

Editorial

Our cover shows a rare and delightful grouping of three Powys brothers, in Montoma, New York State, at Christmas 1924. The photographer is thought to be Alyse Gregory, and the half-hidden figure Phyllis Playter.

Almost ten years later, John Cowper and Phyllis were preparing to leave America for ever. JCP's Diaries, even in unabridged form, manage to make almost anything alive and engaging, with their crazy-pavement of daily domestic details and nature notes, memories, thoughts on reading, meetings with local characters, and the chronicle of joy – as well as (in his 'Petrushka' persona) mishaps – in relation to Phyllis. The pattern emerges perhaps most clearly in the central years of their four-year stay (mid-1930 to mid-34) in Columbia County, NY; but it is interesting too to see how JCP manages to rise above the exceptional 'agitations' of the thronged final days in May 1934, with the traumas of packing added to by the looming storm of the Glastonbury libel case, on top of worry over reduced income and burdensome contracts – AND an erupting septic tank (he rightly avoids finding this symbolic). Their decision to leave was not unthought-of but in the event sudden: Alan Devoe's formal offer to buy the house had come only in mid-February. Devoe's long celebration of JCP was printed in the local paper. Young Albert Krick is a helpful presence throughout the American Diaries.

More and earlier American connections come from archives in California, and other Powys links are with Paris (a book launch), with Kenya (Mary Casey's diaries), a significant Dutch novel, and W. J. Keith's useful résumé of the life of Louis Wilkinson. Once again, many thanks to all contributors.

NB. The Editor's e-mail address has changed to <cewkavanagh@btinternet.com >

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Two Powys Days

Ely, Saturday 13th April 2013

Our Chairman, Timothy Hyman, will lead a discussion of JCP's novel *Weymouth Sands*, focusing on Chapter 10, 'Sea-Holly'. The meeting will be held at **The Old Fire Engine House**, 25 St Mary's Street which is located close to Ely Cathedral. This is a comfortable and popular restaurant venue which also incorporates an art gallery. We will meet in the upstairs sitting room at **10.30 for welcome and coffee**. Our discussion will commence at **11.00**. **Lunch** will be served in the restaurant from **12.00 to 13.00**. The discussion will recommence in the afternoon.

JCP began writing *Weymouth Sands* in February 1932, three months after completing *A Glastonbury Romance* (written 1930–31, published 1932–33), and finished it in July 1933. *Weymouth Sands* was first published in the USA in February 1934, shortly before JCP was sued over the character of Philip Crow in *Glastonbury*. *Weymouth Sands* therefore appeared in the UK, in June 1935, under the title *Jobber Skald*, in a version with names changed to avoid charges of libel. JCP called the altered version he was forced to create for his English readers: '*This poor vivisected book*'. The original version of the novel was not published in the UK until 1963.

Our President, Glen Cavaliero, has called *Weymouth Sands* 'Powys's most mystical and compassionate novel; it is also his most humorous and mellow one.' JCP's compassion can be especially felt in his treatment of the failure, breakdown, and unhappiness which some of his characters experience and in his subtle insight into their fluctuating moods and mental states: 'I am rather proud of my skill', he confessed in his diary, 'in gathering up the various puppets of this planetary book between land and sea'. *Weymouth* had of course a central place in JCP's affections and childhood memories: 'my only home on this earth', he told Nicholas Ross in a letter. *Weymouth Sands* is one of JCP's most effective evocations of the spirit of place and includes some of his finest writing about the town, seen as if in an enchanted glow – 'the whole thing given a romantic *aquarelle* atmosphere' he wrote in his diary. Concentrating on Chapter 10 of *Weymouth Sands* will enable us to examine in detail one of JCP's greatest creations, the love between Jobber Skald and Perdita Wane, which he considered the most difficult part of the chapter to write. We will also study the gradual development of the novel through all its various stages.

For a 'virtual tour' of *Weymouth Sands* please visit Jacqueline Peltier's web site at: <www.powys-lannion.net/Powys/Weymouth/weymouth>

This event is free. However a contribution towards coffee and refreshments would be appreciated and a charge will be made for lunch which is optional. For more information about the venue please visit <www.theoldfireenginehouse.co.uk>

Websites and e-mail addresses: Please note that for consistency these are generally shewn between angle brackets < >.

Dorchester, Saturday 8th June 2013

At the **Dorset County Museum**, High West Street, Dorchester, in the library, at **10.30** for **11.00** start. Members are invited to select and read favourite passages from any of the books written by the Powyses on the theme of *love, friends and family relationships* (real and imaginary). Readings will be discussed in an open forum.

We will break for **lunch** at a local restaurant at **13.00** and return to readings and discussion at **14.00**. Coffee and refreshments will be available throughout the day.

After the conclusion of the meeting a visit has been arranged to the village of East Chaldon including a **walk to West Chaldon** and the coastguard cottages on the Downs.

The **Powys Society Collection** at the Dorset County Museum will be open to visitors during the day.

This event is free with the exception of optional lunch.

Both meetings

Everyone is welcome to attend these meetings. If you wish to attend please notify Hon. Secretary either by e-mail to <chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk> or by post to Flat D, 87 Ledbury Road, London, W11 2AG.

Committee Nominations

Nominations are invited for **Honorary Officers** and **Members** of the Powys Society Committee to take effect from August 2013.

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

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

Nominations must be received by Hon Secretary by **Saturday 1st June 2013**.

Current Honorary Officers of the Committee are:

<i>Chairman</i>	Timothy Hyman
<i>Vice-Chairman</i>	Peter Foss
<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>	Anna Pawelko
<i>Hon. Secretary</i>	Chris Thomas

Nominations are sought for the four positions of Honorary Officers from August 2013.

Current Members of the Committee are:—

Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor*), Stephen Powys Marks, Michael Kowalewski (*Powys Society Collection Manager*), Louise de Bruin (*Conference organiser and Publications Manager*), Trevor Davies, Shelagh Powys Hancox, Jeff Kwintner and Charles Lock (*ex-officio member of the Committee, and editor of The Powys Journal*). Louise de Bruin will complete her three year term of service in August 2013.

Nominations are therefore sought for **one position on the Committee from August 2013.**

Annual General Meeting 2013

This gives notice that the **Annual General Meeting of The Powys Society** will be held at **11.00 on Sunday 18th August 2013** at the Hand Hotel, Llangollen.

All members are welcome to attend and participate in the **AGM** whether or not they are attendees at the Conference.

Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary

The Powys Society Conference, 2013 *The Hand Hotel, Llangollen* *Friday 16th to Sunday 18th August*

‘Placing John Cowper Powys’

How do we place or ‘situate’ John Cowper Powys in World Literature?

In recent conferences we’ve aimed to balance our programme between the several Powys writers. Our President, Glen Cavaliero, will in his opening lecture be reminding us that we read all three Powys brothers above all for Pleasure and Enjoyment; and we are grateful to P. J. Kavanagh – possessor of the most musical performing voice in the Society – for agreeing to lead a reading and discussion of Theodore’s *Fables* on Saturday night. But as it has turned out in 2013 – the fiftieth anniversary of his death – we are focusing chiefly on John Cowper. He was by far the most cosmopolitan and intellectually fluent of the family, though he often played this down. As his critical essays make evident, he wrote from an awareness of world literature, rather than ‘The English Novel’, and his aspiration was to link his own art to that canon of wayward ‘Worldbooks’. It was Rabelais and Homer, Mignon and Prince Myshkin, who most nourished his fiction. Charles Lock has already helped us see John Cowper Powys as a kind of post-modern (linking him to Bakhtin, for example) and now he wants to bring *Wolf Solent* into relation with Musil’s *The Man Without Qualities*, as well as with his other European contemporaries. Robert

Caserio will be considering the *Autobiography* in the context of early twentieth-century Memoirs and Confessions. Kate Nash will explore the shift in voice as John Cowper moves away from the lecture platform persona and into the 'Serpentine Narrator' of the Romances.

The Hand Hotel is beautifully sited, surrounded by the mythic landscape of JCP's late Welsh Narratives. Craning our necks, we can see the broken towers of Dinas Brân high above us, while the purple-black River Dee rushes at our feet. Corwen, the small town where he and Phyllis sat out the Second World War, is close by. John Cowper did 'withdraw' here – perhaps as much from his family as from the world of literary contacts and careers. But in this Conference our quest is to view him not as an isolated figure, but as a writer who may be better understood when integrated within the wider panorama of his generation.

Timothy Hyman

Draft timetable

Friday 16th August

- 16.00 Arrival
- 17.30 Reception
- 18.30 Dinner
- 20.00 **Glen Cavaliero:** 'Endurance and Enjoyment: the Pleasures of Powys'

Saturday 17th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Robert Caserio:** 'Powys amid English and American Autobiographies of the 1930s'
- Coffee
- 11.15 **Charles Lock:** '*Wolf Solent* and World Literature'
- 13.00 Lunch
- Afternoon free – guided walk to place of local Powys interest
- 19.00 Dinner
- 20.00 Readings from **T. F. Powys's Fables**, followed by discussion with members, led by P. J. Kavanagh

Sunday 18th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Katherine Saunders Nash:** 'The Serpentine Narrator: John Cowper Powys's Turn from Lecturer to Novelist'
- 11.00 **AGM** followed by discussion
- 13.00 Lunch
- 15.00 Departure

From the Conference speakers

Glen Cavaliero:

Endurance and Enjoyment: The Pleasures of Powys.

The difficulties and pleasures experienced in a reading of the writings of the Powyses.

Professor Robert L. Caserio jr:

Powys amid English and American autobiographies of the 1930s.

There is a remarkable constellation of autobiographical writing that environs Powys's own. The autobiographers include Winston Churchill, Christopher Isherwood, Louis MacNeice, H. G. Wells, Cyril Connolly, W. E. B. DuBois, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Henry Miller. My hope is that a situation of Powys's *Autobiography* among the others can better establish the form and the force of Powys, and the claims of his text on general readers and, indeed, on all literary historians.

Charles Lock:

Wolf Solent and World Literature

A consideration of *Wolf Solent* in context and in competition with other ambitious novels of the 1920s, notably Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* [*The Man Without Qualities*] and Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*. JCP was well aware of his literary rivals and thought of himself as one among the avant-garde, and not the least ambitious of them. Other hardly less ambitious novels of the decade would include Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, and the continuing episodes of Dorothy M. Richardson's *Pilgrimage*. Proust, Joyce, Musil and Mann clearly belong to 'world literature'; the others do not. This lecture will consider why *Wolf Solent* in particular has been rendered critically 'provincial' rather than 'global', and ask whether these categories and evaluations might be subject to revision.

Katherine Saunders Nash:

The Serpentine Narrator: John Cowper Powys's Turn from Lecturer to Novelist.

A study of JCP's transition from the role of public speaker and lecturer to major novelist.

About the Speakers

Glen Cavaliero is President of The Powys Society, Fellow Commoner of St Catherine's College, Cambridge University, and a member of the Royal Society of Literature. Glen's latest volume of poetry is *Towards the Waiting Sun*, published in 2011.

Robert L. Caserio jr is Professor of English at Pennsylvania State University, USA and editor of *The Journal of Modern Literature*. Publications include: *Plot, Story, and the Novel: from Dickens and Poe to the Modern Period*, and *The Novel in England, 1900–1950: History and Theory*. Recently he was appointed the editor of *The Cambridge*

Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel (2009), and co-editor of *The Cambridge History of the English Novel* (2012).

Charles Lock is editor of *The Powys Journal* and Professor of English Literature at the University of Copenhagen. Recent publications include essays on the poets Geoffrey Hill and Roy Fisher. In 2012 Charles delivered a plenary lecture on JCP and Iris Murdoch at the 6th International Iris Murdoch Conference at the University of Kingston in Surrey.

Kate Nash is an Assistant Professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia, USA. She teaches courses on the history of the novel, narrative theory, feminist thought and criticism, and British fiction since 1660. She received her PhD from the University of Virginia in 2006 after completing a dissertation on John Cowper Powys under the guidance of Stephen Arata and Jerome McGann. She has published on JCP in *Narrative* (2007 – on his narrative form) and in *The Powys Journal* xviii (2008 – on intermental influences in his lecture career). Her first book, *Feminist Narrative Ethics: Tacit Persuasion in Modernist Form* (forthcoming in 2014) includes a chapter on JCP. The chapter, while acknowledging freely that Powys was neither modernist nor feminist, examines the narrative ethics of young-girl-like receptivity in *A Glastonbury Romance*. She has recently begun researching potential relationships between historical bibliography and theories of authorship.

P. J. Kavanagh is a poet and Powys fellow-traveller. He has been novelist, editor, anthologist, columnist, actor and frequent broadcaster.

NEW SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR 2013

Would all of those who have so far not sent the Amendment to Standing Order form to their bank please do so as soon as possible.

The form was enclosed in the last *Newsletter*, but if it is lost please e-mail the Treasurer at

<anna.pawelko@ntlworld.com>

and a copy of the form will be e-mailed to you.

Powys Brothers in Montoma, December 1924

Llewelyn Powys and Alyse Gregory moved to Montoma, NY, in the Catskill hills on the west bank of the Hudson, while he was recovering from the haemorrhage brought on by his excursion to the Rocky Mountains in May 1924 (all described in Verdict of Bridlegoose).

'The reappearance of his old enemy reminded him that his time might be short' (Malcolm Elwin, Life of Llewelyn Powys, p.163), and he persuaded Alyse to marry him. John Cowper was then living with Phyllis Playter in Llewelyn's former rooms in Patchin Place. A. R. Powys ('Bertie') was on a lecture tour.

Llewelyn Powys to Louis Wilkinson

Nov 27th 1924

Montoma, Ulster County, New York

My dear Lewis,

I was delighted to get your letter. I think you might take the trouble to send me a word on my marriage. I have settled in for the winter in this house which is situated on the top of a deserted hill overlooking Woodstock. I sleep on the verandah and eat beans and eggs and winter carrots. — My temperature is now up and now down. I certainly damaged myself by going to those God damned Rocky Mountains.

Old Bert is due to arrive next Tuesday — I shall enjoy playing draughts with the old sod again.

I see that Thirteen Worthies has come out in England (Grant Richards). As yet I have had no clippings from the English Press Agent — perhaps they have not had time to reach me or perhaps they want more money but it is painful for me to think this. At any rate would you investigate and take the necessary steps to see that I lose sight of no notice past or present good or bad. Good God! have you not yet placed "It's All Right Sergeant"

I am now typing my new book "Skin for Skin" which really is a masterpiece. You come into it — It is a bawdy libelous bloody book — more like Marcel Proust than anything else.

We shall see. I think I shall try to get 15% royalty out of Harcourt. What is Knopf paying you? I should like to know.

I long to see the new book. John returned to America to find that Arnold who had been suffering from constipation during the summer had arranged for exactly one lecture. He has now gone over to Keedick. Last week I sold a story of the Rocky Mountains to the Century for \$150. — I remain amazed that I can write at all — I who was never in the sixth at Sherborne and failed the tripos at Cambridge — I really don't know how I manage it — but they all coz me up over here and I grow a long beard and with one hand over my balls wag my head gravely enough.

Goodbye, dear Lewis

Your loving

Lulu

Thanks to Chris Wilkinson for this letter, and to Susan Rands, David Goodway and Peter Foss for the photographs on the cover, printed from damaged negatives in the Malcolm Elwin archive, needing some significant touching up in lower middle areas. Peter identifies the half-seen figure in a hat as Phyllis, and thinks the photographer probably Alyse.

Leaving Phudd *May 20th – June 1st, 1934*

Sunday, 20 May 1934

Warmer Warmer

The T.T. stayed up till 3.30 as I have told you. I described the events of today in yesterday's Diary! This shows how my mind is confused. The apple trees are now in bloom. Our Sweet Apple in bloom. When I read the end of my chapter XII* to the T.T. she did not think it was good — too abrupt! So I have been desperately re-writing the end & now the T.T. feels that it is too optimistic though at her word I did allude to the Neutral Good-and-Evil First Cause; but swept it aside by the motion [*sic*] of a "Power" among other Powers ... the Prometheus Christ ... "against whom, in spite of all atrocities, — the evil in the Universe fights a losing battle". The T.T. fancied that I had described Columbia County without inspiration & also regretted that I had not introduced some of our neighbours but these things it was too late to change alas! There it is! It was all I could do to change the end of the chapter and get a hawk's survey of my existence from further back than America adventures. This I did — under her instruction, manage to do.

When I walked with the Old to the Thunderbolt today and surveyed the landscape I noted that now at last the furthest Ridges of all are green — a sort of yellowish-green — the yellowish green of the very sap in Proserpina's veins. I visited the Dead Tree on my way. But you can believe how I embraced the fallen Ossian Tree. The Oak near the Thunderbolt has its leaves out — curiously pale pink like very pale coral and white too. The Poplars on the Sloping Field have their leaves out, they too are white, very opaque white on one side. These are white poplars different from those Aspens.

It was pretty to see Mr Shaver* with his little cocks; little bantams with spurs & pretty too to see how he showed the T.T. every plant in his garden. That queer grandson or nephew of the old lady came in too.

Monday, 21 May 1934

Very Warm at last: but a greyish sky since dawn. I am simply amazed at the powers of the T.T.

The T.T. stayed up All Night. I stayed up till One finishing my chapter. When I got up at 6.30 there she was still packing the great wooden box, like a coffin, on the Porch.

* Asterisks: see notes on pages 18–19.

The Old is very nervous at all this & stays under Sofa! I hurried so as to get breakfast quick & she put the Coffee on. I did not shave. I took the Old to the Prometheus Stone. How heavy the Dew was! The T.T. had watched the Dawn. She had some orange-juice on the Porch steps ... She rebuked me for standing so long doing my Rigmарoles. She said I looked grim at her! I soon made her know I didn't!

After Breakfast Albert* came with his truck that Old Ford Truck 9 years old that old faithful servant. He drove it clean against our steps so as to get all the luggage in including the Owl & the Duck and Falada ... but not Olwen. Albert packed all into the Truck with extraordinary skill ... including Adelaide's trunk* & the T.T.'s Bed. Will the new Sears Roebuck bed come in time? That is the question. We saw the truck descend the hill by the Burchfield House where so many of our visitors have vanished out of sight. Old Dreiser* like a Goblin & Mabel*. Mr Siberell* made quite a hit with Arthur & so evened all things smooth. Then Arthur & Gladys* came. Arthur's lungs are better but his hand is troublesome & he has troubles in his Rear. These little vexations worry him. They looked at our Gas-Range – thinking of buying one for themselves.

The T.T. is now desperately packing the China for Albert might at any minute decide to take it. Later I must have my Enema. I think this Chinese servant Arthur has got will be a constant interest to him. ENEMA . The T.T. went with Albert to Hudson. Mrs Paul Curtis* paid a call. Mr Shaver came to ask about the lamp. Mrs Powell* came. Boissevain and Edna* came straight from Lulu & Rat's Barn. Arthur came. I gave them all whiskey. The T.T. came back & burst out into crying & had to go upstairs. But Boissevain was nice to her.

Took the Old to Merlin's Grave and the Stone of Fal. The T.T. is exhausted & half-dazed. We went to bed at One.

Tuesday, 22 May 1934

a very hot day Thunder

not up till Nine – we both were exhausted especially the T.T. after not sleeping at all. She went past this house to Kricks when she saw the two cars of Boissevain & Ficke here & slept on Mrs Krick's bed — & then Mrs Krick waked her – but all the same for that* she had to face them when she did get here & it was too much. But Boissevain was very nice & behaved quite right. Edna tried to recite a Ballad she had composed for Llewelyn and wh. at the last moment Boissevain ran with from Lulworth and back.

Got up & hurried. Met Albert ploughing. Met Mr Johnson our Postman very very very nervous. Got only to the Plane-tree & hurried back but found the T.T. upset & beginning breakfast. She is Worn-Out. Now what must she do this little Sylph but set out in her print dress carrying mackintosh & umbrella to the Wambaughs yes! and right straight into a Thunderstorm. I have prayed to Kwang that great-little god of ours & to the spirit of my Mother to guard the T.T. from being struck by Lightning. I have also prayed to Zeus “ νεφέληγερέτα ” [*nephelêgereta*] the cloud-gatherer

Σεῦ' Πατερ, ἰδῆθεν μεδιών, κωδίστε, μεγίστε [Zeu' Pater, Idèthen mediôn, kudiste, megiste] to guard her from Thunderbolts.

At 3.30 I set out with the Old and walked to Wambach's. Here we found the T.T. ensconced in the parlor of the Wambachs with the despotic old grandmother & the Milliner & the ex-housekeeper with a fortune who is the T.T.'s favourite. The T.T. likes this hill & these hilly valleys best of all the country round here. The Old & I got there without Rain. And the T.T. had not suffered from the storm. In a yet worse thunderstorm Mr Wambach drove us back with Louis & Florence his children. The T.T. gave them forget-me-nots. It hissed when lightning struck something! I know not what.

The Wind blew the T.T. up that long hill – the Thunder-Wind. Hattie has come to the rescue about the bed.

Wednesday, 23 May 1934

She is Sick by a Providential Intervention of our Guardian Angel!

She knew it last night — & ate last night no supper. She had a good night & the angel of our destiny gave her an easy time.

Arthur came. Mr Blin of Hudson with a Mrs Bradly* came when Arthur was here. I went with Arthur to Hudson and got writing paper to pay back Carl & ice-cream for the T.T. While I waited in the old Hudson Square for Arthur I contemplated with wicked pleasure two girls playing with each other at some steps ... one of them had an entrancing figure & a curiously voluptuous manner of sitting on the edge of a stone step ... Albert came after I returned & Mrs Powell doing all was here. But alas! in the agitation of Boissevain & Edna suddenly appearing straight from Lulu the T.T. has quite hopelessly lost the \$25 cheque from Mr Pesley at Shulte's Book Shop [*sic*]*. It's gone – it's gone – along with a letter from her mother & one from Miss Morgan. Can she have burnt them? She does not think so but she was so agitated & upset.

Took the Old to the Steitz Lane. Worked hard at my Book. Went with Albert & Dora* to see the Hess Farm. I was thrilled to find a baby called Kenneth there “a span long” as St Augustine wd. say thinking of unbaptized babies –damn him for such thoughts! – on the floor of Hell forever Burning. But this little baby held my hand – or finger rather – was sick – smiled – was sick again – smiled again – It was a pretty sight to see the Hess Farm lit up & little John going upstairs & Mrs Hess in her blue dress with a bunch of Irises for the T.T.

Stopped at at Library in Philmont to meet Mrs Harder the aged School-Marm who taught Albert & Miss Clough a noble old lady like Aunt Dora*. Albert bought fresh ice-cream for the T.T. and the T.T. actually came downstairs better & gave them presents. Then she wrote letters in bed & worked at my Book. Our angel or great Kwang has helped her in this.

Thursday, 24 May 1934

Rain on the wind. Rain

Alan Devoe* arrived at noon – and Albert drove him up to the Steitz where Mr Delaney our kind friend had already taken her in his white Ideal Cleaner car. While I was writing on my couch a young lady rather dark & worried — & yet calm — appeared on foot. The Black barked but I talked very flattery & suave & polite for I thought she was mad – Suddenly she handed me without a word a Document and begged for a glass of water. It was the writ! It was the Libel Writ from Wookey Hole furious Captain. who as we now learn won his Military Cross in Africa. It was signed by Sovereign & counter sign by the Lord Chancellor Sankey commanding me to appear before the King's Bench to answer this Charge in Fifty Days. Arthur read it & treated it lightly. He says I best not employ a Lawyer – but I shall employ Blundell & Baker my son & M.A.P.'s* lawyers in London.

I took Devoe along with the Very Old as far as the Grotto. Then Devoe faithful to his Mary who was expected any minute went hurriedly back. I took the Old to Tintern Abbey where I prayed that the Devoes should be happy in Columbia County and when I got home Mary had arrived. After tea Devoe handed the Certified Cheque over to the T.T. in exchange for the Deed; likewise I handed to him a handful of earth from the garden as a symbol of this transaction & he gave some to [*sic*] this earth back to us & kept some as a covenant. We all went early to bed.

They have brought a tabby cat called “Twink” whose ways are like those of Sintram. I have put a stone at the feet of the buried Mees & Sintram* that I assassinated by the help of the Vet. May they rise to immortality & intense happiness and a stone at their head.

Friday, 25 May 1934

A Cloudy Day with rain in the offing Rain Past or to come! Rain Rain!

The lilac is really Lilac now at the last stage of the bloom. Very sweet to smell after Rain. I shaved intermittently while Devoe went in & out of the bath-room. Their tabby cat behaved like a Witch He got out of the Window of the bathroom – flinging down the Screen – Then though that window was shut, he suddenly appeared in the Proper Place. He likes playing in their luggage. His ways are so pathetically like Sintram's. He is a very cat. I like him.

Took the Old half across Flat Lot. He bolted home because of the Cows & because of a general feeling of un-ease and insecurity. Hattie* stopped. She was so pleased because I gave her the Home Book of English Verse which Arthur had given me. The T.T. & I walked together to the Mail with Parcels. On my return from my walk I fetched the Milk in the proper legal manner. We had a happy breakfast though the T.T. is naturally agitated and feels as if she had visitors.

I forgot to say that Mae Clough and Paul Clough came at supper-time last night. She brought my last chapter typed and I gave her a cheque for Sixty Dollars. Mary Devoe is now washing up. She is very very sweet and does her most utmost to soothe the feelings of her man on one hand, Phyllis on the other & myself on the other. It rained a great deal a great deal and did not go further for my walk than nearly to Mr

Masters' stone. For the Devoes were fetched by Arthur and we had to have tea early for the T.T. to go again to Hudson.

Went on writing at my corrections. Devoe is not at all a bad chap for a Frenchman.

Saturday, 26 May 1934

[added at top] Hugged & embraced old Arthur at one o'clock am on Sunday morning.

The T.T. came down so quick today. I got up at 7.30 & she followed at 8 o'clock. Then I had to write early this morning a line to Mrs Crawford from Decatur Georgia and to tell her to come at 5 o'clock to Marian's Apartment. This was the T.T.'s clever solution. I had tea for her when she came down. I wrote to her mother a line & mailed it. Took the very Old towards the Grotto. Had a happy breakfast – we like both Mr & Mary very much – Then the T.T. set off to one thing after another that in these rushed days my memory forgets as soon as they occur. Albert stopped and took the trunks getting his truck right against the steps but where he went I have not the least idea. I think he went home & then went up to the Steitz* where the T.T. had already taken the Devoes. Devoe has given me the Gospel in Tibetan and has offered to give me Rodmor [sic]. We like him very much.

Carl* took Mary after their meal with Hattie to Philmont while the T.T. went off with Albert and Dora. Carl and Hattie & Albert and Dora were all together here in this room. It was like a Play. Exit – Entrance – entrance, exit! Then Mr & Mrs Watson* came and then Miss Wambaugh* came, with the Laundry? no! I mean the dressmaker's work – in fact a beautiful Chinese silk evening-dress. And then I took the Old to the Grotto and then we all dressed up & Arthur came for us. The T.T. had been to Hudson & did so like the Pier & the old musty desks in the old Dock & the Steamer for Albany coming in with a lovely balcony cafe! & the Captain & sailors & the flag & the bells. She did so wish that she had gone down the Hudson. But o deary I! the expense. Mr Betz' charge was \$50 — & it was \$16 to get the crated things to New York on the steamer. We went to Arthur's. We had a nice evening till one o'clock. Took the Old today to the top of Phudd & prayed to one dead Indian on behalf of the Devoes.

The Lilies of the Valley are out. The garden Columbines are out. The Swallow-Tails have come. The wild geraniums are out. The choke-cherry is out. Found a new oak-gall or oak-apple in the wood.

Sunday, 27 May 1934 *Trinity Sunday*

[added] "Twink" the cat went out but was found. Took the Old to Prometheus Stone.

Up at 6.30 Took some tea to the T.T. ENEMA.. Catharine Curtis* came. Took the Garbage & took the papers & met the TT. in the Manger. Daddy Scutt* appeared suddenly & talked to us while we had breakfast. We liked him so well. The T.T. kissed the old chap. Caught a little Snake by the middle but let it go! Kissed the Primroses (real ones) where the old Privy used to be. Visited the old Stone of Phudd & tapped head on behalf of Lulu & on behalf of the T.T. & on behalf of the Devoes. Saw the

White Horses & the 4 Cows. Took off my hat to the Willow-Tree & to the tree with One Breast which I have been secretly in the habit of kissing. I must today visit my Stone daughter "Perdita" & my stone son "Tony" —

The Triliums are over. The Maiden-Hair ferns are in perfection. The Sham Solomon Seals are out. Hattie came with Carl very gloomy & sad. I kissed her hand & bundled her into their car but I would not let her say goodbye to the T.T. who was at the end of her tether — Indeed she has been at the end of her tether for a long time. I took Devoe to see where that bed of Spearmint is in the field by the river where the cows are fond of grazing on the way to that apple-tree in the water that the river has killed. Then he went back & I went on to my stone son Tony then on to my stone daughter Perdita and then on to Grotto & over Bridge and by Newt Pond and up to High Wood and I went through High Wood & saw the Bracken out there; but I was thinking so hard that I actually passed the Lover-Trees without noticing them. Old Mr Freehan* came to say goodbye with the stick he calls his horse — cut from the hedge — he said if he used his father's they wd. say he was getting "toney". He told me of visiting New York 50 years ago when they were building Brooklyn Bridge & the Battery was called Castle Square. Then all the evening while the T.T. went to the Kricks De Devoe [*sic*] helped me with my corrections copied into the Carbon.

I went to bed at one and the T.T. at two. I got up at 5.30 and the T.T. a little later. I gave Devoe my "Return of the Native".

Monday, 28 May 1934 St Augustine of England

Up at 5.30 Did the things. Prayed and tapped head on Stone of Phudd praying for the Devoes.

I went to say good bye to the Kricks and hugged and kissed Dora and Mrs Krick and shook hands long with "the Master", who said "I will not say goodbye" — Then, and then alone, did I myself feel moved; for there is something so noble so Shakespearal about Old Krick's goblinish head & way that it affected me.

Then I got the Milk. Then I took the Very Old to the Bridge by the Spinney and a bit further but kept to the road. Then we had breakfast which little Mary got so as to enable the T.T. to get ahead but I think the T.T. made the coffee which these two say they cannot do. Then Albert took us to the Train at 8.30. We put the Old into the Guard's Van and he was tied down. This van was next the smoker so I could visit the Old and the T.T. got out his dish from the rugs & I took him water. It was a Slow train. We got two porters and the T.T. put two things into the "check-room" and I held the "very old" in my arms. Then we got in & drove off and the Black did not mind it. He likes going in a taxi.

Thus we reached the Brevoort*— where the T.T. got her room tipping the bell-boy so highly that he treated her with the utmost respect. Then we took the Old to the Dog Home on Lafayette Street. Found Mrs Adams aged 85 — a Perfect Lady. The Black was terribly agitated in Washington Square as we walked there. I had to carry him. But in the "Ellin Speyer Home" he was all right. Then we lunched at Childs on

Broadway & went to Schultes & got \$25 tho' we lost the other one he sent. Then to the Bank. Then I went down to the Battery & went to Staten Island & Arnold* met me.

I cannot recall what the T.T. and I did between going to the Bank and my going down to the Battery. But Arnold met me in Tennis-clothes at St George.

Tuesday, 29 May 1934

Had such a lovely time with Arnold & Hattie last night. Talked with Arnold about all our old days. He said I ought to insert two passages in my Book – one about our Metempsychosis Stunt in Philadelphia — & the other about spilling out of Mrs Levy's clothes-Basket on Greenwich Ave copies of War & Culture wh. I wrote in the Central Library. Arnold looked so nice in his white tennis costume. He laughed & jested & smoked a Cigar quite in the old style. He suggested that in a few years I should come over as a visitor and give under him a short lecture-tour of ten lectures. I am not sure!

I did so greatly enjoy Staten Island & the sound & sights from my bedroom. The moonlight on the houses the lonely lights in a few windows, the trees & the roofs and in the morning I listened to the echoing footsteps in this old place with cobble-stones or near it & walls & old fences & old gardens & brick-work & the Sirens from the water & smoke rising up & an Ailanthus on one side & a poplar & Maple on the other & a Catholic bell-tower sounded the angelus. As I crossed the Ferry near St George I heard the Bell-Buoy sound that—with a Cow-Bell – is my favourite sound of all! I like Staten Island very much. When Arnold saw me off — The Tall buildings looked very lovely grey on grey over the misty sea – two war-ships were coming in. And there was a four-masted schooner. It was warm & misty.

I went to the Custom House & was recognised and greeted there by the old man at the counter of Room 311— I think it is! He said it stayed open till 4.30 & I hoped to bring the T.T. there later. Then I went to the Red Star & found that we had put wrong German labels on our two trunks. This agitated me. I went to Dodd & Mead to meet young Lane* & left a message asking him to tea at the Lace Shop on Thursday. Then I took a taxi to the Dock. Here I found a nice office of the Baggage Master & saw our trunks safe there and wrote a cheque for 75 dollars & saw a Coconut. Then I went to Chelsea Hotel* & had Beer with old Masters*. Then to the Anti-Vivisection library. Met the daughter of Ingersoll* & kissed her hand. Met the T.T. there.

Wednesday, 30 May 1934

Yesterday after our lunch with the Anti-Vivisection people the T.T. & I went to the Bank but she could not go in with me because she had an appointment at 2.30 with the Dentist. I told her I hoped she could go with me to the Customs and I've agreed to meet at the Brevoort. She had visited the Black & he did Number One in the Horses' Stall. The man there turned out to be very nice. I got her Passport Visa obtained with difficulty from the British Consul – they do not want Americans now

they have less money, And I got both our tickets & left them inside the Passport. Then I went to the Brevoort & sat in the lobby feeling peaceful but rather exhausted and my left foot hurt. I read Homer about their taking Chryseis back to the Priest of Apollo. I stayed there from 3.45 to 4.35.

Then she came — She was very exhausted. She looked so worried so nervous so done. I had to beg her to go up to her room & hide away her Passport & our ship-tickets safe. I got the handsome girl at the Public Telephone-Booth there to get information from the Erie*. There was an express at 5 & a train to Tapham at 5.4. I had only just time to show the T.T. the Passport & the Tickets and to make an Assignment to meet her there at Eleven on Thursday. How exhausted her little face looked. We did stare at each other in that lobby & then we had to separate & [I] went off for she had brought down my bag for me with the precious papers taken out. I had got my drafts from the Bank for M.A..P. & Frances*. These I put in my wallet. But we shall have to go to the Bank again — O but how worn & nervous the T.T. looked. I think the Dentist is very drastic with her. She has to go to him again on Thursday at 2.30 that is why I said we would meet at eleven there. I was worried that I had not made the little Being repeat after me "eleven". I pray she will not forget!

I just caught the train for Tappan [*sic*] and walked from there but I got a lift on the way. I found Marian & Peter* playing Croquet. His hand was hurt by Twinkles. Went a simply thrilling walk with Marian. The most adventurous walk we have ever been. Starting from George's house on the Northdale Road & going over the Mountain. We lost ourselves entirely.

Thursday, 31 May 1934 *Corpus Christi*

Up at 6.30 a Summer Day a lovely Bath very long & very hot Went with Marian and Peter from Tapham [*sic*]

The walk I went yesterday with Marian was wonderful. Saw an unknown bird in that Newt Pond now dried up. Lost ourselves completely on the "Mountain", finally came out on the Boulevard. Saw the first Marguerite or Moon-Daisies. I saw the first buttercups on Sunday in the "flat lot" so I've seen both Buttercups & Daisies. There is a Wood Thrush's Nest in Marian's garden in a Plum Tree. We can see the mother-bird sitting there.

Went past Phelps Manor looked at that old Gateway with those houses on each side where the T.T. & I thought of living. Looked at the Babbit Soap [?] Factory where we thought of working. Reached the Brevoort at 9.50 and waited in the lobby till the T.T. came. Then went with her down to the Battery & into Room 130 of the Custom House. The old chap treated us well & the T.T. helped about Income-Tax but did not require one for herself he said.

Had lunch at Childs. We met that very nice & kind old bill-board bearer & he spoke so sympathetically and looked so dignified & gracious between those boards that the T.T. cried at seeing him. She was very tense over-done over wrought over-burdened over-pressed over strained. Her little face shocked me to see it as it was — so nervous

& wrought-up it was. Then we went to the Red Star office & also to the Cunard & got a letter from Hamilton*. Then we went to the Bank but she could not wait. Mr Markman never came but I got the lady “Teller” to help and I wrote a cheque for 103 dollars and got 4 five pounds American Express cheques. Then I went to see the Very Old. The colored man shut me in with him. I saw Mrs Adams but she was very preoccupied about her pet peddler’s horse going back to work. The “Old” & I talked for about ten minutes, shut up together. Then I went away. I got my grip from the hotel Oh no! I went to the Gipsy Café & found a drunken man there but I wrote to Will Durant*. Back to Marian’s. John Lane came to tea & Mrs Crawford & Mrs Bradshaw. Marian liked Lane.

I went into the Cathedral and prayed to Our Lady. The T.T. came. We had Champagne. . Saw her off on the Bus.

Friday, 1 June 1934

Up at 7. ENEMA. A very good & very hot Bath

Marian wearing her onyx necklace got breakfast & was interested in the President* having let a little unknown boy called Nichols review the fleet with him at the request of his son James. Marian let Peter stay asleep in the Lace Shop till Elsa* – looking very pretty indeed in a white dress & coral necklace came in.

I pray the T.T. is all right this morn for she had caught an awful hoarseness in her throat for wh. Marian made her inhale Friar’s Balsam wh. she submissively did. Then while Peter surreptitiously [*sic*] snatched drinks of champaign [*sic*] Marian told our fortune by cards ... “what you do expect – what you don’t expect” three kisses, three tears ... your Wish, your Luck! Both our Fortunes were very mixed. This morning the T.T. has to go to the Bank to get her traveller’s cheques & some money for our tips etc. all expenses. O I pray she won’t be absolutely speechless with this cold — I pray there’ll be no difficulty from this cold of her crossing the gangway.

I tipped the colored man at the Dog Home a Dollar. Yesterday the temperature was 80 degrees & today it is very hot again. Met the T.T. at the Brevoort – Marian & Peter went with me to the 5th Ave Bus Peter carrying my heavy square grip tho’ one of his arms was hors de combat & ought to have been in a sling. Had lunch with the T.T. outside the Brevoort on little tables like Paris. Then we went to the Grand Central & drove with our luggage to the Docks. Then we drove from the Docks to the Brevoort where we left the T.T. & I went on to the Speyer home where I wrote a cheque for fifteen dollars & got the “Very Old”. Then drove all in the same taxi to the Brevoort where the T.T. got in; but not before we had great agitation over the laundry, which was late in coming.π

Then we drove the Old & the T.T. & “all her possessions” — *και πάντα κτήματα* [*kai panta ktēmata*] as it says of Helen, to the Dock but by this time it was nearly 4 o’clock and all visitors had to leave at 4.30. On the dock by the gangway I found that I had not got a ticket for the Black – so this was made out by the man there. But no one asked to see my Custom’s Certificate of Income Tax. I kept getting all my papers

mixed up & I carried the "Very Old" while the T.T. carried the MSS of my Autobiography and also my heavy overcoat, the old one. Thus we crossed the gangway.

There on the deck we found Arnold & Hattie & Marian and Peter. Arnold arranged all. It was like old days to me. Then Reginald* came and said Dreiser was in my berth – so I went & found him & introduced him to Reginald.

Notes

20th May

chapter XII: the end of *Autobiography*.

Mr Shaver: Furniture-maker and helper in the garden (he had 'uncovered' it on April 9th). They visited him and his family in Philmont.

21st May

Albert Krick: young nephew of the Kricks living opposite, and their chief helper. During their time at Phudd he married Dora. JCP saw them as two beautiful children.

Adelaide's trunk: a box containing relics of PP's young life.

Dreiser: Theodore Dreiser (1871–1945): the veteran novelist, a long-term friend. He and his wife Mabel had stayed at Phudd from 12th to 14th May. He saw them off on the boat. He later visited Corwen.

Mabel: Mabel Hattersley, a former girlfriend who blackmailed JCP, now an old friend.

Siberell: Lloyd Emerson Siberell (1905–68), Powys enthusiast and bibliographer, a long-term correspondent with JCP and Llewelyn.

Arthur Ficke: (1893–1945) poet and lawyer, with whose help JCP bought (and sold) the Phudd house. Gladys (Browne) his wife (d.1973), was a painter; she did a portrait of JCP and wrote a novel (unpublished) based on him and Phyllis (see *Journal* xiii). Their big house Hardhack was on a hill near Phudd. Their stone tomb is in the woods beside it. JCP had stayed with them in New Mexico in 1927.

Mrs Paul Curtis: a neighbour. **Mrs Powell:** helped with cleaning.

Boissevain and Edna: Edna Millay the poet (1892–1950) and Eugene Boissevain her Dutch husband, had an estate at Steepletop in the next county. Edna was an old friend of Llewelyn, who with Alyse had stayed with them at Steepletop in 1930–31.

22nd May

all the same for that: JCP's favourite quotation from Homer's *Iliad*.

Greek – see text.

23rd May

Mr Blin, Mrs Bradley: from Hudson (no clue).

Schultz's bookshop: in New York. They replaced the lost cheque in New York before they left (see 28/5/34).

Dora: Albert's wife.

Aunt Dora: (Theodora Johnson), an unmarried sister of JCP's mother. She lived in the cathedral close at Norwich, a favourite aunt on the Powys children's visits to Norfolk, especially supportive of Marian who lived with her and went to school in Norwich.

24th May

Alan Devoe: (1909–55): the naturalist and essayist who had bought the Phudd house. With his wife Mary, he had first visited Phudd on 12th–14th March. (See next piece)

M.A.P: JCP's wife Margaret, who had for years lived with their clergyman son Littleton Alfred.

Mees and Sintram: the white cats they had 'put down' on May 10th.

25th May

Hattie: Mrs Steitz – Mrs Krick was also called Hattie but not addressed as this.

26th May

Steitz: the family up the road where Phyllis went for lunch and friends stayed.

Carl Steitz: a would-be writer, later killed himself (see NL 65)

Watson: the local Methodist minister and his wife, originally from England. JCP had given a farewell talk in their church.

Warnbaugh: a local family where Phyllis had dresses made.

27th May

Curtis, Catharine: from the neighbouring farm.

Scutt, "Daddy": handyman and helper (see photo in *Petrushka*); many references to him in the Diaries.

Old Mr Freehan: from a neighbouring family.

28th May

Brevoort: the famous hotel (on 5th Ave and 8th St) where they always stayed. Built 1845 by a family of Dutch settlers, demolished 1954, replaced by an apartment block that has kept the name.

Arnold: Arnold Shaw (1884–1937) JCP's former manager, met on the first boat he took to America, now fallen on hard times. His second wife was another Hattie. JCP had stayed with them on Staten Island in April. See NL 51, and *The Ideal Ringmaster* by Paul Roberts. He came to see them off – see 1/6/34.

29th May

Lane: the English publisher Allen Lane (later Sir Allen, 1902–70): director of the publishers John Lane (The Bodley Head) and launcher of Penguin books in 1936. (See page 49)

Chelsea Hotel: on 20th Street NY, a residential hotel where many writers stayed (recently closed, 2012)

Masters: Edgar Lee Masters (1868–1950): author of *Spoon River*, long promoted by JCP in his lectures. He visited Phudd and had spent holidays nearby. One of the Chelsea Hotel's famous residents.

Ingersoll: Robert Green Ingersoll, the anti-vivisection activist.

30th May

Erie: the rail line to New Jersey with connection to Tappan (for Palisades).

Frances: Frances Gregg (1885–1941), beloved of JCP who met her in 1912; she married Louis Wilkinson and, divorced, supported herself with two children and her mother. JCP sent her money when he could. (See their *Letters* and her autobiographical *The Mystic Leeway*, published in 1995.)

Marian and Peter: JCP's sister Marian Powys Grey (1882–1972) and her son Peter (1922–92). She lived in Palisades, across the Hudson, and in a flat by her lace shop, in 1934 at 56th St and Madison Avenue.

31st May

Hamilton: JCP's cousin, Hamilton Cowper Johnson (1878–1961) an Anglo-Catholic Cowley Father, living in Boston. He had stayed several times at Phudd.

Will Durant: popular writer on culture and self-education, also published by Simon & Schuster. (See NLs 61, 62).

1st June

President: Roosevelt, elected 1933.

Elsa: Marian's assistant.

Reginald: (or Rex) Hunt(er) lived in Patchin Place, formerly married to Gamel Woolsey. He visited Phudd and played the flute. A recent article by him had been in *The Outrider – a Journal for the Civilized Minority*, a short-lived venture by Lloyd Siberell (1/5/34).

KK

JCP & Alan Devoe

One day in 1933 when JCP was in the middle of writing *Autobiography* he told his friend and neighbour, the poet Arthur Davison Ficke, that he wanted to return to England but his financial position was precarious and he needed to sell his house Phudd Bottom. Ficke immediately contacted his friend, the naturalist, Alan Devoe and encouraged him to consider purchasing the house. On 15th February 1934 JCP received a letter from Devoe making an offer to buy the house and surrounding land for \$3000. JCP gladly accepted the offer and invited Devoe and his wife Mary to come and see them at Phudd. They arrived for a short visit on 12th March 1934. The sale of Phudd enabled JCP to return with Phyllis to England in June 1934.

On Good Friday, 30th March 1934, JCP wrote in his diary that 'an essay on the Old Man' had arrived in the post. Devoe must have sent him a holograph manuscript or typewritten copy as the article about JCP did not appear in print until the following year when it was published in *The Chatham & New York Courier* on 14th February 1935. The article was accompanied by a photograph of JCP taken by Devoe. The photograph must also be the same as the one referred to by JCP in his diary entry for 20th March 1934: 'After tea we read a nice letter ... from Devoe with a photo of Old Man Phudd in the Empire style - like Talleyrand. The best photo — in my opinion — that I have ever had!' A detail of this photograph was reproduced in *Newsletter* 48 (April 2003). Devoe took a number of other photographs of JCP. One of these showing the interior of JCP's house, his horsehair couch and bookcase, was published in *The Powys Journal* VI (2006, page 35). This issue of the *Journal* also reproduced the full length photo of JCP 'like Talleyrand' (page 67). Devoe gave his photographs of JCP to Elise Fullerton, an enthusiast of JCP, who later presented them to Lloyd Emerson Siberell. They are now included in the Siberell papers at Ohio State University. Siberell also provided news of Devoe's activities at Phudd in the 1940s in his privately printed periodical *Imprimatur*.

Recently I discovered the article by Alan Devoe in an on-line archive of historic American newspapers. However, this was not the first time *The Courier* had shown interest in JCP. On 4th December 1930 it had published an article by a local journalist, Ella Watson Bashford, who seems to have visited JCP in early October 1930 although JCP does not mention this in any of his diaries or letters. Under the headlines 'John Cowper Powys Finds Harlemlville Home Similar To Birthplace In England', 'Noted English Author Lauds Beauty of Columbia Countryside ...' the journalist refers to JCP as 'this gracious gentleman from England', writes about his 'retirement' to Columbia County and remarks on his recent 'intestinal operations', his past career as a lecturer and writer, his 'socialistic tendencies' and his latest work 'a romance of Somerset with philosophic scope'. Tantalisingly she also mentions JCP's plans to write 'a romance based in Columbia County'.

Ella Watson Bashford's respectful tone is matched by Alan Devoe's much more laudatory approach. Clearly he was profoundly impressed by JCP. Devoe was

fascinated by his subject. In the article he describes with hyperbolic excitement, in a state of awe and wonder, the details of JCP's daily routine, his regular walks, his eating habits, his odd personal patterns of behaviour and his physical appearance as well as his method of writing and the way he managed his correspondence. Much of this is, of course, now well known to us. But Devoe also gives us an insight into JCP's creative use of the things he encountered on his walks such as the example of the so-called 'witchit' bird which was transformed into the name for Mr Witchit, the fishmonger, in *Weymouth Sands* and which Devoe told JCP was in fact a Maryland Yellowhammer.

JCP and Alan Devoe seemed to get on very well together at Phudd. They shared similar literary and artistic tastes as well as a passion for the natural world, and a dislike of urban existence and modern mechanisation. This aspect of JCP can be discerned in Devoe's books about the natural history of Phudd written some years later. Devoe accompanied JCP on his walks. This enabled him to observe JCP's mannerisms at close hand as well as exchange ideas and opinions with him. JCP commented on his meeting with Devoe in his diary: '*Alan is a formidable competent erudite upper-class fellow with an extraordinary knowledge of birds — a really great knowledge of birds....he is an extraordinary mixture of born naturalist and writer. ... We like him very much.*' We also learn from the diaries that JCP included Devoe in his regular acts of propitiation: '*...I prayed that the Devoes should be happy in Columbia County ...I prayed to one dead Indian on behalf of the Devoes.*' The reference to the dead Indian is interesting for this reminds us that close to Phudd was an old Indian cemetery. Helen Dreiser recalled how JCP used to visit the stones in the Indian graveyard and contemplate '*the existence of the departed chieftains [and] suddenly burst into poetry which, as he stood with arms extended in exaltation, he seemed to hurl into space.*' It was just this magical identification with the living ancient past and link between nature and selfhood which Devoe valued above anything else about JCP's character and his works.

Alan Devoe (1909–55) was a well known and eminent American naturalist, ornithologist and writer. He was born in Montclair, New Jersey and educated at Columbia University, New York. He began his career writing nature notes and a nature column for *The Montclair Times* and *The Brooklyn Eagle*. He also regularly contributed to *Audubon* magazine, *Atlantic Monthly*, and the *American Mercury*. He was a staff writer for *Readers Digest* and edited *The Writer* for several years. His books include *Phudd Hill* (1937) which includes a testimonial by JCP, '*I am thrilled by it; it is beautifully and delicately done*', *Down to Earth* (1940), *Lives Around Us* (1942), *This Fascinating Animal World* (1951), and *Our Animal Neighbours* (1953). He was honoured after his death by residents of Columbia County who named their local bird club after him. He occupied JCP's old home Phudd Bottom for many years but later moved to another house on Hickory Hill Road in Harlemville where he remained until his death. The sympathetic descriptions of the lives of the animals, birds and plants which he recorded in his books are based on the observations he made on the

THE COURIER [Chatham, NY]

Thurs., Feb. 14, 1935

Proximity To Nature Gives Strength To John Cowper Powys' Work

**Rocks, Wind, and Trees Find Way Into Titles and Texts, Giving Them
Prodigious Scope and Deep Perception.**

**Literary Critic Says Powys Tenant of Greater Cosmos But Helpless
Before Prosaic Things; Believer in Routine.**

Bird Call Heard Near Hillsdale Home Is Character In New Book.

By Alan Devoe

The figure stretched out full-length might be the Cornish Ogre, but it is in point of fact, John Cowper Powys. Lying there with his great grizzled head cupped on his palm and one massively booted leg flung ganglingly over the other, he presents an appearance craggy and terrifying. Eyebrows meet in great shaggy tufts over a fiercely jutting and hawk like nose; cavernously deep-sunk eyes peer sharply and glitteringly; immensely long bony hands flail the air in accompaniment to an oracular torrent of words. It is a towering and gigantic Presence and makes one feel inevitably small and puny and ineffectual. One feels that in Powys is combined an exquisitely refined and subtle intellect with a deep-rooted earthy and unsuppressible animalism. There comes to mind at once the image of a hulking grey wolf and there is a sense of fitness when John Cowper Powys smiles and re-

veals his teeth to be huge and chipped and yellow. His hair is not human hair at all but a vast grizzled mane; the strength in his hands is preternatural for a cloistered man of letters. The furious shaking of his head, the grotesque gestures of his arms, the sloping louch of his gait are inalienably extra-human.

Sees Appearance Deception

Almost twenty years ago, in his "Confessions", Powys wrote: "I fancy sometimes that my exterior appearance gives an impression of power and formidableness that is altogether misleading." It is misleading only in so far as it produces an impression of ruthlessness, of cruelty, of lupine ferociousness. Formidable he surely is and powerful, but there is not a vestige of brutality, or even of unkindliness, in him. He is sprung straight out of the primordial earth and

he is imbued with a tolerance as spacious as the blue skies and the broad fields, a pervasive kindliness as of Spring rain. (This is no strained metaphor; it is not possible to speak of Powys or to attempt depiction of his unique being, except in terms of the elemental phenomena of earth by which his life is ruled). The companions of John Cowper Powys and the ingredients of which his life and philosophy are made are sea and air and mountain peaks and singing birds and the heat of the sun and starlight and flower petals.

Powys True to Powys

Powys' literary attainments are diverse. He has written books of poems and written bookish essays. He has given equal attention to novels (such gargantuan novels as "Wolf Solent" and "A Glastonbury Romance") and to philosophical treatises (such as "A Philosophy of Solitude" and "In Defence of Sensuality") He has been by turns a Woman's Club lecturer, a Greenwich Villager, a rustic hermit. And not once in this progression – and surely this is unique distinction for a writer -- has he swerved even momentarily or microscopically from his chosen creed, not once has he altered his personality, his viewpoint or his prose to suit convenience or to suit the public. That, in itself, is striking evidence of the formidable power of his personality, a personality which has needed to make no compromise with an urban and therefore alien culture. The integrity of John Cowper Powys is monumental and the strength necessary to maintain that integrity is little less than phenomenal. "The life illusion", he has said, "is independent of human valuation" and he has gone on to reveal that "in

his own secret consciousness he is a lonely fighter among the planetary silences preoccupied with the effort of retaining a rigid self control as far as human irritations are concerned and a porous receptivity as far as the larger aspects of the cosmos are concerned." These words, which might sound emptily grandiose, coming from someone else, are neatly and unexaggeratedly fitting for John Cowper Powys.

Tenants the Greater Cosmos

For it is among the larger aspects of the cosmos that Powys lives. "The self fixes its attention upon a patch of barren earth, let us say, or upon an empty flower pot or a broken flagstone, or a stretch of sand or a door-threshold or a dead tree stump or even a little fragment of sky and by flinging forth its spirit into this thing, while it creates for itself and for it a circumference of isolation the gates that enclose the mystery of matter roll back and deep calls unto deep....it is a vast solace to think of the huge rondure of the terraqueous earth beneath our skeleton feet, how it is forever carrying us forward with its luminous and its darkened atmosphere, like a great dim, soft projectile through interstellar space." In that rural hermitude to which Powys has contrived to withdraw, he is free of the "sticky gregariousness of crowds", untouched by the "brutal clamour of crowd consciousness." Mile after mile after mile he strides, like a more furious Wordsworth, across broad grass meadows, down earthy country lanes, through thickets, woods, swamps, spinneys -- working his magic evocation of the deep calm inviolable spirit that broods in the primordial

earth. Gigantic, stooped, grizzled and with a great oak cudgel in his hand he has the look – as he stands in contemplation among the hemlocks or intones a propitiation to his forest-gods — of an ancient Druidic priest.

Woos Earth as Panacea

“In Defence of Sensuality” was dedicated to “that great and much abused man, Jean Jacques Rousseau.” An immense bust of Rousseau broods timelessly in a niche in Powys’ study. Here on these shelves are Wordsworth and Thomas Hardy, Epictetus and Lao Tzu – shelf upon shelf of these adepts in psychic sensuous contemplation whose imaginations have been occupied “with the non-human processes of dawn and moon and twilight and the passing clouds across the sky, of birds across mountain valleys, and of all the turbulences and taciturnacies of winds and waters.” Here in the spacious silence of a lonely countryside and in the company of two cats and a cocker spaniel, John Cowper Powys evokes the Earth Spirit which is his remedy for all ills, all woes, all unhappiness. Beneath the lilac bush outside his door he scatters crumbs for the birds – the nuthatches, chickadees and woodpeckers that he delights to call by name – and in the heat of the summer he visits the drying beds of small brooks and rescues the speckled trout, to carry them to deeper pools.

Lover of the Inanimate

The passionate affection with which Powys cherishes the non human and the inanimate in nature is Wordsworthian without the sentimentality of Wordsworth. As he tramps over the

snowy hills in winter he skirts with scrupulous care the small patches of green moss not because he feels sentimentally that to tread upon the little shoots and fronds would be to inflict pain, but because it would be to mar the living, growing, breathing perfection of the earth-world which is so infinitely dear to him. He reveals in the silent, austere loneliness of his un-peopled countryside extracting peace and strength from such subtle phenomena as “the gulfs of empty air surrounding a promontory of bare rock.” In the vision of his profound pantheism there are communing souls in every stark twisted trunk of every dead tree in every glittering, iridescent snowflake, in the cool immemorial stones of ancient pasture boundaries.

The influence of the stark and towering phenomena of nature is profoundly evident in Powys’s speech, personality and literary style. It has given his writing a craggy crushing strength, a kind of tumultuous violence which has led William McFee to observe that the reader is “bogged in queer quicksands of tumbling sentences and bruised by granite boulders of paragraphs.” There is no finicking, no fussing, no small inconsequential meanderings in Powys’s work. He has an invincible penchant for literary images of hugeness, of sharpness, of weight, of space and colour and smell and this springs directly from his perpetual earth metaphor. The characters in his novels take on a curious rugged non-human aspect for being always interpreted in terms of the phenomena of primordial earth. His people are not introverts, or cowards, or bullies, or weaklings, or neurotics; they are rocks, or hawks, or tall pines, or

particles of sea sand or heaps of ants. It is in this connection that there is infused into all his work the deep and baffling mysticism that has led more than one critic entirely astray. John Cowper Powys, either as a man, or as a literary person is incomprehensible except in terms of an earth sprung viewpoint of almost Neolithic simplicity.

"I Am My Work"

Ordinarily a literary craftsman's work may be valued with justice without any knowledge at all of his personal life. This is not true, however, in the case of Powys, for there is that binding a link between the man and his work. It is not possible to perceive the Sylvanus Cobbold of "Weymouth Sands" with any kind of impressive entirety without some kind of knowledge of the John Cohn Cowper Powys from whom he is directly sprung. Even so intimate a detail of Powys' personal life as his daily diet has its place in an understanding of his philosophic outlook and his literary work. John Cowper Powys, because of a long standing internal disorder, lives entirely upon a diet of eggs and milk. As most birds and animals reduce their intake to a few minimum staples so has Powys pared his diet to the ultimate simplicity. No salt, no pepper mitigate the endless routine of eggs and milk. It is a tenet of Powys' creed that in order to fit in to the ordered scheme of nature it is essential to simplify one's life to the greatest degree possible and to adhere to a routine as rigid as that of the whirling planets, as that of the trees and plants which bud in Spring, blossom in Summer and wither away in the Fall. The continuation and simplicity of Powys' life in combination

with its eternally contemplative trend, make him indeed a very monk. At six he rises and performs his chores – simple and elemental chores connected with the disposal of rubbish and the tending of stoves. These tasks completed he walks – across fields and through woods, over hills and down valleys, preparing himself by an intense earth reverie, for what the day may hold. On this early morning walk he carries a heavy twisted stick, for which he has an almost venerative affection, because it is made of magic witch-hazel and was given to him by a gypsy.

Routine Never Monotony

At nine or so he returns and breakfasts; or at least begins the consumption of his daily three quarts of milk. He then writes until tea time – writes with furious concentration, his pen rushing over the paper as though in possession of a demon. Then another long and contemplative walk. To bed at the latest by ten. It is significant that although his mail arrives by ten o'clock in the morning it is propped unopened on his table until precisely seven o'clock in the evening. It is then read, and, if necessary, answered, his replies being composed with the same demoniac speed as his manuscripts. That is the daily life of the man who has written: "Men and women who do not insist on routine in their lives are sick or mad. Without routine all is lost. Just as without some kind of rhythm all is lost in poetry. For routine is man's art of copying the art of Nature. Routine is the rhythm of the universe. By routine the harvests are reaped; by routine the tides rise and ebb; by routine the Constellations march in their sublime order across the sky. The

feel of routine is the feel of the mystery of creation. In the uttermost abysses of life it holds sway. Beautiful and tragic is its systole and diastole. Without routine there can be no happiness, for there can be no endurance, no expectation, no security, no peace, no old or new, no past or future, no memory and no hope."

The Far Perspective

Mention has already been made of the curiously mystic way in which John Cowper Powys delineates the characters of his novels in terms of the non human and the elemental, in terms of rocks and grasses and waters and flower scents and trees. This deep rooted tendency is strikingly evidenced in his verbs, adjectives and nomenclature. His fondness for onomatopoeitic amounts at times almost to an idiosyncrasy, an eccentricity. Sibilants like "hiss", and "rush" and "seethe" produce a cumulative effective of terrestrial rapidity which may very nearly bowl over a fragile reader while even in his philosophical treatises the constant use of such thunderous phrases as "terraqueous rondure" and "warm breathing elementalism" create at times an illusion of towering vastness that overwhelms the reader unaccustomed to them. There is, however, no affectation in this singular vocabulary. It is drawn, quite simply, and directly, from that elemental sphere in which John Cowper Powys lives; his imagery is in his own terms. It is for this reason that some adverse critics have said – as Aldous Huxley said of Joseph Conrad – that he writes of men and women, their opinions and their actions, as if he himself belonged to another planet. It may be said, without any

desire for sensationalism, that John Cowper Powys *does* belong to another planet. He belongs to their earth, to its bare surface, to its brooks and its grass and its rocks and its trees where most human beings belong to offices or libraries or studios or other man-contrived places. That is, in fact, what makes Powys' descriptions and opinions of men and women so phenomenally and uniquely interesting.

Strength in Titles

Even the title of Powys' books and the names which he bestows upon his fictional characters are in large part drawn straight from the immemorial earth and its non human populace.. He has called a volume of poems "Wolf's Bane", and another "Mandragora". Yet another title is "Wood and Stone" and a fourth – for a small volume of poetry – is "Sapphire". Not long ago as we walked across a snow covered field Powys told me of a certain bird song which he had heard frequently and which held a great fascination for him. The bird, he said, seemed to be calling "Witchit! Witchit! Witchit!" He could not get this curious song out of his consciousness. The reader of Powys' new novel "Weymouth Sands" may now discover what use he has made of that odd warbling of the Maryland yellow throat. It appears as the name of that unlovely Weymouth character, Mr Witchit; the fishmonger. The emotion of self pity, John Cowper Powys likens in his "Philosophy of Solitude" to that flower called the smooth – false – fox glove, a simile directly traceable to the profuse quantities of that plant which grow on the wooded hill behind his cottage. All emo-

tion, all personal characteristics, all human behaviour, are inevitably translated by this lonely philosopher into terms of the flowers and birds and rocks and trees which people his contemplative world.

Helpless Before the Prosaic

John Cowper Powys is formidably erudite, but the imposing mass of his lore is not more astounding than the extent of his abysmal ignorances. He has crowded into that great grizzled skull such a monumental store of the skilled intuitions, the subtle philosophic perceptions, the keen awareness necessary to live in and appreciate his earth sphere that there is, it would seem, no room for all the myriad of fussy, practical, utilitarian odds and ends harboured by other minds. This vast and shrewd intellect which can wrest the ultimate uttermost significance from a mossy rock, or a bee's wing, or a puff of evanescent wood smoke, is helpless to cope with an income tax blank. Those extraordinary bony, feral hands which laid for an instant upon a cool tree trunk can extract from the momentary contact a whole structure of philosophical and mystic thought, are utterly inadequate in the tying of a shoelace, the snapping of a door lock, the employment of a type writer or any other ordinary and everyday human application. This heightens greatly the earth-born, the primordial aura that clings inseparably to John Cowper Powys. Never was man so profoundly skilled in the incantations to his particular gods, and never was man more helpless when made forcibly to move on the customary human place. So close is his affinity to primitive earth, so strong and subtle and almost preternatural his com-

radeship with beach pebbles, and clouds and swamp grass and every other voiceless thing, that he moves as a uniquely privileged dweller within a shadowy realm of which most men see only the outer rim but is, inevitably, himself, as lost and helpless and misfitted in the much peopled and clattering world of everyday.

Vision of Nature

It is this habitual walking in a realm outside the pale of customary human experience – this uncanny familiarity with the innermost, intimate secrets of flowering sap and purling water and opening leaf buds – that gives to John Cowper Powys the brooding mystic vision which permeates alike his novels and his philosophy and his personal being. It is what causes him, on a hilly eminence, in the midst of broad fields, to drop... [*the next line has not been captured by the digital transfer of the original document*] ... head to the cool rock or wet furrowed earth, remain for long minutes silent and motionless in a profound absorption of earth emanations which most men are not trained subtly enough to receive. John Cowper Powys calls the trees by name – not by the names known to botany, but by curious titles which are in part his own fanciful invention and in part derived from ancient earthy, and long forgotten mythology. He calls in a high sing-song to the birds, and to the small spaniel trotting at his heels he chants a little rime of complete understanding. He abandons himself to “a rapture old as the world, a rapture antedating by aeons of time the sensations of birds and beasts, a rapture reverting to what the aboriginal planetary vegetation

felt, to what the primordial rocks felt, to what the ancestral ocean ooze and the maternal forest rubble felt when the yellow rays slid slantingly through the wet mists upon them!"

Powys the Magician

So far has Powys withdrawn from the quick cluttered world of human gregariousness, and so deeply has he isolated himself in the cool remote spaciousness of his dim inanimate world, that he occupies a unique place as a contemplative philosopher. It is difficult to say whether he

is greatest as a novelist, a prophet, a poet or a mystic. To me he is greatest as none of these. As he moves with all his exquisite sensibilities, delicately and interpretively alert through his dim lit world of primordial sensations and as he captures the beauty of sunlight on water and discerns and transcribes the deep profoundly moving import of the dead leaf spiralling to earth from the withered twig I see John Cowper Powys as a supremely great Magician.

(transcribed by Chris Thomas)

Reminiscences of John Cowper Powys

by Albert S. Krick

The transcription from which these are extracts was made by Chris Thomas from an audio cassette tape, recorded by Mr Krick on 17th January 1980, originally commissioned by Eddie Jenkins who was an admirer of JCP's non fiction works, a professional drummer and a magazine editor for the Navy Department in USA. Eddie Jenkins corresponded with Albert Krick about JCP; he had been especially impressed by JCP's The Art of Happiness which he said helped him through difficulties in life. Mr Krick died on 23rd April 1983. Eddie Jenkins died at the age of 94 in 2012. With thanks to Nicholas Birns for extra information.

Mr Powys and Phyllis came there in the little cottage in the north east corner of Phudd mountain located down at the foot of the mountain, on a dirt road about a thousand feet off County Route 21 which led from the end of 217 in Harlemlville to State Route 22 in north Hillsdale. They moved there with a dog called the Black who accompanied Mr Powys on many of his walks. They thought a great deal of him - as a dog he was so scared, not vicious, nobody could get near him scared to death.

Mr Powys was a most remarkable man as his writings show. We were very close friends. He had a serious ulcer condition which forced him, practically all the time, to lie on his back, knees pulled up made a little desk, a lapboard for his writing. He had a great power of concentration. If I was down there doing work for him, and I used to do quite a bit of work for him, or visiting with Phyllis, he didn't even know we were there. Anybody could knock at the door and I don't know if he would hear that.

He loved to walk and every morning he took a long walk. He had favourite places around the hills directly at the back of him - a few thousand feet up the mountain were heaps of pieces of stones - the size of dinner plates - quite big heaps of them - 25 feet across maybe, 5 or 6 feet high. He liked to think they were Indian mounds and well they might be because I don't know who the dickens would ever have gone up there - it wasn't tillable land up on the mountain - it was all rocky and ledges. That was one of his favourite places.

After sitting there a while in the morning he would walk up the road to our house and mail his mail - his mailbox was right beside ours at the intersection with the road that we were on - we were just about 500 feet up the road from his house. On the intersection of that road and the crossroad going from the backroad going from County Route 21 was where the mailman came. Never did he put a letter in the mailbox that he didn't put his head on the box. I presumed that he was sending a prayer with a message to whomever he was sending the letter to.

He then would turn and go to the cemetery which was just across the road from the mailboxes and there is a little German cemetery there. My great grandfather and an aunt are buried there. He would put his head on the gatepost and I presume offer a prayer for the souls of those who were interred there. He would slowly walk up the road going east facing the sun until he came to what he called the river. It was a stream. The farmers around there call it a "crick". I suppose, to be really pure, this should have been a "creek". He crossed the bridge and then there was a little spinney he called it. It was a wooded area not very large - maybe 300-400 feet on the ends and 500 feet across the back. He would go in there - I don't know what he did in there. I presume he just soliloquised. It was a nice quiet place with birds. He would cross the river as he called it. He would walk down the back side of the river. The river bordered back of our farm and his place. He would walk down the back side until he came to where he passed our place where he lived. He made many stops along the brook and would look the stream over.

John Cowper Powys was a kind hearted man. He would not hurt anybody or anything. My aunt and foster mother had a nice white mother cat which had white kittens. We gave the Powyses one of the kittens. They raised it. They thought the world of it. But it fell to some illn ess and died. Mr Powys, in quite a state of distraught feelings, came up and wanted to know if I would bury the cat on their property beside a bush. Which I did and he held quite a service for it according to Shakespeare: "the evil that men do lives after them the good is often interred with their bones." So it is with whitey. He had a real ceremony for the cat.

He was a fellow who would lie and write all day. He would lie on his back and Phyllis would be up until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. She did some French translating, I'm pretty sure she did. She would not get up until 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon so he had the house pretty quiet to himself.

He seldom left the place. About once or twice – always twice a year – he would go to New York out of necessity. One thing was that Simon and Schuster the publisher would need him there for something - possibly to autograph books. He had tremendous bushy hair almost like a scarecrow. It would get so big that he would carry his hat under his hand – he wore a flat wide brimmed hat – he would carry it under his arm and a briefcase under the other arm. I would take him to the train at Philmont. He would make quite a sight on the train. He did not look like the German community people.

When he and Phyllis went away – they went rather unexpectedly – it was due I understand to a suit that was coming up – a law suit - where one of the people mentioned in the book related to someone living – well I don't know what the whole thing was about. They left in just a matter of a few weeks – there was a small barn on the place – its now gone – in there were great packs of bound up manuscripts – hand written manuscripts – of several of his books – *Weymouth Sands*, *A Glastonbury Romance* – he said to me would you be sure to burn those – get rid of them – I said oh yes sure – well I was a young fellow then – I had a lot of other things to do and I never got at it – I missed the boat because today they would be tremendously valuable.

In fact since we have lived in our new home here – we have been here 7 1/2 years – several people have been here – students mostly – one from McGill University in Canada who was writing a thesis using Mr Powys and one from Colgate and various colleges. When I tell them about these manuscripts they turn green with envy. They wish they could at least have seen them.

The complete transcript will be available to read at the Conference.

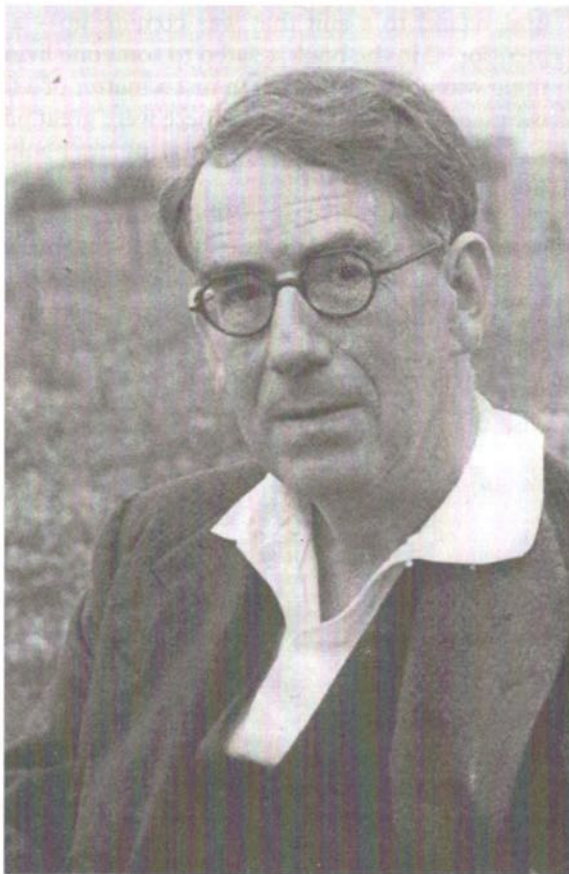


Phyllis, John Cowper Powys, and the Old ready to go, 1934.

One cannot read far in the writings of the Powyses before encountering the name of Louis Wilkinson (or Louis Marlow, his pseudonym). In addition to *Swan's Milk* (1934), which contains a good deal of information about them, and *Welsh Ambassadors* (1936), wholly devoted to the Powys family, there are several others: *The Buffoon* (1916) containing his controversial parody-portrait of JCP; a book of reminiscences, *Seven Friends* (1953), three of these friends being the main Powys writers; his editing of *The Letters of Llewelyn Powys* (1943), and his gathering together nearly all the later letters from JCP to himself, as *The Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 1935–1956*, in 1958.

His obsession with the whole family can hardly be questioned. Yet he was also a novelist in his own right, the author of from eight to ten novels, depending on how many of them are acceptable as 'fiction'. Oddly enough – doubtless because few of these novels are now readily accessible – little interest has been shown in either their literary quality or their relevance to his Powysian interests. I have recently tracked them all down, and have read them with some care. I find them unfairly neglected in themselves, and at the same time full of Powysian references and allusions which deserve to be better known.

However, the more modest aim of this initial article is to establish the basic facts concerning his life and achievements, without which any serious discussion of his work is severely hampered. These have been assembled from stray references already in print, from the appropriate volumes of *Who's Who*, and filled out with the help of family records assembled by Chris Wilkinson, Louis's grandson, to whom I am especially grateful for encouragement and help. I hope to offer more detailed consideration of his fiction at a later date.



Louis Wilkinson, c. 1945.
(Chris Wilkinson)

Before I proceed, however, it will be desirable to clarify certain issues. For the most part, Wilkinson wrote under the name of Marlow, a name deriving from Wilkinson family history. But *The Buffoon* appeared under his own name, Louis U. Wilkinson, and some of his non-fiction reminiscences also employ this surname. Both *Swan's Milk* and *Forth, Beast!* (1946) are complicated as potential sources by Louis's clever but ultimately infuriating way of archly splitting his autobiographical reminiscences between 'Dexter Foothood' and himself as narrator and commentator. The main facts of his life are reproduced accurately enough, but details are altered and the names of certain persons fictionalized. I therefore use *Welsh Ambassadors* wherever possible, as the more straightforward account. However, I shall cite *Swan's Milk* when the facts are not available elsewhere and there is no reason to doubt its basic reliability, and occasionally other versions when they seem more convenient. *Forth, Beast!* is often the sole published source for his own later life and attitudes.

Louis Umfreville Wilkinson was born at Aldeburgh on 17 December 1881. His parents were Dr (the Reverend) Walter Wilkinson (1829–1906) and Charlotte Elizabeth Emra (1842–1931), who were married in 1867. There were two older children: Christabel (1871–96), who died of tubercular consumption at Davos Platz, and Maurice (1874–1947). Maurice appears in *Swan's Milk* as Michael, Chris Wilkinson tells me, because Louis knew that Maurice wouldn't want to be identified or in any way linked in the public's eye to himself; this would have been for Maurice's own sake and for that of the school which his father founded and which Maurice carried on in later years. Dr Wilkinson had been a Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford, and was ordained, but had to resign his Fellowship when he decided to marry. He then found that his conscience forbade him from taking a parish because he had developed doubts about certain aspects of Anglican belief, including the Virgin Birth.¹ He consequently set up a school, first at Lowestoft and subsequently at Aldeburgh, where he served as headmaster, himself teaching Greek and Latin, until his death. None the less, according to Louis he continued wearing clerical dress (*Swan's*, 35).

Louis himself attended the school, at that time called Eaton House School, from 1890 to 1895. Theodore Powys was enrolled a few months after Louis, but only stayed there, as J. Lawrence Mitchell tells us, for three and a half terms.² At that time Louis was eight and Theodore fourteen. He had probably been sent there because Mrs Powys and Mrs Wilkinson had become acquainted, but Louis's claim that Mrs Powys was 'a very young girl' at that time is questionable;³ although there had been 'contact between the Johnson and the Wilkinson family for many years' – Theodore's mother was a Johnson – Mitchell considers it 'highly unlikely', given the 'disparity in their ages' of seven years. The first firm record of their meeting occurs in 1869 (Mitchell, 44), and it seems as if the two women read poetry together at about this time, and perhaps maintained a correspondence. It would therefore be natural enough, twenty years later, for Mrs Powys to remember the existence of the Wilkinson school when the future of Theodore's subsequent education became a matter of concern.

Louis went on from his father's school to Radley College in 1895, where he established notoriety by initiating a correspondence with Oscar Wilde, who told Robert Ross that this was the first letter of sympathy that he received from a stranger since his release from prison.⁴ Later, winning a scholarship to Pembroke College, Oxford, which he entered in 1900, he set out to investigate 'the claims of Christianity' (*Swan's*, 136), went through a brief period of Christian acceptance, 'received preliminary instruction in Roman Catholicism', and even went to Confession (140, 142). But he had become a non-believer by the end of 1901, and early in 1902 gained further notoriety by being expelled for 'gross and outrageous blasphemies against the Christian faith' (159). These, by his own admission, included 'mock Masses' (157).

Undeterred, and with the help of his father, he was allowed in the autumn of 1902 to enter St John's College, Cambridge (*Swan's*, 178, 182), which was probably unaware of the Oxford incident. There he met Llewelyn Powys, who arrived as a freshman a year later, and they immediately became close friends. He had already made the acquaintance of Theodore (whom, Theodore to the contrary, he had not known at all closely when they overlapped at the Wilkinson school), and had already met JCP in 1901. It was during this period that his fascination with the Powys family began. At Llewelyn's invitation he made his first visit to Montacute vicarage late in 1904, when the frequently recorded first conversation with the Powys father took place. (*Welsh*, 4) He graduated with a second-class degree in 1905, by which time he had published his first novel, *The Puppets' Dallying* (which he later disclaimed as 'very bad' [44]), based in part on his experiences at Radley.

At this point, Louis reports in *Swan's Milk* that, just before he wrote his Cambridge Finals, 'there occurred an incident which determined the future course of [his] life' (*Swan's*, 223). Invited up for the weekend by A. R. Powys, the architect brother, who was engaged on restoring a church at Grantham in Leicestershire, he renewed his acquaintance with JCP, who was just back from his first American lecture-tour and had been asked to recommend 'a young Englishman, fresh from Oxford or Cambridge', to lecture there later in the year (224). For all their differences, the two were impressed with each other, and JCP duly recommended Louis for the job. So began Louis's lecturing career in the United States as well as in Britain. He found much to criticize in North America, but much to fascinate him and stimulate him as well. At the end of the tour, however, another milestone in his life occurred when he learnt that his father had died instantaneously of heart failure early in 1906.

JCP was also considerably involved in the next major milestone. Early in 1912, he met Frances Gregg, a young American would-be writer. Her full name was Frances Josefa Gregg, and was often known as Josefa – sometimes spelt Josepha. She had approached him after a lecture and shyly presented him with one of her poems. He was impressed by the poem but also became infatuated with Frances herself. Since he was already married, JCP resorted to one of his recurrent bouts of match-making. He wrote about her in such glowing terms that Louis, about to come back to the

States at the age of thirty and beginning to think about matrimony, was half in love with her before he even arrived. Indeed, they were married in Philadelphia on 8 April 1912. (The date is sometimes given as 10 April, but Chris Wilkinson owns a copy of the marriage-certificate and confirms the earlier date.) They embarked immediately for England – with JCP, Llewelyn, Marian Powys, and Perceval Roberts, a friend of Louis from Oxford days, in tow. A bizarre beginning to any marriage, especially since there had been an agreement that it should not be consummated for a year, and JCP acted as a dutiful watchdog on the voyage. None the less, it was said to have been a happy union for several years, after which it turned sour; they were separated in 1920 and divorced in 1925.

Meanwhile, Louis had embarked on his career as a professional writer. *The Buffoon* appeared in 1916, but Powysians, who are now its main readers, tend to focus so exclusively on the JCP/Jack Welsh character that they carry away a distorted view of the novel as a whole. Welsh is, in fact, a decidedly secondary figure, despite the vividness of the way he is presented; it is the protagonist, Edward Raynes (the buffoon of the title), who is Louis's first attempt to portray what he regards as *the* representative young male of his time (1910s–1940s), and proves to be the forerunner of many others. JCP in his *Buffoon* review hit on a central preoccupation here: the carefree society of the pre-1914 world over which is cast the shadow of war symbolized by the unexpected death of Welsh right at the end of the book.⁵

Published the following year, *A Chaste Man* is a war novel that contrasts the present of 1917 (that included rationing, zeppelin-raids, and the daily newspaper-lists of those killed in the trenches) with the happier if ingenuous world which preceded it. Louis's subsequent novels assiduously explore in fiction the 'years of *l'entre deux guerres*'⁶ that Eliot captures so famously in poetry in *The Waste Land*. These consist of *Brute Gods* (1919), *Mr. Amberthwaite* (1928), *Two Made Their Bed* (1929), *Love by Accident* (also 1929), *The Lion Took Fright* (1930, but written much earlier), *Fool's Quarter Day* (1935), and *The Devil in Crystal* (1944). Together, they create an extraordinary sense of the atmosphere of the period unequalled, in my view, by the more widely read novels of Evelyn Waugh and the young Aldous Huxley. His last published book, apart from *Seven Friends*, *Sackville of Drayton*, a well-researched, traditional, yet controversial biography, appeared in 1948.

We return now to his personal life. Louis and Ann Reid (referred to in the Dexter books as Alison) first met 'in the early spring of 1921', and became lovers during the summer.⁷ He was thirty-nine, she almost twenty-two, 'just the right difference in age' (65). 'I was very much in love with her', Dexter is recorded as saying, 'in fact I had never been really in love before' (64). Their life together began soon afterwards, and continued for 'over four years' (*Swan's*, 53), during which their daughter Deirdre was born. They were married late in 1925 – in fact, as Chris Wilkinson discovered, on Louis's forty-fourth birthday. Both would have preferred a freer liaison, but they decided that Deirdre ought to be legitimated (see *Forth*, 118). Unfortunately, Ann, who had lived for most of her life in fragile health, suddenly succumbed to a

combination of 'meningitis and pneumonia' (46) in January 1932. Louis was shattered.

None the less, he had already met Diana Bryn (Dexter's 'Mariana') early in 1931, and in the summer of 1932 they met again by a theatre. By September they too had become lovers, and their relationship was at its best during the first five months (*Forth*, 50). By that time, Louis was beginning to have doubts, but Diana was persistent, and against his better judgment they were married in October, 1933 (54, 68). Born in April, 1912, on the day before Louis's first marriage (46), Diana was thirty years his junior, 'almost old enough to be my grandfather', as she says⁸ (indeed, Louis was older than her mother!). The marriage itself lasted for some eighteen months until March 1935, when Diana left him because of 'his insatiable carnal demands' (*Forth*, 72). Louis obtained a divorce on the grounds of desertion.

Louis's fourth wife was Joan Lamburn (the 'Joanna' of Chapter 6 of *Forth, Beast!*). Born in 1900, she was nineteen years his junior. They had known each other since 1933. As always through most of Louis's life, there were many women with which he had affairs, and three of them were Joans, but Joan Lamburn, he told JCP in 1942, 'is still first, and will be'.⁹ As soon as the divorce from Diana became final, their marriage was said by friends to be 'only a question of time' (*Forth*, 117). But Louis, understandably, was now chary of marriage in general, and for well over a decade they met each other regularly, and often lived together, though duties and circumstances separated them for long periods. No children were forthcoming from the liaison, and this was a great disappointment, especially to Louis. Otherwise their relationship appears to have been satisfying to both – less passionate, but long-lasting.

For some years Joan had been living with Mark Holloway, a writer and admirer of Theodore Powys, in a cottage in Mappowder close to Theodore's belonging to Vera Wainwright and named (to Theodore's disapproval) 'Mockery Gap'. When the relationship with Mark broke up, Louis often stayed with her there, and so was able to maintain a closeness with several of the Powyses. In 1952, he helped Joan to buy 'Dove Cottage' in Hazelbury Bryan, only a mile and a half as the crow flies north-east of Mappowder, and moved in with her there on their marriage the following year. They lived happily together until June 1957, when Joan died suddenly of a brain tumour.

Louis was sadly unfortunate that his two most successful marriages ended prematurely from deaths of shocking suddenness. But he remained in Dove Cottage (though often spending time elsewhere, especially with his son Oliver), in failing health but subdued and resigned, and lost his most faithful correspondent when JCP, who had been unable to write for some time before, died in 1963. Louis himself eventually died on 9 December, 1966.

W. J. Keith

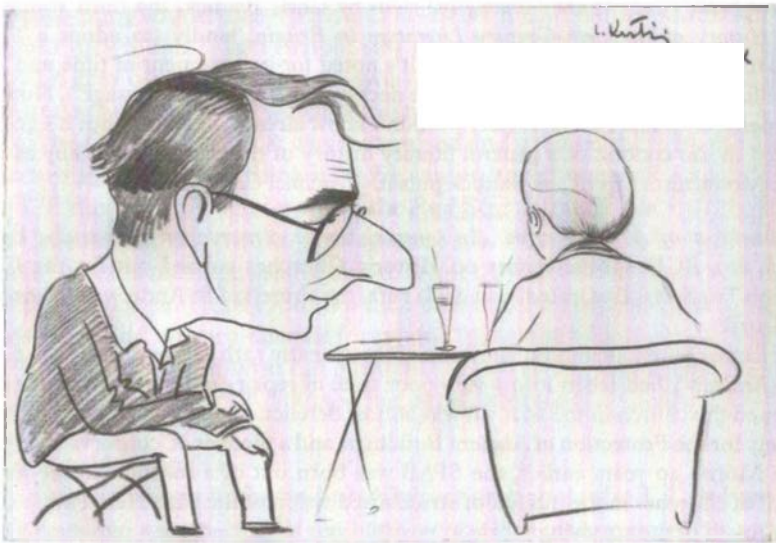
Notes

- 1 *Swan's Milk* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), 42. Hereafter in text as *Swan's*.
- 2 J. Lawrence Mitchell, *T. F. Powys: Aspects of a Life* (Bishopstone: Brynmill Press, 2005), 47. Hereafter in text as Mitchell.
- 3 *Welsh Ambassadors (Powys Lives and Letters)* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1936), 6. Hereafter in text as *Welsh*.
- 4 *Seven Friends* (London: Richards Press, 1953), 5.
- 5 W. J. Keith, 'JCP Reviews *The Buffoon* – in 1919!' *Powys Society Newsletter* 76 (July 2012), 24.
- 6 T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 'East Coker,' section 5.
- 7 *Forth, Beast!* (London: Faber and Faber, 1946), 41, 44. Hereafter in text as *Forth*.
- 8 Diana Petre, 'Living with Louis', *The Powys Journal* 5 (1995), 25.
- 9 Unpublished letter of 30 January 1932 in the possession of Chris Wilkinson.

(Internet listings confusingly show works renamed as by 'Marlow', often under both names. A note by Chris Wilkinson explains this. KK)

The Buffoon was first published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1916 in America, and in England by Constable and Co (using the American print) both under the name 'Louis U. Wilkinson'. Since then various online publishers have issued (without permission) various editions, sometimes bound facsimiles of the American version (but advertising it as by 'Marlow'), sometime as digitised versions for download – people like Nabu Press, General Books LLC and Kessinger Publishing US. All of them have stuck in their marketing to the later name 'Marlow'.

CW



Louis Wilkinson in Dubrovnik, 1939 (?) (Chris Wilkinson).

News and Notes

'Notable Author of the Year 2013/2014'

The National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of John Cowper Powys, in Blaenau Ffestioniog on 17th June 1963, by organising a small exhibition with a display of about 50 items including examples of JCP's books and original manuscript material. The exhibition opens at the beginning of March 2013 and can be seen on the ground floor of the library adjacent to the Library shop.

In 1933 JCP considered the possibility of leaving America and living in Aberystwyth: '*We have thought more of Aberystwyth and of that National Library of old Welsh books and of the scholars there from whom I could get help for my romance about Merlin and Taliessin*' (Diary, 10 October 1933).

★ ★ ★ ★

The National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, currently has an exhibition (until April) featuring the work of the artist and writer Jonah Jones, and including his Head of JCP made in 1957 – see *Newsletter* 54 (p.27). [AP, CT]

More information at <www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/whatson/?event_id=6476>

★ ★ ★ ★

'Your Paintings' website now includes images not included in the Powys Society Collection – they now have images of the TFP portrait by Augustus John at the Tate, the portrait of JCP by Gertude at the National Library of Wales, and also the painting of Gamel Woolsey by Gertrude at Tullie House Art Gallery and Museum, Carlisle. [CT]

★ ★ ★ ★

Literature of the 1920s: Writers among the ruins by Chris Baldick, the third volume in the *Edinburgh History of Twentieth-Century Literature in Britain*, kindly (to adopt a TF word) mentions *Mr Weston's Good Wine* (pp. 93–4). It's noted for its treatment of time and eternity, and for its allegory ('not of the kind that can be decoded into a simpler message'). Nothing that a paid-up member of The Powys Society wouldn't know already, of course, but it's good to see it recognized in the context of a general literary history of the period, especially as it's 'well outside the Modernist current', as Baldick puts it. [Michael Caines]

★ ★ ★ ★

In the footsteps of A. R. Powys: An unusual timber conservation case study, by Lynne Humphries, is a BCD special report on Historic Churches carried out for the Churches Conservation Trust. It is illustrated, and deals with the church of St Andrew, in **Winterborne Tomson**, Dorset:

'a small Norman church, unaltered in its plan since the early 12th century' ... By the early 20th century St Andrew's had fallen into a very poor state of repair, and when the architect A. R. Powys rescued the church in the 1920s it was almost derelict. Powys was by then the secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and a pioneer of conservation. Founded by William Morris 40 years earlier, the SPAB was born out of a reaction to the insensitive 'restoration' of churches in the pursuit of an idealised vision of the past. Here Powys sought to preserve as much of the surviving fabric as possible and he carried out a remarkably sensitive programme of repairs, conserving original material that would, at that time, usually have been discarded. He and his wife are buried in the churchyard. A plaque in the church, beautifully cut by Reynolds Stone, commemorates Powys' work.'

★ ★ ★ ★

From Raymond Cox

I saw this in a current copy of the *Newsletter of the Network of Ley Hunters*, (a small organisation devoted to the study of ley lines and 'earth energies'. Its members hold meetings ('moots') and make journeys to ancient sites around the UK).

In an article author Ian Peglar, who wrote the book *Valle Crucis and the Grail*, believes he experienced automatic writing during visits to Valle Crucis abbey last summer. (Shades of Bligh Bond at Glastonbury). There are links between Glastonbury, Valle Crucis and the Grail legends and Peglar's experience concerned an abbot, Dafydd ap Ieuan, who tried to obtain a book about the Grail from the abbot of Neath. Peglar asked why he needed the book and, interestingly the answer came back in Welsh – which Peglar didn't know and couldn't read. It read, with some of the usual obscurity, that 'from the fort of Maelor a daughter implored Dafydd to weave a fine balance of fact and wonder and wrathful atmosphere to compose and write the Holy Grail'. There were other instances of automatic writing, where it was told that the Grail at some point had come to Valle Crucis, as a dish. Interestingly early representations of the Grail were in fact dishes, not goblets. The writing was again in Welsh.

Peglar then refers to a letter by JCP in 1937 to Nicholas Ross: Powys wrote, ' 'Twas in this Chapter-House [of Valle Crucis] I wrote the first sentences (the first pages rather) of my Owen Glendower and left it uncorrected because the spirits of those Cistercian Monks were inspiring it ...'

In April 1941 JCP lodged at Valle Crucis with his son, an Anglican clergyman who became an RC priest in 1944. See Newsletters 49, 59. [KK]

★ ★ ★

A poet's view of Blaenau

from Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life, by Robert Bernard Martin (1991) (p.402). In September 1886, Hopkins was walking in Wales with a fellow-Jesuit Robert Curtis, on a holiday from his penitential last years' teaching at University College, St Stephen's Green, Dublin. [PJK]

Tremadoc was even better than Caernarfon: remote, beautiful and convenient for a trip by miniature railway to Blaenau-Ffestiniog or by foot to the torrent of notably green water at Pont Aberglaslyn, "the beauty of which is unsurpassed". The pretty little village was some distance from the sea, but the weather was completely unsuitable for the bathing that had been part of the reason for their choice of the Welsh coastline. Hopkins's unorthodox sense of beauty, which bubbled up when least expected, made him appreciate the slate quarries:

Nowhere I suppose in Europe is such a subjection of nature to man to be witnessed. The end is that the mountains vanish, but in the process they take a certain beauty midway between wildness and art.

In the street they were pleased at the sight of itinerant Breton vegetable sellers wearing jerseys, earrings, and wooden shoes. As Hopkins put it in his happiness.

My situation is that Wild Wales breathes poetry on the one hand and that my landlady gives me the heartiest breakfasts on the other —
— what more could man want?

The Akeing Heart

Peter Judd, in New York, has announced plans to publish the correspondence between **Valentine Ackland**, **Sylvia Townsend Warner**, **Katie Powys** and **Elizabeth Wade White** in a book he has called *The Akeing Heart*. The book will include previously unpublished photographs as well as an accompanying narrative with explanatory notes by Peter in which he discusses TFP and Llewelyn as well as Katie's friendship with Elizabeth Wade White. Members may recall that Peter presented a talk about Katie's letters to 'an American friend' (Elizabeth Wade White), covering the period 1938 to 1954, at our Conference at Uppingham School in 1996. The talk was published *The Powys Journal* VII (1997). Peter's catalogue and finding aid to the Elizabeth Wade White papers has been added to our webliography and can be accessed at google books at <www.books.google.com>.

Elizabeth Wade White (1906–94) was a wealthy American heiress, writer, and author of *Anne Bradstreet*, "*The Tenth Muse*", *An American Herb Calendar* and the *Folger Shakespeare Memorial*. She had an intimate relationship with Valentine Ackland for many years and was admired by Katie Powys. She visited Chaldon in 1938 and stayed at Rats Barn. Publication date of *The Akeing Heart* will be advertised later.

CT

California heritage

Historian, film-maker, and retired environmental engineer **John Crosse**, who lives in Los Angeles, has produced a small library of wide-ranging blogs and internet articles about the diverse artistic and cultural heritage of southern California. John Crosse's main focus of interest is southern California's legacy of modernist architecture. Some of these articles, which are still under development and may form the basis of a future book, contain references to JCP and his many Californian friends and acquaintances such as Paul Jordan Smith, Sara Bixby Smith, Noel Sullivan, Kate Crane Gartz, Charles Erskine Scott Wood, Sarah Bard Field, the Californian poets George Sterling and Robinson Jeffers and the photographers Edward Weston, Margrethe Mather and Tina Modotti. One of John Cross's most recent articles deals with the relationship and interconnections between JCP, Reginald Pole, Beatrice Wood, Helen Taggart and Lloyd Wright in California in the early 1920s. These articles can be found on the website of *Southern Californian Architectural History*, where they are all indexed in date order going back to December 2009:

<www.so-cal-arch-history.com/about>

The subjects of most of these articles extend far beyond JCP's circle of friends but some have a special Powysian interest including discussions of the relationships between Edward Weston, the architect R. M. Schindler (who designed stage sets for the 1928 LA production of JCP's play *The Idiot*), and the bibliophile Paul Jordan Smith and his wife Sara Bixby Smith, as well as discussion of Maurice Browne's California career, the connections between the artistic communities of Carmel and Taos, Pauline Schindler's role as cultural hostess, and the writings of architectural critic Esther McCoy whom JCP knew in Greenwich Village.

Some of the material about JCP and his friends presented by John Crosse may be familiar to most Powysians through other sources. However the articles are well worth consulting. John Crosse is very adept at making interesting connections, and he gives a comprehensive account of the vibrant artistic communities JCP encountered in southern California when he visited

there between 1917 and 1923. He usefully provides information about the location of primary documents available in the archives of Californian collections such as JCP's letters to Sara Bixby Smith at the Rancho Los Cerritos historic site in Los Angeles and other material at the George E. Young Research Library at the University of California Los Angeles. The articles are well illustrated with many images of buildings, places, and people known to JCP including a photographic portrait of JCP by Edward Weston. What is missing from these articles, however, is a fuller discussion of JCP's links to people with left libertarian and radical anarchist views, and an appreciation of his conflicted and ambivalent attitude to California which veered from outright hostility and a sense of unreality to feelings of great pleasure, happiness and opportunity. Much good work has of course already been done by others on some of the details of JCP's life in California. What we now need is a deep study of the wider cultural context and historical background for this important period in JCP's life. In the meantime John Crosse's articles provide a helping hand.

CT

The Idiot and the Monster

Among the interesting material sent by John Crosse (*see above*) we see a playbill for a performance of *The Idiot* in 1928, featuring none other than Boris Karloff (aka Frankenstein's monster) as Rogozhin.

A biography of Boris Karloff by **Stephen Jacobs**, *Boris Karloff: More Than a Monster*, published by Tomahawk Press, in 2011, includes a brief section in which the author quotes from an interview with Karloff first published in *Film Pictorial Annual 1938*, about how he returned to his early career as a stage actor in 1927. He had been asked, by Reginald Pole to take on the role of Rogozhin in a new production of JCP's play *The Idiot* at the Belmont Theatre in Los Angeles. This information has been included in other books about Karloff, but it is the first contemporary review of a performance of JCP's play reprinted in this context. Stephen Jacobs's biography won the *Rondo Hatton Classic Horror Award* for 'best book' in 2011.

Stephen Jacobs quotes a significant portion of the admiring review of the play which appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on 26th January, 1928: '*Idiot is intensely powerful*'. It is a pity however the review does not comment on JCP's role, with Reginald Pole, as the adapter from the book. There were also probably other performances of the play at the Trinity Auditorium. The parts of Prince Myshkin and Agalia were played by Reginald Pole and Beatrice Wood who had also appeared in the original production in New York in 1922.

Although JCP seems to have abandoned interest in the theatre during the late 1920s Reginald Pole obviously still regarded the play as a career opportunity. He was probably responsible for another production at the University of Colorado also during the 1920s. It is interesting to note that as late as November 1945 the *New York Times* reported that the film and theatre director Paul Czinner was considering producing *The Idiot* with Sam Jaffe and Elizabeth Bergner (whose acting skills were much admired by Phyllis). The project, however, which was instigated by Marian, was abandoned. We can only speculate about the kind of expressionist interpretation Czinner might have given JCP's play.

Review

Under the Shadow of the Oath

A selection from the African Journals of **Mary Casey**

edited and introduced by Louise de Bruin

(Old Africa Books, PO Box 65, Kijabe, 00220 Kenya), 2012

ISBN 978-9966-7570-2-9

This selection is in many ways an easier approach to Mary's complex spirit than the longer selection from the 1960s and 70s that we already have in print (A Net in Water, The Powys Press, 1994). On the cover, a magical landscape by Will Powys beckons us in.

The book covers the years 1950–57 on the land in Kenya, not far from Will Powys, that Gerard and Mary had owned and managed since 1947 (they had married in 1945) These were years in which the extremist branch of the movement for Kenyan independence erupted into tribal terrorism – the Mau Mau – and was met with drastic reprisals from the British authorities. All European settlements were threatened, but the Caseys 'carried on as normal'; they were in any case sympathetic to African self-government. Suspicion and dread of lurking evil among men were new, but in the world of animals, death and violence from forest predators, drought and disease, were part of their life as farmers.

The exceptional situation gives the book an extra shape. But for anyone who has never been to Africa it is the daily life of an exceptional woman that makes it unforgettable, leaving you with a powerful sense of that beautiful and dangerous part of the planet.

Mary sees life as a poet, always with a convincing grasp of physical detail, whether in her intense awareness of natural beauty or her acceptance of nature red in tooth and claw (as well as the normal brutalities of farming), along with the undiminished stream of her own profound reading and studies of ancient languages, her interior life and her domestic life, her memories and her joy and sorrow in the lives of relations and friends.

A few random passages follow.

KK

1950

Christmas Day

In the big room with two candles burning, one at each end of the mantelpiece: Gerard at the table over a volume of the Encyclopaedia. A long quiet happy day. Greek in the morning, a lesson lasting two and a half hours, afterwards a walk in the forest, all brilliant sunlight and dark shadow at noontide.

1955

20 March

Havoc wrought by wild dogs continues. David who appeared at lunch-time said he had another ten sheep killed the night before last. And this time the brutes neither leaped or scrambled over the wire nor crawled under it but simply bit a hole through it.

21 March

Last night I dreamed I was dying, no long-drawn-out affair but simply my two last breaths. What was most striking about it was my experience of living between the first black wave and the second and final black nothingness. In that instant every nerve in my body sprang in a desperate quivering last rush upon life. Blind but more wildly and urgently alive than ever they have been before were my nerves as they sought to become one with all life, however anguished



1957

4 January

Easy chronicle of outside events, and what of the levels below this crumpled surface, one or another of which is always causing some unforeseen agitation in the cloudy pool of consciousness, as philosophers call it. What I love best is an image, a reflection of nature in the mind that is not uninfluenced by thought, however sad or gay; winging or stagnant the thought may be, but it is the meaning of sky and forest and plain, swift deer and what engenders fear.

(p.192)

12 April

Thirty lambs have died now, eighteen of them after dosing as if they had been poisoned. A little reluctant rain fell in the night, and for what seemed like hours an eagle owl kept up his regular low booming from a roof near-by.

13 April

The blessing of heavy rain at noon. When it grew fine again the air was very sweet, gnats in a delicate throng danced up and down, cicadas sang. The drenched fleeces of the sheep smelled strong.

17 April

Maize planting this morning in the moist black cotton soil under a great sky full of light. No more rain today and all was dry again by evening. I still have a temperature most evenings. Sometimes it seems to me I drink endless draughts of bitterness silently within, so draining all the tears I do not shed. Again all is joy and as this morning earth is as beautiful as in the Golden Age. (p.197)

22 September

... two boys came in sight as he spoke carrying taper bundles of the stalks ten or twelve feet long and newly cut. Loosening their bundles they began splitting each stalk in half down its length with small crooked knives. Basket-making, the old Kikuyu worker explained, was not a craft of his tribe, he used the Swahili word *kikapu* for his hampers. We asked him about the tree, and he spoke in a different tone with an upward glance at this towering neighbour. It was a survivor, he said, of the forest that had covered this region of abundant rain in the time before the Europeans and Kikuyus came. Its name was *muna*; but the seeds would not grow except in the depth of a forest. (p.208)

Review

John Cowper Powys : Une Philosophie de la Vie

by Pierrick Hamelin and Goulven Le Brech

Paris: Editions Les Perséides, 2012. 125pp., 15 euro. ISBN 978-2-915596-83-0

Une philosophie has frontispieces of JCP at Corwen, in a formidable overcoat, and a dedication page to Jean Wahl (both from Barbara Wahl), followed by biographical dates (with a few omissions, such as the later novels). The 'overture' quotes one of JCP's favorite lines (from

Wordsworth's 'Michael'), **'the pleasure which there is in life itself'** – a major theme in the book, and which the authors see as a circular thread for JCP's ideas.

A few abbreviated translations:

... a circle impossible to close, overflowing with imagination and freedom of thought.

A clear-thinking man, deliberately shunning the scientific and pessimistic thought of his time (though well aware of the tragic and painful in every life), John Cowper believed in the power of the will and the creative strength of man ... According to him, therefore, it is up to everyone to force themselves to be happy, or at least to create the conditions for it. In this he anticipated by several decades techniques of well-being and therapies for personal development; proposing original 'life techniques' to dispel depression, to develop closer bonds with the world or to achieve states of happiness through contemplation. On the strength of this he invented possible connecting paths, leading to the *Art of Happiness*, the *Art of Forgetting the Unpleasant*, and the *Art of Growing Old*, works that clearly echo contemporary concerns.

Acknowledging the challenge of transmitting JCP's philosophy, 'complex and mobile as it is, like life', the book presents JCP's key themes in the complementary forms of an essay (Le Brech) and an alphabet (Hamelin).

Our objective has been not only to recognise the modernity of his thought, but to cast light on his creation of mythological thought-lines — concepts such as the ichthyosaur, life-illusion and others that in the joyful intoxication of his writing – shoots from an whirling mass of impressive culture – point us towards a special understanding of the world and the mysteries of the universe, without ever losing sight of the one positive essential: life itself.

Goulven Le Brech's essay moves through the non-fiction books, with sideways looks at the Wessex novels, quoting generously from the *Diaries*, *The Complex Vision*, and above all *In Defence of Sensuality* (*Apologie des Sens* – '*cet essai capital*'... 'a truly inspiring work ... individualist humanism ... at the crossroads between Epictetus and Pascal.') The ichthyosaur and its cult of solitude, its opposite number the Saint, the joys of walking and *The Owl, the Duck and Miss Rowe* ... find their places, as do Rousseau, 'The Ridge', Wales and 'My Philosophy', ending with the affirmation by JCP in the latter essay of the power of thought over limitations – that he could be 'bounded in a nutshell' (or one room in a smoky industrial suburb) and count himself king of infinite space.

Pierrick Hamelin's 'ABC' takes up different aspects of JCP's works, sometimes playfully, in one- or two- page entries, from A for *Analyse Dithyrambique* (JCP's method of entering into the subject of his lectures) through *Bonheur*, *Culture*, *Dormir*, *Effort*, *Fierté* (pride in oneself), *Gentleman*, *Humour*, *Illusion vitale*, *Joie*, *Kwang-Tse* (Kouang-Tseu) ... *Sylphides*, *Tohu-Bohu* ('void and without form' in the Hebrew Bible) ... *Wordsworth*, *Xanax* (on anxiety and achieving calm), *Y-a-t-il ...?* (Is there ...?), and of course, Z for *Zen*.

There are good bibliographies of JCP's works, and of translations and commentaries in French, with the various French literary magazines consecrated to him (including of course *la lettre powysienne*), and an index.

The cover of the book describes Goulven Le Brech as an archivist, living at Gentilly; author of a biography of the philosopher Jules Lequier and of a book of travel in New Caledonia, *Sur le Caillou*. Pierre Hamelin lives and teaches near Nantes in Loire-Atlantique, and has published four books with Les Perséides: *Point de Fuite* 2005, *Une dernière fois a la mer* 2007, *Promenades philosophiques* 2009, and *Manège*, 2010.

New from Les Perséides is *Rire Noir*, a translation of *Black Laughter* by Llewelyn Powys (on his experiences in Africa, published 1924–25) by Christiane Armandet and Anne Bruneau. The editor of Les Perséides is said to have other Powys titles in mind for the future.

KK

Marcella Henderson-Peal describes the launch that took place on Tuesday, October 2 2012 at Librairie L'Ecume des Pages, Boulevard Saint Germain, Paris.

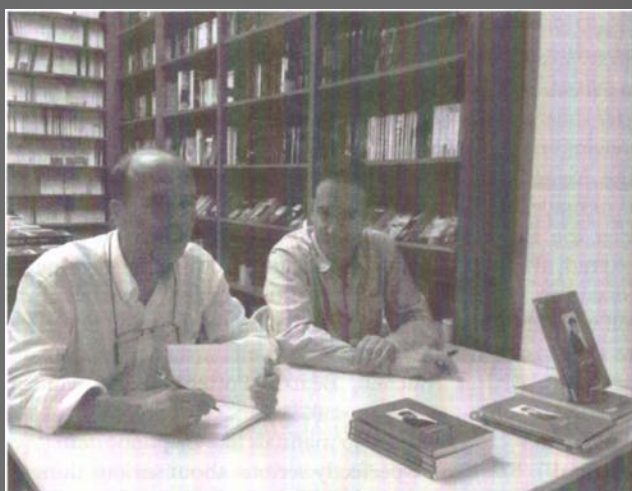
John Cowper Powys could have been thrilled had he been able to see the venue of the launch, a large attractive and famous book-shop next door to one of Sartre and Beauvoir's favourite cafés: the 'Flore'. The invitation read from 8pm. It was already getting dark and the café terraces were full of Parisians indulging in global *Le Happy Hour*, right in the middle of the beat of Paris's intellectual heart, the Latin quarter. A tramp had set up camp between the largest window and the 'Flore' and was asking anyone who cared to hear his words for a drink, with a show of good sense of humour. His was no ghastly pale Waterloo Steps face appearing to Wolf Solent but rather that of someone still enjoying life 'in spite of' obvious accommodation difficulties.

As one approached the entrance to the gaily lit bookshop, the right-hand window showed a whole section devoted to translations of JCP's works in French, at least those still in print. Presented alongside were two of William James's books, thus introducing JCP to the eyes of passers-by as a philosopher, treated as such in Hamelin and Le Brecht's show-cased book.

Goulven and Pierrick talked about JCP's positive, ichtyosaurian, philosophy of life, to a small group of devotees and newcomers and a couple of journalists. Among faithful and enthusiastic Powysians were Bernard Dupas, a friend of Elmar Schenkel's, and a charming couple, Edouard and Karine Mangin, who after reading Powys by chance contacted Catherine Lieutenant, translator and publisher of *Rabelais* and *The Owl, the Duck and – Miss Rowe! Miss Rowe!*, with whom they made friends and whom they were actively representing. Diane de Margerie was sorry not to be able to attend as she was recovering from surgery. Jacqueline Peltier's name came up and up again as our *grande dame powysienne*. All the messages of good wishes from Powys Society members including Glen Cavaliero, and from passionate translators Christiane Poussier and Michelle Tran Van Khai, were duly conveyed to the authors.

Pierrick Hamelin discovered JCP while researching 'sceptical' philosophers for his book *Promenades philosophiques*. He first saw JCP's name mentioned in an article on Théophile Gauthier, and after reading *Autobiography* was very taken by JCP's straightforwardness and enjoyment of sensations and life whatever the circumstances. Goulven Le Brech, a great fan of Kenneth White's poetry, first read about JCP in White's PhD dissertation and went on to read more and more until he felt he had to write about him too! Both authors contributed articles on JCP to an issue of the French Literary magazine *Le Groggnard* devoted to '*Le sentiment océanique*', a concept coined by Romain Rolland and developed by Freud. This is when they decided they would like to investigate JCP's philosophy of life further. Within months they had written their book and found Thomas Van Ruymbeke, founder of the publishers *Les Perséides*, who was happy to give France and the rest of the world new proof of John Cowper Powys's reception in France as a philosopher.

It was later decided that despite the delicious organic cider offered courtesy of *L'Ecume des Pages*, a more celebratory beverage was required to round off the evening at 'La Palette'.



The General Public, that Giant Sloth ... (292)

... if my religion were substantial enough to support doubts ... (303)

Mary Wilkins, a New England writer whose characters appear to be made out of lettuce ... can call one back to a rereading because one remembers a queer brilliant verisimilitude, the lighting of immediacy. (237)

(STW's characters are not made of lettuce, but that last comment might be said of her.)

In many ways a collection like this one, of occasional or commissioned pieces, gives a spicier taste than the wilder shores of Warner's immaculate fiction. There, the plots are unpredictable and subtle (or shocking) enough, needing no more than plain language. Here, writing about anything from Jane Austen and Theodore Powys to garden weeds, factory girls, imperfect guests, bathrooms or banks or Gilbert White's tortoise, she can give herself free rein, domestic or esoteric, quoting the Book of Common Prayer (as JCP does), referring to books she assumes we'll have read, always finding a personal angle to surprise us into interest.

Many of these essays and reviews are on familiar territory – writers near her time: Katherine Mansfield (her skill with 'the small complete existences of birds and flowers and teaspoons'); Walter de la Mare ('his vision has the slant of farewell ... that particular quality of delicate violence'); Arthur Waley, Arthur Machen, Beatrix Potter, Hector Munro – also Defoe, Dickens, Hardy, *Rasselas*.

She has a lot of fun with Victorian self-help manuals like *Enquire Within* ('So superb a boast! So inviting an invitation!'). She can be perfectly serious about serious things – the sorrows of the vanquished in the Spanish civil war, or a ruthless depiction of the reality of English village life. This last includes an unforgettable deadpan anathematizing, worthy of Theodore Powys, of badger-baiting in the village pub in 'Love Green' (a place 'approached by a lane that leaves it only to scramble round a green hill'). Her account of meeting TFP is familiar to us. She writes sympathetically about exceptional women (Countess Markievitz, Nancy Cunard). She comes into her own with off-beat personalities like Edward Lear, or T. H. White, or the memoirs of Arthur Mumby (1828–1910) in 'A Class Distinction'. Her writing on places is inspired: in flooded Somerset, the river Yeo is 'only perceptible as a thrust of water through water, like the movement of some furious shouldering fish ...'

One of the most perceptive essays (a sparky review in 1929 for the *New York Herald Tribune*) (pp.271–6) is on the stories of 'Saki' (H. H. Munro), a maverick from the doomed Edwardian generation, master of Wildean wit and flippant social satire, scorned by the young post-WWI survivors who, deprived of their own golden years, are determined to belittle that obsolete arcadia. But 'it is slightly disturbing to discover that the delicate fabric of this wit should be so durable a material; it is as though one should learn that butterflies live as long as buffaloes ...' STW attributes this to an author's authentic slant of mind – 'a personal constancy'. Saki's technique of imperturbability began with stories about houseparties and moved on to talking cats and werewolves, 'as a juggler might begin with balls who will later go on to knives'. Both the ritualist Edwardian society and the werewolves must have struck a chord with STW's own later work, in the parallel world of her *Kingdoms of Elfin*. It is hard to 'pin down' STW, but this wide-ranging anthology can help us get to know her better.

Kate Kavanagh

With the Hunted is obtainable from: Black Dog Books, 104 Trinity Street, Norwich, NR2 2Bf/

The silence he walked in

A taste of TFP in gentle mood – not, of course, for long. The churchyard dialogue is between the skull of Mr Thomas (dislodged from his re-used grave) and his headstone (moved to a wall by the rubbish heap).

The skull was silent for a while and forgot its anger as it thought again of the former days that it had loved.

‘Can the kind winter days indeed be gone?’ asked the skull — ‘those gentle days, when the grey skies are like a poor man’s coat, and a man’s whole life appears to him like an indistinct dream. I used to stand for a while in the lane and notice the green ivy leaves under the bare hedge; my mind being stilled and quieted by the cold airs, I became a simple creature without fear, and then crept harmlessly home.

‘I walked out again in the same mood, and the winter fields were all become the same colour as my mind: not gaudy with the greedy wantonness of summer, but with the grey colour of peaceful delights. The silence I walked in grew kinder, grew more gentle — large snowflakes were falling. The peace I moved in grew upon me, a gracious resignation filled my mind, for now all my daring summer days had found a winter’s nest to lie in, safe and hidden. The earth caressed me, the quiet came that numbs the rude and releases the golden numbers of soft music — can it be that I am now forgotten, I, who remember so well?

‘Yes, forgotten, for all your fine talk,’ replied the stone mockingly, ‘but it’s I who am thought of ...’

from ‘The Stone and Mr Thomas’, in Fables by T. F. Powys, first published 1929. There will be readings and a discussion of Fables at the Conference.

Members will remember meetings discussing TFP and Fables at Dorchester: in June 2003 with David Gervais (his long article is in NL 49, pp. 13–20), and in June 2005 with John Williams (his talk is in The Powys Journal vii, 2007).

JCP to Allen Lane

“Bodlonddeb”
Cae Coed
Corwen
N. Wales

July 3 1935

Dear Allen Lane

Just a line to tell you that Miss P. and I, & also our Black Dog, are really safe in Wales & getting our little place in order quite rapidly.

But God! it’s been a business getting off from Dorchester & getting our furniture

unpacked here — but you and your brothers will I am sure be pleased one day with the immense view we have from our windows — the grandest possible expanse of the great valley of the Dee & in the distance the mountains beyond Dolgelly, one of which I take to be Cader Idris.

Our house just built — we are its first inhabitants — is on the slope of the foot-hills of the Berwyn Range and on the outskirts of this little town of Corwen but well out of the town but conveniently near the railway station from which a train — without changing anywhere, goes straight to Paddington and from Paddington! For we are on the G.W.R. here & reach the main line (Hereford to Chester) at Ruabon, the other side of Llangollen, which is the next town to Corwen.

So, tho' we are in a sense in the Wilds, we are less inaccessible than at "Down Barn", and much more in wild scenery than in Dorchester!

I trust the sale of Jobber Skald has been commensurate with your admirable "ads" & with the on the whole I wd. say favourable Reviews.

I am now half way thro' my Dorchester Romance wherein I have steered clear, as in time you will see, of every possible danger of Libel.

I shall be in a position to have more liesure [*sic*], more uninterrupted liesure I should say, to write here than in our Dorchester flat.

But it has been a great effort moving — hence my neglect of letter-writing of late!

Yrs v. sincerely

John Cowper Powys

'The ship was enjoying itself ...'

A Dutch connection

from Fabian Heus

Reading *Petrushka and the Dancer* and *The Dorset Year* with much pleasure, I came across the entries for 13th and 14th May 1935 (pp. 246–7) in the latter. To my agreement and joy I read that the T.T. thinks highly of a book about the ship 'Johanna Maria' (13th May). This joy altered into a cheering exuberance, because what did I read as the very first sentence of entry 14th May?

Last Night from Nine o'clock till 10.45 she read to me the *Johanna Maria* & we were more thrilled with it than by any book we've read together except I don't know! — except NONE.

I was thrilled because they read and liked a novel of a Dutch novelist Arthur van Schendel (1874–1946) whom I'm fond of: *The Johanna Maria*, translated by Brian Westerdale Downs and with an introduction by Sir Arthur Quiller Couch (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935).

The Johanna Maria tells the story, covering forty years, of one of the vanishing

sailing ships and its sail-maker, who cannot bear to be parted from this ship he admires, and spends his whole life working on it or searching for it. Van Schendel's basic theme is fate. He combines a sharp eye for the emotions of individual humans and a very sharp eye for human processes from a social point of view, with an austere and restrained style that is almost classical. The greatest characteristic of his whole work is his very powerful ability to evoke images and emotions: perhaps it is this evocation that attracted John Cowper Powys or appealed to him? According to many he wrote some of the greatest novels of his period and was considered to be one of the greatest novelists in The Netherlands.

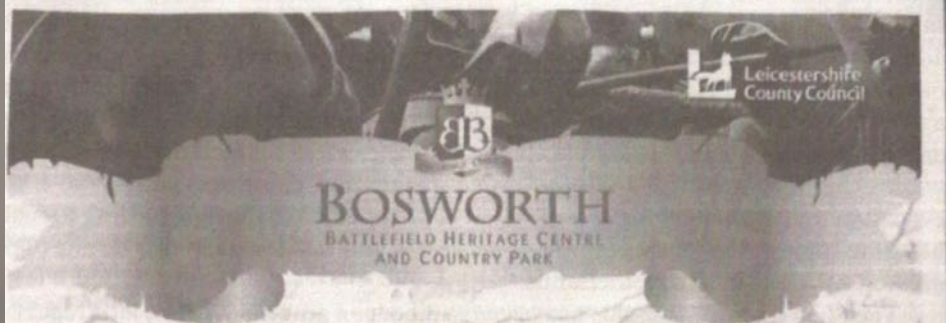
Then (...) it was as if the ship had begun to produce a gentle music. The little ropes and float lines squeaked a bit, the heavy clews whistled with a kind of satisfaction as they stretched, and all the sails murmured in a tone that matched that of the water seething on the bow. The ship was enjoying itself. It no longer bumped or jolted against the waves striking it athwartships, but rocked slowly in a regular rhythm without the resistance of the sea.

Arthur van Schendel, born in Batavia, from 1920 onwards lived almost permanently in Italy with his second wife Anna, an asthma sufferer. As soon as possible after the Second World War they came back to Holland to be united with their children, and he died in Amsterdam on 11th September 1946.

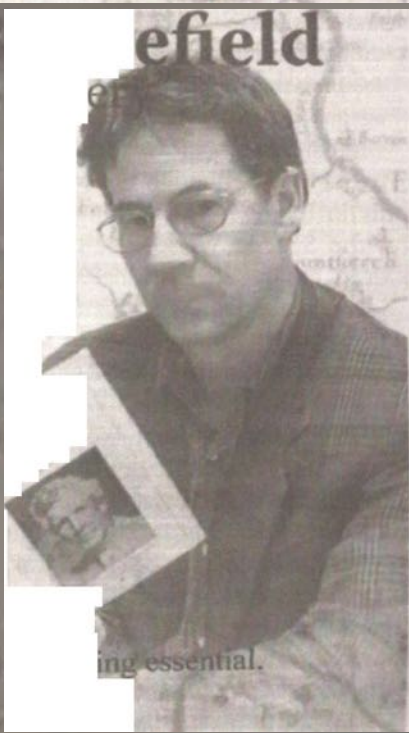
Between 1896 and 1907 Van Schendel often lived in England or Wales. In 1896 he taught at a Grammar School in Tuxford, in 1898 at King's College in Wimbledon, and in 1900 at Stratford-on-Avon. After his marriage in 1902, he lived with his wife Bertha and his step-daughter in Brixham, London and Brighton. In 1903 he was living in Pwllheli in north-western Wales. There he made friends with three fishermen: an American negro, a Dane and a local who spoke only Welsh: they could hardly understand each other, apart from fishery, but seem to have had a lot of fun, Van Schendel often acting as an interpreter. He wrote about this for his children.

In Pwllheli he wrote *Een Zwerfverliefd* ('A wanderer in love') (1904), a book that was to bring him fame, in part because it broke with the literary principle of Realism that was in force at the time in The Netherlands. He replaced realism with a book full of hints and suggestions: a wanderer living 'somewhere' in Italy, 'somewhere' in the middle ages.

He lost both his wife and their baby daughter within a year; and in 1907 lived in London. He remarried and returned to The Netherlands before moving to Italy. Among his books is a biography of Shakespeare, published in 1910. Van Schendel was always silent about his private life and very little has been discovered. Any information about him, in Britain or elsewhere, would be very welcome.



Bosworth
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