

Editorial

Our cover illustrates ancient oak trees, possibly those encountered by the Dekkers, father and son, on their fateful walk from Glastonbury to Whitelake Cottage. Ray Cox traces the history of oaks and tracks in this landscape that JCP might have known. On the back cover is a letter from TF to his sister Katie, on the publication of her poems. Other short letters by TF in the 1920s are to Angus Davidson, translator and associate at the Woolfs' Hogarth Press, with a courteous one to a fan.

The Pageant chapter of *A Glastonbury Romance* was the subject of a Zoom in August, described on pages 17-19, followed by three contrasting essays on the book (two from the archive) and a select bibliography. The Zoom planned for December is again on JCP, the final ('Mohawk') chapter of his *Autobiography*.

Paul Roberts gives us an introduction to Redwood Anderson, JCP's 'best friend' during the Corwen years, followed by glimpses of him from JCP letters to William Gillespie (another sufferer from depression), and JCP's foreword to Redwood's 1947 book *Paris Symphony*.

News and Notes ranges from recent publications in France, to JCP (via Jerry Cobbold) sharing with Dickens the Victorian tradition of burlesque clowns, and to a newly published biography of Stephen Tomlin, charmer of the Bloomsbury Group and victim of the demon drink, but who spent happy younger days in East Chaldon where he was the impetus to TF's publishing career. (*continues on page 2*)

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Other Powys connections, recorded or possible, include reminiscences by Susan Lane (daughter-in-law of Susanne, see *NL 94* and *The Powys Journal XXX*, 2020): Eliphaz Levi (a probable interest); and *Gleichnis* ('likeness'? reflection? allegory?? symbol ???), a final word in Goethe's Faust and a concept often used by JCP.

KK

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Compiling a select bibliography of notes and articles about *A Glastonbury Romance*, sourced from Powys Society and some other publications, has illuminated a wide variety of scholarly approaches, interpretations and responses to the novel stretching back to the 1970s. I hope this will provide a useful quick reference guide for readers and researchers and may help to complement Professor Bill Keith's extensive bibliographical work in this field.

CT

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Susan Rands
In Memoriam
Stephen Powys Marks

I first met Stephen in 1981 when he gave a talk to the Society about his grandfather A.R.Powys, who for many years had been the Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. Some years later we were looking at books for sale at a conference and I picked up *Fourteen Friends* by James Lees Milne where A.R.Powys is described as 'a very remarkable intellectual-cum craftsman...' who 'had known many of the SPAB's founders including Ruskin and William Morris, he himself was the author of a book about the care of old buildings which became a gospel of the preservation society he served so long and so authoritatively.' Stephen was very pleased.

Meanwhile we had fallen out. I was asked to be Treasurer for reasons that I well remember but are too complicated to explain here, and having time and energy, I agreed although I had no knowledge or experience of such work. I paid in what I received and paid out what I was asked for, sent out subscription reminders and by some sleight of hand presented accounts which looked as though they balanced. After Stephen had taken over from myself at the AGM at the time of the upheaval, I asked a few pertinent questions possibly about officer's expenses which were very low in my day. Stephen did not deign to answer but said he would write to me. Afterwards he told me I was a very annoying person and he wasn't going to talk to me anymore to which I replied 'Why should I care?'

I forget the steps by which we became friendly but in recent years we often travelled to the Dorchester meetings on the train together, he from Bath and I joining the train at Castle Cary. He was always waiting at the door as Ian handed me in, and I remember one occasion when Ian met me on return and Stephen said, 'She's behaved very well!' He was a delightful companion; our sense of humour often coincided although he was rather fond of punning. The meeting often ended before the train left so we would visit a bookshop or sit on a bench on the usually deserted platform and talk.

When Stephen and Tordis first moved to Bath he showed me the finer details of his house. There were awnings fixed in the wall that you could pull out over the porch on a sunny day, and that would go back in again of themselves at a touch; and there was a low ceilinged but spacious cellar very convenient for the work of plumber and electrician. In the kitchen there was a custom-made table which would expand at a touch if needed, in a most geometrically ingenious manner. Stephen liked gadgetry of this kind. He was a skilled handyman and liked things to work, and if they didn't he would be very cross with them and with himself.

Stephen and I with Kate were, I think, the only people from the Society to attend the launch of *Descents of Memory* at the Dorchester museum attended mainly by members of the Dorset History Society. Roger Peers, joint editor of *The Dorset Year* and Chairman of *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*, read the part of John Cowper somewhat unconvincingly to Morine's Phyllis, and Judith Bond, editor of the *Overlook Porius*, spoke well.

On another occasion we three visited the grave of John Cowper's wife, Margaret in the huge Catholic cemetery on the outskirts of Bath; we all, so far as I remember, made something of the Latin inscription on the tombstone about praying, or being grateful for release from chains.

No one I think has mentioned how musical Stephen was. He played the piano and the violin and sang in Sherborne Abbey, and regularly at Downside.

Nor have they mentioned the large and very splendid lunch party that Stephen and Tordis gave to celebrate their golden wedding. It was held in Kilmersdon Village Hall, one of the finest in the country, in the design and building of which Stephen had a large part. Many of Tordis's German relations were there, and all the local notables including the Jolliffes of Ammerdown

Stephen's final days were sad. He was tormented by what to do with his superb collection, and lost most of the well fought battles, which he deserved to win, against Bath's monstrous planning development.

The Powys Society
Annual General Meeting
held by video link on Sunday 16 August
at 15.00 BST

Present – members of the Powys Society committee: Timothy Hyman (*Chairman*); David Goodway (*Vice-Chairman*); Paul Cheshire (*Treasurer; web editor and JSTOR manager*); Chris Thomas (*Secretary*); Dawn Collins (*Social Media manager*); Louise de Bruin (*Conference organiser*); Marcella Henderson-Peal (*Hon committee member*); Robin Florence Hickey; Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor*); Kevin Taylor (*ex-officio, editor Powys Journal*); Marcel Bradbury.

Present – members of the Powys Society: John Hodgson; Catherine Bayliss; Ray Crozier; Richard Graves; Janice Gregory); Peter Lazare; Sonia Lewis; Douglas Mackie; Chris Michaelides; Pat Quigley; John Sanders; Anthony Swindell; Kim Wheatley

Apologies were received from Anna Rosic (*co-opted committee member and Conference organiser*), Michael Kowalewski (*Collection Liaison Officer*) and Charles Lock (*ex-officio, contributing editor Powys Journal*).

Kevin Taylor welcomed members, introduced the AGM, outlined Zoom protocols, and acted as moderator throughout the meeting.

The Secretary read a passage from *A Glastonbury Romance*, Chapter 10, Geard of Glastonbury, Macdonald edition, 1966, p.285: paragraph beginning: *What attracted Mr Geard's attention... .*

Minutes of AGM 2019

The minutes of the 2019 AGM as published in *Newsletter 98* November 2019 were approved.

Nomination of Honorary Officers and Members of the Powys Society Committee for the year 2020-2021

Nominations to the Powys Society committee as published in *Newsletter 100*, July 2020, were approved.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman thanked Kevin Taylor for arranging and hosting meetings of the Powys Society, including AGM, by Zoom video link during period of Covid-19 pandemic. Chairman said discussion meetings held by video link had all been very successful allowing more members to participate who might not otherwise have been able to attend a meeting in person. This is all the more important in view of

the fact that although we cancelled our annual conference this year we were able to provide members with an opportunity to meet by video link, as a substitute, and hold a discussion of *A Glastonbury Romance*. The Chairman also thanked Kevin for all the work he had done to make the publication, in e-book form, of JCP's novels such a great success. Sales figures for the e-books are very encouraging. The Chairman thanked Paul Cheshire for refreshing and reorganising the Society's website making it a very user-friendly resource which is now easy to navigate. The Chairman thanked Paul for posting new documents and creating a space for archived material.

Treasurer's Report and presentation of annual accounts for year ending 31 December 2019

Robin Hickey said that this was her last year in the role of Treasurer and that Paul Cheshire would take on full responsibilities as Treasurer from the beginning of 2021. Robin said she would complete Treasurer's report up until the end of December 2020. Treasurer's Report for year ending 31 December 2019 was published in *Newsletter* No. 100, July 2020 and has been approved by auditors Hills and Burgess. Robin noted that income from membership subscriptions had dropped during 2019 but book sales at the conference had realised £515, income from sale of e-books and recovery of income by Gift Aid from HMRC have also helped to increase balance of accounts. This means that with receipt of fees from JSTOR the Society is well on track to take on more paid for projects such as new publications which the committee will now consider. Members thanked Robin for her work as Treasurer and congratulated her on producing timely annual reports for inspection by independent auditors.

Collection Liaison Officer's Report

Secretary said that Michael Kowalewski had been informed that a bookseller in the Isle of Man had been in contact with the committee and said that he owned a short letter which he had found tipped inside one of his books. The bookseller said the letter seemed to be from TFP and is addressed to Katie about her poems. In a later communication the bookseller agreed to donate the letter to the Society which will in due course be transferred to the Society's collection at Exeter University. The letter has been confirmed to be in TFP's hand.

Secretary explained that Glen Cavaliero's Powys collection of letters, documents, and other items, donated by Glen's executor, will be deposited in the Society's collection at Exeter University. Glen's collection of Powys books will be donated to JCP's *alma mater* Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. A summary of both collections can be viewed on the Powys Society website. Secretary said that he has compiled inventories for both collections of books and papers which will be presented, in due course, to archivists at Exeter University and Corpus Christi College.

Secretary's Report

Membership

Secretary said that membership of the Society is now 224. Since this time last year we have lost overall a total of 44 members. Of this total 33 members have been removed due to non-renewal; 7 members were deceased; 4 members resigned. Secretary said he is following up another 14 members whose membership has lapsed and who have not responded to reminder letters so they may need to be removed at a later date. The good news is that 8 new members have joined the Society since August 2019; 3 members have been reinstated.

The total membership constitutes (including complimentary contacts): 185 members in the UK and the remainder are located principally in France and USA.

There is the potential for cross over – one reader in Australia who had acquired an e-book of *Porius* joined the Society – the current popularity of e-books demonstrates interest in reading Powyses which might be transferred to membership.

Secretary said he also expected the new feature, recently installed by Paul Cheshire on the web site, allowing members to freely access all back numbers of the *Powys Journal* on-line through the digital JSTOR platform, might act as an incentive to new membership.

Membership has also been boosted by a few young graduate students in UK indicating academic interest in study of JCP.

However overall membership trend is still steadily downward – although we know there is a strong desire for reading Powyses from statistics provided by Kevin and Paul and evidence of participation in the Facebook reading group.

Secretary said he wished to acknowledge excellent work of Dawn, Kevin and Paul and this is much appreciated – Secretary encouraged everyone to regularly check web site – it is frequently updated – Paul has added many new features as he explains in his report.

Powys Journal

Kevin Taylor said that at a meeting of the Powys Society committee in February 2020, members discussed responses to a questionnaire about the future of *The Powys Journal*, its content, scope, and frequency of publication. Kevin said that all members agreed that *The Powys Journal* should continue as it is in print form but that access to a digital edition would also be made available, on application to the web-editor, through the JSTOR platform. Kevin said that the committee had also agreed to appoint him as editor of *The Powys Journal* to succeed Charles Lock who agreed to continue in the role of contributing editor. Kevin thanked Charles and Louise for the excellent work they have done on *The Powys Journal* in the past. Janice Gregory

asked if an additional number of copies of the *Journal* might be produced for wider circulation but the Secretary noted that storage of unsold copies of the *Journal* is a problem since members have little spare space. Dawn Collins suggested that the solution might be found through print on demand but Secretary said the same issue of storage space would still arise. Kevin noted that cost of *Powys Journal* for this year will be increased due to cancellation of conference and extra costs incurred by mailing the *Journal* to all members.

Publication of e-books

Kevin said that the e-book project has been a great success – to end-July a total of 613 copies have been sold; the best sellers are *A Glastonbury Romance* – 207 copies sold, *Wolf Solent* – 116 copies sold and *Porius* – 109 copies sold. Sales are holding up well each month. Total income of £2,957.21 has been raised which means cost of the project will soon be recovered and royalties paid to the JCP estate. Louise de Bruin said she had noted some small mistakes and printing errors in e-books for *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Maiden Castle* – Kevin responded and said that at this stage we cannot afford to rescan books for small incidental errors but would review this if any errors were found which substantially altered the meaning of the text. Members suggested feedback from readers should be encouraged and an advert for the Society should be inserted if we rescan books. Kevin noted contact details for the Society do appear in the e-books. Dawn Collins suggested discounts might be offered if readers elect to join the Society. Kevin said it should be possible to highlight availability of e-books on the website.

Powys Society and social media

Dawn Collins said interest in Facebook pages is starting to escalate and more members have joined the Reading Group. Dawn also said she would like to encourage more interaction between members and the Facebook pages as well as encourage members to post more articles, news and information. The Facebook Reading Group discussions by Zoom video link have worked well.

Development of Powys Society web site and matters relating to Powys Journal on JSTOR

Website

Paul Cheshire said that over the last year he has concentrated on adding further content to the new web platform and navigation structure that was created in 2019. These additions include:

a full run of the contents of back issues of two Powys related journals: *la lettre powysienne*, Jacqueline Peltier's much-loved journal, which ran from Spring 2001 to Summer 2017 and *Powys Notes*, the journal of the Powys Society of North America,

which appeared from 1985 to 2002. Its last editor, Nicholas Birns, provided several back issues to scan and convert to digital format. Most of the missing issues were then kindly retrieved from the extensive collection of Kate Kavanagh.

Past conferences and events: There is now a complete listing of conferences going back to the inaugural 1972 centenary conference starring George Steiner and the Three Wilsons. Programme details are sketchy in some instances, but the effect gives a good sense of the Society's activities and its guest speakers over these 48 years.

Plans for the future include full digitisation of complete issues to date of *The Powys Society Newsletter*, and *The Powys Review*. This project requires industrial scale scanning.

Website Bookshop

Online sales from the website bookshop are picking up apace. Since the start of this year we have received £234.

Google analytics: Use of Website

According to google analytics we have had over 4200 different users in the seven months since 15 January when this was set up. 58% of users are from the USA, 26% from the UK, and the remaining 16% come from 62 other countries.

The Powys Journal on JSTOR

At the end of July 2020 we set up free access for members on JSTOR. Interested members are invited to apply to me at powysjournal@icloud.com to receive a username and password.

We have received £1,660 from JSTOR for our first year's granting of a licence for the journal to appear on their facility. This is a guaranteed annual minimum and we can expect to receive a similar amount each year. Out of this we shall be paying back £250 a year to allow our members access. So far, apart from the committee, seven members have signed up.

Date and venue of conference 2021

13-15 August, Wessex Hotel, Street – advance booking of the venue has been confirmed by Anna Rosic.

AOB

Kate Kavanagh asked if Peter Foss's book about Llewelyn Powys is to be made available in digital form. Secretary said that there were no plans for this at present but committee will consider producing an eBook edition of the book at a future date.

Kate also asked if we still intend to make the rest of JCP diaries available or at least for a start the American years 1932-34. Secretary said that we should proceed with these plans gradually focusing for a start on the diary for 1932 for which a

transcription is available although this needs to be checked, and an index and notes compiled.

John Hodgson asked if there are plans for new publications and also asked about further editions of JCP's diaries. Secretary said that no firm decisions had been made but that the committee is considering a list of possible publication projects and will report on this in due course.

Kim Wheatley and Catherine Bayliss said how much they enjoyed the Zoom discussion meetings. Kim suggested it should be possible to make a recording of each event. Marcella Henderson-Peal agreed but said this would require the permission of participants.

Peter Lazare noted there seemed to be some confusion recently between the Powys Society and a local history group in Powys. Secretary said this would explain strange e-mails received by Chairman and Secretary inviting the society to participate in a local Welsh TV programme.

Richard Graves asked about arrangements for appointing a new President to succeed Glen Cavaliero. Secretary said this was still under consideration by the committee following deferment of a final decision in the wake of Covid-19. Richard Graves said that the committee should consult the Constitution to ascertain formal arrangements for nomination of a new President. Other members suggested the committee might consult the Charity Commission or the Alliance of Literary Societies for advice on procedures. Peter Lazare said he would like to nominate Richard Graves as President.

**Chris Thomas,
Hon. Secretary**

New Members

We are very pleased to welcome seven new members to The Powys Society who have joined since the last announcement published in *Newsletter* 100 July 2020. New members are located in West Sussex, Knighton in Powys, Suffolk, Llanbrynmair in Wales, Essex, Cumbria and Port Townsend in USA. This brings the current total membership of the Society to **230**, including Honorary members, and allowing for other members who are deceased, or who have either resigned or not renewed their membership.

**Chris Thomas,
Hon. Secretary**

Neil Atkin

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Llewelyn Powys Birthday Walk

Unprecedented times called for unprecedented measures, and the lock-down and social distancing regulations imposed during the onset of the world-wide Coronavirus pandemic turned society on its head, bringing severe travel restrictions and hotel and B&B closures and forcing the cancellation of numerous public and private events – including the Powys Society Annual Conference, AND the gathering of the Dandelion Fellowship at East Chaldon on August 13th for the annual Llewelyn Powys Birthday Walk.

However, the easing of restrictions in July offered a glimmer of hope that it may still be possible to go ahead and celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Birthday Walk and pay a special tribute in honour of our founder, John Batten, who sadly left us earlier this year in late April.

Subsequent enquiries followed: the Sailor's Return remained closed, but the Red Lion at Winfrith had reopened and were happy to host us once again, and the George Hotel in Weymouth, our regular hostelry, was now accepting bookings, so we decided to go ahead with the event. In an attempt to notify members, Rich Stone had placed a notice to this effect on the Llewelyn Powys/Dandelion Fellowship Facebook page, and we attempted to notify regular attendees wherever possible via email & telephone.

Following our 300-mile drive from North Lincolnshire, myself, son Jason Lee and grandson Marcus arrived at the Red Lion at five minutes to noon with some trepidation, wondering if anyone else would actually turn up, and we were delighted to see Paul & Pam Gillingham waiting for us, along with Paul Cheshire as we pulled into the car park! Ben Chadwick and Steph Bradley followed us in, and John Sanders



Wet walkers at the Llewelyn Powys stone.

arrived on the stroke of twelve just as the landlady was opening the pub doors, and thus it came to pass that at 12 noon on a warm & humid Thursday in August nine doughty souls convened beneath a glowering and ominous looking sky in the car park of the Red Lion in Winfrith Newburgh to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Llewelyn Powys Annual Birthday Walk.

Apologies were received from Chris Gostick & Linda Goldsmith, Pat Quigley, Dawn Collins, Jed Redman, Dennis White, Byron & Eirlys Ashton, and from Rosemary Dickens who sadly couldn't be with us owing to illness.

We raised our glasses for the annual toast to Llewelyn's memory on the 136th anniversary of his birth, and raised them again in a toast to the memory of John Batten whilst reminding ourselves that it was John's inspirational leadership and passion which led to the inauguration of the first Birthday Walk 25 years ago, and the subsequent foundation of The Friends of Llewelyn Powys & latterly, the Dandelion Fellowship. We also paid tribute to Stephen Powys Marks and raised a toast to 'absent friends', remembering with fondness former members Leslie Harrison, Richard Burleigh and especially Janet Pollock for her kindness in making Chydyok available to us during the fifty years of her tenancy.

After a leisurely lunch we thanked our host and drove in convoy to East Chaldon where we discovered Rich Stone and his wife Jenny waiting for us in the car park of the Sailor's Return which swelled our number to eleven, and at 1.45 pm we set off across the village green for the steep climb up the Chydyok Road on the 25th annual Birthday Walk.

In the humid conditions Chalky Knapp seemed steeper and more challenging than ever with the passing of the years, and with an age range of between 17 and 70 something, social distancing was never a problem and became a natural feature of the walk for our happy band of pilgrims.

The indomitable John Sanders led the way and was waiting for us as we puffed, panted and perspired our way to Chydyok, where we paused and took note of the recent changes; 'good hope' no longer lay at the bottom of Llewelyn's pond for this had disappeared and had been replaced by a larger, triangular shaped concrete pond which was now the domain of a pair of Eider ducks.

The brick path from the gate to the front door was overgrown with weeds, completely obscuring the two ankhs which Llewelyn had built into the brickwork during the hot summer of 1933, and the terrace walk had been partially transformed into a parking area where an old 4x4 pick-up truck rested (& rusted) in the place where Llewelyn's revolving shelter had once originally stood. We remembered with gratitude the days when Janet Pollock (nee Machen) had welcomed us with cool refreshments in the hot August days of yore at Llewelyn & Alyse's former home, whilst lamenting the changes which had taken place in the intervening years.

The clouds seemed darker and closer as we negotiated the overgrown path through Tumbledown, and the first heavy raindrops began to fall as we opened the gate above Bat's Head which led onto the old Gypsy Track.

Suddenly Portland dissolved into nothing more than a dark shadow in the English Channel, and the fleet of large ferries and cruise ships anchored in Weymouth Bay was obscured by the incessant rain which fell in sheets all the way to Llewelyn's Stone standing rather forlornly, surrounded by nettles and weeds, in the corner of the field above the Chaldon Down obelisk.

As we congregated together for the traditional reading, Rich Stone placed a posy of wildflowers on the memorial stone which he & Jenny had collected along the way, and I gingerly fished in my canvas shoulder bag for the rather damp but precious first edition of *Earth Memories*, signed and with an inscription in Llewelyn's hand dated "May 10th 1938, Clavadel, Davos Platz", together with an ink sketch of an ank. The rain continued unabated, and Paul Gillingham saved the day – and the book – by making a miniature n v n vn n tent of his rain cape, allowing me to stoop and shelter beneath it to read a passage from the essay entitled, 'Natural Happiness'.

For the first time in many years we did not linger at the stone; the wind strengthened & the five of us who had not had the foresight to carry protective clothing stood shivering in saturated shorts and tee-shirts whilst admiring Paul Cheshire's boundless energy as he set off to run back to the village!

As we turned back onto the path over Tumbledown we said goodbye to John Sanders who continued towards Dagger's Gate to catch a bus in Lulworth and return to his interrupted annual holiday near Swanage. Rich & Jenny Stone had gone on ahead, Jason had followed and the Gillinghams left us at Chydyok to take an alternative route back to the village via Dead Horse Valley, leaving myself and grandson Marcus to squelch our way over Chalky Knapp – which seemed much steeper on the way back.

Thankfully we were rescued by Ben & Steph who picked us up in their car, ironically on the last downward stretch just half a mile from the village, where a surprise awaited us; what were Rich, Jenny and Pam doing in my car with all the doors open?

It transpired that they were using any means at their disposal to mop up the veritable lake within, as some fool had inadvertently left the sun-roof open.... Rich & Jenny dispensed hot cups of tea from their campervan and Ben Chadwick gallantly supplied us with dry clothing, and as we reflected on a memorable day before going our separate ways, we concluded that the 25th anniversary of the Birthday Walk would never be forgotten by those eleven wet walkers who had shared the experience!

Chris Thomas
Six letters by TFP

Copies of four of the letters written by TFP between 1923 and 1931, presented here and addressed to “Angus” [Davidson] were sent to me by Robert Caserio, Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature at Penn State University in Pennsylvania. A fifth letter addressed to Frederick Bason in 1929 was also forwarded by Professor Caserio. The originals are located in the archive collection of Penn State University library. The sixth letter from TFP to his sister Katie about the publication of her book of poems, *Driftwood*, has been donated to the Powys Society by a bookdealer in the Isle of Man who said that he had found it loosely inserted in one of his books (see back cover).

Angus Davidson (1898-1980) was a close friend of many of the members of the Bloomsbury Group. He was especially close to the painter Duncan Grant. Davidson worked for Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press between 1924 and 1929. He translated the novels of Alberto Moravia as well as works by Mario Praz, Carlo Levi and Natalia Ginzburg. He was introduced to TFP by Sylvia Townsend Warner.

Tommy, Stephen Tomlin (1901-1937), was a sculptor who is mentioned several times in TFP’s letters to Angus. He lived briefly in Chaldon Herring in the 1920s, established a friendship with TFP, introduced Sylvia Townsend Warner to him and encouraged David Garnett to find a publisher for TFP’s stories and novels. He married



Head of TFP by Stephen Tomlin

Julia Strachey, the niece of Lytton Strachey, in 1927. JCP referred to Tomlin as *a gipsy like William Blake with a most caressing respect for Theodore*. A photograph of Tomlin with his sculpture of TFP’s head (which did not survive) and a letter from Tomlin to TFP (from the Powys Collection) appeared in *Newsletter* No. 58, July 2006. We plan to publish the other letters in the Powys Collection from Stephen Tomlin to TFP in a future *Newsletter*. A biography of Stephen Tomlin, *Bloomsbury Stud*, by Michael Bloch and Susan Fox has just been published – see N&N in this *Newsletter*.

Frederick Bason (1907-1973) was a second hand bookseller and rare-book dealer, autograph collector, broadcaster, diarist, contributor to the miscellany *The Saturday Book*, and author of *A Bibliography of William Somerset Maugham* (1931) and *The Cigarette Card Collector’s Handbook* (1938).

Letters from TFP, 1923-31

1.

East Chaldon
Dorchester
Dorset

May 28 1923

My dear Angus,

I enjoyed very much hearing from you, and I am very proud that you wish me to write your name in this book.

I look forward to seeing you in London.

I hope to come about the end of June or sometime then.

We loved seeing you coming that day with those flowers in your hand. Do come again when you have the chance.

It is very nice of you to praise the Left Leg.

I am longing to hear how matters are going. So far I have seen two reviews – One kindly, and one a little cross.

Goodbye. Violet sends her love.

yours ever

Theodore

I have written my name in the next page to Tommy's.

*

2.

East Chaldon
Dorchester

November 23 1923

My dear Angus

I was delighted with your letter and am very pleased indeed that you enjoyed Black Bryony.

Yes, if only there existed a few more women in the world like Mrs Henden[?] and my sister Gertrude what a pretty happy place the world would be to live in.

Black Bryony had 330 copies subscribed for in London before it came out, but I have only seen one review so far, and I expect this foolish election – wish they would send up our cat Peter as a member I am sure he would tell them about it all – may fill up all the papers with silly nonsense just now. But its most hopeful that you are pleased with “Black Bryony”.

We all feel very happy with the thought that we may see you here next week. We go to London on the 5th and return back here on the 15th. And anyhow we shall see you somewhere.

Yours ever
Theo

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3.

East Chaldon
Dorchester

September 25th 1925

My dear Angus,

I have enjoyed this book extremely. I think Murasaki is wonderful I am entirely taken by her. And I like the lady with a red tip to her nose. Its all delightful and everything is so handsome and lovely. One never has to wait for a pretty lady, – a pleasant way to live.

I hope you are well and happy and I hope Tommy is too. We miss you very much. It was very delightful having you so near. All the gay women are gone – even Doris has forsaken us. But as Violet and Francis call her a dirty little brat I daresay its as well. We picked a few blackberry yesterday but I was lazy and laid upon a bank while Violet picked.

With love, goodbye, yours ever
Theo.

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4.

East Chaldon
Dorchester

October 29th 1931

My dear Angus,

You must forgive me for answering your letter, though you told me not to. Violet thought it so good of you to write. She is a little better and I think will be herself in time. But the worst of it is that to be killed as Dicky was, was just what she has always feared would happen. So the thing that she feared came to her. Violet thanks you so much for your love and sympathy. We both send much love to you.

yours ever
Theo

5.

East Chaldon
Dorchester
July 3rd 1929

Dear Mr Bason,

I thank you very much for your letter. I am most pleased to send you my autograph.

Thank you for saying that you like my books. "Innocent Birds", is one of the best. "Mr. Weston's Good Wine" that was 15/- in the limited Edition is now 3/6 in the Phoenix library Chatto & Windus.

"The House with the Echo" is 3/- too in the same library. The "Fables" that are to come out this next Autumn will be expensive to begin with. But will soon be in the Phoenix library I hope. The lending libraries ought to have them all. I am so sorry you have had a bother to get them. My wife quite agrees with you about lending books. They often come back spoilt.

With my very best wishes
yours very sincerely
Theodore Francis Powys

"Mr. Tasker's Gods" is to come out in the Phoenix library this Autumn.

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6. [see back cover]

East Chaldon
Dorchester
November 15th 1930

Dearest Katie,

I thank you very much indeed for your book of poems that I value extremely. I congratulate you very much. You sent them for me to read on a very suitable day, wind and fog and falling rain. All your poems read extremely well now they are in print. And in this matter certainly, of getting them out, you have won what you sought for. Anyhow, you can lay your book open upon High Chaldon for the stars in their courses to read. For what do men matter —

I will meet you on Thursday as arranged.

yrs ever Theodore



The Pageant

On August 15th, another very successful Zoom meeting, again conducted by Kevin Taylor, was on Chapter 19 of *A Glastonbury Romance*.

The Pageant, a pivotal chapter in which practically all the characters in the book appear, presents an overview of Glastonbury – literally, for its mayor John Geard, who is surveying the scene from the summit of the Tor. From here he is able to see the belligerent communist-led crowd of strikers from the Dye Works bearing anti-Pageant banners (*Down With Religious Mummery, No Lourdes No Lisieux Here*), who are advancing on the dog-cart bringing Lord P. to his seat. They are placated by Geard with beer and refreshments, but (as in the town) an unruly element hovers behind the peaceable citizens .

The audience, ranged in seating instinctively according to class with Lord P. at the front, is varied by many foreign visitors attracted by the leaflets sent by John Crow across Europe to likely destinations.

Comments from characters we have already met in the novel range from comic to perceptive. The foreigners' views are more favorable than the natives', appreciating the 'modernism' of a satirical clown to comment on the action, and the condensation of tradition in the interests of drama. They approve of the tormented figure of Christ as portrayed by Mr Evans, who conflates the pain and cramp from his position tied to the Cross with the pain of the world borne by the god-man he is representing, and with his own sadistic mental fascination as a spectator of pictured pain. The collapse of Mr Evans ends the pageant prematurely, and we are never shown the final "Welsh"

act of the pre-Christian Grail and its legends. In this the clown was rumoured to have represented the poet Taliesin, but a part for Merlin was vetoed by Mr Geard – who since his encounters in Moor Court has in some way blended with Merlin himself.

Over twenty people participated in the Zoom, and subjects ranged widely. Tim Hyman read from a JCP letter to Llewelyn in June 1931, about having to lop 200 000 words off his Glastonbury book – but “perhaps only by writing a vast mass can I write fully and freely, like a growing great tree – then let it be lopped so that the mule-trains can go by ...” But he also worked to balance planning and spontaneity.

Kevin Taylor sees the long pivotal chapter as a set-piece strung between two epiphanies – Mary Crow’s vision at sunrise and Owen Evans’s of salvation through pain – a pseudo-death, unlike Geard’s at the book’s end. Chris Thomas is struck by the polyphony in the multiple levels of the narrative: the voices mocking the Grail, and the satirical French clown. Paul Cheshire found memorable the simple Christian spectators comparing it with the Bible they know. John Hodgson quoted ex-mayor Wallop, that they have thrown everything in – the unsuitable girl dancers at the foot of the Cross, the Roman governor playing chess with the chief Rabbi, erotic scenes with Lancelot and Guinevere ... A “hodge-podge” as Lord P. would have it, or “a jumbled-up epitome of life’s various dimensions”, as JCP called it in his 1953 Preface. Comments from other zoomed voices: Is Evans’s obsession overdone? The Invisible Watchers keep their benevolent distance. Merlin, the *Tremendum Mysterium*, is absent. The mysticism in *AGR* is *explicit*.

The foreigners in the audience, with Father Paleologue from Constantinople their spokesman, broaden and shift the perspectives (this looks forward to *Porius*). The clash of mockery and religion make for a deeper meaning – Evans’s anguish, Persephone acting the Virgin Mary’s sorrow beside the maypole-dancing girls, making a three-tiered appeal. Someone thought of an influence of shifting colours from JCP’s childhood kaleidoscope. For Sonia Lewis, the varied remarks from the audience make them, and us readers, part of the pageant. JCP scorned the cinema, but this is much like a crowd scene in a movie.

Bill Keith’s *Companion* to the book lists probable sources. A festival at Glastonbury was held between 1914 and 1925. At an earlier pageant, at Sherborne in 1905, Will Powys, the youngest brother then aged 17, took part. JCP is thought to have no sympathy with Madame Blavatsky, or with Bligh Bond directed by spirits to dig in the abbey ruins. Among classic books on the Grail that JCP is known to have studied are *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* by John Rhys (1891), and more recently Jessie L. Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* (1920).

Peter Tait wondered how much of the political scene of 1930 gets into the book. The question of the imagined date of *AGR* is disputed. It seems to be about 1920, but WW1 is not mentioned (as it is in *Wood and Stone*). “The second decade of the

20th century” is mentioned. A parallel universe? “Modernism” is in the pageant with parody and satire, and with the disruption of a conventional plot, and the book’s length was also of the time – compare *Ulysses*, *The Magic Mountain*, *Pilgrimage*. John H. reminded that the pageant-like medieval miracle plays employed comedy, and Chris Thomas that one of JCP’s lectures was on the post-Xtian Part II of *Faust*. Others commented on the ‘cosiness’ of Glastonbury compared to the sinister edge in *Maiden Castle*. Even murderers are sympathetic, although the ‘lower depths’ of the Paradise area are not overlooked.

The texts are complex: JCP’s diary reports rewritings even apart from cutting. The censored parts of the Wookey Hole scene have not been reinstated; the closing scene was famously recomposed by Phyllis. Final comments: Is the character of Evans convincing? – too close to JCP’s own obsession with sadism? (Had it left him by this time? He was 60 in 1932.) The characters change and fail. Evans can’t deal with real horror in the iron-bar attack,. Geard, on the other hand, dies, but as a sacrifice to save his enemy.

All agreed that with JCP re-reading is rewarding; and as a last word (from Chris), that comedy is a serious response to life.

KK

* * *

Three views of A Glastonbury Romance

Cicely Hill

Bert’s Cauldron

First printed in la lettre powysienne, no 9, Spring 2005 (a number dedicated to AGR).

No word in literature, unless perhaps ‘ballad’ or ‘legend’, can have more power to evoke the magical and the marvellous than ‘romance’. Under the roofs of Powys’s Glastonbury and under the craniums of its extraordinary inhabitants marvels occur as everyday happenings.

In John Cowper Powys’s letter to Frances Gregg in 1931 he writes of his intention to invent the characters of his book ‘in vacuo out of life and experience’ – a phrase which, in his case, must imply a very broad imaginative scope indeed.

Mr. Geard – ‘Bloody Johnny’, the holy magician of the story – is compared by Canon William Crow to a funnel. Geard describes himself as a conduit – receiving, channelling and knowing vicariously the feelings and sensations of those in the world around him and drawing on forces and powers from beyond the visible world. He is a medium. Geard’s creator, John Cowper Powys, is a medium of a very different

kind – the funnel and conduit of his own unfettered imagination, free to dictate and shape *A Glastonbury Romance*. The result is a poetic and extremely complex book which almost defies overall cohesive study.

Glastonbury is itself a character of the romance. The life of the town is dreamlike, vivid to the senses and contained in its own reality. It is affected by the consciousnesses of those who have been there, by personified forces (or gods) – particularly Chance – and by the dual malice and goodness of a ‘First Cause’ interacting with the goodness and malice in all other identities. This reciprocal duality is something quite other than the alignment with, and of, good and evil which was part of Wolf Solent’s ‘life-illusion’ and which is part of most English understanding of the Arthurian legend. In another letter to Frances Gregg, Powys posits the idea of

...every living human being having ‘The Christ’ (whatever that is) down at the bottom somewhere of our being, itself in touch – so it seems ... with what William James once well described as ‘Something of the Same Sort’ behind the visible world and behind all we know and can know.

He goes on to write of

...the problem of what connection is between this ‘Christ’-in-all-souls and this ‘something-else’ -of-a-similar-kind-behind-the-world – taken together – and the First Cause who is, from the evidence we can see, as Evil or, strictly speaking and not to be malicious, nearly as Evil as he is good. Well! perhaps not nearly as evil; but very very evil!

From this it is clear that the question of duality was central to Powys’s thought at the time of writing *A Glastonbury Romance*. It continued to be so, possibly throughout his life.

Dualism is everywhere in Glastonbury’s history – inside the Church in Cathar legend, outside the Church both in philosophical ‘paganism’ inheriting Mithraic and Druidic ideas to be found in the Grail romances (not yet Christianized) and in older magical cult religions.

Powys’s Welshman, Owen Evans, teases out the Welsh origins of contemporary happenings in Glastonbury. Powys himself touches on them a great deal more lightly. Mabinogian echoes in a story told by an old man to a group of children on the Somerset marsh could pass almost unnoticed. Images – a small dead fish in a vicarage aquarium, a live blood-streaked fish in a grail goblet, a silver bowl in a house named Camelot – all have mythic reference, yet all appear fresh out of their author’s imagination to be used as his totally original Romance demands and inviting no interpretative meaning beyond themselves.

Powys explains in his letter to Frances Gregg why she should feel uneasy in Somerset:

Norfolk & Suffolk are Danish – hardy, independent, resolute, simple, clear cut – whereas Somerset is the very heart of that shifty wavering undulating fluctuating country full of phantoms and fancies and extreme fictions & feignings & weak, crafty, yielding bite-the-hand-that-feeds-you ineffectualities & a poetized, Evangelical Christianity like they have in Wales which is neither Catholic nor Protestant nor Nonconformist nor Anglican but a sort of emotional mystical religion of their own of which all the main feelings – above all vicarious redemption and salvation thro’ emotion and without using will or effort [...] No wonder very curious feelings come over you in Somerset. I tell you it is by far the most enchanted ground in England...

Philip Crow of *A Glastonbury Romance* is, by this measure, wholly of Norfolk; Geard is of Somerset. The protean John Crow is somewhere between. The tale begins in Norfolk where the cousins, John and Mary, escape the family funeral reunion and turn their faces, with sensuous relish, into the East wind of the Fens.

Three or four characters create a tension between that which is Norfolk and that which is Glastonbury. Foremost among these is John through whom the sense of a link is intensified by his going on foot from East to West, arriving with a raw heel, little in his stomach and less in his pocket, at Stonehenge where he meets Wales in the form of the ancient stones and the person of Owen Evans.

In a talk to the Powys Society, at Sherborne in the nineteen-seventies, Gerard Casey warned readers of John Cowper Powys not to mistake the views of ‘Powys heroes’ with those of John himself. No less than four of *A Glastonbury Romance*’s main characters resemble their creator in some way; but setting the novel apart from the two which came before it is the presence of an authoritative narrative voice whose sometimes Biblical certainty replaces the ‘It was as if...’ often preceding the musings of Rook Ashover and Wolf Solent. There is that about the tone of this voice’s pronouncements which makes extraordinary events seem less exceptional – though no less remarkable – in a book where everything is exceptional.

So we learn of John and Mary’s double prayer starting on its flight driven forward ‘beyond the whole astronomical world... till it reached the primal Cause of all life’. There is danger of its being intercepted by the evil will of this ‘vast Janus-faced force’:

Down through the abysses of ether, away from the central nucleus of this dualistic Being, descend through the darkness that is beyond the world two parallel streams of magnetic force, one good and one evil...

Their prayer loses itself ‘not in ultimate good, but in ultimate evil’. A less uncompromising account of the ‘First Cause’ is to be found at the end of *In Defence of Sensuality*, published one year earlier:

This dualistic First Cause, with whose ambiguous personality it [the ichthyosaurus ego] keeps up its dialogue of alternate gratitude and defiance, may in reality be only a weak intermediary Demiurge, and the real ‘Emperor of the Universe’ be so remote, so far away, that no prophet, priest, or magician has ever so much as snatched a hint of His nature.

It is perhaps not surprising that Powys should have allowed his more moderate speculation of that time to give way a little to the dramatic demands of *A Glastonbury Romance* and this passage would suggest that the narrative voice is not necessarily more objective nor more closely in agreement with John Cowper Powys’s views than were the voices of earlier heroes.

In the course of the story a woman with cancer is miraculously cured, a dead child is brought to life. The presence of the crucified Christ above the roofs of the town is described by the narrator before Sam himself sees the vision in the night sky. Later, as he struggles with his conscience in the church, Jesus enters, unknown to Sam. We are not told in what form, only that He would have liked to save Sam from his well-intentioned, self-inflicted torment, but could not. Such wonders belong, by their very nature, to romance. Cause and effect would reduce them to that ‘totally distinct and inferior kind of Poetry – allegory and fable.’ Yet, though no moral is ever pointed, this is a deeply moral book. Sam Dekker, who decides to devote his life to practical saintliness, is described by Powys as one of the two noblest spirits in the town.

The Grail is perceived, by most of the characters, if at all, as a magical or religious reality. It is for Owen Evans ‘a fragment of the Absolute’, cancelling our notions of Time and Space in a momentary timelessness. Asked what it was his Welsh ancestors fished for in their ancient ceremonies, he replies that it was ‘that which exists in the moment of timeless time...’ As Geard cures Tittie Petherton he keeps his mind steadily upon

...that slit in Time through which the Timeless – known in those parts for five thousand years as a cauldron, a horn, a krater; a mwys, a well, a kernos, a platter, a cup and even a nameless stone – had broken the laws of nature!

The 9th-century poet Taliessin (Gwion of the Ceridwen cauldron legend) appears in *Porius*. He envisages a place of ‘...Time free at last from its Ghostly Accuser / Time haunted no more by a Phantom Eternal’. Taliessin is able to let ‘his soul sink into a multiple consciousness of the material of our planet’ as he looks at a fragment of wheat-stalk

*whose non-sentience was on a par with that of any fragment of his own skeleton,
when once that skeleton was scattered to the winds...*

This gives him reason ‘for saying “You and I” or “You and Me” to these lifeless objects’. Powys shared this ability, absorbing and penetrating and transforming at will everything in the world around him.

Unlike his Taliessin, Powys attaches great importance to religious and erotic magic, both of which abound in *A Glastonbury Romance*.

John and Mary plunge into the mill pool ‘with their eyes, their minds, and their souls’ -- much as they might have plunged into Geard’s cauldron of timelessness. Their love-making leaves them with ‘a sense of some strange virtue having passed into them’. Cordelia, the very plain new wife of Evans, associated by him with the Ceridwen legend and ‘the focus of two vibrations issuing from the First Cause – one creative, one destructive’, manages ‘by certain devices... abnormal but perfectly harmless’ to delay Evans and so prevent his witnessing a murder. In doing this she can be said to have saved Evans’s immortal soul. An unwitting agent of good over evil, she has power, with her sexuality, to effect life-changing magic.

The Absolute, that of which the grail is a fragment, is a Mystery – timeless, spaceless, incomprehensible and indescribable, though not wholly inaccessible to the imagination. ‘The answer to all things, that yet answers nothing.’ *A Glastonbury Romance*, like the grail, presents itself as a vision or series of visions or insights, the reader’s imagination called upon to open as a funnel or conduit to its wonders and contradictions. The truth is not in the myth but in the work of art.

It may be that Powys’s Glastonbury asks to be seen with the eye of the infant Bert Cole:

*...none – I say none – contemplated the Dream of Life with a more
concentrated gusto.... Bert Cole surveyed the panorama of existence with
an unpossessive, grave-eyed relish that would have put Diogenes himself
to shame.*

* * *

*Cicely Hill is a member from the earliest years of the Powys Society. She has lived
in Japan and is a composer of haiku.*

Robert L. Caserio
The Pageant – chapter 19, A Glastonbury Romance

As the Pageant's Crucifixion gets under way, Lord P. asks "What on earth possessed Geard to allow such a hodge-podge as this?" A reader might ask, in turn, what on earth possessed Powys to allow his entire chapter to be a hodge-podge? I think the additional query is justified because, behind Lord P., the authorial P. seems to pose the question to himself: as if he shares our puzzlement about how to read his meanings in the light of whatever has "allowed" his strategy. With Powys' consent, it seems, a comic spirit possesses at least the first fifty of Chapter 19's pages. The spirit's agent is Capporelli, a lord of misrule whose "tragical-comical" mischief incites a reader's guffaws. Intervening everywhere, embodying the Pageant's confounding superimpositions of Biblical and other narratives, the clown's presence inspires Mr. Weatherwax to scratch his head: "Maybe Bible itself have forgotten how 'twere." The Bible, to follow Weatherwax's drift, is faithful to what it memorializes, yet simultaneously and self-contradictorily leaves gaps in its record: hence the Bible is and is not itself. The Bible's fissured identity bewilders Weatherwax, but for a reader its amusing aspect is made salient by the author-clown's funny mishmash of Biblical like and unlike.

How many random funny intermixings the art of Chapter 19 depends upon! Red's banner, "Down with Religious Mummery," protests the Pageant, but by chance protests the mummery that is the entire novel. When the Glastonbury museum's curator erroneously tells Tillie Crow that the Pageant's Pontius Pilate is reading the Logoi of Epicurus, she wonders why Pilate's trial of Jesus should include a mariner's log. Those separate blunders are laughably thrown together. In Persephone's impersonation of the Blessed Virgin, inspiring Angela's lesbian desire for her, Powys fuses sanctity with profanation. No wonder the Dekkers consider it all "a monstrous and ghastly parody." But Powys directs readers to enjoy the parody, *and* his piling up of parody on parody. Identifying his melee with modernist aesthetics, he makes us smile at the modernism. Elizabeth Crow, invoking avant garde notions to describe Capporrelli's clowning in the scene of St. Peter's denial of Jesus, describes his stunt as "the new idea... a sort of classical chorus... only satirical of course instead of serious." Satirical of course *and* serious in Powys' comic rendering of it. The climax of the hodge-podge is "that luckless Dance of Death of the two Marys" at the foot of the cross. They are supposed to be gyrating tragically; they seem instead to perform a belly dance. The women are mortified by their gestural confusions, but the sophisticated European audience accepts them as "the final touch of modern art." "It makes a person feel sort o' wobbly in his innards," says Weatherwax. It makes a reader feel sort o' wobbly in his innards because of the comedy.

The comic confounding of separate realms on which Powys's hodge-podge builds is shown to have sociological power, and "allowed" accordingly. The role of "the pretended Saint Joseph" of Arimathea inspires the actor playing Joseph to effect "in real earnest...[Evans'] unrehearsed Descent from the Cross." A jumble of earnest and game thereby exemplifies liberation from constraint and entry into an intensified communal actuality. Geard's thought that he is saving Christ's Blood from loss as he races downhill to rescue Lord P. from a mob energizes Geard's action. At the direction of Crummie's role-play as the Lady of Shallott, the citizen impersonating King Arthur is transformed: when he quiets the unruly crowd "It was as if the real Arturus Rex had suddenly reappeared to restore peace on earth." Evans' crucifixion "re-creates, purges, cleanses, [and] transforms" the spectators. In such examples comic possession seems above all to be oriented toward making attachments: forging solidarities among heterogeneous elements, unions or unities of the kind Red might wants his politics to model. Powys' grab-bag mummery makes the whole world kin. That is an emphasis the chapter's content seems to enforce upon readers.

And yet. Despite the emphasis, a counter-hodge-podge (so to speak), a detaching impulse, develops a ground swell in Chapter 19. That undercurrent, allowing Powys an alternative possession (or a refinement of his comedy), is first summoned in the chapter's three-page "preface." The preface narrates Mary Crow's waking to the dawn of Midsummer Day; and it focuses on her spectatorship: she "was to take no part in ['Mr. Geard's religious circus'] save as a spectator." But at the very moment that forecasts her detachment, the narrative intrudes a contrastive conjunction: between the rising sun and the western horizon. A fusion of east and west, of orientation and disorientation, sounds the keynote of the mix-ups ahead. The present one occurs because Mary, facing a western window, is seeing an indirect phenomenon of light. "Certainly it did look to Mary now as if light were an entity free of all connection with the sun." The appearance fills her with "doubt and anxiety" about the day's prospects: she fears that the Pageant's confusions will make impossible a properly-oriented attachment of things to their rightful origins. The west-east light, "half-born" and "Cimmerian," "that isolated itself in some way from this process of dawn," intensifies the pathos of Mary's forebodings. The narrative apparently duplicates her pathos when it says that "To watch the processes of dawn from a window that faces *west* is...like the contemplation of... excited expressions crossing a human countenance when the cause of such feelings is absent." Would it not be better to bring things together rather than undergo their separation? And would it not be best to read a human face, or to read humanity in general, by joining its expressions to their emotional and intellectual causes? The

excited expressions of the Pageant's spectator-public are temporarily unintelligible because the public's conflicting impulses obscure their determining sources. But those causes become newly legible when their common rootedness in the Crucifixion is revealed by Evans' re-enactment. That legibility is what the Geards, the P's, the Reds, the Spears, indeed all the characters, participate in at the level of causation. The consequent re-creating and cleansing of the community witnesses a shared social good that, as I've noted, *A Glastonbury Romance's* zany way of fusing things invites us to celebrate. Given that shared good, however, it is the more surprising that at the end of Chapter 19's "preface," a wholly contradictory phenomenon breaks through. Mary undergoes "a spasm of irrational happiness." Its cause is "like a quivering love-ecstasy that had no human object." In other words, she is thrilled by the very break between cause and effect that the narrative identified in its sentence about a human expression that has lost its mooring.

It is the unmooring component that overrides the unifying comedy, and the social good, of Chapter 19. That component affects the very character of the narration. Every narrative offers its readers a mooring in its narrator, who is the intelligible cause of what a story tells and sees. But who or what is likening Mary's love-ecstasy to a disjunction between erotic feeling and an absent cause? We might say, the narrator; but then Powys shifts the agent of narration to a discontinuous something named "the invisible Watchers." They apparently know and see what narration can't tell or see, even about Mary. "'She has been allowed to see *It*,' [the Invisible Watchers] said to one another. 'Will she be the only one among all these people?'" If we readers are to be counted among all these people, we too will never know what *It* is, or what it expresses.

Nevertheless, as the chapter unfolds, clues mount up. It must be from the Watchers that the narration borrows remarks about another of Mary's ecstatic moments, when Jesus's words about truth "seem to come [to her] from some mysterious level of life where the laws of cause-and-effect have no place." The possibility that detachments and separations operate on a mysterious level, off the causal narrative track; that they trump the fusions and attachments constituting the human social comedy, is especially witnessed by a conclusive criticism of Capporelli. The clown thinks that "the dark deep knot of erotic mystery" in Persephone's response to Evans—a variant of Mary's object-less ecstasy—is caused by a secret liaison between Persephone and Evans. There is no such thing: between them there is only separation. Consequently, we are told, "the elementals of Glastonbury"—are they not the Watchers?—"must have howled with laughter when they heard this clever Frenchman 'explain.'" Explanations put things together; Powys's art finally takes them apart. This separative thrust might be the *It* of Mary's permitted

sight. Accordingly, our reading must watch for the detachments that undo the comic intermixings. And indeed the final pages of the chapter mark the victory of detachments and divisions. Evans struggles for identification with Christ, and for Christ's identification with him, so that Evans's sadism and its cosmic causes can be seen as inevitably fused, and as therefore inevitably forgivable. Christ refuses the causal identification. "All is *not* equal! All is *not* permitted!" are his words, asserting no partisanship with humanity's insatiable aggressions, and no forgiveness for them. Not that these are Christ's last words in the chapter. But the narration tells us that his speech becomes subaudient, so Evans and narrator alike are disjoined from them. Only the invisible Watchers, who must also be invisible Hearers, can catch them, beyond our ken.

There is, I think, a moral for reading that is portended by Chapter 19's evocation of the Watchers. It suggests that there is always a condition of detachment to be reckoned with. Not even narrators connect with what they tell. Readers, for all their desire to be absorbed by the social crowd of interests that novelistic pageants provide, are also the invisible watchers of what they are reading. Hence they can expect to be invited to practice the heightened detachment figured by Powys's Watchers; or, on a lesser level, to be asked to duplicate, for better or worse, detachment such as Evans's. His "rational mind," we are told, "indulged its activity apart from pain or pleasure," even during his struggle on the cross; and his apartness is not a form of "pedantry," but "a living medium, quiveringly receptive." One might apply this description of activity to the rest of Powys's hodge-podge. It allows itself to be possessed by more than comedy: by a receptivity to expressions of feeling and thought that escape explanation, and that can be "watched" by those who are open to seeing in them not delimited human objects but some mysterious "It." Maybe such watching applies, beyond the great instance of Powys's romance, to a quivering receptivity that is as important to art in general as to any particular "reading" of it.

Robert L. Caserio is Professor Emeritus of English, Comparative Literature, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at The Pennsylvania State University, USA. His books *The Novel in England, 1900-1950: History and Theory* (1999); and *The Cambridge Introduction to British Fiction* (2019), both include Powyses. He is a trustee of the Joseph Conrad Society of America; a member of the Ford Madox Ford Society; and a member of the Modern Language Association.

P.J. Kavanagh
Discovering Glastonbury (1977)

Theology, 1977; collected in *People and Places (Carcanet 1988)*. *Slightly abridged.*

[...] In America, in April 1930 at the age of nearly sixty, after about thirty years of public performances, [John Cowper] settled down to write *A Glastonbury Romance*. It is a gigantic work, at least half a million words long. The effect on reviewers must have been literally stunning. Henry Miller says it took him a year to read, in joyous sips, and the average reviewer can hardly have been half-way through before he had to give an opinion. Surely this must have had something to do with the public myth of the interminable vapourings of an outmoded Sage? I wouldn't have it one page shorter, and when I tried to choose some passages to quote here I found it was like trying to tear a piece of tight knitting. Every paragraph contains a surprise: impossible to forecast what is going to happen next or even what a character is going to say next, though when it happens or when it is said it sounds inevitable. There is no skill apparent in the book, though it is skilful, by which I mean there is no sense of character-charts and plot lines pinned to the study wall. There is only a sense of a man spinning creations out of the largeness of himself as easily and unselfconsciously as God on the First Day.

What Powys did have in his American study was a large-scale map of Glastonbury and its surroundings, and his book is as localized and detailed as the Dublin of James Joyce's *Ulysses* – a book which he knew and helped to defend in court more than a decade before. Also, like Joyce, he used a peg upon which to hang his huge narrative, the story of the Grail. Unlike Joyce there is no word-play (nor for that matter any sign of old scores being settled back home) nor is the complex and ambiguous Grail legend allowed to distort or in any way change the natural flow of the story. As detailed as Joyce he is without his pedantry, as intense as D.H. Lawrence he is without his aggressiveness.

He chose Glastonbury for his Romance – and it is a Romance, with a capital 'R', there is wizardry in it – because of the extraordinarily rich history of that place. As he says himself, 'the most materialistic of human beings must allow that at certain epochs in the life of any history-charged spot there whirls up an abnormal stir and fume and frenzy among the invisible elements that emanate from the soil.'

Whether everybody would allow that is doubtful – all his life Powys had a genial faith that others thought and felt roughly as he did – but I have no difficulty; and it

is into this fume and frenzy that he puts his Mayors and brothel-keepers, his several pairs of lovers young and old, heterosexual and homosexual, his sadists, maiden ladies, murderers, communists, capitalists, his revivalist preacher, his antiquaries and his aristocrats, as well as a mass of walking-on parts, and watches them submit to the forces inside and outside themselves. None of these is only a type, each of them is an individual flame, dancing with the other flames, fed by the same wantonly variable forces that are flowing through them and around them.

The book is no mere pageant, though it contains a pageant, one of the great set-pieces of the story. These high spots occur regularly. There's a christening for example, where the putative father gets drunk and hurls the christening cup in the river and the sturdy old vicar suffers agonies of guilty love for his son's mistress, the mother of the child. In this scene, the cross-currents of feeling become so intricate and are navigated by the author so surely, the climax when it comes is so unexpected and right, that I wanted to take the whole thing out and put it in an anthology of great passages of the world. But I can't because it's too much a part of the book. Then there's the description of the mistress of the vicar's son preparing the nuptial couch for her lover, boiling eggs for them and making toast, which is the best account of a sacramental moment in sexual love I have read. While she does all this her unfortunate lover is condemned to stumble about outside, not sure whether what he wants to happen is going to – a naturalistic touch. But the insight into the earthy mental processes of the girl are poetry precisely *because* they are earthy. Powys's sympathy with women seems complete – elderly unmarried ones and mannish ones as well as young ones in love.

You have to be careful with Powys, not to be too overwhelmed. He should not be set up as a sage, though he entered into the business himself by publishing books of philosophizing essays. He is a magician, as he himself knew very well, not a teacher in the ordinary sense. He transmits a world that reflects in the mirror of our own world and makes ours flash.

Technically, *A Glastonbury Romance* breaks no new ground. To the possible distress of critics it shows no signs of being 'modern'; though it seems today, because of its intentional timelessness, undated, except perhaps in very minor details. What it does is to go back (consciously but not self-consciously) to the narrative speed, in which gods and men so naturally mingle, of Powys's adored Homer. And here, in these gods and energies, I think we come to the heart of the resistance to Cowper Powys, and also to his great contribution. Those readers who cannot believe in anything outside themselves must find him unendurable. Those who do so believe are likely to be some sort of Christian, and Powys's easy way with exterior forces, with energies and demiurges, from the Primal Cause to Merlin, from the Sun God

to Christ to grey-eyed Athene, must often sound disturbing, not to say potty. Thus at the outset he loses two audiences at once. Perhaps more readers are ready for him now. On the other hand, writers and readers have often been impatient with the novel as a form. Analysis of human relations is not enough, nor are social observations enough; even taken together they leave out too much of the elusive richness of our experience. What Cowper Powys wanted to do, and this is why a critic has said of *A Glastonbury Romance* that it makes even some classic novels read like escapist fiction, was to put back what gets left out. He does this by endowing everything that moves, and everything that doesn't, with a life and spirit of its own, with an energy, however tiny, that affects the other energies around it. This is no more than Wordsworth did in his poems – but then the English never believe poets mean what they say. Novelists they call to account.

Whether Powys believed in his Primal Cause, letting fall evil and good, arbitrarily, on poor unwitting earth, whether he believed that trees, after their own fashion, could really think, is no more worth asking than whether Homer believed in his pantheon. Powys probably did. I see no reason why he shouldn't. So possibly did Homer. He certainly didn't think them merely quaint. What is important is that this machinery of other-than-human forces gave Homer, as it gave Powys, the chance to enrich, dignify and in the widest sense *explain* his story. It gave Homer the opportunity to describe Odysseus visiting the dead. It enables Powys, within the first few pages of *A Glastonbury Romance* to describe the thoughts of a corpse in his coffin, reviewing his past life with the detached curiosity of a botanist. As soon as I read that, Cowper Powys had me at his mercy, because that's exactly how a corpse in a coffin *would* feel, if it felt anything at all. The coffin-thoughts speedily and economically help the story along.

Everything does that. Snails, lice, trees, stones, all have their part to play, their small energies mingle with the vastness by which they are surrounded – what Powys called 'The Multiverse' rather than the Universe. The wind carries the troubled dreams of sleeping Glastonbury, each of them particularized, towards Salisbury Plain.

... the wind seemed to need a greater momentum to carry it away northeast, towards its resting place on Salisbury Plain, than it possessed. It flagged a little by the time it reached West Pennard. It dropped some of its tiny moss-spores, its infinitesimal lichen-scales, its fungus odours, its oak-apple dust, its sterile bracken-pollen, its wisps of fluff from the bellies of Sedgemoor wild-fowl, its feathery husks from the rushes of Mark Moor, its salt-weed pungencies from the Bay of Bridgewater.

That is a very particular wind, we even begin to feel sorry for it, and by the time it sinks down and falls at Stonehenge, depositing its seeds and smells and what he calls 'the more psychic part of its aerial burden', he has managed to bring in the sleeping thoughts of most of his characters, the nature and contents of the wind and, with Stonehenge, time and history itself.

This is typical of his method. In even the greatest nature-writers, at the heart of their work, there seems an inhumanity, an over-intensity; whereas in Powys, as in Hardy, nature is the backdrop. His characters are rooted in the non-human world because we all are whether we like it or not, but it is the human world which is centre-stage. Stonehenge, after all, was made by men. But he entirely lacks Hardy's pessimism, without in any sense being complacent; he seems as far above facile optimism, as a novelist, as he is above good and evil. Physical pain, hopeless poverty, he confronts head-on. So great is his mastery over the reader by that time that you wonder if at last someone is going to teach you how properly to regard such things. You are left with a feeling that he has found a way, and it is a possible one. For hovering beside his book is the captivating personality of its author, one of his own greatest inventions. There is a wonderful lack of separation between the writer and the man; you feel certain he has given himself to you fully, without evasion or embarrassment, and if you met him he would talk in the way that he writes.

He says himself of this book that it is the sort into which he flings his whole nature.

I work almost unconsciously as far as life and reality and nature and human character are concerned... the faith I try to advocate is the acceptance of our human life in a spirit of absolutely undogmatic ignorance. Whether death is a waking from one dream to another, or a total snuffing-out and entire obliteration, we simply do not know. In either case the symbolism of the Grail represents a lapping up of one perfect drop of noon-day happiness, as Nietzsche in his poignant words would say, or as nature herself, according to the hint given us by Goethe, whispers to us in more voices than at present we are able to hear, or to understand when we do hear.

He wrote that in 1953 during what was surely the most tentative and self-limited period in our literary, and therefore in our spiritual, history. It was an age when Philip Larkin, finding himself in an empty church, slipped off his cycle-clips 'with awkward reverence' and poets wrote poems about not being able to write poems.

Perhaps the time has come when we can find again the courage to stop limiting ourselves, to discover that our definition of what is ‘real’ in life is too small, that we are feeding ourselves on unnecessarily thin gruel. If the time has come Cowper Powys is our man. He doesn’t shirk the pain and indignities of life – far from it – but he doesn’t shirk the other aspects of it either, as many of us do. I put down his book with more life in me than when I picked it up.

P.J. Kavanagh (1931-2015) was a poet, essayist and novelist, broadcaster and actor.

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Chris Thomas

A select bibliography of articles and notes about A Glastonbury Romance

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John Redwood Anderson with JCP c. 1947

Paul Roberts

John Redwood Anderson

John Redwood, the first child of Elbert Anderson and May Hill, was born on March 1st 1883. In many ways his parents were an oddly assorted couple. While Elbert was a genial, fifty-three year old New Yorker, heir to a huge business fortune, May was the twenty-five year old daughter of a Welsh seafaring family, a devout Anglican with a strong puritanical bent.

They had had planned that their son would go to Winchester and then Oxford, before joining the navy. Yet he proved a sickly child, prone to respiratory problems that several times put his life in peril. There were also early signs of the mental and emotional instability that was to plague him throughout his life.

His childhood was spent touring the capitals of Europe, where they stayed in fine hotels, enjoying all the luxuries a wealthy family might expect, When he was seven his parents decided that John Redwood should take up the violin, and he progressed so well that the whole family moved to Brussels so that he could study at the Conservatoire before being privately taught by the eminent violinist César Thomson.

His life was changed completely by a chance meeting with the Belgian poet Émile Verhaeren, regarded as one of the most important poets in Europe and heir to the power of Whitman. Realising that he would never become a great composer, John Redwood decided, to the horror of his mother, to devote his life to poetry.

In 1903 the family returned to England, settling in the affluent Bristol suburb of Clifton. It was here that he made two influential friendships. First, with the pianist and composer Frank Merrick, who was a devoted and life-long companion, unlike Montague Summers, the flamboyant poseur who later became such an authority of Restoration Drama, Witchcraft and Werewolves, who grew tired of his friend some ten years later.

His first two collections, *The Music of Death* (1904) and *The Legend of Eros and Psyche* (1908) are works of adolescent grandeur, but were not his first publications. Having joined the Theosophical Society as a teenager, John Redwood published a series of densely argued essays in *The Theosophical Review* between 1904 and 1906, while lecturing in Bristol on related topics.

Music remained an important part of his life and he often took part in amateur productions with a group of friends. During rehearsals for one of these concerts he met Ella Webber, a dance teacher. Although they became close friends, it was more by chance than passion that they came to be engaged. Again, May was horrified, since she passionately believed that, as his mother, she should be the only woman in his life. May did everything she could to drive the couple apart and, naturally, this only brought them together. In 1907, John Redwood suddenly threw up his studies and moved to Bristol



A younger portrait of Redwood Anderson

with Ella, where they were quickly married. However, the strain had brought about another serious breakdown and for many years he felt his personality divided into two warring parts that he called Mind A and Mind B. This created enormous tension in the relationship and, despite the birth of three sons, the couple separated in 1913, a year after the publication of his third collection, *The Mask*, in which his true voice began to emerge. This was quickly followed by *Flemish Tales*, a collection of narrative poems that remained among his favourites.

Following the breakdown of his marriage, John Redwood spent time in Manchester with Frank Merrick and his wife, becoming deeply involved in their work for women's suffrage, selling copies of *The Women's Dreadnaught* on Market Street and donating copies of *The*

Mask to a fund-raising drive. He also attended an exhibition of work by new women painters held at the Merrick's home, and it was here that he met Eileen McCarthy, whose bold and powerfully structured post-impressionist landscapes immediately caught his attention. Once again May began a fierce campaign to divide them, now using more subtle tactics. When they married in 1917 she offered her cottage in North Wales for their honeymoon, but insisted on joining them, secretly advising Eileen never to walk in front of her husband on steep paths as he was so mad that he might suddenly throw her over the edge. Unsurprisingly, this marriage also got off to a shaky start, not helped by Eileen's insistence that it remain celibate.

Soon the couple moved to Hull to take up teaching posts at Hymers College. Eileen was a natural and dedicated teacher and inspired the affection of generations of boys while John Redwood was always more concerned with his literary work and regarded teaching simply as a means of supporting himself.

Although their marriage was companionable, it brought neither of them joy. While Eileen continued to exhibit when she could, John Redwood worked furiously at his poetry, producing four collections between 1918 and 1922. *Walls and Hedges*, *Haunted Islands*, *The Vortex* and *The Curlew Cries* contrast urban and rural life in a wonderful array of

vivid, impressionistic poems. All were as strongly influenced by Eileen's paintings as by Verhaeren's style and must be at the heart of any re-consideration of his work.

Yet, John Redwood always felt an urge towards the epic and he also began a huge work called *I Am* which was to begin with a prologue in three books, go on to include twelve verse dramas and end with another three books of epilogue. The purpose was to create a work that encompassed the whole of history and all major religions and traditions in a coherent vision he later called The Fourth Mysticism.

Eventually Eileen found her husband's frequent mental and physical breakdowns intolerable and they separated in 1943 when John Redwood moved to Corwen to be near John Cowper Powys and Phyllis Playter.

Although they had corresponded since 1930 (a rich exchange that deserves to be published), when he first met JCP in 1939 the effect was overwhelming. It was as if he had been granted a vision of a different way of being and his admiration for Powys, as a writer and as a man, soon equalled that for Verhaeren. They talked long and often of literature and religion, but it was the inexhaustible and patient support that both JCP and Phyllis gave to their troubled friend that made the most difference. Despite his failing sight and the urgency of working of *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*, Powys never failed in his kindness towards one he called "that great poet and luckless man." Phyllis was more sceptical, but her practical support and solid good sense often brought him through emotional and mental turmoil.

It was also through their friendship that Anderson met his third wife, Gwyneth. She had admired Powys's work since the publication of *Wolf Solent* and at a time of crisis determined to seek his wisdom in person. After a memorable afternoon Powys suggested that if she wanted to discuss religion, the person she needed was his friend Redwood Anderson. Before catching her train, Gwyneth quickly visited Stores House and there, on the pavement, she met Redwood Anderson, himself rushing off to visit friends. Despite the difference in their ages and backgrounds, the attraction was immediate and mutual: both later blessed Powys for what they genuinely believed to have been his magical intervention. They were married in September 1954 and lived happily in London before moving to Essex in 1957.

John Redwood Anderson died on March 29th 1964 at the age of 81 having at last achieved contentment – a gift for which he always thanked John Cowper Powys. Gwyneth and Phyllis had formed a special bond of friendship and she continued to visit Blaenau Ffestiniog, offering laughter, memories and the sort of practical help that her friend had once offered John Redwood.

In total, John Redwood published twenty collections of verse. However, some of his most ambitious projects such as *I Am* and a sequence of four verse dramas under the single title *Hannibal* remained unpublished and are now lost.

His verse was both visual and visionary: offering powerful images of urban and rural life as well as explorations of a mystical multiverse. Above all, his work sought to be inclusive, of all nations, religions and cultural traditions, which he sought to bring together into a coherent world-view.

During the post-war period, when poetry became increasingly domestic and personal, when its horizons narrowed and the cult of modernism exerted its most powerful grip on the critics, John Redwood Anderson fell from view. Yet, he was once described as “*one of our greatest living poets and technicians*” and “*a modern Blake*” while John Cowper Powys declared him one of the finest contemporary poets.

His is a voice that deserves to be heard, that – despite his frequent periods of near insanity – offers a vision of the world of our senses and the world beyond that might help to heal a fractured universe.

“Friend of John Cowper Powys” by Richard Burleigh is in NL 22 (July 1994) p.14, with another photograph of RA and JCP together and an account of R.A’s publications; followed in NL 23 by Timothy Rogers, on encountering RA through Sherborne School, Littleton Powys and Elizabeth Myers.

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John Cowper Powys

Foreword to Paris Symphony (1947) by John Redwood Anderson

Slowly, steadily, gradually, a small but ever-increasing circle of the lovers of poetry has been made aware of a strange and lonely voice rising clear amid all the discords of these two world wars, amid the brief generation of the drugged and blinded years between them, and now in full face of their dismembered, mutilated and perhaps, catastrophic issue.

John Redwood Anderson’s “Paris Symphony” is in my opinion – and I have done little else but analyse the differences between true and false poetry all my life -- a great poem. I believe it is one of the rare English poems of our time that will most surely be read by our descendants.

The whole of this extraordinary poem revolves round the religious idea of a tragic and cosmic struggle going on for ever, wherein Life fights its desperate way forward towards a Perfection which it can never attain – like that hyperbolic curve that for ever approaches, yet never reaches, the axis which is its asymptote.

All visitors to the Louvre – at least as it used to be before this second war – will recall the impression left upon their minds by the relative position of the Aphrodite of Melos, commonly called the “Venus of Milo” and the Victory of Samothrace. In the “Paris Symphony” the ideal and unattainable Perfection towards which Life so desperately fights its way is symbolised by the former, while the tragic struggle towards this very Perfection is represented by the latter – these two forming respectively the First and

Fourth “Movements” of the Symphony, built, as it is, strictly upon the model of a classical symphony in music.

In his early life on the Continent John Redwood Anderson was closely associated with the poet Emile Verhaeren, and his undying love for this great man and all the memories gathered about that love supply, in the Slow Movement, the personal and human relief to that austerer and more universal tragedy of the eternal contrast that is throughout the dominating theme. That this poem should – as its Scherzo – include a Paris boulevard-scene and, too, the soliloquy of the poet as he identifies himself with one of those trees (which we can all remember seeing from the café-terraces of those crowded pavements) is natural enough; but that another part – the Trio – should describe the dreadful vision of a girl’s arms cut off at the shoulders and found in the Seine – reminding us that the Aphrodite (as Heine noted through his tears) has lost her arms for ever – shows that our poet’s Symphony of Life includes also blood, crime and ineluctable horror. Nor, be it remarked, is the short Da Capo section of merely formal significance.

And so, at the end, we ask ourselves: What exactly is John Redwood Anderson’s religion? What exactly is the philosophy underlying this tragic antithesis between Perfection and the desperate conflicts of Life? On these points the readers of this book must decide for themselves. For myself, I should call him a Platonist who has been inflamed by the Christian religion; and just as I am deaf to music, so I must confess that the spiritual challenge evoked by this daring and original poem leaves me among the heathen. But that surely is the real test! If as a sensualist and a heathen, and devoid of any spiritual ideal, this profoundly religious poem has such an effect on me, by this token, if by none

other, I know that it is a work of authentic poetry and likely to be a successful candidate for those purged and implacable ears that we call the ears of Posterity; for whether Plato and our poet are right or not in holding that music, or mathematics, lies at the heart of the universe, we know as well as Paris knows (that indestructable Harlot of the Nations), that there grow certain actual trees along certain actual boulevards – “of many, one” – that fate has mixed with our whole life! We too have lost the friend of our youth. We too sometimes remember our first love. And whether we believe in the Perfection visioned by Plato and the Christian Mystics, or whether, like Democritus, we “put the world on chance” as Dante has it, we all know something of that fatal beauty, and of those triumphantly beating, outstretched wings where to follow at all is victory.



Redwood Anderson by A. Lewis

Redwood in JCP letters

To William Gillespie, 18th July 1947

...My friend here J. Redwood Anderson aged 67 the poet who has just published 3 vols of poetry is a born metaphysician and believes frantically in God and in the mystical union with God — I've just presented him with the Catholic Catechism which my 'Son-Father' has just given me — but whether his metaphysical ideas respond to it (as I believe they will) or not — he is so mathematical and rational and scientific as well as mystical and so little of a masochist in his mind and so little addicted to nature idolatry and the worship of sticks and stones that I cannot see him becoming a convertite. With this friend of mine J. Redwood Anderson I have the most lively arguments every Sat. when he comes up to spend the aft. but I ought not to say 'arguments' really for I have so un-mathematical and un-scientific and un-mystical and un-theological a brain that always in the end I am more interested in listening to *his philosophy* than in defending my more wilful agnosticism....

24th November 1949

J. Redwood Anderson Esq. Stokes House the Square Corwen is my best friend's address but he is *very eccentric* indeed — *much* more so than either of us! and lately he's been ill and under the Doctor so I cannot answer for his answering or if he does for the nature of his answer. I only know he's got a mania for Ireland just as you have so that *may* prove a bond between you!

He is a great scholar on the Old Irish Language and is *now* he has just had his proofs of it from the Oxford Press publishing a fine poem on a mythological and also quite natural and human love-story. He is *not* a Catholic nor an anti-Catholic. He is religious and goes to the Church services in Corwen *not* the Chapel ones!

29th November 1949

My Dear Liam *HURRAH!!* I am so glad to learn this Great news that you are *HOME!*

...I hadn't heard from or seen my friend Redwood Anderson for days and days and days; it must be a fortnight at least and I find he has got *one of his attacks* and has had to be under the doctor and in bed. He gets these attacks periodically and they are very mysterious for they affect his nerves and through his nerves his mind — as well as his body. It's the devil for the poor old sage! But he wishes me to tell you he received your letter and that he thanks you for it very much. No I don't understand why Doctors don't tell people more in detail *what* exactly is the matter with them — Poor old Redwood is 66 and he could bear up under anything they told them about what complaint he really suffers from — the idea is that the word NERVES covers it. Alas! we know *other* words that cover a great variety of things. The word 'death' and the word 'a grave' and the word 'pain' cover quite a lot of very very different sets of conditions

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- “John Cowper Powys’s Owen Glendower” in *The Dublin Magazine*. Vol. XVII No. 2 April-June 1942.
- “The King’s English”. *English: The Journal of the English Association* Vol. V No. 28. Spring 1945.
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- “My Friendship with Emile Verhaeren”. in *Adam: An International Review*, No. 250, 1955. Adam Books, London.
- ”Lucifer and Lucian”. *The Poetry Review*. Vol. XLVIII No. 1. January-March 1957.
- “Lucifer: An Appreciation”. *The Dublin Magazine* Vol. XXXIII No. 3. July-September 1957.
- “More About The Fourth Mysticism”. *Faith and Freedom: A Journal of Progressive Religion*. Vol. 12, No. 2 in January 1959.

Unpublished Works

- Exodus* A verse play originally intended for the *I Am* cycle. The finished typescript is lost, but the manuscript is held in The Percy Withers Collection at Somerville College, Oxford.
- Recollections of Montague Summers: The Early Years* (1904-1912?) The original typescript is held at Richmond Public Library.
- Some Later Poems: 1956-1962*. The typescript of this collection is held in the Frank Merrick Collection at Bristol University.

Lost Works

Poetry

- Untravelled Worlds*: a collection circa 1955
- The Haunted Garden*: a collection circa 1956
- The Earth*: an epic poem begun circa 1915 and revised circa 1956.
- Translations of the love poems of *Emile Verhaeren* completed circa 1958

Plays

- Akhnaton: a verse drama intended as part of the *I Am* cycle. Written circa 1927.
- Hannibal: a verse drama intended as part of the *I Am* cycle and incomplete at Anderson’s death.
- In The Sound of the Sea: a drama based on Redwood Anderson’s life in Combe Martin, written circa 1921

Fiction

- The Sleeping Beauty*: a short story written circa 1943
- A story about an undertaker*: an untitled short story in the style of T.F. Powys written circa 1943.

Prose

- English Metre*: a study of the history, development and nature of metre in English poetry. Incomplete at Anderson’s death.
- The Third World*: an account of a mystical experience, written circa 1950
- The Heroic Universe*: a work of philosophy incomplete at Anderson’s death.

PR

News and Notes

From Dawn Collins:

A Zoom discussion on JCP's *The Inmates* (1952) by the Reading Powyses FB Group was held on 26th October. Twelve members gathered in another dimension of the multiverse, agreeing that although problematic, the book is very enjoyable with much humour and insightful writing, casting light on JCP's childhood and his relationship with Phyllis. To be continued in the next Newsletter.

from Marcella Henderson-Peal:

A couple of weeks ago, I wrote to Jacqueline Peltier's son Jean-François Peltier whom most of you will remember from last year's Powys Society annual Conference in Llangollen. After several emails, he told me he had left his mother's study and papers as they were when she so sadly died. The house will have to be put up for sale at one point and something must be done to save all Powys-related material. Goulven, Pierrick and I plan to go to Lannion and help Jean-François sort things out, hopefully towards the end of October. There are a number of JCP-related collections at the archival organization IMEC (Institut Memoires de l'edition contemporaine) near Caen which may be a fitting option (to be discussed) for keeping all French JCP-related papers. For instance JCP's correspondence with philosopher Jean Wahl is kept there, most of the Publishers who published his works have their collection also stored there.

News from France

JCP's *A Philosophy of Solitude*, translated by Michel Waldberg as *Une philosophie de la solitude*, and initially published by La Différence, coll. « Philosophia perennis », in 1984 has now been reissued in e-book form by Editions FENIXX in 2018 and published last August in paperback by the reputed publishing house, Editions ALLIA
<https://www.editions-allia.com/fr/livre/872/une-philosophie-de-la-solitude>

Pascal Hecker, who owns a bookshop at the foot of Montmartre's Sacré Coeur at La Halle Saint Pierre has released a video on YouTube with nice clear comments on the book and John Cowper Powys at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=xXGG3Qezbv0>

Goulven le Brech has also written a lovely review in the literary blog he and Pierrick Hamelin created in 2013 called "Entre les Vagues".
<https://entrelsvagues.wordpress.com/2020/09/12/le-vent-eternel-de-john-cowper-powys/>

Goulven le Brech, Pierrick Hamelin and I have written a joint e-mail to the head of ALLIA enquiring about their interest in reprinting *John Cowper Powys, l'ame reconquise*

by Philippe Bartelet (see: <https://www.valeursactuelles.com/clubvaleurs/culture/john-cowper-powys-lame-reconquise-122816>) We have not received an answer yet but we will pursue our research.

Judith Coppel is the translator into French of JCP's *The Religion of a Sceptic* (2004) and *Psychoanalysis and Morality* (2009). Her partner in life Denis Grozdanovitch, a respected author who shares her enthusiasm and quotes JCP extensively, called me last week with news that a full number of a wellknown French literary magazine, *L'Atelier du Roman*, will be devoted to JCP in a year's time. Goulven and I will be contributing to this, and we are about to approach other French Powysians asking them whether they would like to take part..

from Chris Gostick:

I notice that JCP and *Jobber Skald / Weymouth Sands* gets an honourable mention in A.N.Wilson's new book, *The Mystery of Charles Dickens* (published by Atlantic Books). CT adds: A.N.Wilson describes the pantomime tradition that Dickens and JCP knew so well – the burlesque tradition of Grimaldi and Victorian clowns. Wilson says *One of the most intelligent analyses of the phenomenon is found in the character of Jerry Cobbold, the great comedian in John Cowper Powys's Jobber Skald/ Weymouth Sands. Jerry is not only a great comedian, he is also a power maniac, who has discovered, by his ability to manipulate crowds, how mass hysteria, and the incitement to mass violence, can operate.*

from Susan Fox:

Michael Bloch and I have written a biography about Stephen "Tommy" Tomlin. As you know, Theodore Powys and East Chaldon played a very important part in Tommy's life. The website for the book www.bloomsburystud.net gives many details about the biography as well as ordering information. Thank you!

Stephen Tomlin (1901-37), a young sculptor with Bloomsbury connections, came to East Chaldon in 1921, discovered and made friends with TFP and alerted his friends to TF's work, among them Sylvia Townsend Warner and David 'Bunny' Garnett, who helped him to be published. The play The Sin-Eater, by TFP with Tomlin, which we read at the 2006 Powys Conference, was the product of long evenings together at 'Beth Car'. NL 58 (July 2006, pages 23-27) has an article on the play by Elaine Mencher, from her Early Works of TFP, a letter from TFP to Tommy and one from Tommy to TFP. Tommy seems always unhappy with himself, but his affection is clear:

Theo, my dear, I cannot express what I felt & always shall feel about Beth Car & its inhabitants. I seriously do not suppose I shall ever again be so continuously happy, or tap such a deep well of contentment, as in my Chaldon sojourn; & a very great part of that happiness came from you.

The back cover of NL58 shows Tomlin with his portrait head of Theodore which sadly broke on the way to London. The head alone is on page 13.

from John Hodgson:

John Gray on experiments in post-theistic thinking in East Chaldon

John Gray has written an article available at Unherd, ‘The village that imagined a godless world’ – about TFP and the village of East Chaldon in the early years of the twentieth century.

from Chris Thomas:

JCP and Eliphaz Levi

Whilst preparing for our discussion of Maiden Castle, Chapter Six, by video link earlier this year, I was intrigued to find a reference to the occult author Eliphaz Levi (1810-1875). See p.246 of the Overlook edition of the novel (2001):

...he began calling up all he'd heard of such personages as Simon Magus, and Paracelsus and Eliphaz [sic] Levi and Cagliostro. They must have all gulled people over and over again...but I can't imagine their not believing in their own powers... This must surely indicate JCP definitely knew of Levi's books on magic (probably acquired through his cousin Ralph Shirley, editor of the *Occult Review* and director and owner of Levi's English publisher, William Rider & Son Ltd). JCP could therefore have obtained his knowledge of the occult significance of pentagrams and hexagons from Levi's *Transcendental Magic* (see my article *The Two 'Blazing Stars' of John Cowper Powys in Powys Journal*, Vol. XXX, 2020, p.156, Note 12).

from Dawn Collins:

Letters from Oliver Wilkinson to Joan Stevens

I noticed on the ABE web site that Burwood Books has for sale a copy of JCP's letters to Frances Gregg (2 vols, edited by Oliver Wilkinson, 1994). This is bookseller Joan Stevens' copy (Joan died in 2015) and is marked with her light pencil annotations. The further interest of this copy is that loosely inserted are original handwritten and signed letters from Oliver Wilkinson to Joan Stevens dated 22 April and 24 October 1994, 24 April, 5 May, 15 May and 29 May 1995, 25 April, and 1 May 1996 and 16 October 1998. Also tipped in are an undated handwritten signed postcard from Christopher Wilkinson to Joan Stevens, two handwritten signed letters on headed compliments slips from Cecil Woolf to Joan Stevens dated 13th Sept 1994 and 20th April 1995 with mention of the Frances Gregg, Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), and Ezra Pound video (Hilda's Book produced by Frank Wintle) as well as other matters, and various newspaper cuttings and photocopies of magazine reviews.

from Michael Swaine:

I am researching the life of **Walter Franzen**, the American friend of Llewelyn and Alyse Gregory, who died tragically after falling from the cliffs at the White Nose in May 1927. I would be delighted to hear from anyone with information about Franzen, especially his life during the 1920s. I am also interested in learning more about Franzen's friend **Willard R. Trask** (1900-1980). Trask was a polyglot and respected translator who attended Franzen's funeral and later lived in Patchin Place in the 1940s. You can contact me by email at: michael.swaine@mac.com.

Geoffrey Winch, in an interview with Nnorom Azuonye for Sentinel Literary Quarterly (which was published as the 'Monday Writer' feature on 14th September) discusses, among other things, the influences that have shaped his poetry. In this context he specifically refers to his encountering the writings of the Powys brothers. He also discusses his latest collection 'Velocities and Drifts of Winds' published by Dempsey and Windle on 1st September. Three of the poems included in his new collection are in the form of responses to Anna Rosic's 'Wizzie Ravelston' paintings. The new collection is available from <https://www.dempseyandwindle.com/>; Amazon etc; or direct from Geoffrey geoffreywinch@gmail.com (and he will also, no doubt, have copies about his person at the Conference in 2021!) The full interview can be read by following the link <https://sentinelquarterly.com/Geoffrey-Winch-SLQ-Monday-Writer-14-September-2020.pdf>

from Timothy Hyman:

JCP's letters to Susanne Lane

I had a few more thoughts about JCP's letters to Susanne Lane published in *Powys Journal*, Vol. XXX, 2020: "Gleichnis" (see p.167, Note 2) is one of the keys to *Weymouth Sands* – Magnus has it running through his head; Richard Gaul sets out to find a copy of Faust and JCP even quotes it in German in the crucial Punch and Judy chapter (on p. 477 in the Rivers edition).

The Brecht reference is interesting – I think it implies Susanne's sympathies were decidedly Left.

Chris Thomas adds: also see reference in *A Glastonbury Romance*, Chapter 29, 'The Iron Bar' (Macdonald, 1966, p.1035): JCP describes Cordelia's naked body as *the ultimate symbol, the uttermost "Gleichnis" of life's wild experiment...*

Chris Thomas

Susanne Lane and Susan Lane

Shortly after JCP's letters to Susanne Lane were published in this year's *Powys Journal* (*Powys Journal*, vol. XXX, 2020, pp.158-203) I received an e-mail message from Susanne's daughter-in-law Susan Lane who gave me some more details about Susanne's association with JCP and how reading the letters has inspired her own interest in JCP's writing – providing living testimony for the continuity of JCP's influence at a very personal level.

Susan told me how Susanne sometimes used to talk to her about JCP's books: *I remember vividly Susanne telling me about JCP & A Glastonbury Romance many moons, probably about 20 years ago, but at the time it didn't appeal to me. A lot has happened in my spiritual exploration since then, including my writing poetry. There is a right time for everything.*

Susan says she is now reading *A Glastonbury Romance* which she thinks brilliant. *I have quite a close personal connection with Glastonbury, having been on several residential courses at Chalice Well over recent years. Like many others, it has drawn me into its mystical atmosphere and shown me a depth of inner experience that can only really be expressed in poetry. This is probably why I chose A Glastonbury Romance as my first JCP read, and I have of course not been disappointed.*



Susan described her relationship with Susanne and Susanne's connection with Wales: *I met Susanne in 1985 when I first met her son Peter whom I married in 1987, and she remained a regular part of our family life from thereon until her death (in October 2019). When she became unable to sustain herself in London she chose to come and live near Peter & me in a care home in Machynlleth for the last 4 years of her life. I have no doubt that being in Wales gave her a comfort & security that would be hard to explain. Having just recently become aware of her close connection with JCP, which I was not aware of, I am certain that part of her reason to come to live in Wales*

Susanne Lane and daughter-in-law Susan at the Osprey Centre near Machynlleth in 2015

may have been to do with her close connection to him and how much he helped her in her life. She was a very private person and didn't talk much about her past life.

Susan has published two volumes of poetry under the name Sue Lothead-Lane, *Sacred Place – Poetry as Seen and Unseen*, Wordcatcher, 2019 and *Revelation – an Exploration of Life Through Poetry*, Wordcatcher, 2019. She has published her poetry in *Caduceus* magazine and won a Waterstones prize for poetry. In her collection, *Sacred Place* she included a poem dedicated to Susanne on the occasion of her 80th birthday with lines that echo Susanne's correspondence with JCP:

Your love of literature and art/Set you apart...To England you came alone/Though German roots will always claim/Your heart. A part of England now/But torn apart from 'Heimlich' home

The notes Susan has written for *Sacred Place* resonate in a Powysian way: *I explore art and the art of living. Memories that dig deep into the past and return again. The everyday can reflect mysteries that are never known but somehow explain the unexplainable.*

I am now pleased to report that Susan has joined the Powys Society! She told me: *I have become so enamoured with The Powys Society and events held, that I have joined! Funny how things come about isn't it. JCP's writing are completely on my own wavelength, philosophy of life etc. the other levels of consciousness and other worlds that we inhabit, so much so that I have ordered several books to read.*

* * *

Ray Cox

Two Oak Trees Part 1

An investigation into JCP's possible walking routes to the 'Oaks of Avalon' at Glastonbury

Page numbers, from A Glastonbury Romance, are given in italics at relevant places in the text and are taken from the editions of Macdonald (1955), Picador (1976) and the Overlook Press, which all have the same page-numbering. Place names are noted at their first appearance. Other places, with no page numbers, indicates that there is no mention of them in the book. Also useful is W.J. Keith's Reader's Companion to A Glastonbury Romance, as is the OS Explorer map 141.

'... Sam... was standing by the side of an immense oak tree which grew at the edge of the lane. Another tree of the same species, equally enormous, grew a stone's throw further on; and these two gigantic living creatures, whose topmost branches were already thickly sprinkled with small, gamboge-yellow leaf buds, appeared to be conversing together, in that golden sun-haze, far up above the rest of the vegetable world and where none but birds could play the eavesdropper.' *A Glastonbury Romance* (127/8)

JCP – and *A Glastonbury Romance* – were featured in an article this year in a small-circulation publication, *The Newsletter of the Society of Ley Hunters*, by Johanna van Fessem, who considered the lore of the two old oak trees. These trees, she relates, in the Wick (198) area to the east of Glastonbury Tor (110), were at the termination of a straight line, if projected, from the Tor via an avenue of trees - no longer extant – on the shoulder of Stonedown (127). The Druids may have used this avenue, a double row of trees, as a ceremonial facility, a Druidic grove, and a processional avenue. It adopted an earlier Bronze Age alignment which led in winter time to a splendid view over the Tor of the Orion constellation, and to the bright star Sirius. The avenue was cut down by a farmer in 1906 to clear land, but a new single line was planted some years ago by a tree-planting group on the same site. Johanna rightly notes that the two ancient trees, which are from anywhere from 700 to 1000 years old, while being on the alignment would not of course have been present in the Bronze Age.

JCP visited Glastonbury for a few days in the summer of 1929 during his visit to England. The questions under consideration here relate to whether he knew of the oaks and, if so, how he came to have known of them; whether or not he met the Rev. Lionel Smithett Lewis, vicar at St. John's Church, and learned of the oaks and their mystique from him; and if he visited the oaks the route he took to walk to them. Johanna states that JCP's reference to the oaks is the first mention in print, but this is perhaps difficult to discover, as there could have been older or even contemporary local pamphlets or other printed material, which arose from the folklore and traditions of Glastonbury's ancient mythology. Locally the two trees are also referred to as Gog and Magog, especially in later years with the New Age infiltration of Glastonbury. These legendary names are also found with features in other places the country. JCP would likely have used this designation in his book if he had known of it. Nor did he refer to the name 'Oaks of Avalon', which is in Glastonbury lore as another possible tradition.

Lewis, one of a number of Anglican clergymen who were instrumental in propagating the arrival of Joseph of Arimathea in Cornwall and Glastonbury around AD 63, published a small booklet in 1922 titled *St. Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury*. Other booklets followed and in 1927 a much-expanded version of the first one was published. In none of these is there any mention of the two oaks. However, they are given a few pages, including reference to Gog and Magog, in the much later 1955 edition. Of course, this is not evidence of JCP not having met Lewis, nor knowing of his 1920s publications, and according to W. J. Keith in his *A Glastonbury Romance Revisited* there is no documentary evidence for such a meeting.

The main theme of Johanna's article is concerned with finding personal confirmation, through instinct, body information and dowsing, of a subtle 'energetic' line from the Tor, via the avenue, to the existing oaks in question. This subject is not of concern here, even though JCP might well have been interested in it. In 1921, Alfred Watkins in

Herefordshire had realised, in the first instance in a visionary way, the concept of ‘ley lines’ – more accurately ‘leys’ – straight lines on the landscape which linked various ancient sites and places. In 1925 he published his well-known book, *The Old Straight Track* which remains in print today in modern editions. It is, however, important to note that the concept of such lines did not at that time include that of subtle energies, into which the subject morphed later in the New Age times. Today, the matter of leys and energy lines remains potent with the association and connections to the famed historic sites in Glastonbury. Johanna does center JCP, along with the Rev. Lewis, into her article and writes of oral and literary traditions in respect of Glastonbury lore where the oaks could have played a part.

Lewis did know of an oral tradition called ‘The Oak of Avalon’. This was found in *The Thorn and the Waters* (Adam Stout, 1633). This refers, though, to only one oak. There is also the term ‘Avalon’s Oak’ by the antiquary Charles Eyston in 1772. When Eyston visited Glastonbury he received the story from his innkeeper. The oak, said to be planted in memory of Joseph’s landing, was ‘not far from the town at the place where Joseph of Arimathea disembarked, having presumably sailed across the Levels in flood’. The disembarkation, though, would more likely have been to the west or southwest, much nearer to the famed Weyrall (Wirral) Hill than the Wick area to the north of the Tor. Lewis knew of these stories and wrote of Eyston, but he does suggest that while the tradition is ‘slightly jumbled’ the area by the two oaks at Wick could have been a possible landing place as the sea ‘must have come up to just below the oaks’.

As the old stories speak of only one oak there may be no connection with the local lore of the oaks at Wick. Yet “the mere mention of the ‘Oak of Avalon’ awakens the deepest interest. There linger still two ancient trees called ‘The Oaks of Avalon’” – Lewis, 1955. In that later book the two oaks were indeed, for Lewis, the ‘Oaks of Avalon’, though it seems strange that Lewis did not refer to them in print until this later edition. There is a feeling of a hiatus here between the singular and the plural, at least in the literary sense. It might have been otherwise in ancient local lore, especially with the Druids. In *Glastonbury, Maker of Myths* (1982) Frances Howard-Gordon refers to a walk to the ‘ancient Oaks of Avalon’, presumably meaning that the legend was ancient as well as the oaks. The subject of the oaks can also be found elsewhere, as in Richard Levington’s *Heiropphantic Landscapes*, with descriptions from his own clairvoyance in the late 20th century.

So how did JCP learn of the oaks and did he visit them in a walk around the lanes and fields to the east of the town? From his description of the oaks is it possible to establish a route for JCP if he did actually walk to them, either as a specific intention or arriving at them by chance?

The town map which he used and annotated does not extend very much to the east of the town, and in any case the markings concentrate on the dwelling places in the town of leading characters in the book. He would, no doubt, have visited the historic

sites such as the Abbey ruins, Wearyall Hill with the thorn tree, the Chalice Well and lanes around the Tor, if not climbing the steep path to the summit, seeking a suitable field for 'The Pageant', perhaps (161/171). These places were the substance of history and legend, as was the Arthurian connection. The oak trees would have been a more localised, perhaps one-to-one story, if it was there at all, in personal anecdotes or perhaps parochial publications. As we know – and as Susan Rands remarks in 'Aspects of the Topography of *A Glastonbury Romance*' (*The Powys Review* Number Twenty, 1987) – JCP was determined to make the setting as much like the real thing as possible. He would have walked the streets of the town and surrounding lanes in order to connect his characters in the book to their homes. Not only had he obtained a town map but had written to Littleton from America in 1930 for any pamphlets about Glastonbury. Indeed, there are very few errors relating to the locations of the streets and lanes with each other as his characters are walking about. For our purposes here there is one. (128/9). When Mat and Sam Dekker were on their way to Whitelake Cottage they had already walked down the hill at Stonedown and arrived at Wick and had seen the two oaks, yet there is the description that they then passed Wick Hollow and Bushey Combe. In reality they would have passed or walked along these two places near the start of the journey before arriving at Stonedown. This small matter of JCP's memory perhaps being a little askew with regard to this area, may be relevant when the routes to the oaks are considered below.

The oaks are described as 'two immense oaks, and 'two enormous oaks'. One can be confident that he did visit them, as he goes on to say that one of them is 'at the edge of a lane' and the other 'a stone's throw further on'. It is unlikely that this pair of ancient trees would have been mistaken for any others in the whole area, nor in any of the lanes which JCP would have had to use to visit them. They have huge girths. Their diameters are about 11 ft and they will be from anything from 700 to 1000 years old. They appear gnarled and grey, ancient and strangely uncharacteristic in their setting. Perhaps the apocalyptic Gog and Magog designation was a good one to use. Dead as they are now – though one was seen to sprout in recent years – these two trees have a strange aura, slightly menacing even, and one wonders how he would have reacted to them.

The lane in question – rather wider than a path – is at the bottom of Stonedown, and runs to the left (north) at the place where there is a crossing of paths. A short distance before the oaks, which are at the end of the lane, there is a similar wide lane down to Wick Farm. The lane to the oaks, surfaced with stone quite recently, also gives vehicular access into a field at the end. However, the public way continues on, not visible until one arrives there, changing completely in character here as it becomes a narrow footpath between hedges, after a short kink just past the oaks. Eventually it goes to Higher Wick Farm. It is understandable if JCP thought that the lane did indeed end with the termination of the wide lane by the oaks. Alternatively, his meaning of 'edge of' might merely have meant alongside the lane. **[Part 2 of this article will be in the next *Newsletter*]**

**Our next Zoom discussion is planned for Saturday 5 December 2020,
on the last chapter of JCP's *Autobiography*: 'There's a Mohawk In The Sky!'**

To be held online By Zoom 15:00 gmt (Max 1.5 hours To 16:30). To participate please e-mail Kevin Taylor at ksjer.taylor@btinternet.com. Kevin will be hosting the meeting and will send you joining details in due course.

'I play the zany', says JCP in *Autobiography*. Throughout his autobiography JCP refers to himself in a variety of ways confessing his 'shifts, subterfuges, coilings and mole-like burrowings'. He calls himself a scarecrow Don Quixote, a nympholept, a puppet showman, inspired Pantaloon, charlatan, fetishist, imaginative sensualist, magician, ninny, a born clown, a Simple Simon, and Pulchinello. In Chapter 12 he also calls himself the Old Man of the Hills and in the last two triumphant paragraphs of the *Autobiography* he presents himself in touch with 'other dimensions' echoing his earlier declaration he is 'porous to the mysterious magic of the cosmos'. What is the reader to make of these self-images? Are they illusions, projections or self-created masks? How seriously should we take him? He declares he has romanticized and idealized his life. His deepest 'I am I' appears deliberately elusive.

In our discussion we will consider the role that JCP's retirement to Phudd Bottom in up-state New York played in his creative life. It gave him the freedom, isolation and emotional stability. We will consider his appreciation of the local landscape – 'the country of the Mohawks' – the landscape he discovered on his rambles with his Druidic cudgel and his dog (it reminded him of Derbyshire and Shropshire); we will consider his reflections on the debt he owed to living in America, his inner spiritual growth, the development of his personal Taoist philosophy, his daily mental rituals, and his friendship with his neighbours, the Krick family and A.D.Ficke who had found him his house. The four years he spent at Phudd Bottom he says 'have been very nearly the happiest of my life.' Chapter 12 is basically a summa of JCP's life experiences in America but also provides a glimpse into the future, to Wales, Merlin and Welsh mythology.

JCP began *Autobiography* on 15 August 1933. It was first published in the UK in October 1934. It is available in a modern edition published by Overlook, as well as by Faber Finds, and is available as an eBook. Readers may also wish to consult two contemporary essays by JCP: *Farewell to America* (reprinted in the *Powys Review* No 6, Winter/Spring 1979/1980; also *Elusive America* (Cecil Woolf, 2004) and *An Englishman Upstate*, reprinted in *Philobiblon* No 8, Winter 1966 (all available on-line on the *Powys Society* website). Other recommendations for further reading covering some of the same period as Chapter 12 of *Autobiography* are JCP's American diaries (1930-1934), JCP's letters to Llewelyn, the memoirs of his neighbour Albert Krick (available on-line on the *Powys Society* website), and Jacqueline Peltier's essay *Powys, Indian Culture and Worship* (on-line at: <http://www.powys-lannion.net/Powys/America/Mohawks-JCP.pdf>)

CT

A Philosophy of Solitude (1932) also stems from the Phudd years and JCP's thoughts at this time.