Mysterium

I was fascinated to read the article by Rod Madocks, about, JCP's birthplace, Shirley, in *Newsletter 92*, November 2017. Rod quotes from the beginning of *Autobiography* and JCP's description of his early experience of the sublime associated with a sense of *immensity* produced by a grassy hill called Mount Cloud or Thorpe Cloud. [See back cover, *NL 92*] JCP goes on to reflect that: *to the eyes of a small child the rocky valley of the Dove was nothing short of a Tremendum Mysterium*. On consulting the whole of this passage in *Autobiography* I was immediately reminded that at some point JCP must have read Rudolf Otto's very influential book *The Idea of the Holy*, first published in Germany in 1917 and translated into English in 1924. In his book Otto discusses the origins of religious experience which he describes as the experience of the numinous or *Mysterium Tremendum* (introduced in Chapter IV where he refers to the experience of *Awfulness, Overpoweringness, and Energy*): *it may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms or convulsions or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport and ecstasy*. This seems very much like the quintessence of JCP's experience of Mount Cloud as well as the

other descriptions he gives, elsewhere in *Autobiography*, of ecstatic states of feeling [CT] (and see the last quotation from *Religion of a Sceptic*, p. 40 KK)

From Peter Fischerbauer

Peter Fischerbauer, an artist based in Munich, has produced a series of paintings called ‘The One and Many’ inspired by *Wolf Solent*. One of the paintings is reproduced on the cover of a collection of poems entitled *Fundorte* by Hans Dieter Rauh, to be published by *Hawel Verlag* and is intended to illustrate Rauh’s poem *Strandgänge*. Peter says that he feels ‘*a relationship to Weymouth Beach, to JCP’s spiritual and philosophical world in general*’.

Additions to the Powys Society Collection

Steve Gedge has donated five holograph letters from Phyllis Playter to the author and literary editor **Neville Braybrooke** written on behalf of JCP and dated between 1959 and 1962. The donation includes two envelopes handwritten by JCP and a cancelled cheque with JCP’s signature. The donation will be deposited in the Powys Society Collection at Exeter University. The letters from Phyllis are associated with Braybrooke’s invitation to JCP to submit examples of his juvenilia for publication in the journal *The Wind and the Rain*. See *NL* 92, November 2017, (News and Notes, p. 33), for a report on the private sale of JCP’s letters to Neville Braybrooke. [CT]

Lesley Pollinger

Lesley Pollinger, granddaughter of Laurence Pollinger, and daughter of Gerald Pollinger, of Pollinger Ltd, literary agents, has loaned to the Powys Society a box containing a large collection of photocopies of original documents, photographs, manuscripts, typescripts and other miscellaneous papers relating to the Powyses, previously located in the business files of Pollinger Ltd. Committee member **Kevin Taylor** (who is currently acting on behalf of Lesley Pollinger as the trustee and custodian of the box of documents) has made a fully annotated inventory of all the items in the loan. If you would like to know more about this collection please contact Kevin direct at ktaylor@cambridge.org. An article, by Kevin Taylor, about the loan, with illustrations of some of the items, will appear in the July Newsletter. [CT]

From Kim Wheatley, English Department, College of William & Mary, USA

My first article on Powys was published last month: *John Cowper Powys and the Inhuman Wordsworth* in the *European Romantic Review*, November 2017. The article can be accessed at this link: www.tandfonline.com/eprint/bBpzxkTefgPkSURimz2r/full. I gave a lecture on the same topic in September at Southern Cross University in Australia. [NB ‘inhuman’ presumably not in the traditional English sense! [KK]

DATA PROTECTION

The new EU General Data Protection Regulation comes into force on May 25th 2018. All organisations which hold personal and private data, from their customers or members, such as mailing addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers, are required to comply with the terms of the regulation.

Although the UK is exiting the EU the advice of UK regulators, the Charity Commission and the Information Commissioner's Office is that all relevant UK bodies should still ensure that they have robust systems in place that meet the standards of the regulation. This is particularly important as the UK has transposed the EU regulation into UK law. The regulation will have an impact on all charities including literary societies like the Powys Society because we maintain lists of our members with contact details. The new Regulation updates the 1984 Data Protection Act, which was subsequently revised in 1998, and which we reported on in the March 1989 Newsletter. The Powys Society already fulfills legal requirements aimed at securing the careful handling and storage of personal data and can demonstrate we apply good practice.

The new regulation, however, aims to harmonise and strengthen existing laws on how personal data is used and handled. An important element of the new regulation is transparency concerning how personal data is processed, whether this is shared with a third party and what assurances we are able to give our customers and members about their legal right to access their own data which we hold. That is why we have published a simple **Privacy Policy**, which is freely available to all members on our public website. If you do not have access to the internet and wish to consult the Privacy Policy please notify Hon Secretary who will send you a paper copy.

Another key requirement of the new Regulation is that organisations must contact all their customers or members and seek their permission if they wish to continue to be approached by them in the future. This is probably only likely to effect organisations that are regularly and actively involved in fund raising with their members. In most cases concerning literary societies, since our members have voluntarily submitted their personal data to enable us to send them information, such as Journals, Newsletters, general news and other information, they would probably not need to do this. However **if you do not wish the Society to contact you** in the future about our activities **please notify Hon Secretary immediately**.

The following news was issued by the Charity Commission and the Information Commissioner's Office in December 2016: 'The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, and the Fundraising Regulator, are issuing an alert to all charities. It reminds trustees that they must, in addition to following charity law requirements, ensure that there are systems in place at their charity to identify and comply with any data protection laws and regulations that apply to its activities.' For more information see the UK government's information website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regulators-issue-joint-alert-about-compliance-with-data-protection-law> and the Information Commissioner's Office at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/charity/> Also see relevant guidance issued by the Charity Commission on fund raising at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-and-fundraising-cc20>

Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary

Chris Thomas

‘*The poet from Prague*’

Max Brod (1884-1968), *Wolf Solent*, and *JCP*

The German edition of *Wolf Solent* was translated by Richard Hoffmann [1] and first published by Paul Zsolnay in three volumes on 3 April 1930 in a print run of 5000 copies [2]. The publication of *Wolf Solent* in Germany quickly attracted the attention of a group of writers who greatly admired the novel. Elmar Schenkel, Professor of English at Leipzig University, mentions keen interest shown in *JCP* at this time by Hermann Broch, Elias Canetti, and Herman Hesse [3] and says that they *inaugurated a secret Powys cult* [4]. In 1968 in an article in the *TLS* Alfred Andersch recalled the first publication of the novel in German and noted that the translation *still circulates among German intellectuals as a secret recommendation ... we were surprised to receive such a book out of ‘rationalistic England’*. *Wolf Solent suited us*. [5]

Max Brod’s review of *Wolf Solent* appeared in the Berlin-based periodical *Das Tagebuch*, on 1 November 1930. *Das Tagebuch* has been described as *independent and radical* [6], ‘*one of the most important cultural-political weeklies of the Weimar Republic*’ [7] and *second only to Die Weltbühne in influence and importance* [8]. In his article in the *Powys Review* Elmar Schenkel also refers to other significant reviews by Herman Hesse [9], Horst Lange [10] and Hans Henny Jahn [11]. A long review, by Friedrich Torberg, published in 1931, not previously cited, provides another important reference [12]. All these reviews clearly helped to widen knowledge of *JCP*’s novel in German speaking countries but, almost certainly, in light of the circumstances of publication, Max Brod’s review must have had the greatest impact and influence on readers and writers.

The publication of Max Brod’s review, which appears here in an English translation for the first time, could not have been achieved without the kind help of Professor Schenkel and Leonore Sell at Leipzig University. We are indebted to John Hodgson for his fine translation. Although we have known about Max Brod’s review for many years it has not been possible to make a translation without knowledge of the citation. It was only when one of our members, Robin Wood, in Canada, pointed me to a bibliographic reference in Gaëlle Vassogne’s book *Max Brod in Prag* (2009), that I was able to identify the source of the review in *Das Tagebuch*, published in Berlin. I was therefore able to begin looking for copies of the journal in a UK library. But this proved impossible. Only copies of *Das Tagebuch* for the 1920s seemed to be available in a few reference libraries as well as on-line at the Internet Archive, but there was nothing available from the 1930s. I appealed to Elmar Schenkel for assistance who

asked his colleague, Leonore Sell, to check the holdings of Leipzig University library. Leonore located the relevant issue of *Das Tagebuch* and subsequently sent me a scan of the original review in German which enabled John to make his translation.

Max Brod's review of *Wolf Solent* is a remarkable document. It is remarkable because of its many penetrating insights. Clearly Brod was profoundly impressed by *Wolf Solent* for a variety of reasons: he was enthusiastic about the literary qualities of the novel and its *poetic fullness* (*Füller des Dichtertums*) as well as all the naturalistic descriptions but he also admired the way JCP thematically breaks through the barrier of materialism and develops ideas about, what he calls, the *orientation and meaning of the world*, as well as the struggle over the soul and spirituality in the individual. He read the novel with *delight* which contrasts with some of JCP's first English and American reviewers who confessed themselves completely baffled by the book. Brod, on the other hand, says of JCP's novel that *there is no more significant book of our times* (*es kein wesentlicheres Buch unserer Tage gibt*). Brod detected a very contemporary positive resonance in JCP's novel that was of some relevance to him personally in his



Max Brod in 1937

own era, living as he did under the influence of the Weimar Republic in its last years of existence and the shadow of National Socialism – he openly refers to the contemporary presence of *unspiritual brutal swastika pseudo-romanticism* (*ungeistigen brutalen Hakenkreuz-pseudoromantik*). Brod furthermore enlists JCP in a tradition of great modern European writing comparing him to Gide, Proust, Thomas Mann and Kafka.

The origin of Max Brod's status as an important writer in his own time can be traced to his reputation as a pioneer of literary expressionism in the political, cultural and social centre of Wilhelmine Germany and the Weimar Republic, where Brod occupied a prominent position in Berlin's literary culture of the 1910s, 1920s and early 1930s. It was in Berlin that Brod achieved his first early literary success with the publication of a novel called *Schloss Nornepygge* in 1908. In Berlin Brod was represented by major publishers such as Axel Juncker and Kurt Wolff, whom he often visited. Kurt Hiller (1885-1972), editor and radical campaigner for homosexual rights in Berlin, was an enthusiastic supporter of Brod's work: *Max Brod the poet from Prague whom we valued enormously ...* [13]. Brod contributed to Hiller's influential anthology of expressionist poetry, *Der Kondor*, in 1912.

Brod also regularly contributed reviews, poems and articles to all the major expressionist literary, cultural, political and art periodicals of the time such as *Die Aktion*, *Der Sturm*, *Die Weissen Blätter*, *Die Weltbühne*, *Die Gegenwart*, *Die Neue Rundschau*, *Jugend* and *Pan*. He also contributed to other periodicals such as *Simplicissimus*, German language Zionist journals such as *Selbstwehr*, and newspapers such as the *Prager Tagblatt*, *Prager Abendblatt*, *Prager Abendzeitung*, and the *Berliner Tagblatt*. He made appearances at Kurt Hiller's expressionist Neue Club in Berlin in November 1910 in a reading of one of his plays, and at the expressionist Cabaret Gnu in November 1911 where he introduced the poems of his friend Franz Werfel. At the same time he found time to mentor many other contemporary writers, musicians and composers helping to develop their talent and establishing their reputations such as Kafka (he dedicated his novel about Tycho Brahe to *meinem Freund Franz Kafka*), Franz Werfel (their relationship is also reflected in *Tycho Brahe*), Gustav Meyrink, Alfred Kubin, and Franz Janowitz, as well as the composers Leos Janacek and Carl Nielsen.

We can only marvel at the prodigious nature of Max Brod's literary output, which commenced in 1906 and stretched over his lifetime, with over 80 books and hundreds of articles and reviews for journals and newspapers ranging from novels, poetry, plays, essays, musical compositions, features, biographies and religious studies. In the 1920s he was particularly active writing poetry, novels (*Reubeni*, *Fürsten der Juden*, 1925), *Die Frau, nach der man sich sehnt*, 1927; *Zauberreich der Liebe* (a portrait of Kafka), 1928; essays on Kafka and Erwin Piscator's political theatre; a

stage adaptation of Hasek's novel *The Good Soldier Schweik* (commissioned by Piscator), 1928; translations of operas by Weinberger and Janacek; biographies of the composers Janacek, 1924, and Adolf Schreiber, 1921; a play about Byron; and reviews and forewords to books by others. In 1930 alone, he published a translation of Janacek's opera, *From the House of the Dead*, an essay on the architect Adolf Loos, reviews, poetry, and a history of film called *Liebe im Film*. In 1931, when his output started to slow down, he published another novel, *Stephan Rott*, and an essay on Kafka. During this time Brod's work was popular with readers and some of his novels were best sellers in Germany.

Brod's novels, and other writings, clearly show he had a tendency to sentimentality and romantic fantasy which is evident in *Leben mit einer Göttin*, 1924; *Eine Liebe zweiten Ranges*, 1929; *Die Frau, nach der man sich sehnt*, (translated into English as *Three Loves*, in 1929, and made into a successful Hollywood film starring Marlene Dietrich) as well as in his fictional portrait of Kafka in *Zauberreich der Liebe* (translated into English as *The Kingdom of Love* in 1930) and in the postscripts he wrote for the posthumous editions of Kafka's books. But he was also deeply serious and unafraid to engage in political debate and controversial contemporary issues such as Jewish identity and Zionism as in his polemic *Zionism als Weltanschauung*, 1925; a two volume study of religion, *Heidentum, Christentum, Judentum: ein Bekenntnisbuch*, 1922 (*Paganism, Christianity, Judaism: A Confession of Faith*) and *Der Nietzsche-Liberale*, 1921, an essay review of Anton Kuh's pamphlet *Juden und Deutsche*. He also had a sense of the human comedy comparing for instance the Czech writer and satirist, Jaroslav Hasek, to Cervantes and Rabelais (an insight JCP would have surely enjoyed).

Max Brod's review of *Wolf Solent* stands at the peak of his development as a writer, thinker and mentor throughout the 1920s. One way to approach his review of *Wolf Solent* might be via his support for the music of Janacek. In his obituary of Janacek [14] Brod described the effects of Janacek's operas: *they enrapture the spellbound by luring [the listener] into an ocean of beauty*, and referred to the *intoxication and yearning for nature ... an eternal paean of life* which he discovered in Janacek's opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*. It seems that, by 1930, Brod was already mentally and emotionally prepared to appreciate JCP's novel.

It is a great loss that the correspondence between Max Brod and JCP has not survived. (I checked recently with the National Library of Israel and with the Bodleian but they could not trace the letters in their holdings.) However by looking at JCP's diary as well as letters to other correspondents, it is possible to partly reconstruct some of the content of the letters which reveals a little more about what Brod thought about JCP's work, how JCP responded to his comments and what he thought about Kafka's novels.

A useful starting point is a letter which was published in the *TLS*, 18 July 1980, in which the correspondent, Mr. I.E. Jones of Sidmouth in Devon, recalls how JCP once told him how Max Brod used to write him: *long letters about Kafka and always swore he found something Kafkaish in my tales*. The correspondence must have begun towards the end of 1930 or early 1931, but probably did not continue beyond the end of 1931. In his diary, on 13 February 1931, JCP records, *I begin Brod's book on Jews* [15]. *To read about Talmud and Synagogues pleases me but it is a rather thin and weak book*. On 24 February he had finished the novel and declared in his diary that he was *thrilled by it*. On 15 March he reports he has written an important letter to Brod about his novel *Reubeni*. On 20 April he says that he has started reading Brod's novel about Tycho Brahe [16]. By 1935 he seems to have taken up Brod's recommendations to read Kafka and says he is reading *The Castle* [17] aloud to Phyllis: *Read The Castle to the TT – a curious book – everything made numb and muted* (9 July 1935). According to a letter to Bela Hamvas dated 5 December 1946 published in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. 3, 1993, JCP had both Brod and Kafka in mind, as well as Bela Hamvas, when thinking of connections with European literature: *we truly ought be in contact with at least one formidable European mind*. He says that Kafka is *'the TT's favourite European novelist'* and that ... *we first heard about [Kafka] about twelve years ago when Max Brod of Prague wrote to me about him and we read (in a translation) Brod's own novel called I think A Prince of Judaea*. Mr Jones also says in his letter to the *TLS* that Phyllis's view of Kafka's novel *Amerika* [18] was that it was like a dream which prompted JCP to reflect that *this America is like my dreams ... I do not care for it ... I fear it ... I am too neurotic to inhabit the same world as my dreams*.

Notes

1. Richard Hoffmann (1892-1961) specialised in the translation of English, Italian, French, Spanish and Russian books. He translated many titles for Paul Zsolnay. A new single volume edition of Hoffmann's translation, issued by Zsolnay in 1986, attracted a long review by Jürgen Manthey in *Die Zeit*, 6 March 1987. In *la lettre powysienne*, No. 1, Spring 2001, Jacqueline Peltier has listed other books by JCP which have since been translated into German, which include *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Autobiography* and *Weymouth Sands*. We can now add to this list *In Spite Of*, *The Art of Growing Old*, *The Art of Happiness*, and *In Defence of Sensuality*.
2. *Der Paul Zsolnay Verlag*, Murray G Hall, 1994. Paul Zsolnay (1895-1961) established his publishing business in 1923 with support from Franz Werfel and Alma Mahler. In 1924, in the first year of his business, Zsolnay published titles by Galsworthy, Schnitzler, Franz Werfel, Mahler's letters, and an acclaimed facsimile of the surviving completed parts of Mahler's 10th symphony. In 1930 Zsolnay also published reprints of Max Brod's novels *Tycho Brahe* (1915) and *Reubeni* (1925) and translations of books by H.G. Wells and

- W.H. Hudson. For information on Zsolnay in English see: *Two Famous German-Jewish Publishing Houses*, AJR Information, December 1958.
3. *Powys Review*, No. 4, 1978/1979. Canetti not only discussed JCP with his friend Hermann Broch in Vienna but also with his brother, Georges, in Paris. Georges Canetti found a copy of *Wolf Solent* on a bookstall in Paris in 1933 and wrote to Elias in Vienna about 'the book you once told me was so great'. See: *Love, Literature and Power in Dark Times: The Letters of Elias, Veza and Georges Canetti, 1933-1948*, [2010]. Canetti visited Phyllis shortly after JCP's death. JCP was a great admirer of Canetti's novel, *Die Blendung*, 1935 ('Recollections of J.C. Powys and Phyllis Playter, Part One' by Frederick Davies, *Powys Review*, No. 19, 1986). Professor Schenkel's private collection of Powys related documents includes a letter from Canetti describing his fascination with JCP's work. For a note about Professor Schenkel's private collection see: *la lettre powysienne*, No. 19, Spring 2010.
 4. *Powys Society Newsletter*, November 1991.
 5. *TLS*, 10 October 1968.
 6. *Weimar Culture*, Peter Gay, 1969. *Das Tagebuch* was founded in Berlin in 1920 by Stephan Grossmann and Ernst Rowohlt but was closed down in 1933. The editor of *Das Tagebuch* from 1926, was Leopold Schwarzschild (1891-1950). Contributors to the periodical included Walter Benjamin, Hermann Broch, Robert Musil and Klaus and Thomas Mann. Max Brod also contributed a poem, *Feuer*; to *Das Tagebuch* in 1921 and an article, *Kriegswitze*, in 1924.
 7. *Journalsim Quarterly*, September, 1982.
 8. *Vienna Meets Berlin*, John Warren, 2005.
 9. *National Zeitung*, 10 October 1930. Hesse reviewed *Wolf Solent* alongside Huxley's *Point Counter Point* describing both as high points of modern English literature. However Hesse apparently found Hoffmann's translation of *Wolf Solent* very hard to read. This didn't diminish his admiration – in a postcard Hesse sent to Wolfgang Kehr, (now in Professor Schenkel's private collection), Hesse says how much he *cherished Powys* (e-mail to Hon. Secretary). Professor Schenkel has also identified an article about *Wolf Solent* by Hesse's third wife, Ninon, published in the *Neue Schweizer Rundschau* in 1946/1947.
 10. *Berliner Tagblatt*.
 11. *Der Kreis*, January 1932. John Hodgson told me he thinks that *JCP's greatest supporter in Germany was Hans Henny Jahnn (1894-1959) who is something of an outsider figure in German literature, but very well thought of by many, and with lots of similar themes to JCP*. The similarities between JCP and Hans Henny Jahnn have been studied in an article by Raymond Furness, *Man, Beast and Myth: The Threatened Cosmos of JCP and Hans Henny Jahnn*, published in *Anglistentag Passau*, 1984. Jahnn's letter to JCP awarding him a plaque from the Hamburg Academy of Free Arts was published in *John Cowper Powys – A Record of Achievement* by Derek Langridge, 1966.
 12. *Die Weltbühne*, 3 February 1931. Friedrich Torberg (1908-1979), a friend of Max Brod, was a literary critic, poet, satirist, journalist, novelist and the author of anecdotes about life in Vienna. His review of *Wolf Solent* was no doubt influenced by Max Brod. Brod provided a foreword to Torberg's volume of poetry, *Der ewige Refrain*, 1929, and helped Torberg

- find a publisher for his novel, *Der Schüler Gerber*, 1930, which he described as *a perceptive ... visionary insight into the panorama of our existence*.
13. *Die Weisheit der Langeweile*, 1913. Brod's novel was also reviewed by Fanny Johnson in the *TLS* on 26 November 1908. Elsa Lasker-Schüler devoted a chapter praising Brod's work in her book *Gesichte: Essays und andere Gesichten*, 1913. T.E. Hulme helped to introduce Brod's name to English readers in his survey of modern German poetry *German Chronicle*, published in *Poetry and Drama* in June 1914.
 14. *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, 7/1928.
 15. *Reubeni, Prince of the Jews*, Knopf, 1928, translated by Hannah Waller .
 16. *The Redemption of Tycho Brahe*, Knopf, 1928, translated by Felix Warren Crosse.
 17. Kafka's *The Castle* was first published in English in 1930, translation by Edwin and Willa Muir.
 18. Kafka's *Amerika* was first published in English in 1938, translation by Edwin Muir.

John Hodgson

Translator's note

Max Brod's review of *Wolf Solent* is written in very exuberant and convoluted prose – perhaps an example of John Cowper Powys's ability to elicit Powysian behaviour from others ... A lot of the review hinges on the famous German word *sachlich*, which is sometimes translated as 'objective', or 'concrete'. It is literally 'thingy', which evokes William Carlos Williams's dictum that poetry lies not in ideas but in things. The German art movement of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the 1920s favoured a sober objectivity in reaction to the wildness of expressionism, and Brod discerns in Powys a new romanticism, a way beyond the limits of the fashionable *sachlich* aesthetic, and also a possible romanticism of the left.

Max Brod is now best remembered as Franz Kafka's childhood friend and later literary executor, who preserved and published Kafka's work against the author's expressed wish that it should be destroyed. In his autobiography, *Streitbares Leben (A Combative Life)*, 1960) he describes his many friendships with writers and musicians as well as the rich German-speaking cultural life of Prague. Brod was the perfect *Mitteleuropäer*: his work is painfully evocative of a culture that Nazism and the Cold War between them totally extinguished. He describes corresponding with John Cowper Powys in the United States, but it seems unlikely that these letters have survived. Brod fled Prague for Palestine in 1939, taking with him a suitcase of Kafka manuscripts. The story of his journey was published in English in the American Zionist labour magazine *Jewish Frontier*, in December 1979, as *My Escape from Prague*. His papers were eventually granted to the National Library of Israel in 2016 after an eight-year legal battle.

Max Brod

'Wolf Solent's Romantic Mission'

A review of Wolf Solent first published in the Berlin periodical, Das Tagebuch, Vol. 11, Nr. 40, 1 November 1930, pp. 1759-1761

Translated by John Hodgson

John Cowper Powys is an English author whose very name and existence were unknown to me before the publishing house Paul Zsolnay issued his *Wolf Solent*. After reading the first chapter, I knew that there is no more significant book of our times, and this impression grew stronger with every page. The novel contains (to my delight) more than 1,000 pages.

Apart from all its artistic charms, the landscape, the delineation of character, and the style, the most important thing seems to me that all these 1,000 pages deal with the most intimate conflict of a single soul, with purely spiritual events, in other words in total contrast to the rigid artistic outlook that considers nothing worthy of representation apart from cities, regions, continents, collectives, class interests and typical group conflicts that are subject to the Criminal Code. This artistic outlook has its good side, as long as it does not merely expand the scope of the Criminal Code, but emotionally applies it, intensifies it, and fulfills it in its individual way. However, if it becomes tyrannical, it constricts and limits horizons. Then an inspired special case like this *Wolf Solent* must break through the barriers that criticism has erected, having become scared of its own prescriptions as if of ghosts.

The catchword 'concrete' [*sachlich*] has under its many meanings two that are particularly misleading and ambiguous. 'Concrete' means precise, focused, conscientious, and honest – but it refers to the object of this precision, to things (rather than souls) and the *surfaces* of events, the statistical or reportable, and can only be registered in the individual characteristics of figures or colours and overlooks the spiritual depth, which is something totally different from the average and what is merely interesting from the point of view of reportage. Into this situation of an almost universally sanctioned materialistic view of literature and the world, bursts a book that is indeed objective in its precision and exactness and detailed description, as are Gide, Proust, Thomas Mann, Kafka, and in the sense of a youthful novel of mine that I unfortunately have not published and which would fit very well into this list, but which eighteen years ago seemed to me rather too abstruse in its psychological detail. But it is not objective in the other sense, and does not merely touch lightly on the surface, but is precise and detailed in its description of the complex movement

of the soul, in description that is also penetration into an endlessly complicated, passionate struggle over the meaning of the world.

So it is a matter of the meaning that lies behind things, and is not apparent on the surface – *Wolf Solent* is therefore a romantic book, ‘romantic in a modern sense’, and it is here that I find its significance. At this point two immediate explanations must be given, one that concerns the book, and another the nature of ‘a romanticism of today’. John Cowper Powys’s novel is romantic in a very idiosyncratic sense, probably the only one that is now possible, in that he makes romanticism itself the problem that he investigates. How can a human being of 1930 who feels in a romantic, that is not superficial way, without self-deception and without any intellectual weakness, and without illusion and sentimentalism, defend this inner ‘mythology’ of his from a world of automobiles, aircraft, and all other comforts, and to what extent must he resign himself and change? The young schoolteacher Wolf Solent is obliged to leave London after behaving in an undisciplined manner in his school, and returns to his original home country (southern England, Dorset, with its meadow, and muddy riverbanks under leaves and reeds, the warm, wet, fragrant, airy landscapes of this book). Here, in the service of a half-deranged landowner, he is almost destroyed under the assault of atavistic impulses and new passion – this young schoolteacher stands resigned at the end of the book, having surrendered the secrets of his heart, and is left with nothing more than his body. He is apparently at the end of romanticism, his own or of any kind, and yet with a puzzling remnant of self-awareness. Here the nervously sensitive description of the mood of the moment is everything, and a strict conceptual discrimination could not even approximately convey how Wolf Solent, after all the dangers through which he has steered his ‘mythology’, has saved something of it in this new, apparently sober stage of development. How totally naked and hesitant he stands in relation to the violence of natural elements or the cosmos, with which he once believed himself to be magically bound: ‘Between himself and what was “behind” the Universe there should be now a new covenant! The Cause up there could certainly at any minute make him howl like a mad dog. It could make him dance and skip and eat dung. Well, until it *did* that, he was going to endure ... follow his “road”. through the ink-stains, and endure!’ – Here there is at the same time a masculine vote of no confidence in God, and yet an apparent new confidence, not a state of damnation, but a new grace that illuminates a man of 1930’s irony-ridden trust in the world.

And so this work that at first sight seems so ‘private’ and will be denounced by the efficient and proper representatives of the dominant unprivate theory of art as individualistic, trivial, anachronistic, and even bourgeois, will become a book of our

times, almost a manifesto for non-bourgeois man, and a book to lead us – although it lacks the any leadership charisma, because it is a humble book written in an intentional spirit of small-town remoteness and Hamlet-esque scepticism, without the slightest hint of the parade ground. Yet it poses the central question for everybody: how do you maintain your heart and soul faced with the onslaught of the social misery that is ever-present in this book (in a vision of an underground station), against the assault of the machine, of soulless mass civilisation, against indifference and evil. How do you keep going? There is nothing more contemporary than this question, because now a large part of German youth (and youth everywhere) give a totally wrong answer and find the romantic once again in war fever, in a fever of the blood, and in an appeal to dark primal compulsions. All these infernal instincts bear a clear relationship to romanticism, setting chaos against the now plainly obvious operations of necessity, and hot tempestuous desire against cool and rational bourgeois conformity, and therefore in a certain sense everything that is not apparent and ordinary against the superficial – but one must never forget that romanticism also has its dark side, which has rightly brought it into disrepute since the war. It also has its meaningful, chaos-averting power, which, properly viewed, unshackles all that is elemental within itself against the everyday bourgeois order, for the sake of a higher, meta-logical order. The struggle today is between an unspiritual, brutal Swastika pseudo-romanticism and a not much more spiritual, flatly rational materialism. Can one say that one can reject not just one of these battle formations, but *both*? A book like *Wolf Solent* shows once again in what direction the true basic romantic question lies (the question of the invisible pole of orientation and meaning of the world). It helps each one of us in its apparent privacy more than all the political preaching, with its *a priori* claims to universal validity, of the two armed camps.

I have said nothing of the literary beauties that enchant the reader on every page of this novel with their clarity, intuition, penetrating plasticity and melting music. I have said nothing about its gentle and tender-hearted women, the sharply characterised and clownish men, and its audacious plot. Do these beauties go without saying? In a sense, they do, insofar as real romanticism cannot be described in dry, straightforward formulae, but only in such poetic fullness.

Mark Hudson

Wolf Solent – lonely sheep in wolf’s clothing?

(Please note that I am writing this for the general and non-expert reader, and as a newcomer to John Cowper Powys, having read nothing else by him and knowing very little of the extensive scholarship about him – so please forgive my presumption and ignorance. MH)

This is a powerful and curious story about a young man’s journey of self-discovery in the soft, secret enclaves of north Dorset, set in the 1920s. It is demanding, but the effort is re-paid.

Wolf Solent, the eponymous, 34-year old protagonist, in whose mind we generally dwell, is a clever dreamer, with an intense but partially unaware gaze both outwards and inwards, unable to harmonise his outer and inner worlds. Throughout the novel, he is searching for meaning in a God-emptied, Darwinian world – where sexual obsession and/or a frantic scrabbling after control lurks hidden beneath the surface of human life. He finds his own ‘secret mythology’ – in which he battles intellectually with the primal forces of creation – more real than the actual life he inhabits, in which he is an undistinguished teacher of history in a rural grammar school. This makes him peculiarly subject to the whims of his instincts, because he lacks mature self-awareness, and yet it also makes him highly receptive to natural landscape and to those around him, because of a certain, non-judgemental detachment.

Powys has a marvellous ability to bring the reader into complicity with his creation, especially when Wolf is communing in a heightened state of intellectual awareness with a woman – be it his lithe, wife/lover, Gerda; his elfin mind/heart, Christie; or his possessive and sensualist mother. Equally, the receptive reader is mesmerised in the moonlight-bathed dark lanes and valleys of semi-mythic Dorset. Powys uses descriptions of landscape as simple but eerily effective devices for transporting the reader to the powerful shadowlands of the subconscious, where he can convey a horizon-flashing instinct, at once philosophical, particular and brazen. Then, a paragraph later, this protean writer might distance his reader from an intimate passage in Wolf’s mind by breaking off to refer (as the suddenly-intruding author) to his subject’s ‘skull’.

Wolf Solent, published in 1929, was the fourth novel and first notable success of John Cowper Powys. The book has a modernist focus on consciousness and sensuality in a world stripped of certainties by Freud’s insights and Nietzsche’s ‘death of God’. In this respect, it is comparable to the novels of his younger but shorter-lived contemporaries, D.H Lawrence and James Joyce, whose greatest books were published before *Wolf Solent*, and which were surely influential on him. However,

unlike Joyce and Lawrence, Powys did not break free from Victorian language and perspective. Thus, Powys's land and mind-scape descriptions unfold slowly, decorously and in disembodied detail. For example, in the middle of the story (pp. 305-6 in the paperback Penguin 2000 edition), Powys writes of *simple, sensuous well-being* in the Dorset countryside, where Wolf is *enabled to enter, by a lucky psychic sensitiveness, into some continuous stream of human awareness – awareness of a beauty in the world that travelled lightly from place to place, stopping here and stopping there, like a bird of passage, but never valued at its true worth until it had vanished away*. The passage continues in this ethereal vein for a number of pages.

Yet – for me – the novel *Wolf Solent* works, marvellously and surprisingly. It has an attractive mix of realism, mysticism and sensuality. Powys's penetrating and delicate writing brings out the extraordinary nature of ordinary life. The scope of the novel is daringly wide, and there are many luminous chapters (I particularly liked the brilliant Lenty Pond section, chapter 23). Wolf and the host of subsidiary characters are psychologically credible and their conflicts spark realistic drama, while the central character's metaphysical-philosophical musings are refreshingly engaging.

Powys also can evoke a Dorset local character and accent masterfully, not least in the language of the amiable and blunt Mr Torp *stone-cutter of Chequers Street*, father of the girl whom Wolf marries, whom Mr Torp regrets *'aint got the durned consideration to comb her own hair; and it might be mighty silky too, when it be combed out'* but instead she stays *'sitting around, strong as a Maypole'*.

Nevertheless, in the end perhaps one sees hints of why John Cowper Powys never made it to the Western canon (while it existed) and why he is mostly unknown to the general reader today [1] – assuming, which might be quite wrong (?), that his other great novels are approximately similar in broad approach to *Wolf Solent*.

Most obviously, there is the problem, for a world in haste, of a writing style which is languid and elaborate: Powys might take six pages to describe what others would do in six lines. I found it necessary, and rewarding, to read slowly and to be more than usually attentive, or I would have missed the slow, deeper rumblings (and surely I still missed much of this many-layered work). The second difficulty is that *Wolf Solent* comes across as quite old-fashioned, for its time, particularly because the story is told from the perspective of an omniscient narrator.

However, at least one of these caveats could apply to any number of highly esteemed approximately contemporary writers, ranging from Hardy and Proust to Joyce and Virginia Woolf. It is perhaps the combination of these characteristics with a third, which one might call a lack of sufficient engagement with the 'otherness' of life, which may have condemned Powys to relative obscurity. *Wolf Solent* is intensely conservative in his response to the external aspects of modernity, and is

a fierce detester of aeroplanes and materialism – but this is not a problem, and can be seen as a strength. The trouble, as I see it, is a profound, inner conservatism of emotion and the spirit: Wolf is too fearful to let go of what he knows and is too self-absorbed to interact deeply with the world, except with his own, self-limiting instincts and thoughts. In a word, he is too cerebrally selfish: his experiences are writ large, but only inside his head; outside, he is a fairly passive conformist who ducks the challenges of life and who fails to risk a profound encounter with other human beings.

As his supposed *great love* Christie says to Wolf (p. 598), ‘*you great, stupid, talking fool ... what do you know of my real life?*’ He, and we, never learn.

Wolf strides on and Christie lets him off the hook. His more-or-less unexplained ‘*secret mythology*’ has been smashed – that ‘sense of huge invisible cosmic transactions, in the midst of which he played his part’ (p. 610) – but Wolf’s blithe self-absorption remains, albeit with a dawning realisation that his life is *an empty husk*.

Wolf doesn’t truly empathise with anyone: he shows no tenderness to the much-damaged Christie, who waits in vain for his affection; and he is aware but does not really care about hurting his vulnerable young wife, Gerda. He pours scorn on Gerda’s modest desires to spend money on their house and a holiday in Weymouth. This ignites an elemental reaction in Gerda which leads to a definitive crack in the edifice of Wolf’s high-walled self-esteem, and to the destruction of Gerda’s innocence: he is ‘*cuckolded by the water-rat*’, but it is his own pride and loss of control over his ‘sweet girl’ which concerns him, not Gerda’s motivation or suffering.

He is, in truth, a devoted mummy’s boy, willing to *sell his soul* for £200 to finish the squire’s book about sordid Dorset ways, in order to have the money to fund his mother’s tea-shop ambitions, rather than see her take a loan from a man whom he loathes – though he neglects to ask his mother if she wants his money, and she rejects it later.

And yet, one can find this total lack of worrying about others rather refreshing. In *Wolf Solent*, Powys’s characters rarely fear that they have been misunderstood or that they are ignorant or destructive. There is what A.N. Wilson (in the introduction to the Penguin 2000 edition) called, a *robustness* about his perspective. His hero has no self-doubt (until near the end), no ironic detachment or clinging sense of worthlessness. He is not a victim or beset by the self-victimising neuroses of others. He is frank about sex, religion, class – and about his own callousness.

Nevertheless, for all his naturalness and perceptiveness, Wolf is cut off from connectedness to other people and to transforming emotion. Even though, in the last pages, ‘Nature’ comes to the rescue as the healer and over-arching presence,

the protagonist – and the reader – is left with a sense of profound, if stoically born, pessimism. Near the end of the book, after a tormented night walk (p. 620), Wolf's febrile mind is too exhausted to prevent '*the simple chemistry of his body ... coming to its own conclusions ... while his soul ... wriggled and squirmed somewhere above his head!*' (This long sentence ends with a characteristic exclamation mark.) His feverish intelligence has got him nowhere, and it is the animal experience of the long, solitary pounding in the hills which brings Wolf into harmony with *the unutterable ... heathen goodness* of nature – which he seems to forget a few pages later, and from which he appears to draw only limited strength.

Thus, after returning from his walk, the narcissistic Wolf – surely a lonely sheep in wolf's clothing – shrinks from confronting his latest *bête noire*, Lord Carfax, when he peers through the window of his cottage and sees that the old goat has Gerda sitting on his knee. Instead, Wolf escapes to 'the amazing gold of the meadow beyond' for a further five pages of luxuriating, Wordsworthian reverie, released to '*enjoy life ... with absolute childish absorption in its simplest elements*'.

Wolf's self-obsessive, if imaginative, character is not in itself a problem – he is a brilliant literary creation. The difficulty is that the pessimistic attitude to life which Wolf develops (and which Powys appears to be promoting) is not sufficiently deeply grounded: he has only popped his head out of his shell now and then, and has failed to risk vulnerable, deeper experience. With his illusions shattered, but still shuttered inside himself, Wolf accepts a bleak future, believing that the 'inmost soul' of any human is a *furtive coil*, a *quivering ego-nerve*, and that he (like all beings) is alone and *diseased* – he has not been able to escape the *inert despair* of the tramp whom he saw (at the beginning of the book) on the steps of Waterloo station. This, thinks Wolf (and Powys, it seems?), is *stronger than the Christian miracle*, negating love and any sense of a benign (and not necessarily Christian) cosmos. All that is left is to endure, and to enjoy haphazard moments of ecstatic wonder in nature, which is the dual and *secret bestower of torture and pleasure*. That, and the humble pleasure of a *cup of tea*.

Mark Hudson is a new member of the Society and came across JCP via recommendations from two friends who are big fans of his work, including one who is a member of the Powys Society. His background is as a political analyst focused on eastern Europe, as a business and social entrepreneur, and latterly as a writer (he is currently engaged in writing his first novel). Mark lives in Dorset and says that he enjoys nothing better than walking its byways.

Review of ‘*Wolf Solent – the Enduring Appeal*’, a talk by Chris Woodhead delivered at the 2002 Powys Society Conference at Millfield School in Sherborne. The review was originally published in the *Powys Journal*, Vol. XIII, 2003.

Chris Woodhead’s talk began with an account of discovering Powys – in his case the Penguin 1960s edition of *Wolf Solent* which he bought for its attractive cover (Graham Sutherland’s ‘Entrance to a Lane’). He found it hard to define what appealed in the book, because the reader that he was then fused with the text he read, identifying with Wolf/JCP struggling with his manias, as when Wolf is compelled to rescue a dead leaf from the pavement (which then blows into a worse fate).

In *Wolf Solent* Woodhead feels questions gnawing as if the reader is their prey: the importance of pity conveyed in the book and simultaneously the feeling in Wolf himself that pity is a cruel trap – he wants to kill pity. The ‘man on the Waterloo steps’ represents all martyrs to life, as if one unhappy person could kill all the happiness in the world.

But is Wolf’s view Powys’s? Woodhead thinks not. Wolf would like to believe that we enjoy *because* pain exists. But the dying Malakite commands ‘forget’ as Wolf can’t; and Christy too rejects his sympathy. The book is Wolf’s meditations and through him the book sets ethical questions: confrontation or evasion? Sympathy or detachment? Words ‘making sense’ or words as a substitute for action?

Wolf is ‘sublimely egotistical’; this is justified by existence being bounded by consciousness – by what one person believes to be real. He’s alone; and when he can’t decide he retreats into this. Nevertheless this aloneness is true – hence its appeal. JCP forces us to confront whether this is an adequate human stance, or whether it’s an ultimately insoluble dilemma.

There are three conditions for appreciating the book, Woodhead finds. First you have to feel as Wolf says at the start that the ‘real world’ (i.e. the social world of other novels) is commonplace, tedious, sickeningly clever: you have to share his sense of the unreality of the ‘worldly’ world. Second you have to understand his ‘mythologising’ – his sinking into his soul – and see the ambivalence of this in human terms against both the ‘normality’ of Lord Carfax and Gaffer Barge’s un-egotistical willingness to please. Third, you need to be interested in this constant battle. How many are?

Among other enduring enjoyments in *Wolf Solent*, for Woodhead, are the minor characters: in *Glastonbury* there are too many of them; in *Wolf Solent* they’re important, and rich with incidental discoveries. Another is JCP’s way with nature, the nostalgia for pre-modern England (and its links with Hardy). Finally the *sanity* of the book despite the neurotic states it presents (the ending, the escape from the fair to the field) – all its interpretations appeal in *human* terms.

Kate Kavanagh

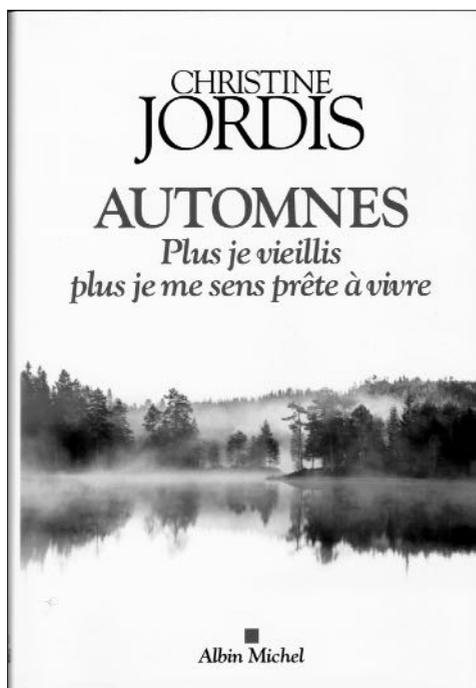
Note: Chris Woodhead’s lecture on Wolf Solent has been published in a book of his essays, What Matters Most, University of Buckingham Press, 2017.

Jacqueline Peltier

Automnes

Automnes, by Christine Jordis (Marie-Christine Morel de Foucaucourt), is a book of essays on the art of growing gracefully old, recently published by Albin Michel. This is a work which is very close to JCP's book on the same subject (*The Art of Growing Old*, Jonathan Cape, 1944). Christine Jordis is a notable figure in France and a life-long admirer of JCP. She has published articles on *Wood and Stone* (*la lettre powysienne*, No. 2, automne, 2002), and on *A Philosophy of Solitude* and *The Art of Happiness* (*la lettre powysienne*, No 18, automne, 2009). Christine is a writer, journalist and editor and has published many books on British authors, among which is a major one on Blake called *William Blake ou l'infini* (2014). Christine has also held an important job at the British Council in Paris, and is a member of the Gallimard and Grasset reading committees.

I attended a debate which Christine Jordis led in my village, in Brittany, the other day. The discussion, based on Christine's book *Automnes*, focused on the anger, and resentment the author feels about the publicity assailing us (older people) all the time,



which centres on that endless battle for people to stay young at all costs but which has nothing to do with a genuine and honest way of gracefully welcoming getting older. ‘*Plus je vieillis plus je me sens prête à vivre*’ (*The older I get, the more I feel eager to live*), she says at the end of the first part of her book. Christine underlines the fact that our society has lost its ideals, its hopes, its outlets, and is stifling us with a propaganda of fear on all kinds of subjects which we should resist and fight.

Christine endeavoured to be constructive, and to offer solutions. Speaking as a woman, she said, she feels she has now become invisible to others, so in a way, rejecting the image offered when you are younger, it is a relief to regain freedom. Christine started to talk about Powys, explaining who he was and what he thought. In her book she quotes JCP, first from *The Art of Happiness* but also *The Art of Growing Old*. As she remarked, it is important to consider the life of our mind, for although there is no real universe, there are *as many universes as there are minds*. She is in complete agreement with JCP when he writes, for instance: *This momentary sinking away from the whole world of action into a complete relaxation of body and mind ...* . Another point of contact between Christiane Jordis and Powys is their shared interest in Blake and Proust, as well as in Oriental philosophy, Korean and Chinese, and especially Lao Tzu. She spent quite a long time in Korea not long ago studying its poets and philosophers. Her advice is to live as you wish, and see growing old as an apprenticeship of a new adventure, and a way to pursue your mental voyage; reading, dreaming, walking alongside the wise of this world.

The name of John Cowper Powys is now known to all those people who listened to Christine Jordis in that little Breton village. The book of the Powys-Miller correspondence (*Proteus and the Magician*, the Powys Press, 2014), which I gave Christine, went round the table, from hand to hand.

Meeting in Hampstead, 2nd December, 2017

Religion of a Sceptic

Tim Hyman's suggested subject for discussion, the 1925 pamphlet of a lecture by JCP, has the same title as his own article in *Powys Review* no. 2, (Winter 1977, an exceptionally rich number of this always richly readable series).

JCP's 1925 lecture covers only some of the subject treated in Tim's 1977 article, which traces JCP's *persona* as 'holy fool' and the evolution in *A Glastonbury Romance* of religion in the more conventional Christian sense, represented by the Dekkers, to mythology (or the patterning of experience) in the person of Geard, a more human precursor of Myrddin Wyllt/ Saturn. Absolute disillusionment, in the final chapters of AGR, leads increasingly in the novels into a wider and ultimately optimistic affirmation – the hope of a new Golden Age: 'a creative lie that can help to bring to birth a liberated future'. A new form of religion? or of human evolution?

JCP's anti-puritanism, his dismissal of the misuse of conventional religion, his faith in our ability to enjoy being alive, and in the power of 'natural, ordinary, human kindness' to overcome 'sycophantic cringing before the supernatural' continues undiminished through the later 'philosophic' books, culminating in *In Spite Of* (written 1952), where humanity is doubly assaulted by false illusions and totalitarian cruelty.

The 1925 lecture was clearly aimed and persuasively explained for a fairly conventional (probably WASP) audience, very much of its time and saying a lot about its author. The evolution of Theology into Mythology, and Religion into Poetry, is an attitude like that of Horace and Vergil towards their official gods: *a historical, traditional, natural attitude and not a mystical or metaphysical one ... surely one that can be felt by quite ordinary intelligences when once they have grasped the peculiar pathos of our human situation.* [RS 13 – page numbers from the Village Press reprint]

As for the *unique figure of the Christ of the mediaeval tradition, that creation of the anonymous imagination of the centuries ... the supreme work of art of the human race*, it is towards him *that our imagination turns with such a sense of rich strange excitement ... a natural and veritable god, a creation not of piety at all, still less of philosophy, but of poetry and the imagination.* (12) As for the Mass, it *remains an eternal witness to a certain quite definite human experience ... of finding relief from one's own personal trouble in the vision of some great reservoir of superhuman passion.* (17)

Religion of a Sceptic is unusual among JCP's published writings in dealing directly with traditional religion. Ten years later, he returned to it at length and in depth (and sideways) in *Pleasures of Literature*, with his colossal essays on the Bible As Literature (i.e. the 1611 King James translation) and Saint Paul. (His American publishers drew the line at the 80-page second chapter. The first, at 50 pages, passed, on the strength of the excellent and immensely popular (also much scorned) *Bible Designed to be Read as Literature* published in 1936.

JCP's 1925 lecture deals with the then still widely accepted various forms of Christianity and the attempts to 'modernise' traditional beliefs. Short shrift for those, referring to the choice between traditional Anglican/ Episcopalian or 'modernist' Dutch-Lutheran churches to be found in New York. But: *The moment we come to feel [...] that the balance of probabilities is against our arriving at any kind of certitude in these high matters, that moment we are liberated from the necessity of either explaining away these dogmas or of rendering them more rational. A rational faith is a contradiction in terms... .(8-9)*

Personally or collectively, we create our own 'religion', from human feelings and moments of vision.

To regard religion as mythology does not make it less important. It gives it a new and lovely glamour ... No cultivation of the aesthetic sense in the presence of life can afford to neglect some deliberate heightening and enhancing of the basic elements of our experience, such as birth, love, food, fire, shelter, procreation, death. (10)

Humanity in reality can never worship anything except the magic of the universe. (13)

No one really, in spite of all progress, knows any better what lies behind the dream of life than people did in the days of Job or in the days of Rameses. (29)

One thing is certain. The vast material universe which we are compelled to contemplate out there in the void, stretching immeasurably to unthinkable horizons, is not all there is. From the vantage-ground of some secret citadel in the depths of our being we are aware ... that this particular spectacle does not exhaust the possibilities of being. But whether we ... will ever share, more fully than in our limited consciousness we are sharing now, these other levels of existence, is a question beyond the reach of any human reply. (29)

The history of the human race, as far as it touches the happiness and unhappiness of individual lives, has yet to be written. There are moments in the days of all men and women when the things of their life fall suddenly and strangely into a new focus, the name whereof, the clue whereto, must for ever remain unuttered. But these are the moments when a strange justification of all that we have endured seems on the verge of being realized. What these experiences seem to suggest is the presence of something in the world beyond the ordinary laws of nature ... (34-5)

There must be a vast recording sensitive-plate of such revelations – for nothing in the universe perishes all – somewhere, hidden from every search. And what if these accumulated moments, moments realized by turbaned heads in the desert, by shaven heads in China, by fur-capped heads in the Arctic circle, by bent laborious heads in the workshops of London and Berlin and New York, have had, all down the ages, the power of flowing magically together ... so that when such a vision comes to any living person, it is as if such a person drew upon a vast secret planetary memory, the mere contact with which can heal and redeem? And what if this great sensitive-plate, upon which are inscribed these moments, be the very under-sea, the very sublunary floor, of beauty itself? (35)



From JCP diary: 23rd December 1930 – It is snowing and all the land is white with snow. Took the Black over Bridge along river ... saw the snow falling against the dark stems of the trees especially of the willows but looking up the hill you could not see it falling against the grey sky. I looked back at the little house containing the T.T. who is all the world to me ...

CHRIS THOMAS

JCP, Neville Braybrooke and Symon Gould

In *Newsletter* 92, November 2017, (News and Notes p. 33), we published details of the sale, at auction, of five letters from JCP to **Neville Braybrooke** (1923-2001), covering the period 1958 to 1961. Neville Braybrooke was an important editor, and literary critic. He edited a Symposium for T.S. Eliot's 70th birthday in 1958 and published a critical essay on Eliot's poetry in 1967. He was also a poet, essayist, reviewer and novelist. He was the founder of the Phoenix Press, published Gandhi's memoirs in 1949, and wrote a biography of the novelist Olivia Manning, published in 2004. Olivia Manning reviewed JCP's *Weymouth Sands* in the *Spectator* in 1963. Neville Braybrooke was for a long time associated with the literary periodical *The Wind and the Rain* which, in 1962, published JCP's poem, *Corfe Castle*, written while he was at Sherborne school, and which was the subject of one of JCP's letters to Braybrooke. This issue of *The Wind and the Rain* also included other juvenilia by John Betjeman, R.S. Thomas, Simone Weil, and Teilhard de Chardin. Neville Braybrooke was a regular contributor to the *Independent*, the *Guardian*, *New Statesman*, *New Yorker*, *Observer*, *Tablet*, *TLS*, and the *Spectator*. JCP's letters to Neville Braybrooke are significant -- they inform us that JCP was still able, in his 80s, to recall the whole of *Corfe Castle* from memory. The letters also include his thoughts about the poetry of Milton, his comments on Braybrooke's only novel, *The Idler* (Secker and Warburg, 1961) and the striking image on the dust jacket of *The Idler*, designed by Terence Durham, which JCP said he much admired.

I also mentioned, in *Newsletter* 92, that Neville Braybrooke had written a short article for the *Sunday Telegraph* on the occasion of JCP's 90th birthday. This is a warm, sensitive and generous tribute by a writer who had personal contact with JCP and honours what he calls his '*Rabelaisian twists and Celtic wildness*'. The article is difficult to retrieve unless you have access to the *Daily Telegraph* digital archive. The article is reprinted below. Neville Braybrooke's obituary was published in *The Times*, 16 July 2001 and the *Guardian*, 20 August 2001. Braybrooke's obituary in *The Times* referred to his personal qualities in terms that JCP might well have appreciated: '*... he was something of a poet, something of a mystic above all, a creative spirit.*'

Neville Braybrooke's tribute is followed by a letter, which also first appeared in the *Sunday Telegraph*, from the publisher **Symon Gould** (1893-1963), prompted by Braybrooke's article. Symon Gould was closely associated with JCP and Llewelyn in New York in the 1920s and his letter includes some valuable personal anecdotes. Gould is not however often mentioned in studies of the Powyses. Morine Krissdóttir

does not say anything about him in her biography, *Descents of Memory*, but Richard Graves, in *The Powys Brothers*, has a passing reference to his role. JCP briefly refers to Symon Gould, in his role as an impresario, in a letter to Llewelyn, (31st January 1938), and also mentions him in *Autobiography*, where he says, he was, ‘guided’, at his New York lectures ‘by an enterprising personage called Mr Gould’. Symon Gould organised public debates at Carnegie Hall as Director of the League for Public Discussion and in 1922 he established the American Library Service in which capacity he published new editions of JCP’s *One Hundred Best Books* in 1922, and *Suspended Judgements* in 1923 as well as Llewelyn’s *Ebony and Ivory*, and *Thirteen Worthies* in 1923. From other references in his letters to Llewelyn it is clear that JCP greatly appreciated and valued Gould’s publishing ventures. Llewelyn also paid a tribute to Symon Gould: ‘A more ruthless and spirited realist could scarce be met with ...’ Symon Gould was an early pioneer of the little theatre movement in cinema and, alongside JCP and Llewelyn’s friend, Benjamin de Cassares, he helped to produce the American version of F.W. Murnau’s silent film, *Nosferatu, a Symphony of horror*, in 1929 (see *Hollywood Gothic*, by David Skal, 1990). Symon Gould founded the Film Arts Guild in 1930 exhibiting and distributing foreign films. Later, he founded the American Vegetarian Party and stood against Nixon and Kennedy as a candidate for US President in 1960. Symon Gould’s obituary was published in the *New York Times*, 25 November 1963.

Fine Performer

Neville Braybrooke celebrates a grand old man of letters

(First published in the Sunday Telegraph 7 October 1962 – the original article was accompanied by a reproduction of Augustus John’s sketch of JCP)

John Cowper Powys is 90 tomorrow. He will spend the day quietly at his home in North Wales. This is in keeping with his character, since all the gusto of his mind, with its Rabelaisian twists and Celtic wildness, he preserves for his books.

There are already 50 of them, and there are more on the stocks waiting to be published. The size of his vast correspondence now rivals Bernard Shaw’s. Life and letters for him have always been very much one and the same thing.

In his young days, when he was a lecturer, his aim was to get inside the skins of the poets and novelists whom he was discussing. Sometimes on the platform his portrait of Keats or Dostoevsky proved only a shadow of himself. Yet when his method succeeded, as it did with Milton and Hardy and Dickens and Walter Scott, there were many flashes of brilliant revelation.

In America there are many who still remember these performances with wonder.

Performance is the right word, too, because lecturing of this order calls for the actor's approach. 'Nature from the start made me an actor', he wrote in his autobiography in 1934 and in one sense every poem and story that he has written has been a chapter of autobiography.

He has played many roles: some of them have been real figures such as *Homer* (1959) and *Owen Glendower* (1941); some imaginary such as *Wolf Solent* (1929) and *Jobber Skald* (1935). But no role has he played in isolation without being the rest of the cast as well.

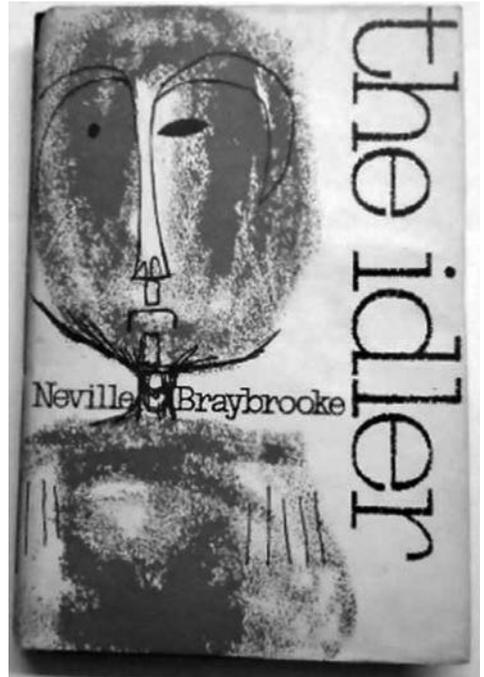
Those whom *Wolf Solent* meets resemble characters in an ancient morality – life and death, good and evil, reality and appearance; they are part of a landscape against which this great sprawling self portrait is painted by the author.

In *Wolf's* search to discover himself, in his exploration of that country of the mind which each man carries within his skull, there is revealed a scene that is none other than the lanes and by-ways of Sherborne which John Cowper and his brothers so loved in their youth.

In *A Glastonbury Romance* (1933) he is a whole group of villagers searching for the Holy Grail. This, his most famous book, has been compared to *War and Peace*, and many readers have wondered at the singular lack of public recognition its author has been given.

This question has now been answered by R.C. Churchill in a valuable pamphlet, *The Powys Brothers*, which has just appeared (Longmans, 2s.6d). Two reasons are given. In the 1930s, John Cowper Powys's most prolific period, his concern with ultimate problems was considered too bourgeois by the fashionable critics of the Left; and after the war his answers to these problems were considered too unorthodox by the new critics of the Christian Revival.

It is to John Cowper's glory that he has been unperturbed by fashion, since the quality of the work has been the only reward he has sought. One of his brothers, the late T.F. and author of *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* (1928) has been described as 'the Quiet Man of Dorset'. Perhaps John Cowper is the Quiet Man of Merioneth.



In his pages live again the exciting moments when Odysseus prepares to sail away, or Merlin prepares to wave his wand. These are the high points, like the mountains that surround the author's home.

But there are also the quiet moments, observed with a beautiful delicacy, that slip into the mind and return with increasing pleasure: 'Newly budded plane trees cast curious little shadows, like deformed butterflies, upon the yellow paving stones.'

Grand Old Man

(This letter from Symon Gould was first published in the Sunday Telegraph, 14 October 1962)

Sir – I read with profound pleasure your tribute last Sunday to John Cowper Powys on the occasion of his 90th birthday.

I am proud to have exercised a pioneering function in introducing him in some measure to the New York public as a lecturer and to have published one of his books.

At this time when encomia are belatedly being addressed to this great man of letters, who should have been awarded the Nobel prize long since, it is worth recalling that one of our major poets, William Rose Benet, then editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, who was unfailingly present at all his lectures, celebrated his attendance by inditing a long poem entitled 'On Listening to John Cowper Powys delivering a lecture on Leonardo da Vinci'.

Forty years ago I acted as his impresario in New York City. I remember how he never prepared his platform discourses. He would have me phone him an hour or so before he mounted the podium, communicating to him the subject of his lecture.

He would appear on time, don his Oxford gown, and stride up and down the platform like a being possessed, holding his audience in thrall with the magnificent sweep of his mind and gesture which would transport his hearers to high planes of aesthetic and intellectual stimulation and rapture.

SYMON GOULD
New York 36, N.Y.

Chris Thomas

Family Connections

Llewelyn Powys, JCP, Alfred de Kantzow and Mildred Bosanquet

On Wednesday, September 13th 1911, Llewelyn Powys wrote in his diary: ‘*Tea at the Prince of Wales with Mildred Bosanquet.*’ [1]

This reference to Mildred Bosanquet immediately intrigued me because I had come across the name of Bosanquet before in connection with my researches into the family history of JCP’s poet friend Alfred de Kantzow. [2]

The connection is provided by Alfred de Kantzow’s maternal grandfather William Bosanquet (1757-1800). Mildred Bosanquet (1886-1939) was a younger cousin of de Kantzow, and the daughter of Alfred William Bosanquet (1854-1936) who was descended from another branch of the Bosanquet family. All the members of the Bosanquet family in England are lineal descendents of David Bosanquet (1661-1732), a Huguenot, who escaped the Catholic persecution of Protestants in southern France, following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in October 1685, and arrived in London on February 21st 1686. [3]

Peter’s note to Llewelyn’s diary entry tells us that ‘*The Bosanquets were a neighbouring family of Townsend Odcombe: Mildred a friend of Katie Powys.*’ [4] Mildred’s father, Alfred William Bosanquet, [5] lived briefly in Australia in the 1880s, where Mildred was born, and worked on a sugar plantation. He returned to England, and attended the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester. Alfred William and his family lived at several different addresses in England before arriving in Odcombe at some point after 1903. The family appears in the 1911 census at Odcombe but by 1919 they had moved to Winchester and later to Cuckfield and Ardingly in Sussex. Mildred remained with her parents during her life and was appointed Secretary of the Women’s branch of the local Conservative Association in Ardingly. [6]

Peter Foss later informed me that Mildred’s name also appears several times in Katie’s diary but, although the Powyses were acquainted with Mildred’s family in Odcombe, they were clearly not close enough to have made regular visits to Montacute vicarage. Peter however also mentioned that Alfred de Kantzow’s signature appears in Katie’s birthday book so he may have visited Montacute with JCP. If that is the case did he perhaps also visit his Bosanquet cousins in Odcombe? It is a remarkable coincidence that one of JCP’s new friends, who he met in 1894 in Portslade, should turn out to have relatives living so close to Montacute. We can only wonder if JCP and de Kantzow discussed these matters in their meetings. They could well have discussed the connection since they both shared a deep interest in family history and genealogy.

But this is not the only serendipitous connection between JCP, Alfred de Kantzow and the Bosanquet family. Henry Bosanquet (1760-1817) [7], Alfred de Kantzow's great uncle and brother of his maternal grandfather, William, was elected Recorder of Glastonbury in 1794. [8] Henry Bosanquet's name also appears in the list of the 'complacent' Recorders of Glastonbury cited by JCP in *A Glastonbury Romance*. [9]

Notes

- [1] *Recalled to Life, Llewelyn Powys: A Consumptive's Diary*, 1911, edited by Peter J Foss, The Powys Press, 2016, p.114
- [2] *Newsletter* 67, July 2009, pp 40-47
- [3] For genealogical connections between Alfred de Kantzow and the extensive Bosanquet family see *The Story of the Bosanquets* by Grace Lawless Lee, 1966 and *The Genealogy of the Family of Bosanquet*, by Louisa Clara Meyer, privately printed, London, 1877.
- [4] *Recalled to Life*, note 386, p.161
- [5] He was the son of the Reverend Edward Stanley Bosanquet (1806-1886) rector of Bolingbroke in Lincolnshire
- [6] Obituary of Alfred William Bosanquet in *The Mid Sussex Times*, 30 June 1936
- [7] *The Story of the Bosanquets*, p.104
- [8] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1794
- [9] *A Glastonbury Romance*, Chapter 16, The Silver Bowl, Macdonald, 1966 (new edition reset), p.490; p.500

New Members

We are very pleased to welcome seven new members to the Powys Society, located in Derbyshire, the Channel Islands, Germany, Dorset, Kent, Essex, and London who have joined the Society since the last announcement published in *Newsletter* 92, November 2017. This brings the current total membership of the Society to **245**, including Honorary members, and allowing for other members who are deceased, or who have either resigned or not renewed their membership. Full details of current membership trends and membership numbers will be included in Hon. Secretary's report at the AGM at the Wessex Hotel in Street, on Sunday 12 August at 11.00am.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary