

Editorial

Street may seem the more homely brother to Glastonbury (always referred to as She) but has its own interest. A twelfth-century causeway (*strata*, paved road – a Roman road is nearby) was made to transport Blue Lias fossil-filled limestone from Street's quarries, to repair Glastonbury Abbey after a fire. The town's badge is an ichthyosaurus. St Gildas Sapiens, a historian (c.500–570), may have resided in an oratory here. Gildas appears in versions of King Arthur tales, and is the patron of bell founders and Welsh historians. Later associations for Street are with the Society of Friends (Quakers) who started the Clarks sheepskin and footwear business – their ex-factory now turned into a 'Factory Outlet' market. As for Glaston herself, Bill Keith's book is an excellent introduction to the facts of the fiction.

T. F. Powys, whose extraordinary *Soliloquies of a Hermit* takes up a good deal of space in this Newsletter, famously connects metaphysics and the fabulous with homely detail – the string he mends his fence with, the cast-iron flowers decorating his fireplace. John Cowper, equally famously, mythologises the ordinary, not least in his letters. Those to Violet over the years must have given *some* pleasure (*pace* Theodora – though the threat of being 'snatched at' by an over-brotherly JCP must have been disturbing). Those to Littleton in their old age, three or four words to a line, come to resemble free verse. Why do we write letters, apart from conveying information? 'To promote kindness' perhaps, as Dr Johnson said about small-talk at dinner parties.

A new era dawns. John Hodgson has been a lovely chairman, calm and practical,

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and always interesting. He and Chris Thomas, a mine of information and internet-expertise, have been endlessly helpful and patient with this often scatterbrained Editor, for which much thanks.

Two puzzles. Can anyone identify (1) the emblem badge described by TFP (in 1916): 'Just now I wear a badge of an order of Socialism [...] I looked at my badge and wondered what it meant by having an arrow, the sun and the world upon it.' (*Soliloquies* (1993) p.11); (2) the epigraph to Anthony O'Hear's *Great Books*: 'To read great books does not mean one becomes 'bookish'; it means that something of the terrible insight of Dostoyevsky, of the richly-charged imagination of Shakespeare, of the luminous wisdom of Goethe, actually passes into the personality of the reader ...'

KK

Chairman's Report 2009–2010

The Society's **annual conference** at The Hand Hotel, Llangollen, on **21–23 August 2009**, attended by over 55 people, was entitled 'Ravishing Limbo', a phrase of John Cowper Powys describing his creative process which recalls T. S. Eliot's 'raid on the articulate'. Our speakers were highly articulate: Tim Blanchard's opening talk was entitled 'I *must* have some tea – drinks, drugs, and defiance in the novels of John Cowper Powys', and on Saturday, Harald Fawcner spoke on 'Wolf Solent and the Death of Doctrinal Sensualism'. Most of the remainder of Saturday was devoted to John Cowper Powys and Dostoevsky. Angelika Reichmann from Hungary discussed Dostoevsky's influence on Powys in her talk entitled 'Influence Without Anxiety', and Charles Lock considered Powys and 'Dostoevsky as revelation' in the light of Rowan Williams's recent book on Dostoevsky. In the evening there was a dramatic reading of an edited version of John Cowper Powys's stage adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*.

Theodora Scutt, T. F. Powys's adoptive daughter, was unfortunately unable to attend Llangollen in person, but was vividly present in spirit. Ian and Hilary Robinson assembled at very short notice a selection of her lively and acerbic correspondence. Janet Fouli, editor of the letters between John Cowper Powys and Dorothy Richardson, talked of the relationship between the two writers and their 'two silent spouses'. Conference-goers made excursions on foot to Valle Crucis, a vivid setting in *Owen Glendower*, and the hilltop castle of Mynydd-y-Gaer, familiar from *Porius*. We thank Louise de Bruin and Anna Pawelko for organising this splendid event, and the AGM expressed support for returning to Llangollen in 2011.

During this year, the Society also held an afternoon meeting in London, and two 'Powys Days' in Cambridge and Dorchester. On **21st November**, we discussed John Cowper Powys's short Keatsian epic *Lucifer* at the Friends Meeting House in Hampstead. On **24th April**, eighteen members and guests met in Michael House, Cambridge. Theo Dunnet spoke on the friendships and social milieu of the Powyses

at Corpus Christi College, and Chris Gostick spoke on the relationship between John Cowper Powys and James Hanley. The Society wishes Chris every success in his biography of Hanley, and would like to support him in his intended publication of the important letters from Powys to Hanley.

On **5th June**, in the Dorset County Museum at Dorchester, Michael Kowalewski gave a fine, discussion-provoking talk on T. F. Powys's *Soliloquies of a Hermit*, and Jacqueline Peltier spoke on 'Powys women', on the sisters of the Powys family, whose achievements have been overshadowed by those of their more famous brothers. We completed the day with a walk round the ramparts of Maiden Castle.

The annual Dorchester day affirms our valued connection with the Dorset County Museum. The recent institution of nomadic 'Powys days' in different parts of the country enables us to attract members who do not live in the West Country or London, and also to visit Powys-related sites where accommodation for a weekend conference may be scarce or expensive. Future Powys days in Brighton and Derbyshire have been suggested.

The Society has **published** two books during the year. H. W. Fawcner's *John Cowper Powys and the Soul* is a searching critical analysis of *Weymouth Sands* and *Wolf Solent*, and W. J. Keith's '*A Glastonbury Romance*' *Revisited* examines Powys's use of the myths and legends of Glastonbury. Our thanks go to our member Jeremy Bird for typesetting and designing these attractive publications.

The Society is distressed to record the serious illness of **Richard Maxwell**, the editor of *The Powys Journal*, and he and his wife Katie are constantly in our thoughts. Richard has been obliged to surrender almost all his work commitments, including the editorship of the *Journal*. He is also unable to speak as he had planned at our 2010 conference in Street. Charles Lock, the *Journal*'s contributing editor, unhesitatingly stepped in to take over Richard's task of editing Volume xx of *The Powys Journal*. The Society is most grateful to Charles for shouldering this great burden of work in addition to his already heavy academic responsibilities.

Kate Kavanagh, ever a sensitive gatherer of Powysiana, has edited three lively **Newsletters**. Stephen Powys Marks has typeset and designed both the *Journal* and the newsletters with a meticulousness which we expect but do not take for granted. Stephen has also produced a supplement to Alan Howe's *Powys Checklist and Reader's Guide*, updating this select bibliography up to the end of 2009.

Frank Kibblewhite's **website** has greatly enhanced the public profile of the Society. Electronic statistics show a rising number of visitors to the site, and the average monthly total of visits in the first six months of 2010 has been over 3,000. Frank also deals with a large number of questions from website visitors, often suggesting to new Powys readers the book they might like to read next.

As curator of our **collection** at the Dorset County Museum, Michael Kowalewski has continued to welcome visitors. The improved visibility of the collection has attracted donors. Lis Whitelaw has generously presented diaries and letters of Alyse Gregory and Rosemary Manning, and Robin Challenger has donated two character-

istically vigorous letters of John Cowper Powys to his father, Harry Challenger, a former member of the Society, describing his work on *In Spite Of* and his admiration for the *Tao*. Eivor Lindstedt has kindly given to the collection a copy of her thesis at the University of Lund, 'John Cowper Powys, Displacements of Voice and Genre', and Jacqueline Peltier has donated successive issues of *la lettre powysienne*.

On 14th October, the Chairman, Secretary, and Curator met with Jon Murden, the new director of the Dorset County Museum, and discussed the future of the collection. Jon hopes to rearrange the Museum's physical space, and it is possible that the Society's collection of books may be moved from the present attic to the downstairs reading room, thus making them more accessible to the public. We look forward to hearing more of Jon's plans.

Ray Burnham, one of our members of longest standing, donated a large and valuable collection of books, which were sold by post, earning the Society more than £700. Part of this gift has been used to purchase high-quality scans of John Cowper Powys's 1940 diaries, held by the National Library of Wales. Chris Thomas has launched an initiative to transcribe these diaries, starting with that year. A team of members of the Society has begun the work of transcription, tackling a month each. I hope many more members will join this collective endeavour. John Cowper's handwriting, alarming at first sight, is in fact not hard to read, and transcribing a month of his diary is an enjoyable way of gaining a sense of the rhythm of his days at Corwen.

The **committee** met in Timothy Hyman's home in London in October, March and June, with a further meeting planned for Street in August. Chris Thomas has brought enthusiasm and civil-service thoroughness to his role as Secretary, and has also put together a new publicity flyer for the Society. Chris and other members have been placing this flyer in bookshops, visitors' centres, and other places where interested members of the public may find them.

This year the Society loses Michael French in his office of **treasurer**, which he has performed outstandingly for seven years. Besides his watchful attention to our accounts, Michael has also stored and distributed the Society's publications, managed the Conference book sale, and offered wise counsel in Committee, and he will be sorely missed in all these roles. I would like to express my personal gratitude to him alongside the whole Society's.

Finally I would like to thank the innumerable members of the Society who have supported and encouraged me during my five years as chairman. One of the pleasures of being chairman has been the chance to correspond with many members who are not able to attend our events, but are enthusiastic readers of the Powyses and our newsletter and *Journal*. With them too, I recognize ties of affinity. During my forty years of membership, I have seen the society grow and mutate, and I am confident that under its new officers it will show its continued vitality in ways that are impossible to predict. I wish them every success in nurturing this remarkable society, and hope to be able still to contribute to its life.

John Hodgson

Committee Nominations 2010–2011

The following Honorary Officers have been nominated and have agreed to stand:

	<i>Nomination</i>	<i>Proposer</i>	<i>Second</i>
<i>Chairman</i>	Timothy Hyman	Richard Graves	Peter Lazare
<i>Vice-Chairman</i>	Peter Foss	Louise de Bruin	Anna Pawelko
<i>Hon. Secretary</i>	Chris Thomas	John Hodgson	John Dunn
<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>	John Dunn	John Hodgson	Stephen Powys Marks

The following Committee members have been nominated by Society members and have agreed to stand

<i>Nomination</i>	<i>Proposer</i>	<i>Second</i>
Stephen Powys Marks	Chris Thomas	Tony Head
Louise de Bruin	Anna Pawelko	Chris Thomas
Anna Pawelko	Louise de Bruin	Kate Kavanagh

If approved the Committee from August 2010 will therefore consist of **Tim Blanchard**, **Kate Kavanagh** (*Newsletter* Editor), and **Michael Kowalewski** (Curator of The Powys Society Collection at the Dorset County Museum) and those shewn above.

There is a vacancy for one other member of the Committee: members of the Society are invited to submit nominations at the AGM on 22nd August.

AGM 2010

The Annual General Meeting of The Powys Society will be held at the Wessex Hotel, Street, at 11.00 am on Sunday 22nd August 2010. All members of the Powys Society are invited to attend the AGM whether or not they are attending the Conference.

AGENDA

- 1 Minutes of 2009 AGM – included in the November 2009 *Newsletter*.
- 2 Matters arising.
- 3 Nomination of Honorary Officers and members of Committee 2010–2011.
- 4 Report of the Hon Treasurer and audited Accounts published in the July 2010 *Newsletter*.
- 5 Hon. Secretary's Report.
- 6 Chairman's Report as published in the July 2010 *Newsletter*.
- 7 Date and location of the 2011 Conference.
- 8 AOB.

The Powys Society Annual Conference 2010
The Wessex Hotel, Street, Somerset
Friday 20th August to Sunday 22nd August

'GRAIL VISIONS'

Programme

Friday 20th

- 16.00 Arrivals
17.30 Informal reception; welcome by **Chairman**
18.30 Dinner
20.00 **Paul Weston: 'A Personal Approach to *A Glastonbury Romance*'**

Saturday 21st

- 08.00 Breakfast
09.30 **Harald Fawcner: 'Modes of Regeneration in *A Glastonbury Romance*'**
followed by coffee
11.15 **Stephen Powys Marks 'My Great-Great-Great-Great-Grandmother Caroline Powys and Her Journals'**
13.00 Lunch
Afternoon: walk up Wirral Hill, guided by Paul Weston
19.00 Dinner
20.00 Presentation of **John Cowper Powys's 1929 screen test** for his debate with Bertrand Russell, 'Is Modern Marriage a Failure'
Entertainment devised by **Chris Wilkinson** and **Louise de Bruin**, '**The Untold Privilege: With Will in Africa**', the story, largely recounted in letters, of visits made by the Powys sisters to their brother Will in Africa.

Sunday 22nd

- 08.00 Breakfast
09.30 **Anthony O'Hear: 'A Philosophical Interpretation of *A Glastonbury Romance*'**
11.00 **AGM** followed by a **Powys Quiz**
13.00 Lunch
15.00 End of conference and departure in afternoon

(See Newsletter 69 for notes on the speakers)

Hon. Treasurer's Report for 2009

The accounts for 2009 are set out on the following two pages: they have been approved by the Society's Honorary Auditor, Mr Stephen Allen. I am pleased to be able to report that, if it is the wish of the Annual General Meeting in August, Mr Allen is willing to continue as auditor for another year.

The paid-up membership for 2009 was 270, similar to that in 2008 (267). The static membership emphasises the importance of members doing all within their power to encourage those interested in the work of members of the Powys family to join the Society.

After taking into account the tax refund under the Gift Aid Scheme of £830 (£815 in 2008), our total subscription income in 2009 was £6,191 or 72% of our total income of £8,619 (89% in 2008). The decreased percentage in 2009 reflects the difference in income from donations and from legacies etc., and the significant difference in the financial outcome of the Conference in 2009 as compared to 2008. The 2009 Conference at Llangollen was very well attended and made a significant surplus (£1,461) as compared to the £491 loss at the University of Chichester in 2008.

As in previous years, the largest part of our expenditure was on our two regular publications, *The Powys Journal* and the three issues of the Society's *Newsletter*. In 2009, the net cost of producing the *Journal* and *Newsletters*, including distribution, was £3,865 (£3,128 in 2008). Both publications saw an increase over 2008; the *Journal* increase was largely accounted for by the inclusion of coloured illustrations to the article on 'The Bird Book of Llewelyn and A. R. Powys' and the *Newsletter* increase by a substantial rise in printing costs and copyright charges.

Three Day Meetings were held in 2009 (Dorchester, Little Gidding and Hampstead). The increase in costs reflects the decision taken at the June 2008 Committee meeting, that in order to encourage members to attend these Day Meetings, the Society would, in future, cover the costs of hiring the venue for the meeting. Administrative costs and expenses of £795 were largely in line with those incurred in previous years.

After taking into account movements in the value of the publication stock, the accounts show an excess of income over expenditure of £3,391 (2008: £2,633) and an increase in Society's net worth on 31st December 2009 to £24,093 (2008: £20,702).

As this will be my final report to members as your Treasurer, I would like to conclude by expressing my thanks to our Auditor, Stephen Allen, and to my predecessor, Stephen Powys Marks, for their continued help and advice over the last eight years.

Michael J. French

A meeting has been arranged at the Friends' Meeting House,
Hampstead, London, for Saturday 23rd October 2010 at 2 pm,
We propose to discuss JCP's *Ducdame* (published 1925).

For details please contact Chris Thomas or John Hodgson.

THE POWYS SOCIETY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2009

INCOME ¹	£	£	£ 2008
<i>Subscriptions</i>	Brought forward from 2008 (12 members)	272	
	For 2009 (258 members)	5,089	
	Tax refund under Gift Aid	<u>830</u>	<u>6,191</u> 6,253
<i>Donations</i>	Conference book sales	352	
	Other (£80 less lunch for donors £34)	<u>46</u>	<u>398</u> 209
<i>Publication Sales</i>	Stock publications, less postage	512	
	Cecil Woolf book sales, less cost	<u>24</u>	<u>536</u> 524
<i>Conference</i>	Registration Fees	8,779	
	less Hand Hotel, Llangollen	(7,234)	
	less Other payments	(84)	<u>1,461</u> (491)
<i>Other</i>	Bank interest	<u>33</u>	<u>552</u>
	TOTAL	<u>8,619</u>	<u>7,047</u>

EXPENDITURE ¹

<i>Powys Journal xix</i>	Cost of printing	1,481		1,181
	Cost of distribution	390		<u>368</u>
	less copies taken into stock ²	(143)	<u>1,728</u>	(120) 1,429
<i>Powys Newsletters</i>	Printing costs, Nos 66, 67 & 68	1,507		1,290
	Cost of distribution	543		<u>484</u>
	Copyright payments for cover of NL 66	87		—
	less payments for insertion of flyers	—	<u>2,137</u>	(75) 1,699
<i>2009 publications ²</i>	Cost of printing	206		
	less copies taken into stock ²	(200)	<u>6</u>	38
<i>Day meetings</i>	Dorchester, May 2009	79		
	Little Gidding, June 2009	79		
	Hampstead, November 2009	60		
	Cambridge, April 2010	<u>50</u>	<u>268</u>	104
<i>Administrative Costs</i>	Web-site hosting and maintenance	—		94
	Alliance of Literary Societies	—		15
	Collection at Dorset County Museum	<u>125</u>	<u>125</u>	— 109
<i>Expenses</i>	Officers' expenses	251		178
	Travel to Committee meetings	<u>419</u>	<u>670</u>	<u>347</u> 525
	TOTAL		<u>4,934</u>	<u>3,904</u>

EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE **3,685** **3,143**

INCREASE /(DECREASE) IN VALUE OF PUBLICATION STOCKS ² **(294)** **510**

EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE

(taking stock movements into account) **3,391** **2,633**

THE POWYS SOCIETY

STATEMENT OF FUNDS AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2009

GENERAL FUND ³	£	£	2008
Funds at 1st January 2009		5,702	3,069
Excess of income over expenditure		3,391	2,633
Transfer to Wilson Knight Benefactors Fund		(5,000)	—
Funds at 31st December 2009		<u>4,093</u>	<u>5,702</u>

Represented by:

Stock of <i>The Powys Journal</i> and books ²		833	784
Cash at Bank 31st December 2009 ⁴	3,493		
Less subscriptions received in advance ⁵	(233)	<u>3,260</u>	<u>4,918</u>
		<u>4,093</u>	<u>5,702</u>

THE WILSON KNIGHT BENEFACTORS FUND ⁶

Funds at 1st January 2009		15,000	15,000
Transfer from General Fund		5,000	—
Funds at 31st December 2009		<u>20,000</u>	<u>15,000</u>
Represented by			
Cash at bank		<u>20,000</u>	<u>15,000</u>

NOTES

- Cash turnover in 2009: total receipts, £16,307; total payments, £13,003. After adjustments, relating to the cost of new publications stocked, existing publications sold, writing down of stock and subscriptions received in advance, the excess of income over expenditure was £3,391. (2008: £2,633). £
- The value of stock at 1st January 2009 784
increase through taking into stock 44 copies of *The Powys Journal* xix (2009) @ £3.25 per copy 143
increase through taking into stock 2009 printing of 100 copies of *Powys Checklist and Readers' Guide* @ £2 per copy 200
decrease through sale of existing stock and straight-line depreciation of remaining stock (294)
Value of stock at 31st December 2009. **£833**
- Society's net worth at 31st December 2009 was £24,093 (General Fund £4,093; Wilson Knight Benefactors Fund £20,000)** (at 31st December 2008, net worth was £20,702).
- General Fund cash at bank at 31st December 2009: £3,493. (Community Account £339, Savings Account £9; Instant Access Saver account £3,145 (being £23,145 less WKB Fund £20,000).
- Subscriptions received in advance: from 2009 accounts; £233 (eleven subscriptions for 2010).
- All interest has been retained in the General Fund.

Michael J. French, Hon. Treasurer

AUDITOR'S REPORT TO MEMBERS OF THE POWYS SOCIETY

I have audited the financial statements in accordance with approved auditing standards. In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Charity's affairs at 31st December 2009 and of the surplus for the year then ended and comply with the Companies Act 1985.

J. S. Allen (Chartered Accountant), 10th February 2010

Philippa Powys
from African Poems —1933 (unpublished)
Dedicated to Lorna Dempster

Winged Ants

Loudly beats the rain;
It falls in rapture
Over bush and tree,
New life to bear
Over veldt and hill.
The clouds pass on,
Birds chant for joy.
Then, as the air comes moist and warm,
The hesitant flight
Of the winged ants
Fills the dim darkness
Of this wanton hour.

Illusion of the soul!
Short treasured voyage!
Wavering and uneasy
They steer their magic course,
Till at last reluctant
They stagger to the ground—
The upward windings of the sky
Forsaken with discarded wings,
Instead, in saddened ignorance,
To grope in mind
Where earth-held thoughts
Shall bind them fast—

Shamefully there to forget
Those hazardous moments
Of that inspired flight—
For across the brown-ribbed track
Those tensile wings
In tender frailty lie,
The brittle sign of fantasy
And disillusioned desires.

The Palm Grove

Sunshine omnipotent,
Tall palms, poised,
Shielding the shadows
Of deeply fringed leaves.

Dry rustle of foliage
Swaying together
Swept from afar
By unseen winds
To the dream-lost sound
Of falling water.

In the shade
At the slumber of noon-tide
My minds bears forth
The question anew.

Have lions lain here
With their tawny limbs outstretched,
Forgetful of the heated rays,
Which mottled fall
O'er their yet still
Arrogant pride?
Have monkeys played
O'er these twisting boughs
With unfailing rapture
Of the ancient lore
Of mate to mate?

Here today
I rest,
With thoughts dim and strange.
Awed and enchanted,
Beguiled as they
By the wide drooping palms
And their deepening green —
To ponder oft
And in vain
Upon the wantonness
Of Time.

Africa

Strange land of Africa
Torpid with heat,
Where sun and wind have conquered all moisture.

Parched plains,
Dry grass and soil,
Golden as sand,
Or stubble rough and bare.

A desert waste
Dotted with thorns.
O! Slender boughs,
Scant shade to lend shelter
From the piercing rays
Of the hot noon sun.

Dry water courses,
Washed long hence
By unknown rains,
There to secrete
Within those hidden beds
The magic prints of cloven feet.

Beyond again,
Forests dark
Stretch sinister and lone.
Sad broken trees
And severed trunks
Scarred black by time,

By the revengeful, cruel
Flame of fire.

Deep thicket of leaves,
Centre of fear and terror,
Harbouring therein
The evil beasts of prey
That prowl and chase
The timid hind
With watchful gaze.
Enchanted creatures of the glade
Pause and listen
Ere thou drinkest
Of the running stream.
Lift that antlered head on high,
Scenting danger —
Flee away.

Let the music of those waters
Tumbling o'er the smooth round rocks
Carry with those running notes
No deceit,
But gladness gained.

Africa!
My song I have sung,
Hills and dales stretch scorched and bare,
Torrid heat with rushing rain.
Scared and awed I stand before thee.
Death with life so interwoven,
Waste and beauty declare thy soul.

(Driftwood and other poems by *Philippa Powys* was published by *The Powys Society* in 1992)



Katie with her horse in Africa. (LdeB)

Cambridge, 24th April 2010

The Cambridge meeting in April took place, interestingly, in a closed-off upper part of a church, still with a vine fresco round the top of a Gothic arch, and stained glass with theological symbols. The main part of the church remains in use downstairs, divided by glass doors from a cafe, from which lunch was brought.

Both speakers illustrated the efforts and rewards of research.

Theo Dunnet's talk had the title 'Curiosity'. It began with his successful efforts in achieving a toe-hold in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. His interest in the Powys family came through his wife Angie, a native of Dorset, then through James Bown and his knowledge of the East Chaldon circle. In the 1980s Theo spotted JCP's first publication (*Odes*) among the Bodleian's Hugh Walpole collection of writers of the 1890s. On the flyleaf was a handwritten poem and a curiosity-arousing name, H. S. S. Parker. This Theo traced to Harry Sholto Searle Parker, a contemporary of JCP at Cambridge, later Headmaster of Rottingdean School; and through Harry's son obtained an album of photographs (now lodged in the Bodleian), carefully annotated by HSSP. Most of the photographs, of 19–22 year-olds, 'sons of the landed gentry, members of the Church, the aristocracy, government ministers etc., fathers who had wealth and position', yielded to further research in directories and local papers, and in the archives at Corpus Christi College. The results were printed in *The Powys Review* 16 (1985).

Harry S. S. Parker (1872–1921) led to Parker forebears and those of his wife, and to Harry's friendship with JCP and his new wife Margaret Lyon. He preserved photographs of the Powys wedding in 1896 (which he did not attend) and is mentioned by Littleton Powys – why not by JCP in *Autobiography*? Further research into university photographers proved negative, apart from some period ephemera. Another Cambridge album (via New Zealand) featured the Firefly Club (more guesswork). Theo made comparisons with the meagre wages of farm labourers at the same period, and the relatively high cost of rail travel and bespoke suits. The connection with Hugh Walpole came perhaps through Llewelyn. Attempting to visualise life in the Powyses' younger days, it surprises Theo that they hardly mention the First World War. He is also curious about a possible connection with Samuel Bensusan (1872–1958), author of stories of Essex life, a friend of Hardy and Mrs Florence Hardy and of other names mentioned in *Autobiography*. One of these, Louis N. Parker (1852–1944), composer and playwright, was director of music at Sherborne School (1874–92) and in the early twentieth century an organiser of many historical Pageants.

Finally, a letter found in the Bodleian, from Littleton Powys to J. W. Lambert, reviewer in the *Sunday Times* (see page 43), thanks him for his understanding praise of JCP's 'proud impatient and affectionate fellow-feeling for humanity' in *Rabelais* (and earlier for Llewelyn's *Swiss Essays*). One thing has led to another, mosaic-pieces of a distant scene.

Chris Gostick, pre-eminent in James Hanley studies, demonstrated the pitfalls that await even experts in their field. The last time he had talked on Hanley in Cambridge was for Hanley's so-called centenary, but having now discovered Hanley's birth-date to have been several years in advance of what Hanley claimed (and to have taken place in Liverpool, not Dublin), he now regards his subject with more circumspection. The teenager running away to sea and enlisting under-age have lost a bit of their glamour. Nevertheless Hanley's was a determined and interesting life, sprung from a time and place he loyally chronicled; and his friendship with John Cowper was one through which JCP could extend his own experience.

KK

(*Chris Gostick's booklet Lord Jim, Lady Tim and the Powys Circle (2000) is in the Cecil Woolf 'Powys Heritage' series*)

Behind the Fitzwilliam Museum A 'Vision of Living Bread'

After our talks and discussions at Cambridge, and our visits to colleges connected with John Cowper, those of us present at Powys Day made our way through the tourist-thronged streets to commemorate a 'very quiet event' which was yet, for John Cowper 'the greatest event of my life at Cambridge'¹ – an experience of ecstasy at an 'ancient wall', with 'patches of grass and green moss and yellow stone-crop'.

This wall 'behind the Fitzwilliam Museum' can be identified with plausibility if not certainty. It has now been cleaned and scraped and blasted of all its moss, and is better cared for than in Powys's time, perhaps too much so, but it is certainly very old. Just behind the Museum, there is a gateway in it with fragments of stonework and brick from every architectural era, mediaeval, Tudor, Victorian.

We waded through grass and nettles to read *in situ* Powys's memorable account of his experience at this moss-encrusted wall. 'Something about the look of these small growths, secluded there in a place seldom passed, and more seldom noticed, seized me and caught me up into a sort of Seventh Heaven.'

What was happening to him? Powys describes it in religious terms. It is 'a sort of vision on the Road to Damascus', and 'a vision of Living Bread'. Yet its religious aspect is inexpressible, and left undefined: 'a power ... that is like the power of a hidden Mass, celebrated by no human hands'.

William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, a book that so absorbed Powys that he missed his station while reading it on a train journey, identifies four essential characteristics of mystical experiences.² They are 'ineffable', and no adequate account of them can be given in words. They have what James calls a 'noetic'

* *noetic*: a branch of metaphysical philosophy concerned with the study of mind and intuition, and its relationship with the divine intellect.

quality', that is, they are 'states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect'. They are 'evanescent', and the person experiencing them is 'passive'. 'The mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power.'

How readily Powys must have recognised in James's description experiences of his own, such as this one at the stone wall. His experience is 'ineffable': In the action of writing his account of it in *Autobiography* at the age of sixty, the experience returns to him in all its power, yet 'the touch of my pen—and I suppose it will always be so—breaks the spell'. Helplessly, he confesses, 'I can tell you nothing!' 'It is impossible for me to describe it!' Powys regularly announces that he has, in fact, nothing to say, as on his first departure to lecture in the United States:

"We be all born, but we bain't all dead yet" Aunt Stone used to say, and such really seemed, when I sounded my brain on this matter, about all that I could reveal to these far-off hordes of "articulate-speaking" Americans.³

But fortunately for his readers, Powys has a go, and the point of tension between the ineffable and the expressed is both a creative spur, but a peak experience in itself:

... *real reality* exists at its intensest and most exultant *just before it loses itself* in the wood, or the stone, or the music, or the metal, or the paint, or the masonry, or the ploughland, or the embroidery, or the whitewashed doorstep, or finally in fictional persons, male or female, who gather up into themselves the whole divine comedy of the human race ...⁴

The stone wall experience too, as we will see, is also a 'meeting-point'.

William James uses a deep-sea metaphor to describe the 'state of knowledge' suggested by mystical experience. Powys does the same describing his 'beyond sensation' at the stone wall, 'like a sunken ship, full of fathom-deep treasure'.

The experience is evanescent. It can be recalled and suggested, and 'something of the same feeling returns. Not, however, quite the same'. And the experience is passive. The look of the vegetation 'seized upon me and caught me up'. Powys feels 'transported', with 'a power upon me'.

Powys also has something in common with Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, in that he has embarked on a misdirected journey. He was walking to have tea with a novelist, the father of a friend at Corpus. This invitation 'to meet my first novelist' should have been an exciting event for a young man with an ambition to write. But it was not. Powys recalls vaguely that this novelist was 'of a satiric turn', that is the sort of writer with whom Powys had nothing in common, and never would. Powys knew this when he set out, and his stone wall ecstasy comes as a sudden 'reaction from the sort of novelist I expected to encounter, and *did* encounter'. Instead, we have a revelation that embodies, in little, John Cowper's entire subsequent writing career, 'a prophetic idea of the sort of stories that I myself come to write, stories that should have as their background the indescribable peace and gentleness of the substance we name grass in contact with the substance we name stone.'

This lyrical close to Powys's paragraph enacts the ebbing of Powys's mystical experience, and comes to rest in the non-human. Powys's stories are not themselves peaceful or gentle. They are dramatic and packed with incident. The 'peace and gentleness' is in their background, which is yet not inert. The grass and stone of this 'mysterious meeting-point of animate with inanimate' are 'in contact' with each other, as if electrically charged. They have their own life and interaction, and the role of the human here is to look on and 'name', though it sounds as if we are doing this only for our own, provisional purposes, and we do not know what these substances really are. In *Porius*, the precocious Gunta is asked 'Is that your name?' and replies, 'I don't know. It's what everyone calls me.'⁵

When he came to describe his stone wall experience in his *Autobiography* forty years after the event, Powys is midway through his trajectory as a writer. The 'prophetic idea' has been fulfilled in the books that he has written, but the most complete embodiment of this 'secret underlying world of rich magic and strange romance' was not to come until *Porius*. How clearly Brother John's cell in this book recalls the stone wall in Cambridge:

The stones of Brother John's cell descended straight and deep into that same black mud, and when Porius reached them, the spear clenched in one hand and the water bottle in the other, and touched them with his cold knuckles, it was a rough, blind expanse of stone he touched, where miniature armies of moss and tiny ferns and little round-leaved trailing plants and squadrons of grey lichen seemed in league with the swamp and the forest in their slow tireless vegetative determination to go on invading this solitary outpost of human civilization until they had swallowed it up.'⁶

Powys's stone wall is not as secluded now as it was 120 years ago. But even against a cheerful and noisy background of shouts from Italian language students, we did well to recall a pivotal moment in John Cowper's life.

John Hodgson

NOTES

- 1 *Autobiography*, London, Macdonald, 1967, 199.
- 2 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, London, Longmans Green, 1908, 388.
- 3 *Autobiography*, 440.
- 4 *Dostoevsky*, London, Bodley Head, 1946, 40.
- 5 *Porius*, London, Overlook Duckworth, 2007, 273.
- 6 *Porius*, 150.

*The Group at
the Wall. (TB)*



W. J. Keith — More about Lucifer

I never expected to write even a short article on JCP's *Lucifer* because I have hitherto found most of his verse virtually unreadable – unoriginal and willed rather than inspired. I confess I had never tackled *Lucifer* until recently, since a long poem on 'The Death of God' in JCP's customary poetic style seemed uninviting. However, the discussion in the previous two *Newsletters* around last November's London meeting aroused my curiosity. To my surprise, I found it far more absorbing than I had expected, despite its obvious weaknesses, and would like to offer the following notes on its increased interest when examined within the history of English poetry.

JCP referred to his 'copy-cat' verses (*Autobiography*, 225), and it would be easy to apply the term to *Lucifer* since he identifies his main influences in his Preface: Milton, Keats, Tennyson, and Arnold (with Homer an unstated but palpable presence in the background). Yet, if I may be allowed a paradox, I suggest that, in this case, JCP is 'copy-cat' in an original way. Part 1 is obviously modelled on Books 1 and 2 of *Paradise Lost*, culminating in the Council in Pandemonium. Milton immediately focuses our attention on Satan, thus practically guaranteeing that he will become the most memorable figure in the poem. His God does not appear until Book 3, in a balancing Council in Heaven, but cannot compete in terms of charisma. JCP chooses to *begin* with God – yet slyly imitates his model, introducing Saints Paul and Augustine to participate in the debate with the Milton-like angels, including the rebel Abdiel. Readers are intended to recognize the tone and form as that of Milton's Hell. The effect may be somewhat crude, but JCP makes his point.

In Parts 2 and 3, JCP sets his Lucifer/Satan centre-stage, and transfers his poetic allegiances from Milton to Keats, more specifically to *Endymion*, *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*. Book 4 of *Endymion* contains a brilliant set-piece on 'Bacchus and his crew' (ll. 193ff.) upon which JCP clearly draws; the two *Hyperion* poems deal with the replacement of one divine order with another, and, like JCP's poem, are unfinished – for the interesting reason, Keats tells us, that he found too many 'Miltonisms' in them. Again, one can call this part of the poem blatantly imitative of Keats's sensuous urgency and rich verbal texture, but JCP's original contribution, I would stress, is his combination of Arnold's well-known division of western culture into Hebraism and Hellenism within a single epic-style poem. (This explains JCP's acknowledgment of Arnold, whose presence behind his poem is, to my ear, otherwise sporadic and relatively inconspicuous, since what some see as Arnold-like similes are for me more basically imitations of Homer's habitual epic practice.) We have Greek epics (the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), a Latin imitation (Virgil's *Aeneid*), and others from other nations, but I know of no epic that embraces two radically different cultures. Milton, one remembers, famously rejects the Classical world in *Paradise Regained*.

Yet JCP provides more. Part 4 takes us to India to encounter a third culture when Pan transports Lucifer to the East to visit the Buddha. This journey inspires some of JCP's most memorable writing but, while one can understand why Buddha's nihil-

A Literary Dinner

The Wessex Royal Hotel, Dorchester, contained an oblong dining room dotted with eight circular tables perfectly creating the shape of a parallelogram. In an instant this room was crowded with sweet perfumed ladies and good-tempered friendly gentlemen; I was fortunate enough to meet some of them and spend the evening with them.

The dinner was directed by Mike Nixon, Secretary of the Hardy Society, whose big smile and twinkling eyes were in amusing contrast with his gesticulations as he gestured everybody peremptorily, table by table, towards the buffet.

After dinner some announcements were made by Mike and others of which two deserve recapitulation here. One, that it is the intention to unveil a bronze statue of Philip Larkin in Hull Paragon Interchange on the 2nd of December 2010, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the death of this poet; see for more information <www.philiplarkin.com>.

And next, Mike enthusiastically declaimed that a member of the Powys Society was present; hoping that this marks the start of more cooperation between the Societies. An ordinary member in some respect, but not in all: a member, a man, even from The Netherlands! Some murmurs arose. Spying eyes. ‘Who is it?’ ‘Where is he sitting?’ ‘I haven’t seen anybody from abroad.’ I stood up, smiled politely and bowed a little bit. On behalf of the Powys Society I received warm applause of considerable length. I felt just a little bit like Queen Elizabeth.

The evening closed with recitings of poetry by Hardy and Larkin. In turn, two of the five readers (Anthony and Ann Thwaite, Furse Swann, Sue Theobald and Jane Thomas) stood up and read Larkin and Hardy alternately; in total fifteen turns! My head became drowned with poems. You must know at this stage that under normal conditions my brains are only capable of dealing with one poem per evening, digesting every word, punctuation etcetera. ... I stumbled very dizzy and confused (placing Larkin’s comma’s after Hardy’s words) to my B&B where I slept satisfied, but dreaming of rectangles placed upon commas, orbiting parallelogrammed poems.

Fabian Heus

The Voice of God: Theodore’s Soliloquies of a Hermit

(Summary of a talk delivered on Powys Day, 5th June 2010, at the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, by Michael Kowalewski.)

Some of us are drawn to the Powyses through their works and some through personal encounter. I came to the Powyses via JCP’s works, first encountered in Jeff Kwintner’s inspirational Village Bookshop. Then, I met an actual Powys, Theodore’s

son Francis and his wife Sally. They were transcribing JCP's diaries. Francis told me that 'of course' the greatest of the writing Powyses was his father, Theodore. Up till then I had only read TFP's *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* and found it a powerful allegory of Christian faith in a superbly evocative, dark Dorset setting. After Francis's remark I decided to read more TFP and the next I read, by chance, was 'The Only Penitent'. This story tells of an evangelical vicar, Mr Hayhoe, who decides to revive the Catholic sacrament of Penance. However his 'only penitent' is an old tinker called Jar. In his confession to Mr Hayhoe it becomes clear that Jar is God himself confessing his sins against humanity – 'I have crucified my son'. It is one of these scalp-tingling moments in literature and I realised that Theodore (appropriately enough, considering his name) was also a theologian of unique power and vision in which God indeed walks among men and is a suffering being.

The Soliloquies of a Hermit (or *Soliloquy* as it was titled in America) published at the beginning of his career, was a kind of manifesto of this unique blend of literature and theology. 'I am a priest' he says in it, and indeed he is, not as a romantic exalting art but humbly placing the word at the service of The Word, without in the slightest adhering to any evangelical fanaticism. He does not thump the Bible but finds it open before him in everyday existence.

One can place the three writing brothers according to their reaction to their father's evangelical religion, from Llewelyn's rejection, JCP's mystical neo-paganism and in Theodore's case apparent agreement but in reality, as the reversal in 'The Only Penitent' shows, complete subversion. The unique feature of Theodore amidst all the theological currents of the time is its rejection of the Hellenic and Latin Platonic current of Christianity. As he says in *Soliloquies*, 'I know no Latin'. His religion is based exclusively on a personal reading of the Bible with a bit of help from the Mystery Plays, Bunyan and Wesley – whom he cites in *Soliloquies*. While Theodore is described as an allegorist, he seems to me to have gone beyond allegory to a more concrete religion in which gods actually 'walk in the cool of the garden' and as Ezra Pound says in an essay in *Passions and Divisions*, prior to moralising abstraction, there was concrete experience of an encounter with divine beings which is only turned into a fable when its truth is questioned. It is the level of consciousness described by Julian Jaynes in his *Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, in which men actually heard and were possessed by divine voices and had no proper self-consciousness but just a readiness to obey the divine voices – a sacred audition rather than vision.

Theodore in *Soliloquies* calls himself a priest and one who listens, like Mr Hayhoe, to the voice of God in nature. His god is a god of stories and story-telling who appears in his own tales. Theodore is a priest because he tells these stories, which are real events because told by God. In the *Soliloquies*, Theodore talks of the moods of God, and they are not very different from the moods of Theodore who attends to them. This emphasis on moods might seem to give the book a rambling kind of air, like the extended walks Theodore was fond of, but actually there is a three-part

structure here. The pivotal point in the middle of the work is announced by Theodore with another inversion – looking at himself as a ‘Mr Thomas’, from the point of view of one of the ‘immortals’ who have no care for the moods of God and think they will never die, as he digs his garden and mends – or fails to mend – his fence. This projection and objectification of self is precisely the kind of mind-projection Jayne’s bicameral mind is capable of, rather than the anguished ‘agenbite of inwit’ of the modern self-consciousness. Sequestered in his remote Dorset hideout Theodore attains to a pre-modern consciousness of unique power and resonance for us, overburdened with conscience.

After this externalised portrait, in the third part of *Soliloquies* Theodore turns to Jesus and the meaning of his love, which he interprets in a deeply personal way as a living in the Now. This is compared by some to Zen or even the Tibetan lightning bolt of enlightenment, but we do not know how much of eastern religion Theodore knew. His style is forged by the Bible and the ‘mad German’, Nietzsche – also a son of the manse – and we should allow him his uniqueness. His is not a Platonic religion of abstract ideas clothed in allegory but a concrete encounter with living presences whom he encounters in quotidian life. Theodore makes nothing of any distinction of body and spirit. Spirit and flesh are a single substance that lives in persons who can be actually encountered. Flesh is quite as holy as spirit. His is not an ascetical or negative theology so much as a deeply inverted one, where certain concepts, such as immortality, function in the opposite way to the normal religious usage, and thus create a shock of radical encounter as if for the first time. His Jesus is a defence against the moods of God that dominated in the first part of *Soliloquies*, Jesus ‘stood alone in all the earth to face and destroy the moods.’ In this way, ‘The New Heaven and the New Earth’, as the last section-heading puts it, will be opened without anger or guilt, those sins of excessive ego-consciousness.

To return to Francis’s question about the greatest writer – Theodore is perhaps not the greatest, but certainly the most unique and original. His brother John said of him that he had reached levels of moral pain that he, John, had never plumbed. Certainly Theodore’s presentation of evil, not the banality of evil but the evil of banality, has a unique power. For example, in ‘The White Paternoster’, he describes the cold-blooded planned rape of an innocent girl – targeted precisely to destroy that innocence – by two lechers over a beer, in a way that chills the blood far more than any actual description of a rape would do.

Towards the end of his life Theodore seems to have found a kindred spirit: Simone Weil’s *Waiting on God* is in Theodore’s library, heavily annotated. He belongs with her and a handful of religious thinkers who explored the very boundaries of the Christian message. Theodore’s God was the author of tales, who appeared in his own dramas and suffered in the world to realise his love for it.

Michael Kowalewski

Curator, The Powys Society Collection

Wisdom of TFP, Lover of String

"... if the people ruled, if these lovers of iron railings and brick walls had the power, there would be no life for me or any lover of string upon the earth." [16]

"I have a terror of anything that is sound and whole" [10]

"In the common longing to do something – I will not say to work, I see the desire to escape from God. When I want to go out and work, or even to help my neighbour, my reason is that I want to hide myself from the moods." [13]

"The priest ... trains himself ... to walk the road that is nearest before him and to keep always to the left-hand side of the way..." [13]

"It is futile to try to go gaily along for ever ... The fear of God is sure to break in upon you; the very winds bring it; it comes out of the stones; I dig it up in the garden; I hear it in the sound of a train far off; there is fear in the sound of a train." [19]

"As I am a priest, I never give anything away; it is a natural law of my nature not to give, but always to receive." [20]

"We poor mortals play with the romance of another life as a babe would with a celluloid toy, and when the fire touches it, in a moment it is gone." [25]

"As a matter of fact all good books tell the same tale, and advise men to look into all kinds of holes and corner for honey to make their lives sweet." [26]

"I like there to be round the table three or four companions, but no more than the number of the bottles, and no women." [29]

"Sometimes, but alas only too seldom, comes to me out of the heavenly presence the mood of loving Tolerance, that most gentle of

the moods of God. It is then that I regard the world as a garden and the people as good children; it is the mood in which everyone is forgiven; it is the mood that makes me say to myself, 'it is good for me to be here', and to say to other people, 'it is good for you to be near me'." [29]

"If a mood comes and therein is hidden a vision, I welcome it and believe; for there is a mood in which God even believes in Himself, and in that mood He begets the belief of the world." [34]

"I very much dislike people who are always the same; for no man can be always the same unless he is so much of an animal that the moods pass over him like the clouds." [36]

"I am always polite to the world, and I try not to tell anyone when God's moods break in upon me; or when a tongue of fire suddenly devours all the thought that I love best; this is what I expect to happen." [36]

"All priests ought to be trained as unbelievers, for unbelief is the only good soil for the believing mood to grow in; so long as unbelief is not fixed to that foolish idea that we are all so proud of – the idea, I mean, that we know the Truth. How, I should like to know, can I know the Truth when God Himself is always contradicting it?" [37]

"I like to make a wonder out of every little act, because every little act is a wonder." [39]

"The fact that it is hard to get anything out of oneself drives people to go and get what they can out of others. I do not blame them. I never blame anybody; I never even blame myself." [40]

"I try to deepen, to broaden, to open my life in every way; to stand no more wondering how to be happy, but to see and feel and

touch. I like to touch the waves of the sea and the mould in my garden; I like to touch the heart of man; I like to touch the grass and moss of the fields.” [40]

“It is best to have before you only two roads, This or That, this life as it is, or nothingness.” [42]

“I still desire cunningly to defraud...” [44]

“I want to appear interesting in my own eyes ... I want to study myself, because I am the nearest and most interesting creature that I know.” [44]

“With the terrible moods of God moving about me, as dark clouds, and then the lighting, and sometimes the ominous silence and calm, I turn to the Stranger upon earth that once learned to bear the burden of God, calling Him Father, and holding Him, as Atlas held the world, upon His shoulders.

I turn to the Stranger upon earth, He who was not afraid to call the terrible moods ‘Father’, to take them into His life, to bear with them, to love them. And still more than that, He dared also to become the Shepherd of men; to live Himself as a man and to fall before His Father’s terrible mood of blind rage working in men. He alone dared to become one with the spoiler and the spoiled.

I bow my head before this Stranger of the Earth; and why should not I too sing a song of belief in Him?” [45]

“I know quite well He is the most unreal, the most unthinkable of ideas; but to feel him is All; to believe in Him is nothing. We send His love to the farthestmost star, and He will be formed in that star. When He is near, very near to us, then we feel His terrible love and we kill Him.” [47]

“I long to bring all the hidden thoughts, the gnashing of secret teeth into the sun.” [49]

“Only at times under His yoke I have been

allowed to take a little nectar from the flowers; I have hidden my hand in a waterfall of brown hair...” [51]

“In the old days when I held my head in the sand of mystery, I thought that something wonderful would happen to me; and now I believe that the most wonderful thing is that nothing wonderful happens.” [52]

“The centre of life is always near; it is only the outer parts that are afar off and hard to understand.” [53]

“I would like to think how a friend would write about me, and it must be a friend with a little wit, and not a soul that loves.” [54]

“[Mr Thomas] walked as if at any moment the earth might give way...” [60]

“... he was in a better mood on a dull day than when the sun shone. He did not like to turn away from the sun, and was never easy with his back to it. This may have been the instinctive willing of some plant in him, for his nature belonged to the plant tribe that grows in wild places.” [64]

“... he used to brood in odd corners and try to hatch a little god out of his eggs – a little god that would save his type, the outcast monk type, from the well-deserved stones and jeers of the people.” [66]

“... he knew that all his life he had lived in a mystic alley that leads nowhither.” [66]

“Mr Thomas gently stroked his beard, and smiled...” [67]

“I think sometimes when I come home tired to my gate, that I must not come in. I think that I must go on walking past my gate, through the one or two villages where I am known, and then on and on and on.” [69]

“It is not in extremes that the road to heaven lies; the way to life is the same now as it has

ever been; it is in the meaning of things.” [70]

“ Perhaps ... A star of life with its own colour, its own raiment, and its own joys, has entered in me to die. But the star still has its desires and its longings; I do not want its light to go out like a snuffed candle. I would like it to live again in some other body; I would like it to feel the earth through many, many other lives. I do not wish to be the grave for the death of a star. I want it to carry my life on, and on, and on ... This is the way that Mr Thomas used to talk.” [70]

“ I suppose I have the priest’s instinctive delight – or love, shall we say – of hearing a tale that comes from a man’s fear rather than from his wits ...” [71]

“ One can see, while writing odd things about oneself, that inside the mob till rules... I think that the mob will always rule, for it is by the law of hate and not by the law of love that the world lives and has its being.” [72]

“ I think every father would do very well to write a book of his own short-comings for his children to read. ... The fear of looking a fool has cost the world more good lives than it wots of.” [72-3]

“ We cannot get away from our pride, do what we will. And my pride is quite a plain thing to see even in these pages. I show it on purpose; I am proud; I like to be proud; I intend to be proud.” [73]

“ Perhaps if we of the saintly tribe, we exempt ones – if we were compelled to be iron kings, or wheat kings, or petrol kings – it is possible that we saints might relinquish some of our abominable pride. The very size of our palaces would then diminish some of our bigness.” [74]

“ The most wonderful idea that has ever come to man came to Jesus. It came to him silent, subtle, and like the lightning. ... He wished to

create for a moment a state of vision with no earthly everlasting deadness about it; to create a new heaven and a new earth. The longer anything lasts, the worse it always becomes, but the divine idea came to Jesus without beginning and without end; and in a moment it became Himself.

“ We cannot conceive the lightning rapidity in which the vision of true life enters in and passes out of our minds...” [75]

“ I can promise that our pretending at little games of Virtue never in the least hampers our real lives...” [78]

“ ... our souls are not possessions at all. I will tell you what my soul is. My soul is a waiting, hesitating, longing silence; it is the most delicate, the most ethereal, the most ready to die away of all the silent noiseless feet that we feel moving in our lives.” [80]

“ We share all our good actions with other people, just as we share the air that we breathe.” [81]

“ Is it not strange that only a man who has felt the lightning and who has felt the immortal moods fall from him – all save the mood of sorrow – is it not strange that this is the sort of man that loves the world, that really understands the world. and accepts the world? “ [82]

“ ... it may be – I am not sure – but it may be that even the moods of God end somewhere! ... What I do know is, that there is something more godlike about the lightning that kills in a moment, than about all the feelings that live for ever. Sometimes I think that it is the glorious presence of utter absolute extinction, of death – that is, real death – that gives the magic to the lightning.

“ I wonder, do the moods of God tire of their manifold disguises in man? ... Does He desire to die? And did He choose the man who called Him Father for His last home? ... In Him end, it may be, the everlasting moods; in

Him, it may be, God himself ends; or the sudden lightning of a jsupreme joy begins.” [84–6]

“ ... this Stranger is like the lion; He is not afraid of the Father ... He has in a moment put an end to the world He slew, He broke in upon God with a fierce fire, a fire more fierce than God’s when He breaks in upon men ... He knows, this Son of Man, that a moment of destruction is better than many years of creating ...

... the destroyer meets the creator in the great awakening; these two heroic ones hold hands at last; their souls meet and end. Nothing, not even the moods of God, can find its true soul until it is destroyed ...”

The moods fierce and utterly blind stayed their fatalistic dancing in Him; He died to break the power of God. And now the moods creep silently in the earth; they cannot sting as they used to ...” [88–9]

“ I see a difference in the world since He lived; I even think I see the moods themselves begin



*TFP from the frontispiece to the first edition
(American, 1916) of
The Soliloquy of a Hermit.*

to take a new turn, consoling, liberating, and even becoming free men...” [90]

“ A sigh of great content comes up from our Grange mead, where God lies amongst but-tercups ...” [91]

“ But alas, the moods are a many-headed monster, and today the black waters have burst out again amongst men.” [93]

“ I cannot welcome extinction, because for millions of years the immortal feelings have been desiring more and more hours, more and more tomorrows.” [94]

“ I can assure you now, if you have not guessed it before ... that instead of meaning no harm, I mean a great deal of harm.” [95]

“ He came to free the world and to give Joy; not afterwards – He knew no afterwards – but now. I know my hatred of others; I know my greed for myself; and I know, my masters, that we all have the same feelings; I want to break up these feelings and take hold of the new Joy.” [96]

“ No doubt the great Artists, the happy portrayers of Man’s deeds and ways, will scream out with a great rage at the thought of their old occupation being gone. What will happen to bloody rage and blind lust that gave them all such good copy for their long nails? ... Well, they will have to change, that is all.” [99]

(Pages refer to 1993 Powys Press reprint. A personal selection. KK)

JCP to Violet – 5 letters 1923–58

March 17 [1923, Hollywood]

My dear little Violet I was very glad to get your letter . . . you are a dear young sister to write to me now & again—I like you very much and would give a lot to be at this moment—all troubles over—and happiness realized—snatching at you at the gate or at the door or on the staircase!

Oh I am so tired of California—I cannot tell you how I hope I shall never see the place again—there are “Coyotes”—sort of wolves—& “mountain lions”—sort of wild cats—and a few skunks—in these hills—but I myself only see eagles or buzzards & hares & rabbits. I refuse to meet the Movie “Stars” or to go to their Studios or to go to their elaborate Hollywood Theatre where Douglas Fairbank’s “Robin Hood” seems running forever. But I have a 50 cent breakfast in a place called the Eleanor Tea Room where they come at night—They are terrible people—except Charlie Chaplin—and he has just been jilted by the person he was going to marry—an actress called Pola Negri—not a Negress but a Hungarian—

What I must do is to live from day to day & walk in these hills which are made of Decomposed Granite—the dustiness & absence of lovely cool rich deep green grass with Celandines is what sets ones teeth on edge—

Oh how I hate California—I hope I shall never, never, never see it again! Violet my dear! You know I’ve got no heart—How can it be anywhere? But if I had one it would be East of Colorado—I can give ’ee my word for that—Maybe it would be East of Iowa too! It wd be east, east, east anyway; & far from “The Golden State”—

But apart from hearts, my little Violet, I am very homesick for Lulu—and I shan’t see him till the Summer now—I fear—I am to go from here to Canada—to North Western Canada—beyond the Rocky Mountains.

Well here is a very very very very very very very affectionate & Dorsetshire kiss!

Bless you my friend. Yr J.

You yourself have a little tiny bit of my heart, you know!

7 Cae Coed, Corwen Merionethshire N.Wales

March 6 1938

My dear Violet

’Tis long ere I have heard how you are & I always begin to be uneasy about you if I don’t hear but I know it’s my fault for not having written for you are splendid in always answering so quick & I do so like getting letters from you.

James Hanley & wife were over yesterday from where they live 10 miles on the road to Carnarvon (via Bettws-y-Coed) and spoke of seeing a notice a good one of a book by Theodore in John o London I wonder if that’s the Special Printed short one of which you spoke some while ago? I am now reading Don Quixote for these essays which I’ve got to write and I confess I don’t like all the bangings and pummellings

and being sick over each other and Sancho's having diarrhea and Don Quixote being so often thumped and trampled on. Charles Lamb says he hates that Duke and Duchess who were nice to them for their own frivolous amusement and I don't like them very much either, for even there they put cats in a bag to let them loose to claw Don Quixote in the night and I don't like it when the young man Andres who says he has had to go to the hospital because his master beat him so, owing to Don Quixote's interference; curses him so roundly, and says, "if ever you see me being half-killed don't come to my rescue—for your rescuings are worse than anything else!" But it is curious to think that "Shelton" (and nobody knows who he was) translated Don Quixote a good time before Shakespeare died into English so Shakespeare may have read it but whether he did I don't know. This /present translator of the book is a modern individual called Henry Edward Watts who has evidently written a long big Life of Cervantes wh. I believe Theodore would like only he may have got it already but I—tho' I long to read it to improve my essay—cannot spare the time so I must just read the tale & say what I like & what I don't like as I go on; & so be; "and a leap over the hedge is better than good men's prayers".

I think I heard a Curlew yesterday & I certainly found 3 white violets in the very hedge of our great Highway to Holyhead! & there is frogspawn in the pond on mountain where grouse live. Little Susan wd. like to help me later with a threepenny net I keep for this purpose carrying them down in a jam-jar with a string handle when that pond dries up to put them in pond in field—I speak of course of the tiny tadpoles when they are still very little for the pond up there dries up—Why the Devil, my dear sister, does not Nature tell the Frogs not to put spawn in a pond that is Destined to Dry Up?

I had some talk this morn before breakfast—this Sunday—for we have breakfast later on Sundays and P's Mother & Aunt come to breakfast—with a tramp who for 20 years had been a tramp and I noticed with curious interest his coat which was of leather but so torn and pulled about that it was like the skin of some animal who has been caught in a trap or attcked by the dogs of Lord Bullman. In his pocket wrapped up in a piece of chamois leather he kept his Medicine which he showed me—It was a bright pink colour. His inside was such that he had been commanded to have an operation but to avoid this he had fled and lost his weekly sum. He had a perambulator—to carry his things—And I notice that all the older & more experienced men on this Holyhead road (you'd be surprised how many—I wd. have never thought there could be so many) have a perambulator. Isn't that a peculiar thing?

Phyllis is happy whenever nobody comes and she can work by herself in her garden. Is that dog still stopping that road to W.Chaldon? I must stop now my dear but I send Theodore & Sue much love & yourself a kiss.

yrs (as you may guess)

Jack

Corwen, Merionethshire

March 26 1938

Just a hurried line Violet, my dear, to tell you how greatly I did enjoy your lovely long letter. Aye! - but I do enjoy your letters so! They give me such a real idea of how Things Are—both good & bad—and so few letters really do this.

The saddest thing was to hear of Granny's being so ill I keep thinking of her like I used to know her .. & I can see her face so clear. Yes I do hope Gertrude is better by now for I get nervous lest these bad colds should turn into pneumonia—I wonder if she did like your doctor so much as you do—Well if he is a good doctor & looks after you well & keeps you alive I won't grudge him his fortune.

I am shocked to hear of how your premises have been invaded by cattle—and I can't say I like it very much not to think of you as having even gone down to the Post Office as you always do since before Xmas! Good lord! what you have been through my dear! Aye I wd. if I were rich, or a bit richer than I am, for if I were rich I would be like the rich I suppose & never give away a penny, for then I'd send Sister Violet such an Easter Egg as never was seen! But I have to be a miser this summer—And that means no staying in East Chaldon alas! for lodgings will be out of the question with all their expense—and how I shall see you & old Theodore & what a big great good girl Susie is, the Lord alone knows. Maybe we'll put ourselves on poor Gertrude for 2 or 3 nights; & that will be all—we shall see—I can't do all what I'd like——

My letter to Theodore crossed yours. It must have been thought-reading! There is snow on the Mountain today & it is very cold! Bless you J.

xxx with P's love

Corwen, Merioneth, N.Wales

Sunday July 24 1938

My dear Violet

Don't you bother to reply to this because now I've seen you I know even better than before all the terrible lot of things you have to do, which are so many that you can hardly get them in as it is without adding answers to letters on the top of it all!

Phyllis is waiting to get that GREEN WOOL till she goes to Llangollen where there are much better shops than in Corwen which she has often told me has the Worst shops of any town in the world—The last few days she has spent almost entirely working in her garden for which she has a Mania—She is happier when working in the garden even picking up stones—those stones that seem to grow out of the earth for they always re-appear when she has picked them all off—than at any other time. But I have a fancy myself that she is in the garden so much and on her knees at her flower-beds in a sort of desperation to snatch every moment before many Visitors turn up—For GAMEL is coming on this Tuesday and MARIAN I believe on the Tuesday of Next Week with PETER, and then after that an individual (no relation)

called Mr Albert Edward Johnson with a young lady called Catharine whom he has just married or will have just married. So this young lady will come here just when the pleasure of being married is very new to her so that I shall be able to look up in the old plays like those of Beaumont and Fletcher the proper sort of jokes to make to young ladies just married or only married for two days!

Aye but I forget! all “Mermaid Series” Plays, and my Beaumont & Fletcher & Ben Jonson Folios, are with “My First Family” as I say, at Wiston and after that that nice young man that you & Theodore said you liked called Tristram Beresford speaks of coming with his wife and even of bringing his Dad with him

That old man who I like so well Mr Ebenezer Jones who has one arm and shot at those Orphan boys of the Home so that when one of them went to the “stickhouse” (as you might say) several shot fell from out of his shirt on to the floor, and it is said that his shirt was bloody: but the policemen only took away his gun and he was not prosecuted—Well! this poor old chap has got terrible bad teeth the worst teeth that have ever been known & so do they hurt that he can only sleep sometimes from 3am to 6am and the doctor & dentist only are now telling him to wash his mouth out. Of course he ought to have 2 taken out with gas every day till all are out—for he’s over 70 & to take them out all together might finish him off by spreading the Poison. What a strange thing it is Violet my little Sister how one person can be ill and in suffering and another well! I thought of this as I passed Eben’s door this morn before breakfast stalking along like the King of the Tramps with my dog so as to climb up that hill called Pen-y-P ... Pen-y-Pygyn, Pen-y-Pygyn which stands up above the town & where that cross Farmer said I might climb the hill but not walk on the flat ground where his sheep liked to be or he liked them to be so as to catch them easy—Do you know why my hand keeps straggling down over the page like this? Because after drinking my milk in the morning instead of having lunch (there I go again!) I always feel so terribly Sleepy that I tend to go entirely to sleep—all these lines are because of that. I keep my pen in my hand (show Susie) and when I nod or I go to sleep, my hand with the pen glides down the paper.

I have been struggling to read with the Dictionary the life of a Welsh writer by another Welsh writer in which there are pages and pages of praise of the Sunday School which he says is the Welsh University and it is full of abuse of the Welsh Squires who live as the grand English do—the one where he lived was called Sir Watkyn, the squire I mean, and this Welsh writer says that the other Welsh Writer said that all the people who went to the Church Sunday School instead of the Chapel one were “Swatiwr Swatevn” which must be the Welsh for “suckers up” to Sir Watkyn!

Oh do you know what I saw by the River a Swan flying and not high up but near my head, and it descended into the water like an air-plane! It not only made that mechanical noise with its wings like Walt Whitman says Geese ake; “yo honk! yo! honk yo honk! yo honk!” up in sky—but it also make (please excuse [squiggle]) a cry out of its beak sounding like “Thewyk! thewykk! thewykkk!” It was hunting for its mate: for when it got back on the water its mate came down stream from up stream

where it had been and they rushed to each other and held their beaks and necks against each other and then went on swimming side by side—

I have just been reading an Anarchist newspaper which I like best of all political papers.

It is sad about poor old Ebenezer Jones and his mouth so full of foul and filthy decay and they won't take his teeth out because for fear of poisoning him. He walked a bit down the lane with me and told me of all he goes through.

Give my love to Susie and tell Theodore I am so glad that we were able to see him & that I could hear from his own lips how he was.

There goes my Clock ticking but God bless my soul! it isn't like your clock that chimes every quarter of an hour like Sherborne Abbey does to the tune of: "Why can't you leave my Wife alone? She is - so drunk - she can't get Home! Home! Home! Home! Drunk! Drunk! Drunk! Drunk!"—

A funny old Witch called Nance—who I like to talk to & who loves on 10/- a week and smokes cigarettes as she goes along the road—now goes up our lane to clean house for old Eben tho' she says "There will be talk" but I tell her to go to him and never mind the talk.

P wd. send her love if she were in this room to you all three—I am your loving brother Jack

I do pray & hope Theodore is better than when we saw him. I think he is wonderful to go on knitting like that—instead of cursing God & the World. I was very impressed by his doing that.

1 Waterloo, Blaenau-Ffestiniog, Merioneth, N. Wales

Friday Jan 6th 1956

My Dear Violet

I must just tell you how very sorry P & I are to hear of all you've been through—No I do so agree with you about Doctors : for Phyllis has experienced recently much the same sort of rage with some Doctors. There are good ones but O it's so hard to select them from the others! I am amazed and positively awed by the energy competence and spirit our Susan shows! She is a one! May the great Powers guard her & give her a lucky year.

I am so glad you've got, my dear, those nice people at the shop. I can't remember my dear for that is where I feel my age, in Memory!—whether I ever met Nell Sampson. I love, so does Phyllis, to think of your having your own little house. Give my love to Susan that brave girl—

Your affectionate
old Jack

Reviews

Florence Marie-Laverrou

John Cowper Powys and the Soul, by H. W. Fawkner

The Powys Society, 2010. ISBN 978-1-874559-39-9. £10.00.

Any reader of John Cowper Powys's novels is likely to be thrilled by the publication of a new book by H. W. Fawkner, whose previous works (in particular *The Ecstatic World of John Cowper Powys* in 1986) have shed such stimulating light on Powys's masterpieces. The new book is no exception.

It is composed of two main parts. The first is devoted to *Weymouth Sands*; the second focuses on *Wolf Solent*. Such a chronological inversion is accounted for by the point H. W. Fawkner makes, that whereas negativity permeates *Weymouth Sands*, in *Wolf Solent* the reader gets a detailed and far-reaching study of one soul confronted with such negativity.

The idea H. W. Fawkner develops in the first part of his book is that the reader of *Weymouth Sands* should not be dazzled by the magic or mystical aura of the novel, and should take a closer look at the all-pervading negativity of the eponymous place. Negativity and wretchedness are at the core of the novel: what with some characters' passing states of mind, others' intrinsic fascination with sadism, omnipresent in the elemental imagery of the text. H. W. Fawkner demonstrates how futile any positive view of life can be in such a context, where negativity turns out to be neither subjective nor transient but innate and unavoidable. It is what endures in life. Although the word 'negativity' may seem a rather vague and broad term, making H. W. Fawkner's reading a highly personal one, the detailed analysis of the vocabulary and of the recurring metaphors carries conviction and throws light on the darkest aspects of *Weymouth Sands*, urging the reader to read it once again and be on the lookout for all the diverse modes of negativity.

The study of *Wolf Solent* follows two distinct threads. First it revolves around the centrality of the 'Waterloo face', which exemplifies the unforgettable essence of suffering and completely rocks Wolf's position in the world. The Waterloo face triggers the crumbling to pieces of Wolf's mythology, and exposes his cult of sensations as smug and deeply selfish. It wreaks subterranean havoc in Wolf's life, but it takes him a long time – the whole book in fact – to come to terms with this ensuing chasm and its consequences, which should not be confused with petty moral matters.

On the other hand, H. W. Fawkner goes on to distinguish between two types of sensuality – 'frontal sensuality' and 'subtilized sensuality' – stressing Wolf's overt disgust at and rejection of the first form. The neatly delineated opposition between the two types of sensuality helps the reader understand Wolf's mythology, the elusive nature of which can hardly be captured by Wolf's use of 'commonplace words for lack of any better ones' (142). In that respect, the sophisticated analysis of Wolf's choice of 'pure reflectance' is most illuminating, and helps the reader make sense of the

narrative in spite of its ambiguities and intricacies. Now that Wolf is haunted by the memory of the Waterloo face, however, his mythology turns out to be another kind of self-delusive humbug. In the last chapter of the second part of the study, H.W. Fawcner reunites the two threads of his analysis, however divergent they may have appeared at first sight. Although the ups and downs of Wolf's state of mind may also have something to do with other confrontations, H.W. Fawcner reaches a convincing conclusion – the metaphysics of delight, typical of many a Powysian hero, ends up exposed as fraudulent when confronted with the Waterloo face.

The links between the two main parts of *JCP and the Soul* are not always obvious, as there is a mixture of genres and tones. At first sight, the deep sense of defeatism in the first part could seem to be at odds with the concluding note of the second part ending with a chapter entitled 'Renewal'. In that respect, it is a pity there is no overall conclusion to round off the book and stress the link between the modes of negativity in *Weymouth Sands* and Wolf's story as one ending on a harrowing sense of loss. Nonetheless the two parts are highly readable and full of ground-breaking and stimulating insights into two of the most well-known novels by Powys, whose complexities are endless but rewarding.

Florence Marie-Laverrou

Susan Rands

A Glastonbury Romance Revisited, by W. J. Keith
The Powys Society, 2010. ISBN 978-1-874559-38-2. £10.00

This scholarly and fascinating book is necessary to all of us who have been intrigued and puzzled by JCP when he is, in Bill Keith's words, 'frustratingly and brilliantly devious'. It shows how deeply versed JCP was in the literature of Arthur and the Grail, and in the history of Glastonbury, of which like Blake's 'Bard', he 'present, past and future sees'.

The book is helpfully planned in seven chapters: briefly, on how JCP came to choose Glastonbury; the theme of the book in general; Glastonbury as it was at the time of writing; Arthur; Merlin; the Grail; and Cybele. In other words it starts at the periphery of the subject and moves closer to the climax of the novel. The Pageant ends exactly half-way through this book just as it ends the first of the two volumes JCP's American publisher originally planned.

Professor Keith's aim is to show how 'the mystic patterns and resonances that derive from stories and traditions engrained in Glastonbury's rich past' are part of the fabric of *A Glastonbury Romance*. JCP had deep knowledge and awareness of what one might call the Matter of Glastonbury, and drew on it copiously; probably most of us who read the novel are only dimly aware of this and do not recognize details of the interconnections and their subtleties. How, it is asked, now that Arthurian scholarship has advanced so much, does JCP's use of it measure up in this new climate? The

answer is, with surprising aptness; and likewise with all the twentieth-century accretions to the facts and fictions surrounding Glastonbury: in some ways JCP seems to have anticipated them.

WJK's chapter 2 is a masterly analysis of the first three chapters of the novel, telling how JCP in life, and John Crow in the novel, come to Glastonbury; and introducing the cosmological perspective. WJK likens this element to that in the medieval mystery plays which were evolving at the same time as the Grail romances were being written; so that although it may perplex modern readers it is actually in keeping with the romance form, the form of *A Glastonbury Romance* and later of *Porius*.

WJK considers the fascinating question of how familiar JCP was with Gnosticism, and his use of its tenets, about which so much more is now known; and goes on to discuss the mysterious 'Watchers'. These also appear in the writings of the extraordinary architect and archaeologist Bligh Bond, who was busy in Glastonbury from 1908 to 1922, even more intrigued by 'her' than John Cowper was. Although best known for his curious book *The Gate of Remembrance* (1919), Bond was distinguished in his professions, and JCP's dismissive remarks about his prototype in *A Glastonbury Romance* are significant, for they had ideas in common. For instance, in *The Mystery of Glastonbury and her Immortal Tradition* Bligh Bond wrote:

The real and permanent element in the folk-memory is not a matter of oral repetition at all, but a sub-conscious recall of the latent memories of all racial experience, which ever subsist so long as the race endures and—given the right conditions—are always ready to emerge and take shape again, perhaps in some new form, but essentially the same, in the imagination of the people.

In WJK's next section, 'The Norfolk Connection', he discusses JCP's interest in and use of racial characteristics, further expanded in *Porius*. The final section of this chapter is an extremely interesting discussion of Stonehenge: the present fluid state of knowledge about it, how it has been perceived through the ages, and in the novel, the different ways in which John Crow and Mr Evans think of the stones and how their views interact. Once again JCP is in some ways more akin to to-day's thought than to that of his own time.

In the third chapter we are at Glastonbury herself, and learn what an extraordinary place it was at the time of JCP's writing, had been and indeed still is: we meet Lionel Lewis, the myth-purveying vicar; Armitage Robinson, Dean of Wells and pragmatic historian; Katherine Maltwood, inventor of the Glastonbury Zodiac; and more recently Dion Fortune and John Michell. *Vis-à-vis* these real characters, JCP's in the novel are not so far fetched as some might think.

Next we come to the very vexed question of Arthur, who is still obsessing writers and historians. Was he historical or not? If he had lived and died (in many versions he is 'to come again') was it his bones that were dug up in the abbey grounds in 1191? Were, in fact, any bones dug up? The sheer quantity of scholarship expended on these questions probably exceeds that on Shakespeare. But as WJK says, 'an alternative

approach, JCP's approach, is to create a cross section of (for him) contemporary Glastonbury society and record how its members respond to the story in a number of conflicting ways. We need to be on our guard against the idea that the story of Arthur is monolithically fixed. There are numerous stations on the spectrum of interpretation, between the extremes of total acceptance and equally total rejection.' Throughout, WJK's presentation of the multifarious and seemingly endless material is masterly, comprehensive and clear. It concludes with an account of the intriguingly named Lucius Artorius Castus, a Roman Samaritan descended from Iranian-speaking Scythians.

The last three chapters focus more closely on the novel, the first of them showing how JCP substitutes the complex figure of Merlin for the insubstantial one of Joseph of Arimathea, and the degree to which John Geard represents Merlin. The curious word 'Esplumeoir' is discussed at length, and I cannot resist adding a little to it. Over twenty years ago there lived in Glastonbury a remarkable young woman. A teacher of the Japanese art of Aikido, she was also an expert physiotherapist. Previously, after gaining a degree in Old Celtic languages, her doctoral thesis, deriving from these, was on Merlin. Her supervisor was Count Tolstoy, whose book on Merlin (subject of his lecture to the Powys Society at the Conference at Exeter University in 1988) post-dated this thesis. I was privileged to read the thesis and remember from it that in those ancient manuscripts Merlin was sometimes a bird, the manifestation of the soul, or souls of dead or wounded warriors; 'Esplumeoir' was the place where he changed his feathers, often a secluded hazel grove.

Even more complex than Arthur, in its anomalies and anachronisms, is the Grail, and WJK skilfully traces the use of the word through the centuries, what it represents and the different forms in which it appears. Drawing on a wide range of sources, this is conceivably the best account ever written on this elusive subject, whose only palpable manifestation is the cup of Holy Communion. But in Romance, the Grail always appeared in a secular rather than a religious setting: a characteristic in keeping with its appearances in *A Glastonbury Romance*. There it represents the mysterious, and as WJK says, JCP 'may be unique among English fiction-writers in the twentieth century by virtue of his ability to present human life as mysterious without limiting it within the confines of religious belief.'

In the last section WJK summarises the work of the archaeologists Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess* (1993), comparing it with Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), a book that much influenced JCP, and using both books to illuminate the final paragraphs of *A Glastonbury Romance*. Is it known what JCP had written before Phyllis suggested Cybele as the ending?

WJK warns us how seldom we should take JCP literally when he uses anthropological terms such as 'Neolithic', 'Bronze Age' or 'Iron Age'. Nevertheless, JCP's conviction that Neolithic people were peaceful agriculturists is now being reconsidered.

One is bound to regret that there is no index, but Professor Keith's book is so well

planned, with subtitles, that this is less of a disadvantage than usual. The notes are neatly managed within the text, and there are sixteen pages of tempting bibliography. Two of the three books listed by Francis Pryor have Arthur in the title, and it is of note that the *Sunday Telegraph* 'Book of the Week' (23–30 May 2010), *The Making of the British Landscape* is also by Francis Pryor.

One last related point: an enterprising and industrious scholar, Tim Hopkinson Ball (recently arrived on the Glastonbury scene from Norfolk, and author of *The Rediscovery of Glastonbury: Frederick Bligh Bond, Architect of the New Age*) has now written and presented a film, *Glastonbury: The Inside Story*, about Glastonbury in the 1920s, including archive film and interviews with local notables, in which he says

... but the greatest Glastonbury novel is, without doubt, that written by John Cowper Powys, and called, appropriately enough, 'A Glastonbury Romance'. Powys captures something of the magic of early twentieth century Glastonbury in his book, providing numerous quotes, possibly the best being: 'There are half a dozen reservoirs of world-magic on the whole surface of the globe—Jerusalem ... Rome ... Mecca ... Lhasa ... —and of these Glastonbury has the largest residue of unused power. Generations of mankind, aeons of past races, have—by their concentrated will—made Glastonbury miraculous.'

The film ran to full houses for five nights in Street's capacious theatre, and it is hoped that it will widen the readership both for JCP and for WJK's *A Glastonbury Romance Revisited* – a gem that none of us should miss.

Susan Rands

Pleasures of Great Books

Anthony O'Hear's clear-sighted and helpful *The Great Books* (2007), and JCP's *The Pleasures of Literature* (1938) – second only to *Autobiography*, for this reader, in range and revealingness – have naturally a good deal in common. They are from different centuries and they approach from different angles, but they are perhaps complementary. They must recognise (implicitly) each other's territory, even if they are less at home in it. (*page references are from these two books – see below*)

AO'H who is after all a Professor (even if, of course, not the evil antagonist of Powys senior's bedtime story) excuses what might seem presumption in fields so richly ploughed by scholars, but

... there is scholarship and there is enthusiasm. This is a book written by an unashamed enthusiast. I love these books and I return to them again and again. I want most of all to communicate to others some of the enthusiasm I have, and to help new readers journey through territories that to us in the 21st century are increasingly difficult to penetrate. Maps are needed ... I hope that with what is provided here my

readers will ... be able to read these great books with delight and enjoyment as well as gaining from them illumination, insight and wisdom. (*Author's preface, p.xi*)

JCP would certainly rate enthusiasm above scholarship ('the creators of each age wither into the scholars of the next' (13)). Both these books are related to lectures, and both have the same objective of enabling or enticing readers, especially unfamiliar readers, into these enriching realms.

We are in a new century now and the past is more foreign than it was, AO'H reminds us, even for the 'educated'. Even superficial familiarity with ancient Greece and Rome, or with European Christian tradition, can't be assumed. So a journey through the ancient classics may be a journey of discovery and also a journey of self-discovery, since we (inheritors of Western culture) may recognise how much in our own thinking is rooted in what has gone before.

AO'H's Great Books – books that have stood the test of time – run from Homer to Goethe (after this, he considers maps not so essential); in between, he shares with JCP Greek Tragedy, Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Milton. AO'H includes also Plato, Virgil, Ovid, St Augustine, Chaucer, Pascal and Racine, where JCP (within this timescale) has The Bible (as Literature), Rabelais, Saint Paul, and Montaigne.

AO'H sets his authors firmly in historical context and leads skilfully through selected works as starting points for each writer (delivering among other things useful cribs for examinees), explaining and interpreting as he goes. His concern is to help readers understand what they are dealing with (deploring the current dogma of making the past 'relevant' in modern terms, but noting the difficulties of moral judgments in past worlds). His 'maps' include cross-references to writers building on other writers in Western culture, following some of the many possible connecting themes (such as the Eternal Feminine), and extending to extra-literary influences in paintings (illustrated) and in music.

JCP would surely agree that before we can enjoy we have to understand a certain amount of background (with the help of scholars and translators), and he in the age of reading can assume that certain amount. His concern is with past writers or writings as individual, timeless, views of the world and ways of dealing with it, in books which can help us deal with the human life we share: 'recurrent Symbols of the Permanent in nature and human nature, of which books are the everlasting mirrors ...' (12) 'The lively advocates of modernity are liable to forget that the essentials of life upon earth remain the same, and our common human nature remains the same, below all the external changes.' (14)

What matters, as AO'H in turn puts it, is what across the centuries these poets and invented characters have to say to us, in a genuine conversation through the ages.

AO'H (as did JCP in the 1930s) feels bound to defend himself against élitism and 'unfashionable' views, and to affirm (as JCP did not need to) his belief in the intrinsic objective value of art, and of respecting the Great – whatever the limitations of possible readership and possible teaching. He quotes Iris Murdoch on good art as a symbolic force, providing an unreligious age with something 'separate and precious

and beneficial' – something to be confronted without projecting on it the prejudices of our ego. (Epilogue, 444)

Powys, who could be thought of as an arch-egoist, would probably say that everyone is one, like it or not, the difference being in how far they admit it in public. He brings his own conditioning and prejudices into the open – his privileged education, his ambivalent feelings for the Deity, his repulsion at Dante's cruelty – which leaves him free to project himself not on to but *into* the writers he is discussing, to hear their unique voices. 'I cannot rest till I have connected the most intimate peculiarities of a writer's style with the very centre of his soul's circumference and the widest parabola of its circling flight.' (17) (However, 'among books, as among people and events, our character is our fate. We can extend the boundaries of ourselves, we can enrich our native roots; but it is a waste of time to struggle to enjoy what we are not destined to enjoy!' (13))

'Our imaginative response to beauty is part of the divine economy of things', AO'H writes, quoting Rilke's poem on an archaic sculptured torso giving light like a star, saying to us 'You must change your living'. (445) He sets this against the now commonly held relativist view that value judgments are only projections of the feelings of the receiver.

It's doubtful that JCP would have let any theory impede his enjoyment of (or pleasure in, or gratitude for help from) literature.

... For all their tragedy and for all their terrible reality, there rises from these books a mood, an atmosphere, an after-taste – but this is a mystery not lightly to be spoken of – that reveals something impossible to be put into words, something too tenuous to be called hope, and yet something utterly different from despair.

The great books are the books that create a world, a world to which, with its atmosphere, its situations, its characters, you can compare the haphazard chances and casual impressions of real life as they cross your path ... (14)

Books are man's rational protest against the irrational, man's pitiful protest against the implacable, man's ideal against the world's real, man's word against the cosmic dumbness, man's life against the planetary death, man's revelation of the God within him, man's reprieve to the God without him. Whoever touches a book touches not only "a man" but Man. (17)

Kate Kavanagh

Anthony O'Hear: *The Great Books: From The Iliad and The Odyssey to Goethe's Faust: a journey through 2,500 years of the West's classic literature* (Icon Books, 2007, 465pp.).

John Cowper Powys: *The Pleasures [in USA Enjoyment] of Literature*. (Cassell, London 1938, 672 pp., Village Press, 1975).

JCP on Literature

How well I know the peculiar aggravation that my particular way of treating these terrific works [in *The Pleasures of Literature*] will excite in certain minds! But a critic with any spirit at all is bound to evoke contempt and disgust in temperaments antipathetic to his own ... I think what really annoys him is that any simple and unscholarly heretic should take a gnomic and oracular tone in place of trying to be ingratiating, whimsical, and entertaining. My seriousness must annoy this type of authority exactly as the peculiar seriousness of an old-fashioned Nonconformist would annoy a disillusioned and witty prelate. It affects him as if a guest at his table should not only commit the impropriety of smoking a cigarette with his port, but of referring in passionate earnestness to the blood of Jesus. He smells the rhetoric of an Extension Lecturer, "throwing his weight about" at a party of College Fellows. Well! It cannot be helped. I am writing for book-lovers of my own kidney, and what we Lollards of Literature want is the direct application of our scriptures to the smallest detail of our domestic lives. (656)

Youth ... is much more inclined, in its craving for topical subjects, to dodge the *effort of detachment* which is necessary if we are to enjoy, deliberately and quietly, any of the great books of the past ... But there is, I think, a natural comprehensiveness of taste in ordinary intelligent readers that ought to be deliberately cultivated as we get older, so that we should not miss, by reason of a little superficial laziness or some trifling and accidental prejudice, any book that might really change our whole life, lifting some unspeakable mental load off our brains or nerves or consciences, and giving us deep draughts of the water of life from one of its original fountain-heads. (654-5)

Different as human temperaments are, I cannot help thinking that there are many people who, if they made a definite vow, as Goethe did, to read a passage every day out of some old great book that suits their nature ... would soon begin to tap an unfathomable reservoir of strength and endurance. It strikes me as being the one essential thing in our reading to be absolutely independent of the fashion of the hour, both at its cleverest and at its stupidest. (659)

For it may well be that what gives us the deepest happiness we know is merely to touch, though we ourselves and the books that inspire us must sink into oblivion, that level, that dimension, that plane of existence, from which proceeds the inexplicable imperative to follow goodness and mercy in a world built upon a different plan. (660)

(page numbers from *The Pleasures of Literature*, Village Press)

W.J. Keith — More about Lucifer

I never expected to write even a short article on JCP's *Lucifer* because I have hitherto found most of his verse virtually unreadable – unoriginal and willed rather than inspired. I confess I had never tackled *Lucifer* until recently, since a long poem on 'The Death of God' in JCP's customary poetic style seemed uninviting. However, the discussion in the previous two *Newsletters* around last November's London meeting aroused my curiosity. To my surprise, I found it far more absorbing than I had expected, despite its obvious weaknesses, and would like to offer the following notes on its increased interest when examined within the history of English poetry.

JCP referred to his 'copy-cat' verses (*Autobiography*, 225), and it would be easy to apply the term to *Lucifer* since he identifies his main influences in his Preface: Milton, Keats, Tennyson, and Arnold (with Homer an unstated but palpable presence in the background). Yet, if I may be allowed a paradox, I suggest that, in this case, JCP is 'copy-cat' in an original way. Part 1 is obviously modelled on Books 1 and 2 of *Paradise Lost*, culminating in the Council in Pandemonium. Milton immediately focuses our attention on Satan, thus practically guaranteeing that he will become the most memorable figure in the poem. His God does not appear until Book 3, in a balancing Council in Heaven, but cannot compete in terms of charisma. JCP chooses to *begin* with God – yet slyly imitates his model, introducing Saints Paul and Augustine to participate in the debate with the Milton-like angels, including the rebel Abdiel. Readers are intended to recognize the tone and form as that of Milton's Hell. The effect may be somewhat crude, but JCP makes his point.

In Parts 2 and 3, JCP sets his Lucifer/Satan centre-stage, and transfers his poetic allegiances from Milton to Keats, more specifically to *Endymion*, *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*. Book 4 of *Endymion* contains a brilliant set-piece on 'Bacchus and his crew' (ll.193ff.) upon which JCP clearly draws; the two *Hyperion* poems deal with the replacement of one divine order with another, and, like JCP's poem, are unfinished – for the interesting reason, Keats tells us, that he found too many 'Miltonisms' in them. Again, one can call this part of the poem blatantly imitative of Keats's sensuous urgency and rich verbal texture, but JCP's original contribution, I would stress, is his combination of Arnold's well-known division of western culture into Hebraism and Hellenism within a single epic-style poem. (This explains JCP's acknowledgment of Arnold, whose presence behind his poem is, to my ear, otherwise sporadic and relatively inconspicuous, since what some see as Arnold-like similes are for me more basically imitations of Homer's habitual epic practice.) We have Greek epics (the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), a Latin imitation (Virgil's *Aeneid*), and others from other nations, but I know of no epic that embraces two radically different cultures. Milton, one remembers, famously rejects the Classical world in *Paradise Regained*.

Yet JCP provides more. Part 4 takes us to India to encounter a third culture when Pan transports Lucifer to the East to visit the Buddha. This journey inspires some of JCP's most memorable writing but, while one can understand why Buddha's nihil-

ism, his welcoming of Nirvana and Nothingness, is rejected, I agree with those who find him an ineffective character. One feels that, at this early stage, JCP had not discovered any equivalent Oriental tradition to which he could turn. Oddly enough, the poet who dominates this section is Tennyson, a move rationalized by the fact that Lucifer/Satan's journey eastward can be seen as an analogue to Odysseus/Ulysses' journey westward in Tennyson's 'Ulysses', verbally echoed on many occasions at this point in the poem. (JCP includes a comparable journey on 'immortal steeds' – two horses, one of them winged, rather than leopards – in his version of the story in *Atlantis*, another book set at the time of a war between rival gods and published two years before the belated appearance of *Lucifer*.)

However, Part 5 and all that was written of Part 6, inexplicably set in England, lack the exoticism and mythic energy of what has gone before. Lucifer encounters two young lovers whom he rescues from the condemnation of the girl's 'anti-life' father, instills a positive view of life into a despairing condemned criminal, rebukes a frustrated youth on the Fosse Way, and views a communist revolutionary protest (complete with red flag) in the unlikely setting of Norwich. Apart from the last, which is firmly dismissed, these are offered as improvements that a Lucifer-recreated world might produce, but lack the earlier poetic resonance and impact.

The ending is enigmatic. Perhaps in an attempt to provide symmetry for what is unfinished, Part 6 breaks off at a point recalling the end of Part 1. There God stops speaking abruptly; here Lucifer melts unexpectedly into mist. Moreover, we should realize at this point that, unless God is foretelling the future, Part 1 takes place *after* the main events in the poem, which it anticipates. Both scenes end with the evocation of a cosmic but possibly post-human world. Has the concept of God been magically blotted from human memory? Or can it be that Lucifer has uttered – or is about to utter – Buddha's *uncreative* 'potent Word' (the opposite of John's at the opening of the Fourth gospel) and so has expunged both God and humankind in order to start afresh? We shall never know. All we can say with certainty is that the complete poem would have been a youthful championing of Life against all that is against Life, the kind of philosophy later to be associated with Llewelyn. An ambitious undertaking, perhaps incapable of resolution – but no less intriguing for that. Ultimately, JCP's verse is of little interest in terms of poetic originality, but here the epic-style attempt interests us, if only because it reaches forward to his later epic-like achievements in his prose masterpieces.

W.J.Keith

Owen Glendower: The Seen and the Unseen

This sprawling masterpiece begins at a walking-pace, a horse's walking-pace, that of the hero Rhisiart's beloved piebald Griffin. If Griffin spots a tasty bit of sorrel by the path-side, he stops to enjoy it. Indeed for the first few pages Griffin is as much a character as his master. When Griffin meets other horses he 'flirts' with them. The verb is JCPs, and there is much human flirting in this book, and more than flirting. Those were lusty times.

The attempt to get inside the head of a horse is a part of JCP's urgent desire to suggest the inexpressible, animate and inanimate, seen and unseen, waves of it, affecting us. There is no dark and draughty castle chamber without a slit through which an important star is glimpsed, or a passing ominous bird, and the sea heard, or the wind. Owen Glendower, for instance, is so distracted by a bothersome gnat inside his helmet that he almost fails to prevent his French allies from raping and pillaging a Herefordshire village.

Glendower himself is seen as both theatrical and magical, self-doubting and confident, ruthless and compassionate, usually at more or less the same time. This ambiguity is oddly reminiscent of Marvell's attitude to Cromwell in his *Ode*. Marvell's obvious love of his monarch, both as King and as a person, is not in opposition to his admiration for the Protector, whom he sees as a force of nature, one possessed, as it were, by History itself. So it is with Glendower. Powys makes no comment on the fact that Glendower's love of the Welsh people, his fated need to rescue them from English tyranny and to burn the English out of their haughty castles, will necessitate the burning of Welsh villages with Welsh people in them.

Before going on to praise, it is necessary to warn of a couple of irritations. First, this book's length: my copy weighs in at a thousand pages. It is impossible not to long for a pair of scissors. Second, and more urgent, is Powys's use of several names, and nicknames, in both Welsh and English, for his individual characters, so that frequently the reader is at a loss to know whom he is talking about, or who is talking.

Enough complaint – what of the set-pieces, in which Cowper Powys is so often at his best? They are many, dramatic, even operatic, but they work because they so often seem psychologically right – just what would have happened at that point. For example, Rhisiart, after some dubious sexual gropings on the castle's dark stairs, finds himself in the room of his true love Tegolin (though, a man, he does not yet know that is what she is) and kneels at her feet, weeping, speechless. Tegolin does not speak either. A woman, she knows more than he does of the unseen link between them. Powys does not tell us this; he has no need to, it just seems to the reader precisely right.

Later, under arrest, manacled, expecting execution, Rhisiart gives poison to his cell-mate and friend, the Lollard, who is to be burned alive next day. This might seem too Grand Opera, to go too far, but does not, is almost intimate, the details both mental and practical (the manacles) so precise.

The gnat in Glendower's helmet expelled, he comes to himself and prevents the destruction of the Hereford village. Thereby he loses his French allies, deprived of their girls and their loot. The rebellion is therefore over. We next see him old, ill unto death, living with one retainer in a prehistoric Welsh tunnel in the Welsh hills. Kingly still, he rouses himself ceremoniously to burn, or cause to be burned, the King's Pardon. Typically, it is uncertain that his last proud words might well have been spoken *after* his death-seizure. For did he not live for centuries in the Welsh consciousness, alive/ dead, waiting to come back and rescue them again?

Everything is uncertain, depending on forces unseen. Powys ends this pageant with his full Credo. Rhisiart, now a successful lawyer, is half Norman but vows to be wholly Welsh because of 'the Welsh knowledge that the things seen are unessential compared with the things that are unseen'. Meanwhile Meredith, Glendower's young son, his father's funeral pyre burning in the hills, comes upon an antlered stag at dawn, hears an owl and ponders the effect they have on him. 'What were they, what did they have in them, that they should bring such comfort?' They were seen, but they carried with them the inexpressible *unseen*. And he realises why: "It's their impersonality" he thought, "visions of thousands of generations ... they're not mine!" It is the unseen, says Meredith/ Powys, that releases us, briefly, mercifully, from our selves.

P. J. Kavanagh



Richard Maxwell reading from his novella, March 7th 2010.

News and Notes

National Library of Wales

From Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary, 17 May 2010:

Dr Geraint Phillips is Manuscripts Librarian at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, and currently the sole librarian at NLW responsible for cataloguing recently acquired Powys family manuscripts. These include all the Powys-related items given to the library by Morine Krissdóttir, comprising much of the material used in the preparation of her biography of JCP.

Geraint is a keen supporter and valuable and friendly advocate of the Powyses. He has made proposals to improve accessibility to the Powys Collection at NLW including the development of a new illustrated guide to their Powys material, the creation of a single searchable archival tree of the collection, and the creation of a dedicated Powys page on NLW's website. He has also deposited copies of the Society's new flyer in the library bookshop and is working with NLW Communications Officers to help raise awareness of the Powys Collection. We hope that Geraint may be able to join us at a future conference or meeting.

★

Anyone with ideas of where to distribute the new **FLYERS**, please ask Chris Thomas for a supply.

★

Llewelyn Birthday Walk

The meeting is scheduled for midday at East Chaldon on the usual date, **13th August**, this year a **Friday**. Neil Lee-Atkin plans to attend with up to 10 members of his **Dandelion Club** (Friends of LIP), from all over the country.

Neil Lee-Atkin writes from his new address: Fairlea, The Green, Stainton by Langworth, Lincolnshire LN3 5BL. (e-mail address(es) retained). His wife's illness has obliged him to take full retirement and to leave his beloved Derbyshire. He now lives on a smallholding in Lincolnshire, surrounded on all sides and underneath by interesting medieval remains.

★

John Hodgson and Chris Thomas went to Treadwell's occult bookshop for the launch of **Paul Weston's** 'personal psychic odyssey' called ***Avalonian Aeon***, which starts in the seventies and goes on till 2012 [*sic*] the author seemingly unscathed by psychedelia.

★

Statistics for the use of the Powys Website are obtainable from Frank Kibblewhite or Chris Thomas.

★

Snippets (from Tim Blanchard):

A. S. Byatt, in an interview in Canada's *Globe and Mail* claims that the character of Herbert Methley in her *The Children's Book* is partly based on JCP (as well as H. G. Wells and D. H. Lawrence!).

For Penguin's 75th anniversary they asked 50 current **Penguin authors** to name their favourite Penguin title. JCP's *Wolf Solent* was in the list (named by **David Thomson**).

★

From a recent issue of *The Spectator*: 'In Competition 2623 you were invited to submit an extract from a novel or a play, of which one letter of the title had been changed, in the style of the original author. It was especially tough this week to whittle a large postbag down to just six. Oh, to have the space to share with readers the delights of *The Drapes of Wrath*, *Finnegans Cake*, *Wailing for Godot* and *Lady Chatterley's Liver*.... Alan Millard nabs the bonus fiver.'

Such was the variety to be observed from the esplanade shelter that, to Scabber Crout, none resembled another. Nor was it those on the face of the Jubilee Clock that so obsessed him, but rather those attached to the arms of each passer-by, whether walking towards the Nothe or in the opposite direction towards Greenhill. Some were instantly recognisable, like Mrs Stark's of Uptwey—barnacled with warts, or those of Rodwell's rigger, Ranker Skewer—bony and white as coral.

Scabber Crout's eyes, quick as shark's glance, shifted from one promenader to next, marvelling at the diversity of these peculiar appendages, some outspread like starfish and others clenched tight as mussels. Faces and feet were of no interest to Scabber. For now his focus was fixed entirely on these strange extremities, some large, some small, some gloved, others bare, but each as unique as the incoming wavelets lapping the shoreline. Alan Millard (Weymouth Hands/ John Cowper Powys)

(The Powyses have always invited parodies, but this one is quite recherché?)

★

TLS 7 May 2010: a review by **David Malcolm**, praising essays on Kate Chopin (1850–1904, author of *Awakenings*) ends with the hope 'that a range of other non-canonical or marginally canonical writers among the British, for example, Ella D'Arcy, Hubert Crackenthorpe, T. F. Powys, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Sybille Bedford may be so lucky.'

★

Littleton, botanist and optimist

Bill Keith came across this cutting (on the back of one about Hardy's 'Cross-in-Hand'), from the *Western Gazette*, presumably early October 1938 after the Munich Agreement was signed, promising 'Peace in our time' and widely welcomed.

Local and District News: SHERBORNE. A GOOD OMEN Mr Littleton C. Powys, The Black Horse Hotel, Sherborne, writes to *The Times*. "On September 26th (September of all months!), when strolling on the slopes that look down upon this town, some friends and I came upon a fine specimen of a cowslip in full bloom; on the 28th, while wandering through a neighbouring wood, I found two primroses. Writing to a friend that evening I said, 'I count the finding of these flowers at this season of the year a good omen. When nature can be responsible for a miracle like this, why should we not look for a miracle in these international affairs? Let us go on hoping.' On the 30th we heard that our hopes had been fulfilled; the miracle had happened."

★

‘Humane Jester’

(From a review of JCP’s Rabelais by J. W. Lambert, The Sunday Times, 6th June 1948. **Littleton** wrote to Lambert to thank him for this appreciation.)

... The liberal European, tremulously defiant amid the encircling gloom, might surely draw some comfort, as well as amusement, from Rabelais’s passionate yet prudent humanism ... his sound sense and good-humour, his defence of the simple-hearted and his love of life.

Love of life somewhat clouded, like his subject’s prose, by a ‘flavour of ancient and gnomonic wisdom’ is Mr Powys’s strong suit also; in praising Rabelais he develops a restatement of his own proud, impatient and affectionate fellow-feeling for humanity. His style, as usual, boils and bubbles like some witches’ cauldron; the reader plays a sort of Devil’s snapdragon, snatching out sometimes a wild extravagance, sometimes a par-boiled King Charles’s head, but as often as not an acute observation or a phrase of swift imaginative insight. And the heart-cry sounds clear enough: Let us now praise Pantagruelism that is, ‘a certain jollity of spirit pickled in the scorn of fortune’.

★

Soliloquy/ Soliloquies

Both the 1916 Arnold Shaw US edition (*Soliloquy*) and the 1918 Andrew Melrose London edition (*Soliloquies*) can now be seen entire on internet archives. It is noteworthy in what company TFP first appeared: Andrew Melrose also advertises *Peace of Mind, August 1914–17* (Anon); *Adventures in Contentment* (David Grayson); *The Friendly Road*; *The Lowly Estate* (Cranstoun Metcalfe) and *Cheapside to Arcady* (Arthur Scamwell).

★

Jacqueline Peltier’s latest bilingual *lettre powysienne* (No 19, printemps 2010) contains one of **Llewelyn Powys’s** ‘sling-shots’ (at his brother and human illusions) ‘provocatively’ titled *Visions and Revisions*. It was commissioned by Theodore Dreiser for *The American Spectator* in 1932 and published 1933/4 along with other essays collected in *Damnable Opinions*. Other essays later collected in *Damnable Opinions*. Also in this *lettre* Ludwig Kirchner’s unappreciated portrait of Llewelyn; the preface by Van Wyck Brooks (1886–1963, one of LIP’s earliest and most active promoters) to LIP’s *Earth Memories* (New York, 1938); Pat Quigley continuing his literary pilgrimage with Patchin Place; and various reminiscences of Blaenau Ffestiniog including Elmar Schenkel’s (with some useful maps).

★

Jeremy Bird’s Merry Meet magazine (‘Independent Journal of Folklore and Paganism Spring’ 2010, £1.95) has an article on ‘Archaeology and Pseudo-Archaeology at **Stonehenge**’ a new research project with a large grant.

★

Graham Carey wishes to dispose of his library of around 7,000 volumes, on among other subjects psychoanalysis, feminism, modern poetry, theology, mountaineering, Willa Cather and Thoreau. Preferably for cash, or free to a good community cause.

Or any advice on what firms might be interested. Contact at 6 Granville Terrace, Bingley, BD16 4HW (no computer, but c/o <alan@russell7.eclipse.co.uk>)

★

Lucy Sullivan's recent book, *Shakespeare's Shattered Youth: Laming or Elixir* could, the author says, be considered as ratifying JCP's assertion in his *Autobiography* (p.610) that a happy life is fatal to genius: *It is useless to remind me how sane and well-balanced we are taught to regard Shakespeare as being. It is not true! If you rely, as I do, purely on the plays themselves it is impossible to see how these crafty moralists have patched up their misleading lie at all, about this desperate spirit's equanimity.* It can be ordered from Lucy Sullivan, 11 Pitt St, Windsor, New South Wales, Australia 2756, for £10 or 9 Euro or \$A18 cheque (including postage), from <books@newsweekly.com.au> or from Freedom Publishing – paperback 310 pages). LS will bring a few copies to the Conference in August, where they could be purchased less postage.

★

Diana Crossman sends a note from *Dorset Life* on the lucky escape of the residents of the former **Stalbridge Rectory** (of the Powys grandfather, now a care home). A car parked on the steep hill opposite rolled downhill, across the High Street and crashed into the Rectory's entrance. A happy piece of non-news!

JCP to Littleton, 1953

[Corwen]
March 2nd 1953

Well old friend
so Mr F decided
there weren't enough
of E's letters — for that
purpose — so now you are
waiting
upon the Tide of Time to bring
other offers from other hands
of
skill.... Here January and
February have both been
the nicest winter I can ever
remember in all my days —
Nothing but Sun! Well! there
was that week of Snow and
Snow Drifts

from the Lakes & from the
Derbyshire Peak
but that snow was gone or
nearly
gone in a week! & now it is
only far off on the high
mountains
that any is left. But there
have been few gales
& scarcely any
rain and

really I would say
from the bottom of
my heart that I
have [*never?*] known the
winter months January
and February of more
Warm Sunshine
all

day long! And I have greatly
enjoyed it I can tell you!
O if only my poor darling
Phyllis wasn't so hit
by having to do all for
the Mistress whose legs are
now
practically useless to her and
yet who is decidedly
better in general[ly] health
and eats well & sleeps well
but can only get from one [*side?*]
of rooms to the other with
the most utmost difficulty
holding to things and shuffling
very very very slowly —
But she is decidedly better.
But
aye! we cannot get
out of the Doctor

what really
is
the matter with her —
he murmurs the word
“brain” & the word “spine”
at intervals — but we
can’t get out of him
even a weird medical
word half Greek half
Latin as they reveal
sometimes under
pressure!

I
do
pray
you
got
that Middle
Distance
glass you
hoped
to
get
out
of
your
Doctor

Aye! but today is a
lovely weird strange
odd extraordinary
day... Rime frost —
yes Rime Frost dominates
long queer streamers of
brittle trailing strings
of frost —
God! I write badly — you
couldn’t read that! nobody
could! “strips of rime frost”
But no
wind
at all!

every twig rime frost — the
ground
covered & the woods covered
just as if some Ice-Goddess

whose hair was
coming off had been
dragged or had rushed
up the mountain to this
ridge where after getting
thro’ our wood I finally
daily climb ... & where
there are two Steles that
I have made it my duty to see
are propped up on their heaps
of stones
[*drawing*]

Well. Yesterday was
Redwood’s
70th Birthday & the old chap
came up here to celebrate &
Phyllis (with
all her difficulties) gave him a
grand Tea and an Indian
Wooden Box
in which she put cigarettes & I
gave
him a lovely little Catullus
Tibellus Propertius —
how fond they are of jamming
those 3 in one vol!
God! if I were Catullus I
should be very annoyed !!

Well! the gods be with you
my dear old companion
your ancient J with P’s love
xxxxxxx

Yesterday
I
upset my
ink bottles
so there’s
a huge
black
torrent stain
on
one [*side* ?]
of my
couch!
Poor Phyllis

with an
Octopus here
& the
Mistress
is
only
3 years
off 90!!
It is
much
worse for
those who
look after
the old
than
for
them
themselves —

March the Tenth 1953

I
am
simply
staggered
by your
being so
Cold when
I am so
warm!
It does seem queer
& odd indeed —
for here I am in about
the same latitude or
is it longitude?
as Shirley &
the Dove &
the Peak

not to speak of the
peaks of Eryi
or “Eagles”
wh. is Welsh for
Snowdon —
here day after day for

a month at least
 I've been walking with
 the sun from 8 to
 10 daily & lying
 with him too on this
 couch so warm that
 I've had always to
 turn out the electric
 heater — wh. is
 in this house along
 with gas our
 happy & pleasant
 substitute

for all the terrible fuss
 & bother of coal!
 Yes all the early hours
 out with him & all
 the late hours in with
 him & at the end day
 after day watching him
 out of this window go
 down in great red
 ball behind our
 nearest mountain
 “Moel Goch” or “the
Red Bald One!”
 or (much more often!)
 just dissolve in the
mist & disappear
 before sinking over
 any ridge at all!
 And the truth
 is I cannot
 recall

a nicer Jan or Feb in
 all my days save for
 that one single
 heavy snow storm
 that blocked the
 main roads all
 right but soon
 froze so that I
 could easily walk
 over it to the top
 of my favourite
 daily ridge where

I keep two Steles
 στήλη (I forget
 also that plural!)
 one dedicated to the
 nice God of S. Wales
 Pryderi the
 son of

Pwyll Pen Annown
 and one to my kind
 friend Gilbert Turner
 of the Richmond Public
 Library who has been
 so good to our Faith &
 has helped me with
 books more than anyone in
 the world save our
 Wandering Jew Mr Lewin
 who helped Smuts so
 well with his library.

My son tells me that on my
 tomorrow (your and his
 today) he's going to a
 Bristol Specialist about
 this mysterious collapse
 at the centre of all the
 muscular nerves of our [*sic*]
 body. Who would
 ever have
 predicted

he would have — he of
 all people — he who
 will I think be 50
 this 30th of Aug —
 such a disastrous affliction.
 I had my old
 perambulatory
 universal
 encyclopedia
 our mutual friend
 Redwood up here
 and even he had
 never known
 a case like my
 son's. He Redwood
 is looking forward

to doing some
 serious

mountain climbing
 in that part of
 Eyri-Snowdon
 called Ogwen
 or some such name where
 I've read of so many
 accidents &
 deaths — ere this
 summer is over —
 Good luck to him!
 I wouldn't have a single
 day of our youth back to
 go too as we were when we —
 went up, you carrying me
I daresay, or most
 certainly helping
 me & “old Bob”
 too I
 bet!

Do you know I
 heard my first
 Wood-Pigeon's voice:
 “Take two cows Taffy take two!”
 —this morn in
 the wood... and
 also my first
Blackbird's song —
 Those are my too [*sic*]
 favourite
 birds... which are
 yours, old friend?
 And my favourite tree
 is undoubtedly entirely
 absolutely and
 certainly is
Spruce Fir !

I've been struck
 in these woods
 since that heavy
 snow broke
 down such a
 lot of trees
 by the different

& contrasting ways
they have fallen!
Like different heroes
in a great fight!
My favourite
spruces
just
snap off

clean

then the larches
are uprooted
& this gives them
a queer half-life that can go on
for

long afterwards
for a whole year perhaps
& for even more!
For part of the root tends
to draw up new
sap even if it's

only on[e] tentacle!

Then the Scotch

Firs break
off

near their top
& only the top
branches (little ones)
come crashing down
leaving the tree standing
upright, but its
top gone!

Then there are cases of
larches who instead
of being uprooted
bow down! and
press their
leafless head
into the
moss!

[drawing of bowed tree]

The day before yesterday
I head what I fancy
was the cry of a
Kestrel Hawk and
I've seen a hawk of

some sort up
there once or twice.
But yesterday I found
a big wood-pigeon
headless a bloody
sight and its lovely
black-grey-white
feathers sprinkled
everywhere. I carried
its body to a particular place
but (by God!) if the
killer hadn't returned (or some
carrion-crow perhaps!)
and only the feathers
were visible
today!

I am so glad
you refrained
from
having

a regular literary fight with
Louis over our parents. I
commend you for your
restraint.
It's no good all round these
rows.

Well! our Sister Marian will be
on her way by now for Italy
and then in about a month

I fancy we shall all
be seeing her in a
month. And my
dearest old friend I must
tell you how
greatly touched I am by your

speaking of helping me with
the expenses if ever I decided
on
this operation you have had.

I shall not forget these
generous words old friend
though at the moment I am

getting on quite all right.

Tonight we are a bit
agitated for we have a
elderly person coming to spend
the night with Phyllis's mother
as a nurse.

Whether it will be a success or
not we have no idea at all, not
having ever yet met the lady
in question whose home

is in Cynwyd pronounced
"Cunwid"
which is where we
first went when we
came to this neighbourhood!
If we like this Cynwyd lady
it may prove
a great respite for
we certainly will have to

have somebody to help when
our Marian pays us her visit.
Well! we shall see!
O how often

do we poor mortals have to cry
out
We shall see — And the gods
might
retort — O you'll see all right —
but
whether you'll understand
what you see is
another thing!

With love from Phyllis
your old
bobolink-boaster
Johnny
Wild Goose
xx
xXx
xXx

The Flute
by John Cowper Powys
For Reginald, May 30th 1932

O flame, that flickers in our hearth
Burning that cedar bough,
Be mute, while up the orchard path
Can you not hear them
Over the rustling rain-wet grass
Those flute notes rise and sink and pass.

Perhaps in all our days again
Never will reach our ear,
Such throbbing joy, such liquid pain,
Such mysteries made clear!
Listen! Up from our bridge still floats
The echo of those lovely notes.

O birds among the swaying trees,
A moment cease your song!
Those far-off notes upon the breeze,
To another land belong.
From a far-distant shore they come
O let all other sounds be dumb.

Our stream may dry in summer's heat;
But while our bridge is there,
That echo tremulously sweet
Will float upon the air;
A touch, a breath, a voyaging sigh
From fields beyond mortality!

(From *Melvon L. Ankeny*, as found in the *Lloyd Emerson Siberell Papers*, *Rare Books and Manuscripts*, *The Ohio State University Libraries*)

Reginald (Rex) Hunter (1889–1960), a poet of disillusioned romanticism, sometime resident of Patchin Place, was once married to Gamel Woolsey and unflatteringly portrayed by her in her novel *One Way of Love*.

John Cowper Powys: Diary, 29 May 1932: Reginald came & talked & was so nice but I am a Curmudgeon in the morning in my mind tho' very civil in speech. He went down to the Bridge & sat dangling his legs & playing his flute—oh how nice he looked with his white face so gaunt & then how lovely his flute sounded in the distance.

8th November 1929: Rex Hunter came to tea and talked [...] wisely and with sense [...] rather amusingly ... about other topics 'expansively'. He is a nice irresponsible creature like a fiddler at a fair cajoling the girls.

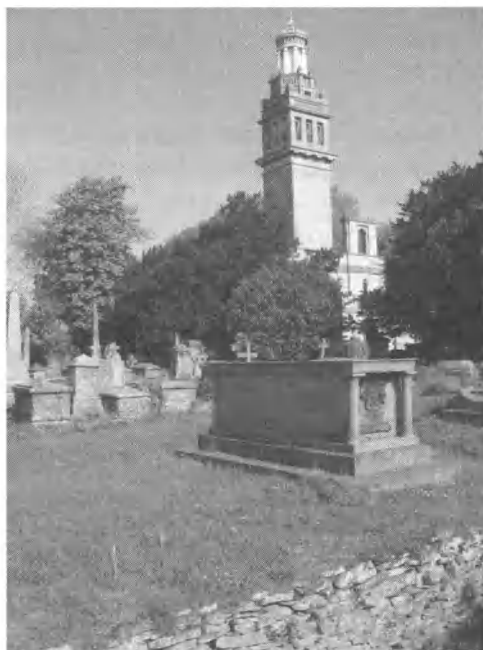
Buried in Bath

Prompted by Margaret Powys's letters reproduced in the last *Newsletter* we went and looked at the tombstone of Margaret Powys and her son Littleton Alfred in the Roman Catholic cemetery at Perrymead in Bath. However, these are not the only Powyses known to have died in Bath and been buried there: high up in Lansdown Cemetery four sisters from an earlier generation, dying in the 1850s and 60s, are commemorated in a single memorial. I was sure that there was a memorial in Bath Abbey to an even earlier Powys, but the keeper of its records could not find that one.

A huge amount of systematic work has been done by many people in plotting and recording the various cemeteries around Bath: for these two I am indebted to Phil Bendall for plans and directions, and for much information; he has been working on behalf of the Bath Preservation Trust on Lansdown and for the Widcombe Association for Perrymead. This account is based also on my own careful examination and detailed knowledge of the Powys genealogies.

LANSDOWN

This elegant square structure, a small tower with a low pyramidal top and nice architectural detail, and a mason's mark 'KING', is the memorial to four of the daughters of the Revd Littleton Powys (1748–1825) and his wife Maria Priscilla (*née*



Lansdown Cemetery, Bath, with Beckford's Tomb and Tower. (SPM 2010)

Shaw, 1752–1833). In my chart printed in *Newsletter* 28 (page 20) I showed seven children, all daughters except the sixth, the Revd Littleton Charles Powys, father of Charles Francis Powys, Vicar of Montacute; this was based on the pedigree shown in the Northamptonshire genealogical volume of the Victoria County History (VCH) published in 1906. You would think this was good enough authority, but one of the four sisters on this memorial is yet another daughter, so that we must now record that the first Revd Littleton had seven daughters, six before the birth of his only son.

The burial of these four women in Bath shows how popular this city was at a place of retirement in the nineteenth century. Two of them, Eleanor and Harriet (the one not on VCH), are recorded in the 1861 Census as living at 28 St James's Square, Walcot, with three servants; all four deaths were registered, so there is ample documentary evidence for Harriet. The VCH shows 2 of them as spinsters, while the second daughter, having married, had reverted to her maiden name.

The inscriptions, on the four faces, refer to the following women:

EAST (see photo): "Elenora Dorothea/ Second Daughter", 1783–1851 (shewn as "Frances Dorothea" in VCH);

NORTH: "Eleanor/ Third Daughter", 1785–1866 (VCH: Eleanor);

WEST: "Harriet/ Fourth Daughter", 1786–1866 (not in VCH);

SOUTH: "Mary Anne/ Fifth Daughter", 1788–1859 (VCH: 4th D, "Mary Anne").

Their memorial is very well placed, close to the left side of the photo, facing the colossal pink-granite tomb of William Beckford and almost in the shadow of Beckford's Tower, which has been completely repaired and restored in recent years.

PERRYMEAD

Margaret Powys died in 1947 and was buried with this quite substantial tombstone (showing pale under the side-chapel window). It is located at East 99, to the east of



Perrymead Cemetery, Bath, view of east end of Mortuary Chapel, with Powys tombstone just left of centre. (SPM 2010)



Perrymead Cemetery, Bath, headstone of grave of Margaret Powys and Littleton Alfred Powys. (SPM 2010)

R·I·P

PRAY
FOR

THE SOUL
OF

MARGARET ALICE
POWYS

WHO DIED 26 : 2 : 1947.

AGED 73.

DIRUPISTI VINCULA MEA.

ALSO FOR

REV. LITTLETON ALFRED
POWYS.

WHO DIED 16 : 2 : 1954.

AGED 51.

the Mortuary Chapel, usually a place of privilege; Littleton followed in 1954.

The headstone is rectangular with angled shoulders; the main area of the face is recessed for incised lettering with a flat border, with a projecting Latin cross in the plane of the border; it has a plain stone kerb. It is in good condition.

Above the Cross is engraved R·I·P, around the Cross the words PRAY FOR THE SOUL OF are arranged in two columns, then the text, transcribed above. The Latin phrase, DIRUPISTI VINCULA MEA, is taken from Roman Catholic Psalm 115, verses 16–17, which read: '*O Domini, quia ego servus tuus et filius ancillae tuae: dirupisti vincula mea, tibi sacrificabo hostiam laudis*'; the phrase is translated as '*Thou hast broken my bonds.*' It is the *Offertorium* in the Mass for February 27th, almost the day that Margaret Powys died.

The corresponding Psalm in the Anglican Prayer Book is 116, verses 13–15: '*Behold, O Lord, how that I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast broken my bonds in sunder. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving: and will call upon the Name of the Lord.*'

Margaret Alice Powys (*née* Lyon) was born in 1874, married John Cowper Powys April 9th 1896. Littleton Alfred was born on August 30th 1902.

Stephen Powys Marks