

## Editorial

Our back cover showing the Prophet Elijah smiting a priest of Baal (*3 Kings 18, 40*) illustrates Patrick Quigley's account of Llewelyn Powys and Alyse's journey to Palestine in 1928; a prelude to his talk at the next Conference on how this journey is reflected in Llewelyn's philosophy.

Our December meeting discussed TFP's friendship with Liam O'Flaherty and the Progressive Bookshop, and the world of cruelty and hypocrisy in *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, a book O'Flaherty greatly admired. T.F. Powys calls up very different responses, from those who see his world as controlled by demons of cruelty, and those who see their opposite, the besieged forces of light, innocence and kindness. Michael Kowalewski's review in *NL89*, of Zouheir Jamoussi's book on Theodore, emphasised the darkness and the role of an 'Old Testament' God of wrath. Ian Robinson, long-term publisher of TFP with the Brynmill Press, is of the party of the angels, and the long-suffering meek who are rewarded. TFP's publisher Charles Prentice introduced the 1947 collection of stories, curiously named (by TF himself?) *God's Eyes A-Twinkle*; and Glen Cavaliero's poem imagines TFP sleeping beside, and in, the Map-powder churchyard.

Nature, and seasons, were crucial to all the Powyses, and John Cowper's years in up-state New York gave him sustained time to observe American skies, especially at sunrise. New books by our President (Collected Poems) and our Chairman (Figurative Painting) are reviewed. We have notes on JCP and music and on Alyse Gregory's revised birth date. Members in Norfolk and New York visit two bookshops called after JCP's late novel *The Brazen Head*.

And we look forward to Llangollen once again, for the Conference in August.

---

### ON OTHER PAGES

Two Powys dates	2	Review: Glen Cavaliero	
Committee Nominations	4	(John Hodgson)	20
AGM	4	Review: Timothy Hyman	
Conference preview	5	(Kate Kavanagh)	23
Draft Conference programme	7	Review: Michael Caines on LIP's 1911	
Conference speakers	7	Diary, in <i>TLS</i>	24
New members	10	Llewelyn and Alyse in Palestine	26
News and Notes	10	Alyse's Birth Date	30
Hampstead meeting: TFP, O'Flaherty		JCP and Phudd Hill	31
and <i>Mr. Tasker</i>	12	JCP and Sibelius	37
Ian Robinson: a letter	15	Two 'Brazen Head' bookshops	38
Charles Prentice on TFP stories	16	Inscriptions, part 2	42
Glen Cavaliero: 'TFP Under Bulbarrow'	19	'If Books Could Talk'	48

## Two Powys Days

Ely, Saturday 29 April

### ***Porius* and Myrddin Wyllt**

**John Hodgson** will lead a discussion of two chapters from JCP's novel *Porius*: Chapter III 'The Stranger' and Chapter XV 'Myrddin Wyllt'. Both chapters provide a good opportunity to explore JCP's conception of the deep and elusive character of Merlin. For background reading members may wish to consult an essay by Mark Patterson, 'The Origin of John Cowper Powys's Myrddin Wyllt' in *Powys Review* No.25, 1990; also see JCP's own comments on his ideas about Merlin in his notes on the characters of *Porius* published in the Colgate University Press *Powys Newsletter* No.4, 1974-1975; and JCP's letters to Norman Denny at the Bodley Head, in 1949 and 1950, which include references to the role of Merlin in *Porius*, published in *Powys Notes*, Fall and Winter 1992. Nikolai Tolstoy sympathetically discusses JCP's interpretation of Merlin in his book *The Quest for Merlin* (1985). Richard Holmes in his review of this said that *Of all the modern retellings of Merlin's story ... none strikes me as so clearly a masterpiece as the huge swirling novel by John Cowper Powys*, quoting its end (of the 1951 version) with the *distant haunting sound of the future*.

The meeting will take place at **The Old Fire Engine House**, restaurant and art gallery, 25 St Mary's Street, Ely, located near the Cathedral. We will meet in the upstairs sitting-room and start at 10.30 for welcome and coffee. Discussion of Chapter III of *Porius* will begin at 11.00. Lunch will be available from 12.00 to 13.00. We will recommence our discussion after lunch with an examination of Chapter XV of *Porius*.

\*

Thursday 15 June

Exeter University, Old Library, Prince of Wales Road, Exeter

### **A one-day literary symposium**

The aim of the symposium is to identify potential for wider study of the books and documents in the Powys Society collection, to present current research at Exeter University into writing about the south-west region of England and show how analysis of original archival material can help broaden our understanding and appreciation of authors and their literary works.

This one-day event will focus on the rich resources of the literary archives of the Heritage Collections at Exeter University where the Powys Society collection is

now held. There will be an opportunity to hear talks by experts in the field of literary research and the handling of archival materials, participate in an open discussion and view examples of original documents, manuscripts, letters and books selected from the archives and literary papers of Exeter's Heritage Collections including the Powys Society collection. The symposium will conclude with readings from works of the writers discussed during the day.

Speakers include **Michael Kowalewski**, Powys Society Collection Liaison Officer, **Christine Faunch**, Head of Heritage Collections, University of Exeter; **Dr Chris Campbell**, Lecturer at University of Exeter in Global Literatures, whose research focuses on the intersections of world literature, postcolonial theory and environmental criticism; and **Dr Luke Thompson**, writer, publisher and editor. Luke Thompson lectures at Falmouth University and is a former student at Exeter University. He has recently published a biography of the Cornish poet Jack Clemo, entitled *Clay Phoenix*.

The event will open at 10.30 for welcome and coffee and commence at 11.00. We will break for lunch at 12.30 when there will also be an opportunity to examine a display of documents from the archives. We will recommence with talks and discussion at 14.00. The symposium will close at approximately 16.30.

*Both events are free and everyone is welcome. A charge will be made for optional lunch at Ely. A contribution towards costs of refreshments at both Ely and Exeter would be much appreciated.*

***If you plan to attend either or both events, please notify the Hon. Secretary by e-mail or post (see inside front cover for contact details).***

**Chris Thomas**

## Committee Nominations

Nominations are invited for **Honorary Officers** and **Members** of the Powys Society committee to take effect from August 2017.

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

Nominations should be sent to the Hon. Secretary by email to [chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk) or by post to Flat D, 87 Ledbury Road, London W11 2AG.

Nominations must be received by **Thursday 1 June 2017**

Current Honorary Officers of the Powys Society committee are:

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

Nominations are sought for the four positions of the **Honorary Officers** from August 2017.

Current **members** of the Powys Society committee are: **Dawn Collins** and **Kate Kavanagh** (*Newsletter editor*), who have one year to run of their three-year term of office; **Shelagh Powys Hancox**, **John Hodgson**, and **Michael Kowalewski** (*Collection Liaison Officer*), whose three-year term of office expires in August 2017; and **Louise de Bruin** (*Publications Manager and Conference organiser*) who has two years to run of her term. **Jacqueline Peltier** continues as honorary committee member; **Anna Rosic** (*joint conference organiser*) serves as co-opted member of the committee and **Charles Lock** (editor of the *Powys Journal*) as *ex-officio* member of the committee. Nominations are sought for three vacant positions on the committee from August 2017.

## AGM 2017

This gives notice that the **Annual General Meeting** of The Powys Society will be held at 11.00 am on Sunday 20th August at the Hand Hotel, Bridge Street, Llangollen, LL20 8PL.

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

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

## The Powys Society Conference, 2017

The Hand Hotel, Llangollen

Friday 18th to Sunday 20th August

### ‘Where the spirit breathes’

In 1909, Mrs Rodolph Stawell made a journey by car through Wales, at a time when there must have been very few other motorists. She described Llangollen in her book *Motor Tours in Wales*, as *a little town that owes its charm entirely to its position ... it is an entrancing place*. In the eighteenth century the English naturalist, William Bingley, also toured Wales, and observed the view of Llangollen from a distance *with its church and elegant bridge romantically embosomed in mountains*. When JCP arrived in Llangollen in May 1935, on the way to his new home in Corwen, he was at first unimpressed. He wrote in his diary that he thought Llangollen was: *a grievous disappointment ... we shall not return*. However on that first visit he was also very much impressed by the river Dee and instantly remembered, appropriately, a line from Milton's *Lycidas* ... *where Deva spreads her wizard stream*. He stared, transfixed, at the ruins of Dinas Brân and prayed for the soul of Owen Glendower. JCP's veneration for the subject of his new novel, which he was already thinking about, connects with a fragment of verse by Shelley: *Great Spirit whom the sea of boundless thought nurtures within its imagined caves...* . Of course JCP did return to Llangollen many times. He loved the town and its surroundings reversing his original impression. For this year's conference we also return to Llangollen and the friendly hospitality of the Hand Hotel in its picturesque position overlooking the Dee. Famous guests who have stayed here, in the past, have included Darwin, Wordsworth, Browning, Scott and Shaw.

One of JCP's favourite excursions from Llangollen was to visit the nearby Cistercian abbey of Valle Crucis which was a site of special meaning and significance for him (the editors of *The Dorset Year* say it was a place of *psychic focus*). He believed the bard Iolo Goch was buried in the precincts of the Abbey. It was also here, on 24 April 1937, in the beautiful chapter house, underneath the lovely ribbed vault, that he began to write the first page of his novel *Owen Glendower*. He told Nicholas Ross: *... the spirits of those Cistercian Monks were inspiring it ...* . This is a place well worth visiting during the conference. If you climb to the top of the hill immediately opposite Valle Crucis, above the A539, you will find yourself encircled by towering mountains, (Llantysilio and Ruabon), forests, wide valleys, and a vast

open grassy space filled with heather, bilberry and gorse. Overhead you might see red kite, curlews or merlins. Up here, amidst what Ruskin called *gentle wildness*, your spirit can breath freely.

The title of this year's conference is a quotation from Katie Powys's poem 'The Valley' published in her collection *Driftwood* (E. Lahr, 1930; Powys Society 1992). History, and personal memory, the conflict of spirit and matter, self discovery, the spirit of freedom and the quest for liberation, the spirit of romance, myth and legend, the spirit of place, and spirit as the power that inspires and gives life, all feature in the talks presented by our speakers. **David Goodway** will examine the life and career of Gerald Brenan, especially his association with the Powyses, members of the Bloomsbury Group, his marriage to Gamel Woolsey, and his study of Spanish history. Like JCP Gerald Brenan rebelled against his conventional family background and looked for freedom outside England: *I set off to discover new and more breathable atmospheres*, he said, in his book *South from Granada* (1957), a copy of which he presented to JCP, who was greatly amused by the portraits of Lytton Strachey, and Virginia and Leonard Woolf looking completely out of place in Brenan's home in a remote Spanish village in Alpujarra in the 1920s. **David Stimpson** will give us a very personal interpretation of JCP's discovery of creative freedom in America focusing on the development of the spirit of JCP's philosophy of life. In *Autobiography* JCP said that in America: *I felt always that I had escaped from something much more insidious than grey skies or drifting rain*. **Grevel Lindop** will discuss the spirit of Arthurian romance and legend in the novels of JCP and Charles Williams. We are especially delighted to welcome Grevel to a Powys Society conference following the publication of his important biography of Charles Williams in 2015. **Patrick Quigley**, who recently visited the Holy Land, retracing the footsteps of Llewelyn on his visit to Palestine in 1928 (*see page 26*), will examine in depth Llewelyn's evocations of the spirit of place, his views on religious belief, the Bible and his attitude to Christianity. Reflecting on his tour of Palestine Llewelyn wrote in *The Cradle of God* (1929): *I found myself treading upon this God-trodden soil, treading upon it and tracking the Great Spirit's footmarks in the hot dust*.

On Saturday evening we will present dramatised readings – yet to be decided. The book room will be open at selected times, so please bring your donations for the book sale which will be very much appreciated.

Chris Thomas

## DRAFT PROGRAMME

### Friday 18th August

- 16.00 Arrival
- 17.30 Reception
- 18.30 Dinner
- 20.00 **David Goodway**: 'Gerald Brenan: Bloomsbury, Gamel Woolsey and Spain'

### Saturday 19th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **David Stimpson**: 'John Cowper Powys in America – a Personal View'
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.15 **Grevel Lindop**: 'Saving Mid-Century Britain: Arthurian Themes in the Work of John Cowper Powys and Charles Williams'
- 13.00 Lunch
- Afternoon free
- 19.00 Dinner
- 20.30 A performance of dramatised readings (to be decided).

### Sunday 20th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Patrick Quigley**: 'The Making of a Pagan – Llewelyn Powys and Palestine'
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.00 AGM
- 12.00 Open discussion with members – topic to be confirmed
- 13.00 Lunch
- 15.00 Departure

### The Speakers

**David Goodway** was a founder member of the Powys Society in 1969 and the first vice-chair, a position he again occupies (for the third time). A historian, from 1969 he taught mainly adult students at the University of Leeds until it closed its School of Continuing Education in 2005. His books include *Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* (2nd edition, 2012), with two chapters devoted to John Cowper Powys, and an edition of the correspondence between J.C. Powys and Emma Goldman.

Gerald Brenan was a member of the Bloomsbury Group, but necessarily a fringe participant since after service in the First World War he lived largely in Spain. Back in Britain in 1930, he visited East Chaldon to meet Theodore Powys and encountered



Gamel Woolsey, Llewelyn Powys's lover who, as Powysians know well, had followed him on his return to Dorset. Brenan and Woolsey immediately fell for one another and settled in Spain together.

With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War they were compelled to leave the country temporarily and Brenan proceeded to write a major, immensely influential, work of history, *The Spanish Labyrinth: An Account of the Social and Political Background of the Civil War* (1943) – the first book to be published under his own name. But when in the early 1950s he was invited to contribute the volume on Spain to *The Oxford History of Modern Europe* he declined, explaining: *I've given up writing history. You can't get at the truth by writing history. That only a novelist can discover.* Yet whereas *The Spanish Labyrinth* was masterly and of great originality, Brenan's handful of novels left even him dissatisfied. His *Literature of the Spanish People* (1951) was enthralling and his two autobiographies much admired.

\*

**David Stimpson** describes himself as a happily ageing baby boomer. He was born and raised in Seattle, Washington, USA and now lives in New York. He has a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Washington and a master's degree in Communication Arts from Cornell University. Over the years he has served as a US Peace Corps volunteer in Malaysia, and as an intern with the Population Council in Taiwan. Subsequently, David worked both in New York and Malaysia as an account executive with the public relations firm Burson-Marsteller, then as a managing director of editors and public relations with the Wall Street based bond-rating firm, Moody's Investors Service.

David has been a member of the Powys Society since 2013. He has been an enthusiastic admirer of John Cowper Powys's life philosophy since the early 1980s, when, in a sort of alternative calling, he began researching a book on what he called 'Friends of Solitude', and by chance (or perhaps it was synchronicity at work) he discovered JCP's *A Philosophy of Solitude* in the New York Public Library. After escaping from Wall Street and retiring for good from public relations, he finally found time to write and then publish *The Greatest Escape: Adventures in the History of Solitude* (2004). John Cowper makes a cameo appearance in the book among dozens of other friends of solitude, from Zhuang Zhou and The Buddha to Henry Thoreau and Emily Dickinson.

Soon after finishing *The Greatest Escape*, David realized he should have spent more time with JCP. Though he had only read one of JCP's books thus far, he had come to regard his new friend as the wildest, most adventurous, vehement, down-to-earth, and enticing of all the advocates and philosophers of solitude he had ever met. Thus began a lonely research project to find out who this long-forgotten writer was, what his overall life-philosophy is all about, and what he was up to during the three decades he spent in America. David's talk will present his personal interpretation of JCP's philosophy and his life in America.

**Grevel Lindop** was formerly Professor of Romantic and Early Victorian Studies at the University of Manchester. Since 2001 he has been a freelance writer. His prose books include *The Opium-Eater: A Life of Thomas De Quincey* (1981; recent revised edition available as an e-book from Crux publishing); *A Literary Guide to the Lake District* (Lakeland Book of the Year 1992; now in its 3rd, revised, edition from Sigma Leisure); *Travels on the Dance Floor* (Andre Deutsch; BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week, shortlisted as Best Travel Book 2009); and *Charles Williams: The Third Inkling* (OUP; Mythopoeic Society Award for Inklings Scholarship, 2016). He has published seven collections of poems with Carcanet Press, including *Selected Poems* (2001) and *Luna Park* (2016). Work in progress includes an edition of *The Arthurian Poems of Charles Williams* (with John Matthews) and a study of the spiritual life and poetry of W.B. Yeats.

Twenty-one years (1930-51) cover the publication of Charles Williams's *War in Heaven*, *Taliessin Through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*, and of John Cowper Powys's *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Porius*. Almost at the centre of this period were the years of the Second World War. The lecture will look at ways in which both authors drew upon legends of Arthur and the Grail in attempting to illuminate and even transform the experience of their own times.

\*

**Patrick Quigley** lives in Dublin and is a retired public servant. His first novel, *Borderland* (1994) was broadcast on Irish national radio and translated into German. Recently he has written two books of popular history – *The Polish Irishman: The Life and Times of Count Casimir Markievicz* (2012) and *Sisters Against the Empire, Countess Constance Markievicz and Eva Gore-Booth in 1916/17* (2016), both available from the Liffey Press. He has given Creative Writing courses and lectured in Ireland, Poland and Ukraine. The Polish Government awarded him a Pro Memoria medal for *The Polish Irishman* in 2014. He is a long-standing member of the Powys Society and has written articles on the family, especially the connections with Ireland, in the *Powys Society Newsletter* and in *la lettre powysienne*.

Llewelyn Powys visited Palestine with Alyse Gregory in 1928, a visit which crystallized his views on religion and the supernatural. On a personal level the journey to Palestine was at a time of marital tension and his difficult love for Gamel Woolsey. His experiences led him to interrogate his religious beliefs and his upbringing in the family of a clergyman. Following the visit he wrote three 'religious books' – *The Cradle of God*, *The Pathetic Fallacy* and *A Pagan's Pilgrimage*. The talk will examine these and subsequent books in which Llewelyn outlined his philosophy of life. It will also look at the complex religious beliefs of the Powys siblings and the changing nature of religious belief in the early 20th century.

## New Members

We are delighted to be able to welcome three new members (in Gravesend, Wimborne and Durham), who have joined the Powys Society since August 2016. This brings our current total membership of the Society to 248, allowing for other members who have either resigned or not renewed their membership. Full details of trends and other membership data will be provided at the AGM at this year's conference in Llangollen on Sunday 20th August at 11.00 am.

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

---

## News and Notes

### Correction

In *Newsletter* 89, November 2016, News and Notes, p.24, it was stated incorrectly that the author of *At the Existentialist Café* was Julia Bradbury. The correct author is **Sarah Bakewell**. Apologies to members and readers for any inconvenience or confusion this error may have caused.

CT

\*

**East Chaldon** was featured in BBC South's 'Inside Out' TV local news programme, on Monday 13th February at 7.30 pm. It included information on Theodore, Llewelyn and John and showed part of Llewelyn's last Birthday Walk in August 2016, with interiors of 'The Sailor's Return' and beautiful views, including some vintage motors. Contributors included Chris Gostick and Judith Stinton (author of *Chaldon Herring: Writers in a Dorset Landscape*, 1988 and 2004).

### From Daphne Spiers

I have just come across the Powys Family Society and am interested in reading about the family. We knew Elizabeth, Will, their children and others – my father did their farm accounts and we visited on many occasions to Lewa and Kisima Farm. I have a painting by Elizabeth of Mount Kenya which I wonder whether the Society would be interested in acquiring. If you are interested in seeing the picture I will be pleased to send a photograph of it. I would prefer this picture to be lodged somewhere where people would appreciate it. I look forward to your reply.

**The Powys Society website** has recently been updated with news on the Home page of a new edition, the first edition in paperback format, of Philippa Powys's novel *The Blackthorn Winter* (1930), published by the Sundial Press, with an introduction by Glen Cavaliero. This edition is available to Powys Society members at a special limited price. The Home page also includes work in progress on the first stage of making the new comprehensive **inventory of the Powys Society Collection**, now

located at Exeter University, available on-line. The inventory opens on the website with pdf files in separate tabs or windows. There are entries for material in the collection for JCP, TFP, Llewelyn, Littleton, and Philippa Powys. Other entries will follow shortly. The page for **Publishing News** includes details of Glen Cavaliero's New and Collected Poems, *The Flash of Weathercocks*, published by Troubadour Publishing Ltd. *Newsletter* 88, July 2016, is now available to read on the website. *Newsletter* 89, November 2016, and *Newsletter* 90, March 2017, will be posted on the website in due course.

*JCP's Welsh Bible* has been donated to the Society – see Chris Thomas on *Inscriptions*.

The back page of the *TLS* dated 20 January 2017 included a photograph of JCP's house in Blaenau Ffestiniog, **1, Waterloo**, which has been on offer for sale at a price of £93,000. However, neighbours say the estate agent's advertising board has recently been removed so a sale may have already been made.

### From Michael Caines

I've just made my own brief pilgrimage to Rendham and Sweffling, as I believe the Society has done before in a more formal and probably thorough way. What a pleasure it is to see White House Farm still intact, assuming I found the right spot, and looking like a much happier home for its current owners than it was for Theodore.

### From John Gray

Peter Foss's new volume, *Recalled to Life*, (The Powys Press, 2016), is one of my *Observer* Books of the Year – just a mention, but I hope it leads to more people buying and reading the book. (Michael Caines's notice of it in *TLS* is on **p. 24** – Ed.)

### From John Hodgson

**Margaret Drabble's latest novel**, *The Dark Flood Rises*, is about different ways of living in old age. One of the characters, Owen England, is a retired lecturer in English literature. Margaret Drabble writes: *Owen had been a Cambridge, Downing-bred Leavisite when young, and was still engaged in an arcane and now inevitably one-sided dispute with the Master about Joseph Conrad and Thomas Hardy, T.F. Powys and John Cowper Powys* (Owen champions Hardy and John Cowper, against Leavis's Conrad and T.F.). We later learn that Owen is studying *cloudscapes in Gerard Manley Hopkins and Thomas Hardy and John Cowper Powys*. The novel also culminates in a flood in the Somerset Levels.

### From Chris Thomas

On 26 December I listened to a reading by Jonathan Firth, on BBC Radio Four, of the

first episode in *Book of the Week* of *Snow*, by the novelist **Marcus Sedgwick** (Little Toller Books, 2016), abridged by Katrin Williams. This episode included a brief quotation of a description of snow by Llewelyn and a reference to JCP.

#### **From Anthony Green**

I am giving a **piano recital on June 24th** at Schott's Music Room in London at 48 Great Marlborough Street, behind Oxford Street, which will include a performance of my *Piano Sonata No.5*, subtitled *Homage to John Cowper Powys*. My sonata is in five movements. The first movement is entitled *Portrait of JCP* and attempts to portray the author himself in various moods and states of mind. The second movement is an arrangement of my piece *The Slow Worm of Lenty* originally scored for soprano, flute, clarinet and cello. This is followed by two dreamlike flashbacks of ideas. The fifth movement is entitled *The Glastonbury Passion Play and Flood*. The recital commences at 7.00 pm and will also include works by Beethoven (Sonata in F, op.54) and Schubert (Sonata in A, D 959). Please contact the venue for tickets and full details on 020 7534 0710.

The Spring/Summer Newsletter of the **Alliance of Literary Societies** (humorously entitled *Not Only, but ALSO...*) gives details of its **AGM Weekend in Edinburgh, 2–4 June 2017** celebrating the 100th anniversary of the meeting of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, with the booking form for this (latest date for registering, 3rd May), and reports from many other societies (including Powys and Bennett). More information available from [www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk](http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk).

---

## **Hampstead Meeting, 3rd December 2016**

A group from the Society met upstairs in the Friend's Meeting Room in Hampstead on 3rd December, where Patrick Quigley read a paper on the friendship between T.F. Powys and the Irish writer Liam O'Flaherty. The writers met in 1924 when O'Flaherty stayed a month in East Chaldon. Both were working on the books that would make them famous – *The Informer* and *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*. O'Flaherty was a revolutionary communist and a member of the group of radical young writers who met in the Progressive Bookshop, Red Lion Street, Holborn. TFP would appear an unlikely candidate for such company, but he was highly esteemed by the revolutionaries.

PQ's paper explored the web of relationships between T.F. Powys, O'Flaherty and the publishing enterprises of the Progressive Bookshop owner, Charles Lahr. In the 1920s and '30s Lahr would publish T.F. Powys & O'Flaherty in his magazines and in special editions, along with other members of the Powys family. There was also the involvement of David

and Edward Garnett, whom John Cowper Powys lauded as 'those fearless explorers of the *Terrae Incognitae* of Genius'.

The lively discussion that followed focussed on O'Flaherty's rave review of TFP's *Mr. Tasker's Gods*. Those of us who had read the novel agreed it has been misunderstood and neglected; it is primarily a biting satire on clericalism and would have gone down well with the radicals in Red Lion Street. Perhaps the Powys brother we thought the most cautious and conventional was really the most radical of them all. Chris Thomas suggested an affinity between the TFP of *Mr. Tasker's Gods* and Jonathan Swift's *Modest Proposal*. KK noted the deceptively quiet opening to the book with its subdued ironies (*see below*). The meeting ended with tea and mince pies supplied by John Hodgson.

PQ, KK



*Liam O'Flaherty by William Roberts, on cover of New Coterie, no.3, 1926. [PQ]*

*Other Powys studies on the subject include:*

**Chris Gostick:** Charles Lahr: Theodore's Favourite Bookseller, *Cecil Woolf*, 2009

**Judith Stinton:** Chaldon Herring, Writers in a Dorset Landscape, *Black Dog Books*, 2004

**Richard Garnett:** 'Theodore Powys & the Garnetts', *Powys Journal*, Vol. XI, 2001

### ***Mr. Tasker's Gods, Chapter One***

*A subtle scene worthy of Jane Austen, with little hint of horrors to come, especially for the unfortunate Alice, whose curiosity leads her to look out of the window, 'for some reason or other'. The harmless idle school boy and old person sitting in the sun should perhaps alert us to a village where the inhabitants' chief pleasure is in tormenting their neighbours.*

The servants at the vicarage had gone to bed. Edith had just locked the back door, and Alice had taken the master the hot milk that he drank every evening at ten o'clock.



Just after ten the two servants had gone upstairs together.

Indoors there was law, order, harmony and quiet; out of doors there was nothing except the night and one owl.

The servants at the vicarage slept in a little room at the end of the back passage. They slept in one bed, and their tin boxes rested together upon the floor; there was also in the room an old discarded washing-stand. It must be remembered that servants like a room with scant furniture: it means less work and it reminds them of home. The servants at the vicarage did not pull down their blind, there was no need; they never thought that any one could possibly desire to watch them from the back garden. Beyond the back garden there were two large meadows and then the dairy-house.

The delight of being watched from outside, while one moves about a bedroom, is rare in country circles; these kinds of arts and fancies are generally only practised in cities, where the path of desire has taken many strange windings and the imagination is more awake. As a matter of fact, these two girls were much too realistic to believe that any one could possibly stand in the dark and look at them undress. Not one of the young men that they knew would have stood outside their window for an instant, so the vicarage servants had not even the womanly pleasure of pulling down the blind.

They were both very tired; they had been cleaning the house, and they had been washing up the very large number of plates that the family – ‘three in number’ so ran the advertisement – had that day soiled.

Tired girls do not go to bed, it is just the very thing that they won’t do; they will prefer even to darn their stockings, or else they pull out all the little bits of blouse stuff hidden under Sunday frocks, but they never get into bed.

Edith sat upon the end of the bed, partly clothed, and tried in vain to draw a very large hole in the heel of her stocking together. She knew very well about the hole, for a little mite of a girl walking behind her the last Sunday had very plainly and loudly remarked upon it, coming down the church path.

Alice, for some reason or other, was looking out of the window.

To the north of the village, in view of the girls’ window, there was a low down, the kind of down that an idle schoolboy with a taste for trying to do things might have attempted to throw a cricket ball over, and receive it, if it were not stopped by the gorse, running down to him again.

This down was like a plain homely green wall that kept away the north wind from the village, and in March, when an icy blast blew on a sunny day and beat against it from the north, any old person could sit on the dry grass, the village side, and think of the coming summer.

## Ian Robinson

### A Reply to Michael Kowalewski about T.F. Powys

A critic who says ‘*no reader could dispute*’ so-and-so is issuing a challenge. When Michael Kowalewski offers as something ‘*which no reader could dispute*’ that ‘*Sex is usually sado-masochistic for [T.F.] Powys*’ (Newsletter 89, p.27) I not only dispute, I wonder if we are commenting on the same author. Firstly, for T.F. Powys, sex is not ‘*usually*’ anything. His depictions are not stereotyped, he is an artist. Then: in literary criticism examples are usually necessary for a convincing argument. Michael Kowalewski does not give a single instance of sado-masochism. Nor yet of the ‘*misogyny*’ also casually attributed. I will nevertheless give one or two of the numerous counter-examples.

Luke Bird, and Jenny Bruce, for whom Mr Weston turns the water into wine, sado-masochistic? Misogyny? As for ‘*The Fear theme is everywhere...*’ Where then? In the early work, unpublished until the *Selected Early Works*, *The Bondage of Fear*. In *Kindness in a Corner* there is the episode, in this very comic novel, of Mr and Mrs Turtle, whom Sexton Truggin cures of their fear of death. But *Everywhere*?

Michael Kowalewski tells us that *The Bible of Powys is far more Old Testament than Christ and the good news* and that *It is Jehovah of wrath not Jesus of mercy who dominates the landscape*. But is Mr Weston really to be characterised as Jehovah of wrath? And think of the *Old Testament*-derived and lovely tale ‘When Thou wast Naked’: is that about wrath? As for the *New Testament* what about *The Sixpenny Strumpet*, where the strumpet herself, Mary Triddle, becomes the bride of Christ? How can anybody write about T.F. Powys without quoting!

*As the man drew near, and Mary knew that he saw her standing in the doorway, she was as joyful as a young girl upon her wedding morning, and when he approached her, she knew she was his true bride.*

*The man, though he rode upon an Ass and carried a basket of buns, bore himself like a king. He appeared too, to carry, besides the basket another and weightier burden, the griefs of many.*

*But though his looks were sorrowful, his eyes when he saw Mary were filled with joy, as though he saw her as one whom he had loved long and dearly with an everlasting love.*

Which of Michael Kowalewski’s phrases does that fit? Is this an author obsessed with fear, sado-masochistic or misogynist?

Michael Kowalewski says that ‘*[T.F.] Powys was obsessed with the Bible – at a time when it was losing its grip on writers ...*’ T.F. Powys’s principal contemporaries



were T.S. Eliot, James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence. To which of these does Michael Kowalewski's remark apply?

*Ian Robinson is a long-standing member of the Powys Society and an authority on the work of T.F. Powys. He has been responsible for producing editions of formerly unpublished works by T.F. Powys through the Brynmill Press, (publishers of books on literature, literary criticism, poetry, politics and theology): Father Adam (1990), The Market Bell (1991), Mock's Curse (1995), The Sixpenny Strumpet (1997) and Selected Early Works (2005), as well as Theodora Scutt's memoir Cuckoo in the Powys Nest (all currently in print).*

*Ian gave a memorable talk on T.F. Powys at our 2005 conference in Llangollen on 'T.F. Powys and the Renewal of English Prose'.*

*Michael Kowalewski was reviewing Theodore Powys's Gods and Demons by Zouheir Jamoussi. He has led discussions and given a number of talks on TFP.*

KK & CT

---

CHARLES PRENTICE

from

**Preface to *God's Eyes A-Twinkle*,  
an Anthology of the Stories of T.F. Powys (1947)**

... Powys's style is his own; yet it has received strength and suppleness from many older books, and principally the Bible. Other influences have been the sixteenth and seventeenth century poets and dramatists, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the clarity that graces innumerable works of the eighteenth century. How exquisitely chosen are the verse quotations that appear in the stories! How apt is any allusion to Montaigne, *Don Quixote* or Charles Lamb! With what significance does Powys handle such common words as 'honest', 'mild', 'noble', and 'innocent' – enabling himself, when he desires, to suffuse them with a maximum of irony! Writing has been a long study. And so has thought. In his first published book, *An Interpretation of Genesis*, the interlocutors are the Lawgiver of Israel and Zetetes. Zetetes – the Seeker, the Inquirer – is Powys. He becomes the Observer and Contemplator; he is always the seeker, with an inquisitive curiosity. Those active wits are applied to his reading and to everything he sees and hears. There may not be, there cannot be, any finality. In *Soliloquies of a Hermit* he writes: *I am without belief; – a belief is too easy a road to God.*

Yet this statement is refuted elsewhere. The upshot might seem to be a sort of pantheism, a mystical point of view that is many times expressed, for instance in

*The Left Leg* and in *The Dog and the Lantern*. There is no finality; everything is 'becoming'; everything changes. God is omnipresent. *Our* only ending, so far as we know it, is: 'Lie thee down, Oddity!'

\*

... It would be a mistake to attribute to Powys any systematic theory, either theological or metaphysical. He does not try to pose or prove anything. Let body and soul be inextricably entwined; earth may sometimes seem to be spirit, and spirit earth – perhaps they are the same in a curious way. John Pardy may have been right to step into the Waves; but in *A Loud Lie* suicides are described as 'having lost the truth in this world'. Powys's work is as crammed with antinomies as life itself. He has learnt from Spinoza; also from Dean Swift. From Schopenhauer, and Pascal. He is a poet and a writer of stories; a mediator, not a commentator; a creator, not a philosopher: – yet outside purely literary practice, he has much wisdom too to impart. It is difficult to assess what he would or would not accept in Christianity. He frequently uses the Bible stories and symbolism. Why shouldn't he? Shelley and Keats made use of the tales and beliefs of the Greeks. And what if there are contradictions? Even in the playful tale of *Jesus' Walk* there is reverence. An artist must remember his *dramatis personae*, and not forget humilitude. On 'Nature' herself the sages have failed to come to a conclusion. To some she is friendly; to others hostile. To some indifferent; to others the opposite. Why should not these contradictions be present in the mind of one man?

Before the Bucket and the Rope begin to converse together in the 'fable' of that name, there is a significant remark:

Both were interested in any kind of life that was not like themselves, such as mankind, because both were humble and did not consider, as so many do, that they or their own kind deserved the most notice.

It is this point of view that endues the *Fables* with tremendous power. The Stone jeers at Mr Thomas – he is but mortal man, of little account, and even his skull will lose its identity; the Flea knows more than Mr Johnson about the mystery of things. It is not only animals and human creatures that can talk. Of all Powys's stories the *Fables* are farthest from everyday reality. Their conception leaves him free to depict the insignificance of man amid the huge disregarded company in which he lives – from seemingly dumb familiar objects to the hidden forces behind the mundane screen. Clearly, Good and Evil exist, though they change into each other bewilderingly; the good and honest life is good and honest; and humility and resignation are necessary to it. But no morals are drawn. Powys is no more a moralist than a philosopher – whatever moral and philosophical notions he may keep to himself.

His character is sensitive and complicated; it cannot be summed up in a few words. Powys is like nobody but himself. He is modest; scarcely one of his stories is told

from the standpoint of an 'I'. His love is for 'the meek, the white, the gentle'. He loathes avarice, hypocrisy and lust; at cruelty and tyranny he will whip round like an adder. He has a grave roguish eye. The sinner has a place in his affections. *The Only Penitent* is a eulogy of love; a paean to the forgiveness proffered by Man to the World Spirit, to God, who has caused him all his miseries. The merry woman Minnie Cuddy is to be loved as well as the jolly knave; and all the delightful procession of the seasons, the scents, colours and sounds of this pleasant earth, into which we shall all be gathered. Humility and resignation! Humour, irony and a spice of cunning! These are our weapons.

Besides the idea, it is Powys's own character that informs these stories. They are searches to reveal to us a history of some sort, told as objectively and loyally to what he himself knows as was Mr Dottery's 'History of the Kings of England'. They are explorations in a great and curious country. The novels *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* and *Mockery Gap* were first written as short stories. So the stories have to be composed with deliberation and subtlety – qualities which are not merely artistic but are idiosyncratic as well. There are quicksilver transitions from this position to that; not everything is to be included, only what will best display the theme in its full scope. There has to be design; and simplicity behind the turns and intricacies of the plot. The vocabulary too must be simple; the racy rustic dialogue, though extraordinarily faithful to actual Dorset speech, is stylized for the sake of simplification. And the characters have to be simplified somewhat and disembarassed of the otiose and accidental. Extreme psychological nuances are not Powys's care. He sees his people plainly: the epicurean Mr Dottery; the impish Sexton Truggin; the bloated Farmer Lord and Farmer Told; the young girls, the flowers of the field.

This economy of essentials, combined with an elaboration of setting, is paralleled in colour, line and imaginative sympathy by the Books of Hours, the tapestries, the sculpture, and the stained glass of the late fourteenth century in France, and more sparsely and clumsily in England. For this reason Powys has sometimes been called a 'Gothic' writer. Yet he has simply followed his own genius. Everything has turned out perfectly naturally – and if we have not seen the sights he has, we can easily arrive at a good understanding of them.

Powys uses realism as a poet. His stories are creations as well as designs. They have grown from the idea, and from himself. Like a blade of grass from a seed they have grown from his life and his domestic life; and so in their natural originality they give pleasure, as natural and original things do. They have been tended with art and well looked after by a sound gardener and forester. The big novels stand up like oaks: *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* and *Unclay*. Then we traverse a copse of flowering trees: *Kindness in a Corner*, an almond; *Innocent Birds*, a wild cherry; with spiky sloe and early blackberry blossom in the hedges. The stories spring up everywhere in the fields, on the heath and the downs: 'When Thou Wast Naked', a cluster of lilies from earth and water, dying, alas, against

a vista of 'bare ruined choirs'; 'I Came as a Bride', a pale anemone; 'The Devil', a gay flaunting pumpkin.

They should all be read slowly. Powys is not a literalist; his words convey more than their face value. These stories treat of the general and unalterable, with subtlety of thought and feeling, and with simplicity of presentation. Wisdom and humour are embedded in them. They reveal the infinite mystery, the fluid inconsistencies of life. They are delicate, wiry, and human. 'God's eyes' are 'a-twinkle'; but the main business is the incalculable doings of that oddity Man.

(A later (1984) preface by the poet Peter Redgrove to a proposed reissue of this anthology is in NL47.)

\* \*

GLEN CAVALIERO

Theodore Powys Under Bulbarrow

for Gerard Casey

The churchyard wall's so close an old man in his bed  
may share the slumber through the neighbouring thick clay  
of the young man buried deep three hundred years;  
an ear serene in stone beneath the yew recalls  
slim bones that held a pulse of darkness, roused the lark –  
the downs' crest to them a threshold, clouds a roof.

The ancient one lies quiet and listens to the robin  
chiming in a holly thicket through the twilight glass;  
young flesh, loam now, can warm old aching joints.  
An unheard psalm, still with its own silence, counterpoints  
all death: life slays itself. The woodworm ticks away  
as the old man turns in bed towards the grave, the root of God.

*From INHABITANTS, in The Flash of Weathercocks, p.352*

*This poem appeared in The Powys Review (No.4, 1978-9), and in Glen's collection Elegy for St Anne's (1982), dedicated to Gerard Casey, who suggested its present title. The tombstone of the 'young man' is illustrated in PR.*

## REVIEWS

John Hodgson

All the Splendours of Passionate Song

Glen Cavaliero, *The Flash of Weathercocks – New and Collected Poems*  
(Matador Kibworth Beauchamp, 2016, 451 pp., ISBN 978 1785892 349,  
£24.99 hardback, £11.99 paperback)

With Glen Cavaliero about to mark his ninetieth birthday, here are his collected poems. Most members of the Powys Society will have some of his eight volumes on their appearance over the last forty years, but perhaps few will have all of them, and it is a fine thing to have all the poems, now rearranged by theme, and indeed speaking to one another in conversational groups.

Topography, the inner lives of places and of nature, the possibility of the numinous, church architecture, love, an unflinching or honestly flinching view of loss and death, and the pathos of transient social mores, these are the concerns of these poems. Not to forget a spirit of camp fun. They are beautifully crafted, with an ear to the inner music of words and of nature.

... the sheep weave in and out  
in time with the wind, led  
by the mineral rhythm of the earth ...

[‘Saga’, p.111]

Their topography ranges all over the British Isles – occasionally beyond – and every reader will find some village, isolated church, lakeland ghyll or wealden beechwood they imagined had personal associations for them alone. Other places they may not know, and will have to look up. (Where is Folkington, whose badgers are being gassed by the government?) The most beloved landscapes are the Lake District, the Yorkshire moors (as gritty and austere as anything in Basil Bunting), Norfolk, and the Welsh marches, but there are also evocations of the indwelling genius of the most unpromising places, as in ‘North Midlands’, ‘where ale is real as cooling towers’. Nor are landscapes always benign. The fens especially are sinister, agoraphobic:

Kale; beet; embankments; drains:  
levelling and alignment is the rule.

[‘At Nordelph’, p.89]

Instinct with natural life and mapped by historical association, these landscapes are vulnerable to destruction and spoliation: ‘the nuclear reactors waiting out of sight beyond the hill.’

The landscapes are punctuated, defined, and made both human and divine by many churches, each one precisely rendered with its own individuality, its spirelet or steeple, squat tower or vast singing choir. The faith of the churches may be in decline:

children scribble in the visitor’s book,  
giggling, and the sanctuary lamp’s extinct.

[‘Fenland Churches’, p.316]

This is imaginative territory famously inhabited by Philip Larkin (five years Glen’s senior) but the church visitor in these poems is quite different from Larkin’s gauche and ignorant cyclist.

To stoop and enter is to step right out  
into more space than time contains  
or quiet can sing.

[‘A Redundant Church’, p.126]

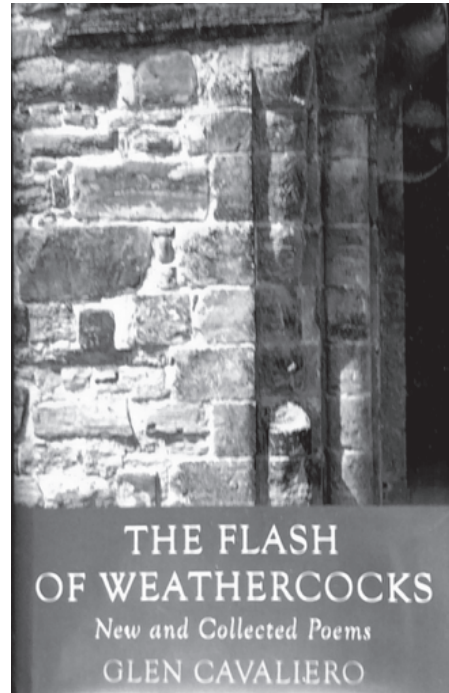
These are poems informed by a knowledge of theology and architecture, and indeed the stones of the churches enact the mysteries of faith as their mediaeval architects intended. Perhaps a special love is reserved for the haunting presences of large churches that have lost their villages, as in the magnificent and unnerving Norfolk poem ‘The Church at Salle’.

Landscape and architecture shape one of the very finest poems, ‘Armistice’ whose theme is altogether larger. There is ‘the carcass of a church’ which becomes the occasion of a profound meditation, questing and suggestive, on the grief of war. The focus of the poem is fluid, and moves through meditations of conscience through a landscape that is part fenland, part Flanders. The grim and magnificent ‘Crosswords’ meditates on the crucifixion on a northern moor. It would take a rash and literal-minded reader to spell out the transcendental reality these poems point to. As T.F. Powys memorably put it, ‘a belief is too easy a road to God’.

Often in brutal juxtaposition, here is a brisk vein of satire of the crushing inanities of modern life. ‘Memorial Services’ lampoons the euphemisms of the contemporary funeral, ‘the crem’s smooth velvet-textured glide’ until the poem in a characteristic swerve of tone, concludes with the unforgettable *logos*: ‘The sting of death is love’.

There are character sketches, rendered with a novelist’s eye for hidden motivation. The most memorable are of elderly women, who might generically be termed aunts, figures as if from the novels of Barbara Pym or Elizabeth Taylor. There is affectionate camp in the portrayal of these often formidable ladies, but also poignancy and tenderness, and even more, in the mystical rapture experienced in the ordinary existence of a suburban wife in ‘Viewpoint’. Some of these women can be sinister as a spinster in Angus Wilson, as in ‘Nelly Sly’, in which a house represents a mind,





or the other way round. There is the profoundly moving poem, ‘The Last Virgins’, about the generation of women deprived of husbands by the carnage of the First World War.

Readers of this newsletter will want to know what influence or congruence or association exists between these poems and the Powys brothers, in whose imaginative world Glen Cavaliero has been steeped for so many decades. There are poems dedicated to members of the Powys circle, and some explicitly or subtly take up themes from Powys books. A mention of ‘the swift passage of the Dove’ is more than a glancing homage to the opening of John Cowper Powys’s *Autobiography*. It is an instance of how the poet embeds and composts his favourite literature into his own work, as John Cowper did, both consciously and half-consciously.

There is a deeper association in a common debt to Thomas Hardy. These poems, like Hardy’s, are rooted in time and place. They are subtle and musical, drawing out the inner music of language and nature in unexpected ways, like the verse of Hardy, the trained architect, who wrote of ‘the cunning irregularity’ of architecture and

poetry. This skill is there in Glen’s ‘On Waterloo Bridge’: re-enacting ‘the tension of the bridge’s stride beneath you’, a poem will be

a sentence that articulates a faithful consecration,  
the tone rung true, the tempo flexible  
in pitch, in poise.

[‘On Waterloo Bridge’, p.237]

Meanwhile, beneath the art, and through the images of landscape, history, and faith, there runs the poet’s creative impulse [‘Catching the Bus’, p.397]:

...the ongoing troublesome need to articulate that which can never be known –  
the root and the cause of all that is here, our reason and madness and knowledge;  
the enigma of beauty; impersonal love; all the splendours of passionate song.

Kate Kavanagh

Islands

Timothy Hyman, *The World New Made: Figurative Painting in the Twentieth Century* (Thames and Hudson, 2016, ISBN 978-0-500-23945-2.

256 pp, 158 illustrations. £32)

In this sensational book Tim Hyman assembles fifty-four artists, Applebroog to Yeats, nearly a third of them unknown to this ignorant reader. Many of them are omitted, wholly or partly, from current narratives of twentieth-century art, in whose versions figurative painters are ‘cast as backward children, conservative throwbacks, outdated survivors’.

TH calls the book a ‘collective retrieval’, ‘both anthology and hagiography’, of those isolated free spirits ‘who have found an idiom for human-centred painting in the midst of modern life’, and whose paintings he has loved most. ‘My bias is evident: I am less concerned with “straight realism” than with artists who create narratives and microcosms’.

Not a few of these chosen narratives are what might conventionally be called ‘disturbing’ (the art of Not Forgetting the Unpleasant?) – as of course there have historically always been (Bosch? Goya?), but formerly, usually, with subjects more widely shared. These artists’ personal microcosms, springing from their ‘concern

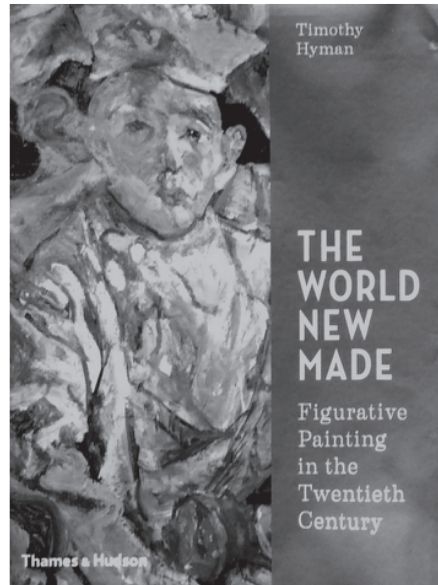
for a core of experience – physical, social, psychological – that could not be reduced or schematized’ (as the various forms of abstraction sought to do), are necessarily more esoteric, relying to a greater extent on the empathy of the onlooker, and on their originality, to carry their message. Many of the painters illustrated here, not previously known or not well known, strike home to this viewer: Khakar, Red Grooms, Ken Kiff (memories of Tim’s talk to the Powys Society on ‘the pictorial equivalent’), Jacob Lawrence, late Bonnard, Alice Neel, Otto Dix, Marsden Hartley, Carlo Carrà ...

In ‘a large field crowded with the most diverse individual artists’, TH says, ‘I have conceived [the book] as an archipelago – with each painter as an island on which to touch down, however briefly, almost as a picaresque episode, before flying on to the next’. His analysis and explanation of these often strange, sometimes alarming, sometimes familiar islands is lucid and stimulating, encouraging further flights of discovery over the troubled yet undaunted ocean of the twentieth century.

Michael Caines

Peter J. Foss, editor, *Recalled to Life – Llewelyn Powys: A Consumptive’s Diary, 1911*  
(Powys Society, Mappowder, 2016, 169pp., paperback £10,  
ISBN 978-1-874-559-52-8)

In November 1909, the young Llewelyn Powys – who was later to become moderately well known as an essayist – coughed up blood for the first time. He had contracted tuberculosis, and would soon be packed off by his family to the Davos-Platz sanatorium in Switzerland. *Recalled to Life* is his diary for 1911, the year that he returned to England, somewhat recovered. Annotated with companionable



diligence by Peter J. Foss, who is long accustomed to the challenge of transcribing Llewelyn’s hand, it will appeal to those interested in the Powyses, their eccentric writings and the literary culture of the time, as well as those interested in the English countryside during those pre-war years.

The younger brother of John Cowper Powys (‘Jack’) and T.F. Powys (‘Bob’), Llewelyn saw plenty of his scribbling siblings in 1911. The year and the diary begin at Davos, however, in the company of fellow patients blessed with nicknames such as the ‘doomed boy’ and the ‘Jocular Whisperer’. Substantial quotations of poetry and letters from home (including Jack’s report after a night with a Liverpudlian prostitute) give way to the journey home at the end of April and much tramping about Somerset and Dorset during that notably sweltering summer. There is much flirting and lecherous observation of young women (petticoats and the like are duly noted), much enlightening rural chat with strangers (‘Gave a drink to a postman; he liked frosty weather best’), and much philosophical declaiming, both to other people and to the diary itself. There are the occasional tests for Llewelyn’s ‘neo-paganism’ against Theodore’s ‘blackest melancholy’ or his parents’ more infuriatingly conventional piety. (‘I will not believe’, Llewelyn has to repeat to himself as a ‘glorious bright light’ illuminates a church, ‘I will not believe’.) There is the Wessex landscape, gloriously shaped by man and the seasons: ‘Plovers tumbled on the wing behind me wailing plaintively’; ‘I sat on a gate in the Chilthorne Lane with honeysuckle, privet, meadowsweet, knapweed, scabious, goldenrod, in my hand’; ‘A soft waving mist like a wedding veil was spread over the village’. In August, not long before ‘the hottest day ever recorded’, there is a first glimpse of an aeroplane, ‘humming like a bumblebee’. Above all, there is the sheer existential appetite of a man returned from the dead: ‘every day, every turn of the globe, has its own unique existence’.

Llewelyn Powys reworked the in-the-moment material of his pre-war diaries in *Skin for Skin* (1925); the accrued succulence of 1911 survives in this artful memoir, even overshadowed as it is by the memory of the disease that had so radically redirected his life. He died in 1939, not long after the outbreak of another epoch-smashing world war.

*TLS, 11th November 2016, p.34, In Brief: Diaries*

PATRICK QUIGLEY  
*Llewelyn and Alyse in Palestine*

Llewelyn Powys's pilgrimage to Palestine with Alyse Gregory in 1928 marked a turning point in his life and writing career. The experience crystallized his views on religion in three books and helped him formulate his philosophy of life. He was in fragile health from tuberculosis and his exertions in the hard climate brought him close to death, but he relished the experience. He wrote to his sister Lucy in December 1928: *It really was extraordinary inspecting those old places that Mother used to read to us about from the dining-room sofa.*

In October 2016 I visited the Holy Land (a term acceptable to Christians, Jews and Moslems) and attempted to compare my pilgrimage with that of Llewelyn and Alyse. The country has changed enormously in the twentieth century; Llewelyn thought it relatively unspoiled, but lamented the noise caused by Arab motorists speeding on Mount Carmel. But there is more than one Promised Land – the Biblical sites are a timeless landscape which has shaped three world religions, a mythic bedrock beneath the pylons and concrete cities of modern Israel.

Llewelyn and Alyse disembarked at the port of Haifa in early October 1928 to stay in an Austrian Hospice on Mount Carmel. After dinner they walked on the mountain where Llewelyn recalls the romance of the story of the Prophet Elijah *with his cloak and staff and his wallet of parched barley*. On the following day they sat beneath a carob tree to watch an Arab camp with black tents and camels, a scene that had changed little in two thousand years. Haifa in 2016 is a busy modern city, the streets crowded with tour buses and container lorries. The paths where Llewelyn & Alyse walked are covered by exclusive three-storey houses and roads lined with modern shops. They came too soon to experience the wonderful Baha'i Gardens stretching from the Old City up the slopes of Mount Carmel. My tour bus followed the twenty mile journey they took in a pony and trap to a monastery at Muharakha (the Sacrifice) where Elijah routed the prophets of Baal.

Llewelyn was delighted with the prospect from the monastery roof: *I saw Mount Tabor and Gilboa and the hills about Nazareth and Little Hermon. I saw the plain of Jezreel and the brown dusty sun-absorbing hills of Samaria*. In 2016 I was delighted to stand on the same roof with the same spectacular view. After some time on the roof Llewelyn felt dizzy and feared the tuberculosis had returned.

The monks brought him to a cell to rest for three hours. On the wall hung a drawing of Elijah with his foot upon the neck of a prostrate priest of Baal. It was a pivotal moment; as he lay in his fever Llewelyn recalled how Elijah and his followers slaughtered four hundred rival priests: *The look on Elijah's features I knew well; I have seen it on many a clergyman's face – a narrow tyrannical*

*dangerous look, inimical to natural happiness, entirely devoid of natural goodness*. I thought the image LIP saw a relic of another age until I encountered a laminated picture of Elijah on a restaurant wall raising a sword to finish off the unfortunate pagan priest. Nothing has changed.

Llewelyn and Alyse were stricken with fever and spent the next ten days in bed. On recovery they went to Nazareth, an Arab village with many religious buildings on the hills. Llewelyn had great reverence for Jesus the man and was enchanted by the village. *When once we have rid our minds of all Church teaching how deeply we can be moved by the few authentic utterances of this prophet, so sensitive, so stamped with immortal simplicity!*

Nazareth in 2016 is a cosmopolitan city in two parts, the Arab Lower City with the historic sites and the Jewish Upper City; the buildings are stacked like stone boxes right up to the skyline. Llewelyn visited Mary's Well and photographed native women with water jugs on their heads. Today the well is smothered by a Greek Orthodox Church where throngs of tourists jostle to take 'selfies' in the crypt. The Church of the Annunciation, where the couple sat at the back and listened to *the honeybee hum of the human race at its prayers*, has been replaced by a building with stunning mosaics of Mary and Jesus. One problem with the Holy Land is that the original artefacts have long decayed and the pilgrim needs some familiarity with the Biblical narrative to appreciate the significance of the 'sights'. In the 4th Century St Helena began a trend of building basilicas and churches to remedy the deficiency.

Llewelyn's interest in the flora and fauna of Palestine results in some of his most heartfelt writing: *Passing down that road with no footfalls sounding but our own ... with tiny crickets piping, and with the flickering shadows of bats on the white dust, I would gladly have had Christianity to be true.*

He was delighted with Galilee: *I never imagined anything more blue, more fresh ... I could see where the river Jordan entered the lake and ... flowed out ... equal to the distance from Lulworth Cove to Weymouth ...* On their first night in Tiberias they went to the shore and sat on the stones. Donkeys passed on the road; a woman came to collect water in a bucket. *Jesus had let it run through his fingers, had held it in the cup of his hand, had drunk of it*. In 1928 the stone houses were built to the shoreline; today the obstacles are fences, walls, marinas and gates. Eventually I found steps leading to the dark beach where young men were fishing and having a barbecue while listening to music on radios. The atmosphere of 1928 can never be recaptured, but I sat for a while on a rock and imagined Llewelyn and Alyse beside me listening to the lapping waves.

A boat trip on Galilee allows the pilgrim to visit the places where Jesus preached and performed miracles. We stopped in Kibbutz Ginosar at the museum with a boat



from the time of Jesus, discovered in 1986. Llewelyn and Alyse visited Capernaum where Jesus taught in the synagogue. The town is an archaeological site with carved pillars recognizable in Llewelyn's photographs. At lunch I make another connection when served a local catch, Peter's Fish, with snake-like scales and lemon-coloured fins. Llewelyn imagined its ancestors listening to Jesus telling stories on the shore. He reports accurately that it was *dainty-tasting*. Another attraction unknown in 1928 is Qumran south of Jerusalem, the site of the remarkable Dead Sea Scrolls, with a visitor centre and ancient stone houses.

The highlight of any Holy Land pilgrimage is Jerusalem which Llewelyn found more moving than Athens or Rome. *It was from these stones piled high on a whale-back of common earth that the strongest yearnings of the human heart have sprung*. The city is the source of *the most extravagant challenge to the rule of matter*, despite being *hardly larger than Dorchester*. Even though he decides that the stones have no spiritual power he concludes *it is impossible to rob them of their natural poetry*. When they walk through the Jaffa Gate at sunset he feels *a trembling down my spine and through the marrow of my thigh-bones*. They stay at the American Colony hotel on Mount Scopus where he writes somewhat irreverently: *This mountain pleases me well, it is as full of Gods as the White Nose of rabbits*.

In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre he was impressed by pillars with carved flowers dating back to St Helena. He sat for a long time outside of Christ's Tomb, but detested the surroundings *decorated like a booth in a circus*. *It was covered with banners and other bright-coloured hangings*. They were disappointed to find the legendary grave concealed by a slab of marble. *The spirit of Jesus was not here and never had been here and that I knew*, he declaims. He sounds disappointed at the lack of a supernatural ambience and was annoyed at the number of priests: *I am sure Father would have sighed very heavily had he been with us ...* The tomb is contained in a building inside the church and in 2016 was surrounded by scaffolding for conservation. The sepulchre is divided among six Christian churches with a warren of corridors and candle-lit altars. Any sense of the sacred is diminished by queues of impatient pilgrims pushing towards the tomb where black-clad clergy briskly usher us in and out of the small chamber.

Llewelyn and Alyse were more impressed by the Wailing Wall where about fifty Jews were praying. The Moslems only allowed small numbers to pray there and Jews did not have free access until 1967. Llewelyn notes: *They swayed backward and forward in front of the masonry in a kind of sexual ecstasy. They kissed the dumb blocks, they laid the palms of their hands flat against them ... What memories these Jews have! Was there ever such a people?* In 2016 the Jews have unlimited access to the wall, but are constantly on guard against suicide attacks; visitors must

pass through a security check with metal detectors. Men and women use separate sections, but when I visited they were praying quietly before the sun-heated blocks of stone.

Llewelyn ponders how places which set the imagination trembling are no different from any other. *Under the shadow of eternity this celebrated Temple area is in no way to be preferred to East Chaldon Green – mud and stones and grass and hawkweed!* However, the world does not make pilgrimage to East Chaldon, not yet anyway. On the Mount of Olives they stand gazing at the Golden Gate, its twin portals sealed with masonry until the End of Days. In 2016 the gate remains sealed before the tombs of thousands of Crusaders and Jews.

Llewelyn risks his fragile health by exploring the walls of Jerusalem. Above the Pool of Siloam an excavation was taking place to find the tomb of King David; Llewelyn was not enthusiastic: *I hoped that those who had undertaken this enterprise would lose their money. I have no wish to see this royal tomb ravished*. He was feeling feverish and hoped water from the Pool would help. *I was walking too much ... I was aware of renewed activity in my lungs and a fever in my blood*. The native women laughed as he doused head and shoulders with water.

At breakfast an American schoolmaster defended the lynching of Negroes, arousing in Llewelyn *a current of unreasoning fury*. He was about to attack when the illness struck. *I lay in bed for many days and yet never spat white. For twenty years I have been sick and yet blood can never come from my chest without my concluding for a certainty that now at last the end of my protracted reprieve has arrived*. Despite his disbelief in the supernatural he is grateful that *God clapped his hands for me – not once, nor twice*.

There is not space enough here to give more than a sample of Llewelyn's experiences in Palestine and his shifting attitude to religion. *I could have stayed with profit in Palestine for a year*; he wrote to Lucy in December. After nine days of frantic movement across the county I can concur with his sentiment. Despite the political conflict and human suffering the Holy Land holds a special place in the imagination of the world and is a source of endless interest.

Llewelyn wrote three books based on his pilgrimage – *The Cradle of God* (1929), an evaluation of the Bible, followed by a book of essays, *The Pathetic Fallacy* (1930), and a travelogue entitled *A Pagan's Pilgrimage* in 1931. All quotations are from the latter and from *The Letters of Llewelyn Powys*.

*I would like to acknowledge the help of Peter Foss in researching Llewelyn's religious attitudes and the help of W.J. Keith's Ultimate Things: Christianity, Myth and the Powyses (Powys Society, 2013).*

PQ

## Alyse's Birth Certificate

### From Janice Gregory

I recently secured a copy of Alyse's birth certificate. Guess what?! Her father, who filled out the certificate 6 months after Alyse's birthday, lists her name as Alice Earle Gregory and her birthdate as July 19, 1882, not 1884, as is commonly assumed.

I had become curious about her name and birth date as family documents and those listed on Ancestry.com variously recorded 'E' as her middle name, and 1882 and 1883 as her birth year. Most notably: 1. *Certificate of Registration of an American Citizen dated 15 Sep 1915 in Leeds, England* indicates she was born July 19, 1882; indicates her name was 'Alyse E. Gregory'; signed by both Homer M. Byington (her brother-in-law, my grandfather) and 'Alyse Gregory'. 2. *Passenger List of the SS Mauretania, dated 25 Sep 1914* indicates the arrival of Alyse Gregory in NY, and that she was born July 19 1882. 3. *Passport Application dated 1915* and signed by Alyse Gregory indicates she was born July 19, 1883 and lists her occupation as 'suffrage organizer'. 4. *US Census dated June 5, 1900* indicates Alyse Gregory was born July 1882. 5. *US Census dated April 23, 1910* states that 'Alice Gregor' was 'age 27'.

So I went to the City Hall in Norwalk, CT, where she was born, to get an official copy of her birth certificate, which I have attached. I think that her family and she changed the spelling of her name and dropped referring to her middle name sometime in her childhood. I have several letters from Alyse's parents all of which refer to her as Alyse. I've never heard her called Alice except by some of my English friends. I'm wondering if Alyse is the English spelling for Alice.

In terms of her birth date, I conclude that it is July 19, 1882 and that references to 1883 and 1884 are inaccurate. Does anyone know why it is often noted as '1884'? Is this because she is assumed to be Llewelyn's age? Maybe she colluded in this deception because she hated being older than he. I have no idea and welcome your input and/or corrections.

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
Public Health Statistics Section—Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.A.  
Certified Copy of Birth Record

I CERTIFY the following refers to be correct from the best information which I can obtain:

Full name of child, Alice Earle Gregory  
Place of birth, Norwalk Street and Number, \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of birth, July 19 1882 Sex of Child, \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Father, James G. Gregory  
Residence of Father, Norwalk Street and No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_ State or Country, \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Age, 29 Color, W  
Maiden Name of Mother, Ann L. Davis  
Birthplace of Mother, Wassachusetts Color, W  
Age of Mother, 30 Number of Child, \_\_\_\_\_ Number now living, \_\_\_\_\_  
Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Registrar or Deputy, J. P. Gregory M.D.  
Dated at, Norwalk this 7 day of June 19 82

I certify that this is a true copy of the original certificate as recorded in this office.

Attest: Richard M. Quinn, Registrar of Vital Statistics  
Date: DEC 29 1916 Town of Norwalk

NOT GOOD WITHOUT SEAL OF CERTIFYING OFFICIAL

## Looking at Phudd

*In January KK had the delight of another visit to Columbia County, its highlight a walk up Phudd Hill with Ruth Dufault, kindly conducted by Conrad Vispo. This was from the steep wooded back of the hill, with light snow on the crisp orange leaves, scattered boulders and tumbled remains of stone walls, the magical pools white with ice. The Phudd Stone and the chieftain's grave still not surely identified – next time? The wooded slopes above Powys's and other houses along the road have spread downwards in the past half-century, so JCP's views of and from Phudd Hill must have changed a certain amount. The diary extracts are from his first visits with Phyllis, and winters 1930 to 1934. The name Phudd for the hill, now in general use, seems of uncertain origin: Powys was told that the German hamlet was once called Fud (as in 'fuddle', meaning drink). Or it could derive from a word for the back-end of an animal, like the hill at the end of a ridge. 'Miss Pettigrew' (19th Jan. 1931) was the imaginary ideal housekeeper whom JCP had asked his sister to find for them (Magda Hagen the real one arrived three days later; she lasted until July). The phantom 'dead Indians' of Phudd became increasingly interfering until JCP countermanded them.*

1929 (on their first visit)

Friday, 4th October

... On the way back from the village I entered the wood of our Hill and came like a gorilla forcing my way thro' the undergrowth & catching glimpses of the valley. Stones, mosses, hemlock trees all were lovely. I had almost an ecstasy to be in such a place ...

Saturday, 5th October

I got up while it was still dark – but there was a deeply bloody stain in the East. But the Morning Star was there & over my head over the Hill was Jupiter very large – I felt hypnotized by the power of the earth to stay & I stayed. I had my coat. And I saw all the processes of the dawn. Tawny brown clouds – then light brown clouds – then gold in the east – then rose-coloured clouds everywhere. Then daffodil sky. Then a very curious phenomenon – a Dull sky like mid-day without sun, without character ... a neutral day. The sky fallow, waiting. And, at this, the earth too lost its hypnotic power. Until this, the earth was dark, insubstantial dark, deep, full of liquid hollows, mystic, more important than the two silver planets or the gold sky, dark, living, full of indrawn spirit. But now all was neutral and flat. O how slow the dawn was! I climbed the Hill, led by the hamadryad Birch Tree & then higher up led by the five nakeds – five Birch Trees – and as I kissed them at that second the Sun rose; pure white burning fire.

1930

Sunday 13th – Monday 14th April

Alone I walked to the Five Naked and then on and on to the top of the hill where there is a sort of stone circle where I prayed to the dead great chief and to his unknown gods and I found a single arbutus and two hypaticas ... How should I not go up there the first day?

Sunday 20th December

Woke up before 'twas light at all. Got up before the sun. Took the Small Black [their new dog] via the mail where the sun was half-risen over the ridge, large and round and driving the clouds before it like a living Godlike Circle of Power and Consciousness. A great black hound with a baying roar like that of a Lion, an old fierce one, was roving about the foot of Phudd. Phudd itself and all the sky behind it was luminous with a lovely opalescent colour – hard to describe – a pale rosy opal tint but diffused like water in which a mountain of mother-of-pearl has been dissolved.

1931

Thursday 8th January

I saw the sun rise. I marked the place where it rose. It is warm in the sun today. I got the mail, I took the Black. The fields were glittering. I stepped on bluish ice in that watery place near the thorns where we roll under the railing into the sloping field. Phudd and all the hills were on clear translucent air and cold bright sun. It is America! I thought Never do we have winter sunshine like this.



*Phudd Hill,  
frozen pond  
[Conrad Vispo]*

Monday 12th January

All is Snow. A heavy snow storm ... O how deep and snow white ... on every pine and birch and willow and plane – masses of soft white elemental Substance the flesh of God the Son, white as wool as ivory, whiter than milk white as light itself and heavy and soft and silent on all.

Thursday 15th January

Zero night last night. Terrible cold ... I saw this morning from beginning to end the whole sun-rise. The first I have patiently watched for the whole up-rising since once, long ago, on the slope of Phudd. There was green in the sky. Then pale gold. Then I watched the line of trees grow clearer and clearer outlined on that noble Ridge every curve of which I hope one day to know so that I could draw it. Then behold! I saw the sun's Penumbra ... a sort of anticipatory Eidolon of the half-sun or crescent sun projected above horizon about six inches to my view then saw that queer bite downwards of blaze. Then I saw the trees of that distant ridge across the actual rising disk of the orb, which was of white fire, not yellow fire. Thought of 'that angel which John saw in the sun' ... Then ... 'twas too blazing ... even then, in coat-hole, I saw a lemon-coloured orb surrounded by red fire! This was what might be called the after-mirage of the weak stunned over-powered mortal brain after seeing the Head of God!

Monday 19th January

Snow, snow, snow, heavy snow. Snow! ... Aye, how heavy the snow fell. All horizons were darkened. The hill we go over to Ficke's non-existent. The red barn on the high hill gone ... all dark with snow ... After putting Black under sofa safe after walk ... what did I proceed next to do but struggle in the falling snow and fallen snow up hill behind house to worship the Stone and the God of Phudd in the form of Stone. O! how hard it was to find the place! I dug with stick and scraped six inches of snow away. At last! At last! There was the Stone ... The Rock ... the Altar of the God of Phudd & I cleared away the snow and I lay down flat on my stomach and I tapped my head three times on the stone ... saying O God of Phudd make Miss Pettigrew a success! Then I had an ecstasy afterwards in Bathroom loving this country, Columbia County so very well! How nice the back of house did look in the heavy snow; the T.T. so fast asleep under that roof.

Sunday 24th January

Today when I took Black ... the sun was all pale and misty and there was a lovely greenish tint in the northern sky. The ice-snow was all glittering like the tiny little scales of a great Leper-Dragon.

Wednesday 16th September

... In the middle of this dark stroll with a southerly Wind blowing warm & damp



& gusty I looked at Phudd and O how its shape – that flatness like a flat-headed Table-land upon which a ‘Secret Mount’ Temple could well rise. Like the thought of Transfiguration in Raphael’s picture. It gave me a sense of calm to see it.

Friday, 18th September

Cool, a Perfect Day. Cool and yet sun. Warm clear crystal sun & a deep blue sky a northern blue sky a sky so blue that it looks as if it were composed of a blue water but bluer than any water! & white clouds rushing past with a cool Northern wind behind them.

1932

Monday 11th January

There were the Mountains! There were the New Moon its horns all cloudy and blurred & the points in heavy mist. And in the South there was a low line of watery yellowish light ... all else dark ... & against this the fir-trees of the hill above the alders stood out distinct. These dark trees against that yellow light made me think of ancient walks in other incarnations.

Tuesday 12th January – 13th

The wind was lovely today when I first went out. It is the kind of wind that seems to blow over a far off anthology of memories. It comes from the East – from over the sea – from the land of “yr echwyd” from the land of “Gwlad yr Haw”. It is so balmy and so full of strange far-off feelings, such as recall walks of other days! ... As I walked Eastward I got such an ecstasy for the wind was lovely, wonderful, the South East with the infinite magic of the great voyages and the Isles of the Living & Dead. Yes it was the wind from South Wales that blows in my Book & from which the Stones came of Stonehenge.

Thursday 14th January

It is – it is – incredibly warm – warm lovely sunshine – warm as May – warmer than April – O and the heavenly and indescribable scents that came out of the earth – the muddy wet drenched earth. ... I had an ecstasy of pleasure at the deep deep deep beautiful lonely wildness of Columbia County. O how I do like my life here how I do like it. And it is given to me by the T.T. who sacrifices her Watteau sophistication in the City & her Theatres Concerts & shops. Then the sky got green & rose pink as I was crossing the brook in the wood. But O the loveliest thing I saw were the rose-pink clouds and evening star reflected in the Mabinogion pool ... and the bare twigs of the hedge against a blood-red sky.

Saturday 16th January

I got up at 6.30 and was down by six-forty five thus I saw the whole of the sunrise

from the kitchen – but I did not realize when I did first see it for a thin film of clouds obstructed the sky above the ridge and like a vast ghost of the sun large and such as I could look upon without blinking, the sun seemed to glide up over the ridge & I saw it when it was half hidden but there were no rays shooting down ’twas so pallid, this great ghostly circle like a vast Hoop for a young sun-god to trundle along the ridge that I saw trees against its upper [*drawing of sun half up*] quite clearly. ... Took Black the round and paused many minutes to admire the blueness of the water by the Red Wohn Bridge and the yellowness of the willows & the whiteness of the road-railings and the sepia brownness of the leafless wild raspberry canes by the edge of the river.

Sunday 17th January

Then I chose to go and tap head on the Phudd Stone. I heard the Indian Tombs on top of Phudd telling me this layer or film of ice lay on them & begging me to climb up the Mount & salute them. This I was too lazy to do. I notice how if you are to be happy in this world you have forever to be hardening your heart. My heart also – that other stone – hath a film of slippery eyes [*sic*] on it. I too O dead Indians am an ice-covered Stone.

Monday 25th January

How lovely the grey posts of the rails looked against a faintly rose-tinged grey cloud and a lovely blue sky. ... all was pearl-touched, all was fresh and shimmering and yet cool and clear – like shells on Weymouth beach. ’Twas wonderful to see the greyness, so pearly, of that line of posts against the blue.

Wednesday 27th January

It was raining hard but in my Seven League Boots & in my long coat I did not get wet. Drank the Orange Juice so beautifully got ready for me by the T.T. at the kitchen window looking out at the rain falling against the Pump, against the apple-tree and I looked at the wide expanse of the valley the higher fields light straw coloured dead grass and the Lower fields where innumerable stalks & seeds of dead flowers are a remarkable reddish-colour, brownish-reddish, like the bark of elm trees gets when it has been deluged by the rain for many hours. The Indians of Hill & the God of Phudd commanded me to come to the Phudd Stone & tap my head. But I refused. I too am a Magician! I said. So they set themselves to show their Power & I set myself to show my Power. Today has been a struggled day but I would not do it till they fancied they had done their worst.

1933

Tuesday 10th January

Saw Albert mounted on Min in his Red Coat – galoping & caracolling to take her to drink. Against Phudd with its firs bowed in snow & deep blue sky young Albert in his red coat on the white horse’s bare back looked a wondrous sight.



*Phudd Hill, precipice [Conrad Vispo]*

1934

Monday 29th January

I took the Black up to the Precipice at the top of Phudd. All was dark in the valley below and the tops of the Hemlocks looked black. On the edge of the Precipice there was ice slippery grey ice with green moss & lichen interspersed. I was nervous lest the “Old” would fall down the Precipice. Following along the western edge of Phudd I turned round & looked east – & there was the Full Moon rising between the branches over the tombs of the dead Indians. Through the clouds shone the moon through dark firs & pale birches its pale light, faintly yellow, was diffused in the grey sky.

## *JCP and Sibelius*

### *From Raymond Cox*

In *Newsletter* 89, November 2016, page 47, (JCP’s letter to Ron Hall dated 1 Feb 1951), there is a reference to Sibelius as the only composer JCP could take to: ‘*the only Musician I can properly follow and honestly enjoy*’. Being a musical person I found this very interesting. I did know of the reference to Sibelius by JCP, but not to the mention in the form in this letter to Ron Hall. One wonders why Sibelius. Sibelius was very close to nature at his home in Finland and this is reflected in his music. There is also a mystical and legendary element, notably the *Kalevala*. His home was amongst the fields, lakes and forests of rural Finland, and he responded to the moods and changes of the seasons. So we hear in his music the icy blasts and the rising winds, or the overhead swirling of the cranes and geese, and feel the drifting of a swan on a dark lake. His music often produces a feeling of being on a lonely journey somewhere in the dusky northland. In all likelihood a subconscious response came into play with JCP and Sibelius’s music. JCP’s nature, revealed in his books, was not so far away from that of Sibelius revealed in his music. And both men had mystical elements in their powerful imaginations.

**Kate Kavanagh** adds: About Sibelius my guess would be that he heard shorter pieces, either *Finlandia* or the popular and often played and very hummable *Valse Triste* – the sort of thing you’d find on a large 78rpm (with symphonies you had to turn the record a dozen times). Phyllis did own a record player – did she leave it at Phudd? I don’t think they had anything like the Third Programme in USA or indeed in UK until after the war. [*The BBC Third Programme was first broadcast on 29 September 1946 and replaced by BBC Radio Three on 4 April 1970 – CT*]. Of course JCP could have heard longer musical works on the Third Programme by the time he was writing to Ron in the 1950s but I have an idea that in Corwen Phyllis used to listen to the radio with her mother next door. (Very unlikely that JCP on his own would have known how to switch on the radio?)

**Chris Thomas** notes: In an article in *Planet*, April/May 1995, ‘*Mr Powys and Miss Playter*’, Raymond Garlick, who lived in Blaenau Ffestiniog between 1955 and 1960, and who used regularly to visit Phyllis and JCP, recalled how at 1 Waterloo Phyllis kept her radio in the downstairs room, ‘*always tuned to the BBC Third Programme (as it was then)*’. JCP refers to Phyllis’s affection for the BBC Third Programme in a letter to Louis Wilkinson, dated April 8th 1957, (see *Newsletter* 75, March 2012, p.26): *Phyllis is very thankful that the Third Programme is still to go on – at 8pm every night*. He also refers to listening to spoken word programmes on the Third, which he called *top notch and unequalled*, in letters to Louis Wilkinson on 19 May 1947 (about a programme on Aristophanes), and on 8 January 1952 (about a lecture by Gordon Craig on Henry Irving). In a letter to Katie, he says he could hear Phyllis’s radio from his upstairs room: ‘*The B.B.C is kicking up such a row downstairs ... Phyllis will tell me what it’s all about when she comes up*’, suggesting he had the opportunity to listen to broadcasts of music on the Third Programme as well.



KEVIN TAYLOR

## *The Brazen Head Bookshop, Burnham Market*

A visit to the genteel village of Burnham Market near the north Norfolk coast in November 2016 confirmed that the attractive little Brazen Head Bookshop and Gallery on the main street was indeed partly named after JCP's novel (1956) of the same name. The owner, artist David Kenyon, told me: 'We set up the Brazen Head in 1996. The name was inspired by a half-remembered memory of the Roger Bacon story that echoes through the Cowper Powys book ... we liked the idea of a bookshop where all answers can be found providing the right question is asked!'

Readers will recall that Powys has Bacon, the thirteenth-century philosopher and Franciscan friar born in Ilchester, Somerset (just a few miles down the road from Montacute), construct a bronze head on a marble base which looms rather sinisterly in the background of many of the scenes of the novel. Various characters fancy they hear its necromantically channelled voice pronouncing ominously, until the final scene



Kevin Taylor outside the Brazen Head bookshop, Burnham Market [KT]



Patricia Dawson's 'Brazen Head' as on cover of NL62

when, just before it gets destroyed by a burning meteor, the head speaks the cryptic foreshortened message: *Time was. Time is. And time will ...*

David Kenyon took artistic inspiration from JCP's rendering of a manufactured head that was 'enormous in size, hideous beyond all human imagination' and which could be heard speaking in 'a multitudinous voice out of the infinite': 'As an artist I have worked on a series of heads which began with the visual images of fairground mechanical talking heads – which again resonates with and refers back to the Brazen Head.'

David's series of paintings so far numbers over a hundred. My visit concluded with David's wife seeking out what Powys works they might have in stock – and emerging with a first edition of JCP's *Dostoevsky*!

The Brazen Head bookshop can be found on the web at <http://www.brazenhead.org.uk/>

## *The Brazenhead Bookshop, New York*

*Chris Thomas writes:*

Somewhere amidst the historic districts, apartment blocks, and tall buildings of NY's upper east side, resides a man, **Michael Seidenberg**, who is the owner of a secret bookshop, actually it's his private apartment, called the Brazenhead, which is stocked with a marvellous and eclectic collection of titles including a few books by JCP. Michael not only sells books but he also hosts events, literary discussions, and poetry readings in his apartment. He keeps the location of his bookstore/apartment undisclosed for all sorts of personal reasons but news of the events that he hosts can be tracked through his website at <http://brazenheadbooks.com>. At the top of the homepage, you can tap on the words 'SAY SOMETHING' then leave your name, email address and a message. First, though, David Stimpson recommends that potential visitors leave their email address in the box titled 'Feeling bookish? Stay in the know ...' That way they should get regular updates on upcoming salon nights or poetry readings. Then they can e-mail Michael as to which event nights they want to attend. Alternatively Michael is happy to receive an email that simply specifies the days on which each person will be available if they are coming to New York. Then he, or one of his helpers, will send invitations to events that are happening on those days. Enquirers will receive Michael's address and the apartment number of his secret store. Michael requests that visitors **do not share** the Brazenhead street address with anyone else.

Brief references to the Brazenhead bookshop in New York may be found in Jacqueline Peltier's *la lettre powysienne*, No. 23, Spring 2012, p.50, and in the Powys Society Newsletter 88 July 2016. There is an article about the bookshop in the New Yorker magazine at [http://www.newyorker.com/talk/2008/06/02/080602ta\\_talk\\_marx](http://www.newyorker.com/talk/2008/06/02/080602ta_talk_marx). There are also several films about the bookshop, providing 'virtual' tours of the apartment and interviews with Michael Seidenberg, which can be accessed on YouTube.

David Stimpson, who lives in NY, and is one of our speakers at this year's conference, has a passion for all things to do with JCP and his connection with America, especially New York. Quite by chance, one day in June last year, David met Michael, in the street. Michael immediately invited David to visit his secret location. David has subsequently attended one of Michael's literary events earlier this year.

**David Stimpson: First visit to Brazenheadbooks** (a letter to Chris Thomas)

*Good news! I finally hooked up with Michael Seidenberg and met him at the new location of his Brazenheadbooks.*



Last Wednesday evening when I was taking a walk, with my wife, Natalia, near our neighbourhood on the Upper East Side, I happened to recognize Michael walking toward us not far, it turned out, from his new location. What a friendly gentleman he is. Although we hadn't seen him for almost two years, he invited us to his new location. The next day I received an email with the address, which happens to be just 9 blocks south of us. He also apologized that he hadn't been in touch due to problems with the email at his website, adding that he was 'glad that synchronicity took over and had us bump into each other on the street.'

So we paid our first visit one June evening. With several other bookworms we were very well received. Michael and I talked a lot about JCP and have become good friends. It turns out however at the moment he hardly has any JCP books for sale. But we did find an edition of *The Brazen Head*.

Mike showed me two ceramic jars which he was proud to tell me were once owned by Phyllis Playter. He said a friend of his acquired them from Phyllis when he visited her in Wales after JCP's death. I didn't get who that person was. Michael also has on display a photo of JCP and next to it a photo of Henry Miller. I asked which of John's writings Michael loves most. Answer: *Wolf Solent* and *Glastonbury Romance*. He said he first met JCP when he happened to pick up a copy of *Wolf Solent* and read it – because he liked the cover! But he liked the book too, so much so that, as they say, he was 'hooked.'

I wanted to know when he decided to name his store *Brazenhead*? Answer: he has used that name after reading *The Brazen Head* and ever since he opened his first store back in the late 1970s in Brooklyn. In the early '80s, he moved to a basement space on 84th Street on the Upper Eastside. That lasted for a few years, but by the early '90s he couldn't afford the space so he moved his shop to his own nearby apartment, also on 84th Street. That remained a very friendly bohemian meeting place that matches Michael's warm and gregarious personality until 2014. For some reason (maybe pressure from the landlord, I don't know) it looked like that was the end of *Brazenheadbooks*. But recently, early last year I think, Michael moved to another secret apartment a few blocks away.

Michael said he chose the name of *Brazenheadbooks* partly because he had become a Powys fan around the time when a deluge of JCP's writings became available through the Village Press. Michael said that he was a friend of the Village Press publisher (Jeff Kwintner) and apparently went to London specifically to meet him. Mike said he admired Jeff and told me the story of how Jeff had inherited a successful clothing business from his father, but, if I remember correctly, he soon sold it and used the money to found Village Press [1]. Michael said he ordered many key volumes of the Village Press for sale in his store. At the same time, Mike ordered copies of every one of the JCP books published by Village for himself. He still has

all of them in his house 50 miles north of the city, about halfway to JCP's Hillsdale.

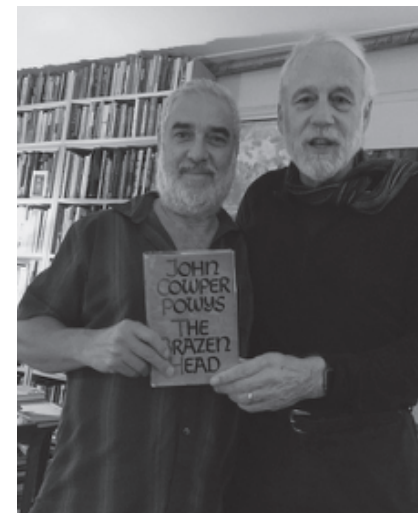
Michael said that he also knew Peter Powys Grey very well [2]. Peter lived close to his old apartment and they and their friends would frequently meet in the neighbourhood.

As we were leaving I told Michael that I admired his lifestyle and the way he has chosen not to manage *Brazenhead* as a succeed-or-quit business process, but rather to make his 'shop' a friendly gathering place for people, young or old, who enjoy literature, a place for poetry reading, literary discussion, and so on. Michael really does enjoy his calling and all the people I've ever met in his secret library are just as kind and friendly. I suggested further that he is leading the sort of life that JCP 'propagandizes' in his philosophy books and novels. Michael agreed completely, adding that JCP's writings, especially his novels, have had a great influence on his own way of life.

[1] See note on Jeff Kwintner in *Newsletter* 84, March 2015, p.34 and an article by Paul Roberts, 'Jeff Kwintner and the Village Bookshop' at:

<http://fashiontribefootnotes.blogspot.co.uk> (CT)

[2] Peter Powys Grey (1922-1992) was the son of Marian Powys. See obituaries of Peter in *Newsletter* 17, November 1992 and in *Powys Notes*, Vol.9 No.1, Fall 1993/Winter 1994. Peter gave a talk to the Powys Society conference in Cirencester in 1992 on Katie Powys and Father Hamilton Cowper Johnson which was published in *Powys Journal*, Vol.III, 1993. (CT)



David Stimpson with Michael Seidenberg in New York [DS]



Inside The Brazenhead, New York [DS]

## Inscriptions and Dedications, Part 2

Some of the most significant and interesting annotations made by JCP in a book can be found in his own copy of A.T. Murray's translation of Homer's *The Iliad* (Loeb Classics edition), especially in Volume One. According to Charles Lock, JCP owned the 2nd printing of the 1929 Loeb edition and collected all 4 volumes of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in the Loeb Classics edition published by William Heinemann (*Powys Journal* XVI, 2006, p.19). The inscriptions in Volume One of the *Iliad*, now owned by Stephen Powys Marks, are also reproduced in *PJ* XVI. But what happened to JCP's copy of the Loeb edition of *The Odyssey*? It would also be interesting to know what happened to his treasured copy of the illustrated Homeric dictionary given to him by his Sherborne friend, W. E. Lutyens, *a proper Homeric gift and my second greatest preoccupation* he wrote to Louis Wilkinson in 1942 [1]. These no doubt all include interesting inscriptions. Can anyone help locate these books?

We no longer have to speculate about the existence of JCP's copy of the Welsh Bible which he mentions so many times in his letters in the 1950s (the translation in Welsh was originally made by William Morgan in 1588). This Bible, after an absence of over fifty years, has now reappeared and has recently been given to the Society by John Hughes, a retired headmaster. This 'great Bible', *Y Beibl Cyssegr-Lan sef Yr Hen Destament Ar Newydd* is leather-bound, and was published in London by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1930. It lay on a table beside JCP's writing couch accompanied by a Greek coin. JCP learnt the Welsh language by reading at least half a page every day with the help of the King James Authorised version (1611) and a Welsh dictionary. He told Louis Wilkinson he was *absorbed in reading the Welsh bible clear thro'* and had got as far as the beginning of *Proverbs*. Clearly this was a book that JCP revered as much as Homer. He told Frances Gregg he was brought up on the Bible, especially the Old Testament, and his essay on the Bible in *The Pleasures of Literature* is full of insights about the King James version: *The Old Testament has a beautiful and poetic light shining from it; the Bible reflects the undying beauty of the life of humanity*. It's no surprise therefore that JCP's Welsh Bible should include many inscriptions in Welsh as well as a single quotation from Homer.

After JCP's death his copy of the Welsh Bible was presented by Phyllis to Dr Iorwerth Cyfeiliog Peate [2]. On the inside cover Dr Peate has added his library stamp which says in Welsh: *'From the library of Iorwerth C Peate'*. This is followed by a dedication from Phyllis: *'Beibl John Cowper Powys. Rhodd gan Phyllis Playter i Iorwerth C Peate i gofio amdano'* (*A gift from Phyllis Playter to Iorwerth C Peate to remember him*). The Bible has been in the possession of Mr Hughes for more than 30 years and came direct to him from the Peate family who were his close friends. JCP's

inscriptions are laid out over three pages on the front free endpapers. Here are just a few examples with accompanying text [3] from the King James Bible: *'Pwy fedr gael gwraig rinweddol? gwerthfawroccath yw hi na'r carbuncl'* (*Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.*) (*Proverbs* 31.10); after this JCP has written (*The T.T.*) *'Wele di yn deg fy anwylyd, wele di yn deg; y mae i ti lygaid colommennod'* (*Behold, thou art fair; my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes*), (*The Song of Solomon* 1.15); *'Na fydd yn gyfiawn ac chymmer arnat fod yn rhy ddoeth: palsam y'th ddifet hit dy hun?'* (*Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish, why should'st thou die before thy time?*) (*Ecclesiastes* 7.17); and *'Y byw, y byw efe a'th fawl di...'* (*The living, the living, he shall praise thee ...*), *Isaiah* 38.19. This, of course, is the inscription on Llewelyn's memorial stone [4]. On the title page JCP has written in bold Greek lettering: *'spassi trillistos epēluthē nyx erebennē'* (*[Sorely against the Trojans sank the daylight, but over the Achaeans] welcome, aye, thrice-prayed-for; came the darkness of night*) a quotation from the *Iliad*, Book 8, line 488 [5]. It doesn't take much to notice that JCP seems to have aligned his own life and obsessions with passages from the Welsh Bible that impressed him. Members can view JCP's Welsh Bible and study all the inscriptions for themselves at this year's conference where it will be on open display.

**Nick Fenney** has made another fascinating discovery. He has acquired a copy of the 1961 Macdonald edition of *Wolf Solent*, inscribed by JCP, dated 19th February 1962, and presented to the novelist, short story writer, literary critic and lecturer, Angus Wilson: *To Angus Wilson from John Cowper Powys*. (This must have been on the occasion of Angus Wilson's visit to JCP in Blaenau Ffestiniog in February 1962.) The rear free endpaper and paste-down of the book are covered with Angus Wilson's handwritten notes on JCP and *Wolf Solent*. Angus Wilson, (1913-1991), was Professor of English Literature at UEA, and Deputy Superintendant of the Reading Room at the British Museum in the 1950s. He was a great admirer of JCP, with whom he exchanged letters; he championed JCP's work in articles and wrote his obituary in the *Observer*. He was also President of the Powys Society in the 1980s. JCP referred to him in letters to Louis Wilkinson as: *our admired gentleman of the hemlock* (referring to AW's novel *Hemlock and After*, 1952) and *a formidable and penetrating modern critic*. Our current President, Glen Cavaliero, remembers him very well, especially his appearance at the centenary conference in Cambridge, and recalls his convivial and amusing personality. Our past Chairman, John Hodgson, also remembers his spirited talk at the centenary conference, his birdlike figure and his thoughtful and concentrated response to questions. There is a good description by Angus Wilson of his meeting with JCP in *Recollections of the Powys Brothers* (1980) as well as by Margaret Drabble in her biography of him (1995). The notes at the back of his copy of *Wolf Solent*, particularly the references to the subject of evil, probably relate to the four talks Wilson gave on



the theme of evil in the English novel (based on his Northcliffe lectures at London University in 1961), which were broadcast on the Third Programme in December 1962 and January 1963 and later published in *The Listener*. The last lecture on *Evil and the Novelist Today* included a discussion of JCP, his *pantheistic animism* and his *serious schematised idea of good and evil*.

**Jacqueline Peltier** has a copy of JCP's *Rabelais* (The Bodley Head, 1948) inscribed by JCP and presented to his friend George Lewin. The dedication reads: *Affectionately inscribed to my dear old friend G L Lewin to whom I owe more help in my Work than I can ever repay/John Cowper Powys/Corwen/N Wales 1948*. George Lionel Lewin, (1890-1970), was an admirer of JCP's work, and an antiquarian bookdealer but he was bombed out of his home during the Blitz. He visited JCP in Corwen in Autumn 1940 and stayed for three weeks. Lewin provided the inspiration for JCP's abandoned novel with a contemporary setting, *Edeyrnion* (published in *Powys Journal*, Vol. I, 1991 and Vol. II, 1992). JCP described Lewin as: *a very nice book-hawking, bombed-out Jewish bookseller friend*. In his diary, 14 October 1940, JCP wrote: *Mr Lewin leaves Corwen. We shall miss him. We are very fond of him ...* During his stay in Corwen Lewin presented JCP with a copy of *The Imitation of Christ* in Welsh. Cecil Woolf has promised us an account of Lewin as he knew him.

**Kate Kavanagh** sent me details of her copy of the original two-volume edition of *Wolf Solent*, published by Simon & Schuster in 1929, a present from someone in America. This contains a dedication from JCP: *To my kind & beneficent friend/ Of many happy days/ Mr Charles Farnham/ by John Cowper Powys*. Kate comments that 'by' seems an unusual word to sign off with and wonders what JCP means by 'beneficent'? Who was the dedicatee? Perhaps this is the same Charles W. Farnham who was associated with the Republican politician, and lawyer, Charles Evans Hughes (1889-1950), in San Francisco and New York.

**Tim Blanchard** contacted me and said: *'I thought I'd pass on a dedication I have a snap of – not necessarily that revealing, but may be of some interest. It's from a first edition copy of Owen Glendower given by JCP to his neighbours the Joneses in Cae Coed. Roger Jones showed it to me when I visited Corwen earlier this year and saw me lurking outside no 7 (he is very proud of his Powys connection).* I asked Eirlys Ashton if she could translate the inscription in Welsh which reads: *Cloriannau anghywir sydd ffiadd gan yr Arglwydd: ond carreg uniawn sydd foddllawn ganddo ef*. Eirlys says that she guessed the inscription is biblical but the language does not translate easily into modern Welsh. The quote is from the *Book of Proverbs*, chapter 11, verse 1: *A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight*. Eirlys adds that the inscription seemed *initially confusing* as 'carreg' means *stone* and *is no longer used as meaning weight*.

**Conrad Vispo**, who manages the ecology and conservations programme of the Hawthorne Valley Farmscape at Ghent, near Phudd Bottom, has a copy of *A Glastonbury Romance*, signed by JCP with his inscription: *In recollection of such a happy visit we had together on Aug 9th 1932*. The book belonged to the Goodfellows, a pair of school teachers who, as JCP's diary notes, visited him on that day: *Had a nice visit today from Mr. & Mrs Goodfellow of Pittsburg, school teachers*. The inscription in the book indicates that Mr Goodfellow had given it to Mrs Goodfellow in June of 1932, so Conrad says they therefore must have brought it with them on their visit and asked JCP to sign it. Conrad also has a 1934 copy of JCP's *Autobiography*. It is annotated in pencil by somebody who addresses himself to JCP as 'you', 'brother' and 'old chap'. Presumably he was a keen contemporary reader of JCP's books. The name in the book, marked in pen, and in a distinct hand, is 'Birger Magnuson'.

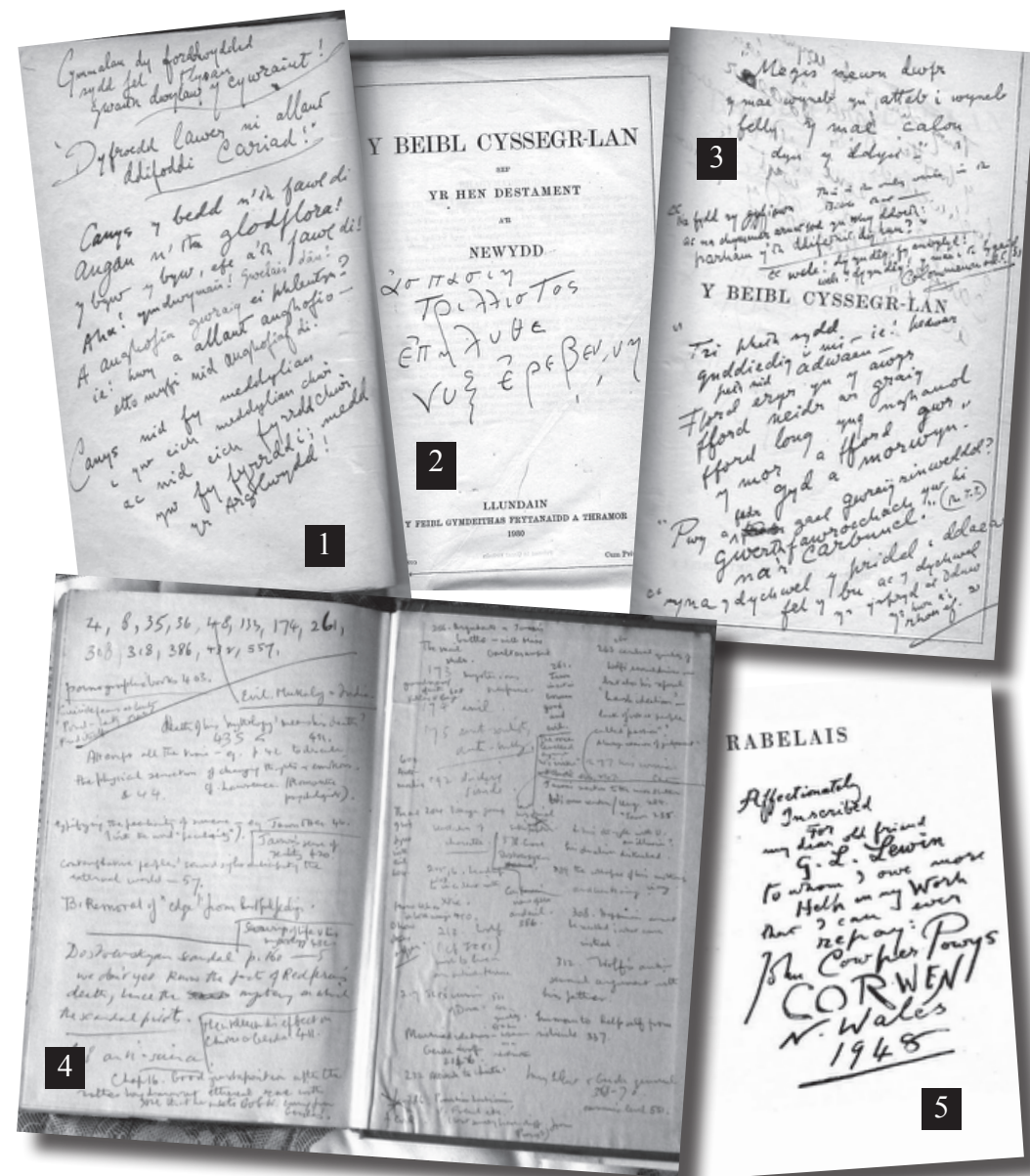
**James Nawrocki, in San Francisco**, reports that: 'A while back I bought a used copy of the 1915 G. Arnold Shaw edition of JCP's *Visions and Revisions*. Pasted on the inside covers are a number of items. The first is the following letter, dated March 17, 1922, from Charles Dexter Allen (a book collector from Montclair New Jersey) to JCP. It reads: *My dear sir, I knock respectfully on your door – may I enter? I promise not to stay more than a minute, and not to interrupt your work. I bring an evergreen wreath, and I come, sir, to ask if you will be so kind as to write your name within it? Then, if it can come back to me, so honored by your hand, I shall with great pleasure paste this little book plate into my copy of Visions and Revisions, a book long endeared to me, and which this personal touch will make even more precious. So, I take my leave, promptly, as agreed, and I leave my wreath with you, hoping that the moment of inclination and opportunity to grant my boon, may not be long delayed. With appreciation and high regard, I am sir, in sincerity, Cha. Dexter Allen*. JCP duly signed the 'wreath' bookplate, and added this handwritten note at the bottom of Dexter's letter: *Dear Sir, your name 'Dexter' seems to be the predestined name of a great Book Lover – J.C.P.* JCP's remark on Dexter's 'predestined' name could be in reference to its original Greek meaning (right-handed, fortunate) or (admittedly a bit of a stretch) to the Old English meaning 'one who dyes' as in 'dyed-in-the-wool book lover'. James says that his copy of *Visions and Revisions* has also inserted other related items including a newspaper clipping of a sketch of JCP done by Ivan Opffer, a magazine clipping of a well-known photo of JCP, a short clipping from an unidentified newspaper columnist answering a reader's question about the JCP and the Powys family, and a clipping of the Edgar Lee Masters poem 'John Cowper Powys'.

Whilst collecting these inscriptions I also remembered seeing a short note by **Rob Stepney** in *Newsletter* 44, November 2001, page 39, *A Short Story about the*



*Mabinogion*, in which he describes how he visited Eigra and Llewelyn Roberts living in Dolwyddelan, a few miles from Blaenau Ffestiniog, who he hoped might be able to assist him make various translations from the Welsh in connection with a new edition of *Owen Glendower* which he was preparing. He was astonished when, during their conversation, they showed him JCP's own copy of Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion* (1888 edition). I recently contacted Eigra and Llewelyn and asked them about this but they said JCP had not in fact inscribed any of the pages of the *Mabinogion*. However they told me they do have a presentation copy of Llewelyn's *Swiss Essays* inscribed by Phyllis: 'to another Llewelyn from a friend and neighbour of so many years'. Llewelyn and his parents lived next door to JCP and Phyllis in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Llewelyn's father worked most of his life in the slate quarries. Llewelyn told me how he remembers JCP and Phyllis visiting his father every Sunday, and how JCP used to ask lots of questions about the quarries. He said JCP was fascinated by Llewelyn's ability to identify where the cars that parked outside Waterloo had come from just by reading their registration numbers. He remembered JCP going for a walk regularly at 7.30 in the morning, and how he used to pick up leaves from the road and pavement and throw them over the wall saying: *Now the trees will continue to grow*. He also remembered Phyllis smoking, very heavily, Players cigarettes.

- [1] *Homeric Dictionary for use in schools and colleges*, compiled in 1873 by Georg Autenrieth (1833-1900), (*Wörterbuch zu den homerischen Gedichten*, Leipzig: Teubner), and translated in 1877, with corrections and additions, by Robert Porter Keep (1844-1904), teacher of Greek at Yale. JCP's copy of the dictionary was an edition published in 1902 in America by Macmillan.
- [2] Iowerth Peate (1901-1982), was a poet, reviewer for *Y Cymro*, scholar, and founder and first curator of the Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagans. Peate obtained the honorary degree of D.Litt for JCP from the University of Wales which was conferred on him on 21 July 1962. He also broadcast a profile of JCP on the BBC Welsh Home Service on 18th October 1962. JCP's correspondence with Iowerth Peate, 1937-1954, was published by University of Wales Press, in 1974. JCP started the correspondence when he wrote to Iowerth Peate to enquire about details of early medieval Welsh costume for *Owen Glendower* which he was then writing. In an article, 'Mr Powys and Miss Playter' in *Planet*, April/May 1995, Raymond Garlick, editor of *Dock Leaves* and the *Anglo-Welsh Review*, poet, teacher and lecturer, who lived in Blaenau Ffestiniog, recalled visits to Number 1, Waterloo in the late 1950s and going upstairs to meet JCP in his 'writer's study'. He says that: *The walls were lined with books, several of which have come down to me, (including) Iowerth Peate's The Welsh House, inscribed by the author. The Welsh House – A Study in Folk Culture* was first published in *Y Cymro*, in 1940, and later by the Brythyn Press in 1944, reissued in 1946.
- [3] I am indebted to Eirlys Ashton for sourcing many of these inscriptions. Eirlys says: 'We grew up with the William Morgan Bible ... very beautiful language. It is said that it saved the Welsh Language because it was used in the Circulating Sunday Schools which made many Welsh people literate. However some of the vocabulary is now archaic and can be a problem, but I much prefer it to the modern versions.'
- [4] Discussion of the significance of this inscription on Llewelyn's memorial stone was published in *Newsletters* 20 (November 1993), 21 (April 1994), 22 (July 1994), and 23 (November 1994).
- [5] I am grateful to Stephen Powys Marks for identifying this quotation and for providing the translation.



1. Welsh Bible – sample of quotes in Welsh; 2. Welsh Bible – title page with quote in Greek from Iliad Bk 8 l.488 (welcome, thrice-prayed-for, came the darkness of night); 3. Welsh Bible, from Proverbs: 'Who shall find a perfect woman.?' (The T.T.); 4. Angus Wilson's notes in Wolf Solent (Macdonald, 1962); 5. Dedication to George Lewin in Rabelais by JCP (Bodley Head, 1948)

Neville Diffey  
*If Books Could Talk*

The pretty little town of Stratford in southern Ontario once owed its prosperity to pigs and furniture. Then in the nineteen-fifties, drawing inspiration from its name, it took the extraordinary decision to get into the Shakespeare business. Today the annual Stratford Shakespeare Festival is quite the finest of its kind in North America and has been associated with such names as Alec Guinness, Christopher Plummer and William Hutt. During my own annual pilgrimage I make a point of visiting a second-hand book shop which stands beside the Avon Theatre and whose German owner invariably bewails the difficult state of his trade yet somehow manages to remain in business. This year as I rummaged through his dusty shelves my eyes settled on a small and rather shabby looking volume entitled 'Dorset Essays' by Llewelyn Powys. In the last few years I have started taking an interest in the works of J.C. Powys so knew enough to recognize the name of his brother. This I must have, thought I. My bookdealer would not part with it for less than thirty dollars, on the grounds that it was a first edition, and I now consider it was a very fair price. Once one gets past the cover it is in good condition, well-bound and beautifully illustrated with 40 photographs by Wyndham Goodden. I quickly immersed myself in the relatively unspoilt world of rural Dorset between the wars, which still existed to some extent when as a boy in the nineteen-forties and fifties I walked in the Purbecks or along the cliff path to Lulworth Cove. I am sure that others better qualified than I am have written appreciatively about this wonderful collection of former newspaper and magazine articles which show the author's fine powers of observation, not just of nature but of local society. But apart from my enjoyment of its contents I found myself musing about the possible history of my new acquisition, beginning with the question of the book's first owner. Inscribed on the right side of the front end-paper is the name 'John Hayes', followed by a date '25/12/35'. It seems reasonable to assume that Hayes was given the book as a Christmas present in the year of its publication. After that there is a place-name: 'Chaldon Herring Dorset'. Since the author himself and his better known brother were living in the Chaldon area at the time, it seems likely that the recipient – or the giver – knew the family or even one of its members. I am left with a number of intriguing questions, the most obvious being, who was John Hayes? Perhaps one of your readers can supply the answer? No other owner's name appears on the fly-leaf and there are no other markings in the book apart from some faint pencil underlinings of certain words and images, which may have seemed particularly felicitous. And how did this little book finish up in Canada? Did Hayes himself move there in the wave of post-war immigration? Another piece of 'physical evidence' intrigues my forensic imagination. There is a distinct stain along the spine spreading over part of the back cover, suggesting that at some time in its life the volume was steeped in some kind of liquid. Perhaps a chemical analysis would reveal its nature: rain-water, coffee, beer – or brine? The latter appeals most to my fancy. In my mind I see the reader reclining on a beach, perhaps at Weymouth, nodding off under the spell of the mesmerizing text and the beating surf to be woken by the incoming tide caressing his lap! The more likely if more prosaic account is that the book lay dormant for years in some leaky basement, as part of Mr. Hayes's estate or that of his successor, before finishing up in a house-clearer's job lot. What a wonderful story that eighty years after its publication, by whatever circuitous route, this little gem has finished up in the hands of an exiled son of Dorset. If only books could talk.