

Powys Notes

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Powys Notes

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Founded in December, 1983, the Powys Society of North America seeks to promote the study and appreciation of the literary works of the Powys family, especially those of John Cowper Powys (1872-1963), T.F. Powys (1875-1953), and Llewelyn Powys (1884-1939). The Society takes a special interest in the North American connections and experiences of the Powyses, and encourages the exploration of the extensive collections of Powys material in North America and the involvement, particularly of John Cowper and Llewelyn, in American literary culture.

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John Cowper Powys and William James on Religious Faith

Peter G. Christensen

Particularly in the wake of Harold Bloom's famous study, the idea of the anxiety of influence has been popularized to the point where we are not surprised to find authors either denying their ancestors or creating in their own art revolutionary rereadings of their mentors. Some feminists have responded with examples of non-Oedipal relations of daughters to their literary foremothers. However, less attention has been paid to the fact that in some cases authors would have us believe that they have important predecessors, a claim which on further reflection, we find to be exaggerated or even false. By appealing to famous "predecessors," unjustly neglected writers or authors whose views seem eccentric or perverse to society at large may actually legitimize their own work, and at the same time they may also allow themselves to become less anxious about certain gaps in their education. This may well have been the case when John Cowper Powys claimed William James as an important influence on his writing. Powys may have been attempting to buttress his own claims to philosophical seriousness—for despite the great of his best half-dozen novels, Powys never received the recognition of a Ford Madox Ford, let alone that of a Hemingway. Moreover, his version of pantheism and the multiverse easily lent itself to satirical jabs. Finally, he had little formal background in philosophy, much less graduate work in the field, as had T. S. Eliot, for example.

Taking their cues from Powys himself, many critics make brief reference to the influence of William James on his work. Although Powys's literary career did not begin in earnest until 1914, with the appearance of *The War and Culture*, Powys is in certain respects a younger contemporary of James (1842-1910): while Powys was publishing *Odes and Other Poems* (1896) and *Poems* (1899), the Harvard professor had still many essays before him, including *The*

Varieties of Religious Experience (1902), *Pragmatism* (1907), *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), *The Meaning of Truth* (1909), and *Some Problems of Philosophy* (1911).¹ This essay will first review Powys's references to William James and later critical assessments of the relationship between the two authors. It will then use questions raised by James's idea of religion to ask similar questions about Powys's religious views, particularly with respect to such Jamesian questions as the nature of truth, twiceborn souls, and the right-to-believe. Most important, it will suggest that Powys's claims to have been influenced by James should be treated with a measure of skepticism.

Perhaps the best known of Powys's many references to William James comes in the *Autobiography* (1934), where he is called one of the "great imaginative spirits" (285):

But William James was a startling delight to me, too, for all his roughish jibes at Hegel. I responded with a lively Cymric reciprocity to his Pluralistic ideas, which in my fluid and incorrigibly sceptical mind, seemed quite as *conceivable* a vision of things as any self-evolving, self-dividing, self-reconciling absolute. I can recall one occasion, when I was heading for Trenton where I was to give a lecture, being so absorbed in William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* that I permitted my train to stop at the station and to leave the station in complete oblivion of my purpose (479).

Here Powys takes his usual attitude toward James, a type of hit-and-run praise without any discussion of what the book actually meant to him on that occasion.

A second, similar example occurs in the preface to *The Inmates* (1952): "I like to tell myself that one aspect of the Philosophy of the Demented is that daring cosmological theory. . . of William James that we live in a multiverse rather than a universe. Everyone of my inmates is a symbol of some important aspect of its truth which seems to me especially alien to the schoolmaster-taught conventional mind with its passion for unity and oneness" (viii). In this passage the appeal to James indicates no more than that Powys has latched on to a phrase. Whether his indebtedness goes further does not become clear.

From the correspondence, we can point out additional comments. Powys tells Nicholas Ross on 6 July 1940 (28) of his admiration for both William and Henry James, and on 15 August 1956, he remarks that William James is "now my special

Philosopher" (133). In the correspondence to Louis Wilkinson, from the letter of 3 November 1943, we can assume that he has read an edition of James's letters published in 1920, for he comments on "an ironic-friendly letter of William James to some girls' class at College who have sent him an *Azalia*" (81). He notes, "I think very highly & ever have of W. James. I like him as a Philosopher nearly as much as I like Henry James as a novelist" (81). In *Obstinate Cymric* (1947) there are five references to William James, some of which fancifully connect aboriginal Welshness to anarchic pluralism.

On 19 December 1953, writing to Ichiro Hara, in a letter published only in 1990, Powys states:

As to our cosmological adjustments—I am not interested in all you point out. The word Multiverse I got from *William James* and its quite possible that I have got his meaning wrong. But I think I recall that he described what he didn't like in the *Oneness* of the System of Things as a '*Block Universe*' and I seem to recall that he used the phrase '*a strung-along world*' for what he preferred to such a *Block Universe*. I fancy that what something in my nature instinctively rebels against is *The Absolute*. I think there is something in me that rejects the whole idea of an *Absolute* and that instinctively untuitively and almost unconsciously makes war on the whole conception of there being an *Absolute* (35).

Powys continues claiming that he thinks he got his rebellion against the absolute from William James's book "*Pluralism*," but since he has lost the book, he cannot check the reference. About a year later, 16 November 1954, in a letter to G. Wilson Knight, Powys praises Knight for dodging in his book on Alexander Pope the "*Block Universe*" and the "*Absolute*" in the same way as William James had done (51). In each case Powys does not mention that he had not always liked William James nor that he himself was sometimes more sympathetic to the absolute. Perhaps this was a crucial moment in the art of forgetting.

Since "*Pluralism*" is really called *A Pluralistic Universe* and since Powys had no copy, it may be fair to say that James was more of a jumping-off point for him than a philosopher with whom he was in continual dialogue. Nevertheless, on 26 May 1955, Powys again affirmed to Hara James's influence on his "whole way of thinking" and stated that he knew nothing about Theodor Fechner (1801-1887), another philosopher Hara suspected of influencing him,

except for what James says about him in the book on pluralism.

However, there is also a discordant note. What needs to be emphasized in contrast to all of the praise from 1934 onward is that in the Preface to *The Complex Vision* in 1920, Powys attacked James severely:

When in such a dilemma one turns to the vitalistic and pragmatic speculations of a Bergson or a William James there is an almost more hopeless revulsion. For in these pseudo-scientific, pseudo-psychological methods of thought something most profoundly human seems to us to be completely neglected. I refer to the high and passionate imperatives of the heroic, desperate, treasonable heart of man (xxiii).

This quotation makes Powys's relation to James look deeply problematic, a point which has not gone unobserved by critics—few or none of whom, however, seem to pursue the discrepancy very far or, if they do pursue it, to resolve it successfully.² Given that the part of the *Autobiography* that had recounted Powys's immersion in *Varieties of Religious Experience* occurs in the chapter called "America," and presumably refers to a date between 1909 and 1914, we are struck by a paradox. Powys's point of departure seems similar to that of James in *Varieties*. James wants to overcome the limits of logic and physical science; so does Powys. As Powys writes in his 1920 Preface: "It has become clear to me that the real poignant personal drama in all our lives together with those vague 'marginal' feelings which overshadow all of us with a sense of something half-revealed and half withheld has hardly any point of contact with these formidable edifices of pure logic." On the other hand, "the tentative, hesitating ambiguous hypotheses of Physical Science, transforming themselves afresh with every new discovery, seem, when the portentous mystery of Life's real secret confronts us, to be equally remote and elusive" (xxiii). Powys has added James's own philosophy to the ones found inadequate in *Varieties*. This raises several questions: why, when, and how did Powys revise his attitude toward James in a positive direction? Did he misread James in 1920, not finding in him the "heroic, desperate, treasonable heart of man" sought by James's own philosophy? One may remember the description in *Pragmatism* of the student who felt that he had to abandon real-life concerns when he entered philosophy class (1987: 495). James considered this a great misfortune and tried to create a philosophy that would reduce the disorientation felt by this young

man.

Perhaps a fresh approach to the relation of Powys to James is needed. The interpretation of James's philosophy remains full of confusion and disagreement to the present day, as even the newest studies suggest.³ Wernham notes, "The recent literature on James boasts, in addition to the received view of him, a multitude of deviant ones" (5). We should keep this in mind if we assume that Powys, who does not refer to standard scholarship on James, necessarily took a received or scholarly view of him.

I believe that Powys is more attracted to a correspondence notion of truth than James, who maintained the possibility of judging religious beliefs entirely by their effects. At the same time, Powys like James, is more sympathetic to twice-born religious types than to the once-born; also like James, Powys reserves the right to religious belief now in the face of those who claim that we should not believe in religion until it is able to prove itself in a more convincing manner. These two similarities, however, do not constitute a claim that Powys was heavily influenced by James.

Considering Powys's injunction not to forget the "profoundly human," we might temporarily put aside the metaphysical speculations and ask some more visceral questions about the view of religious experience in Powys's work, beginning with the key question of whether the truth of religious beliefs rests on their value. Because both James and Powys always speak of religion in its larger rather than its more limited sense, there are ample opportunities to look at this matter.

The religious question I wish to ask is not whether a multiverse has a different set of moral imperatives than a universe but whether we should judge our religious beliefs by their effects, as James did. Powys is tempted in this direction but he refuses to answer yes. Although this is not explicit in *The Complex Vision*, I will hypothesize that Powys dismisses James in 1920 as a religious thinker because James is too concerned for moral conduct at the expense of truth value. If we think of the idea of the complex vision as a state of heightened consciousness, as Fawcner uses the term, then we can speculate that for Powys, James's hostility to the correspondence notion of truth is what really bothers him.

The truth of my hypothesis is not evident from the opening statements of *The Complex Vision* and only becomes apparent as Powys develops the idea of truth. He begins as if he is justifying his faith on the basis that it produces creativity.

The philosophy of the complex vision is not a mechanistic philosophy. It is a creative

philosophy. And as such it includes in it from the beginning a certain element of faith and a certain element which I can only describe as "the impossible." It may seem ridiculous to some minds that the conception of the "impossible" should be introduced into any philosophy at the very start. The complex vision is, however, essentially creative. The creation of something really new in the world is regarded by pure reason as impossible. Therefore the element of "the impossible" must exist in this philosophy from the very start. The act of faith must also exist in it; for the imagination is one of the primary aspects of the complex vision and the act of faith is one of the basic activities of the imagination (12).

When Powys calls the complex vision a creative philosophy, is he saying that the merit of the philosophy should not be judged on the basis of whether it corresponds to reality or not? At first it would seem so. The value of the vision is predicated on a religious faith whose final test is its effect in the world. It produces creativity, and therefore it can be judged "good." But what is the relationship between creativity and truth? Powys writes:

Truth, as the complex vision clearly enough reveals to us, refuses to be dealt with by "pure" thought. To deal with truth one has to use "impure" thought, in other words thought that is dyed in the grain by taste, instinct, intuition, imagination. And every philosopher who attempts to round off his system by pure reason alone, and who refuses to recognize that the only adequate organ of research is the complex vision, is a philosopher who sooner or later will be caught red-handed in the unphilosophic act of covering his tracks (17).

Apparently there is something out there called truth that we should attempt to approach, and it is possible to get there by the complex vision. Powys invites us to use pictorial images to arrive at it, and he praises modern thinkers who use images drawn from classical mythology to approach reality. "Poetic thought may go astray" (17); however, poetry's mistakes are never as bad as "the thin simulacrum of reality into which pure reason divorced from poetic imagery is capable of fading" (17). The image that Powys chooses to guide us

makes of the complex vision "a pyramidal arrow of fire, moving from darkness to darkness" (32). The tension between judging the vision on its correspondence to truth or on its creation of good effects is apparent here. My desire is not to show off Powys as a bad thinker, but to reinsert the question of effects of belief into the discussion from which it is usually left out.

Another version of the correspondence/effects debate appears when Powys takes a die-hard, romantic, elitist view of human creativity:

Thus it comes about that, while the supreme artists, whose approximation to the vision of the invisible one is closest, remain our unique masters, the lower crowd of moderately sane and moderately well-balanced persons are of less value to humanity than those abnormal and wayward ones whose psychic distortions are the world's perverted instruments of research.

A philosopher of this unbalanced kind is indeed a sort of living sacrifice or victim of self-vivisection, out of whose demonic discoveries—bizarre and fantastic though they may seem to the lower sanity of the mob—the true rhythmic vision of the immortals is made clearer and more articulate (23).

This passage begs the obvious question: what in day-to-day affairs are these "debauches of specialized research" and the deeds of the "abnormal and wayward ones"? If the debauchery of research has anything to do with real debauchery, then people are likely to be hurt and Powys does not want to face that fact. He hopes that the mental torment of the supreme artists will be totally internalized and not spill over into making other people miserable. This belief seems more like a pipe dream than a complex vision. Powys himself must have sensed this problem because later on he praises love and condemns cruelty (34), but that addendum does not get him out of this difficulty.

Nevertheless, despite Powys's failure to look at all of the effects of the vision, he does not want to jettison the idea of judging this religious faith on the basis of its effects of delivering demonic discoveries about the immortals to the average person who could not care less. By refusing to use the word "god" here but rather "invisible ones" and "immortals," he leaves us with a problem. Do these plural nouns refer to various possible revelations of individual

creativity or to one real revelation of the truth?

A few pages later Powys has another try at the way we should view truth when he discusses the concept of the imagination (one of the eleven parts of the complex vision) with echoes of Wordsworthian romanticism. He writes, "Imagination differs from intuition in the fact that by its creative and interpretive power it dominates, possesses and moulds the material it works upon. Intuition is entirely receptive and it receives the illumination offered to it at one single indrawing, at one breath" (37). For Powys, imagination is a "half-creative, half-interpretive act by which the complex personality" moulds a deeper unity (37). Again we see an attempt to balance both sides of the argument when Powys implies that there are limits to the imagination. It can only take a deeper unity and reshape it. So we seem to be saved partly by the imagination and partly by the fact that imagination cannot totally disrupt the original unity. We have the cake and we eat it too.

A fourth attempt to resolve the problem of the nature of truth comes from Powys's subsequent effort to distinguish the complex vision from religion and to cast suspicion on organized churches. Religion is not seen as a distinctive aspect of the complex vision, as are reason, conscience, and imagination. Unfortunately, religion means too many things to Powys, so he will redefine it:

Religion must therefore be regarded as the culminating ecstasy of the art of life, or as a premature snatching at such an ecstasy while the art of life is still discordant and inchoate. In the first instance it is the supreme reward of the creative act. In the second instance it is a tragic temptation to rest by the way in a unity which is an illusive unity and in a heaven from which "the sun of the morning" is excluded. It thus comes about that what we call religion is frequently a hindrance to the rhythm of the apex-thought. It may be a sentimental consolation. It may be an excuse for cruelty and obscurantism. There is always a danger when it is thus prematurely manifested, that it should darken, distort, deprave and obstruct the movement of creation (59-60).

In the first option, good religion is justified by its creative potential. Bad religion, by contrast, is condemned because it fails to correspond to a truthful unity. The two sides of the evaluation seem to be based on different criteria. It is surprising later to see Powys

writing about "real 'immortals' confronting this real universe" and believing that a stream of beauty, truth, and goodness carries us into the future.

In *The Complex Vision* Powys falls into the abstract theorizing that he takes James to task for. Not only is *Varieties of Religious Experience* clearer than *The Complex Vision* as a philosophical statement on belief, it is far more moving on the level of human interest that Powys wanted to reach. In "Religion and Neurology," the first lecture of *Varieties*, James writes:

In other words, not its origin, but *the way in which it works on the whole*, is Dr. Maudsley's final test of a belief. . . . In the history of Christian mysticism the problem how to discriminate between such messages and experiences as were really divine miracles, and such others as the demon in his malice was able to counterfeit, thus making the religious person twofold more the child of hell he was before, has always been a difficult one to solve, needing all the sagacity and experience of the best directors of conscience. In the end it had to come to our empiricist criterion: By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots (34).

James appeals to Jonathan Edwards's "Treatise on Religious Affections" to express the same sentiment. In accordance with this belief, James rejects what he calls "medical materialism" (29). For him, to "plead the organic causation of a religious state of mind" is wrong, and he scorns those who reinterpret religion as perverted sexuality (228). In "Conversion Concluded" he continues, "If the fruits for life of the state of conversion are good, we ought to idealize and venerate it, even though it be a piece of natural psychology; if not, we ought to make short work with it, no matter what supernatural being may have infused it" (195).

Both of these issues have relevance to *A Glastonbury Romance*, where, in the Dostoevskian tradition, characters suffer from a host of physical and mental ailments, and where various possibly supernatural occurrences are presented while an intimidatingly omniscient narrator comments on the First Cause and Cybele, all the while claiming not to know all the secrets of the universe. As in *The Complex Vision* Powys does not wish to affirm that religion should be entirely judged by its effects. The contrasting revelations of Sam Dekker and Johnny Geard at the end of the novel indicate Powys's inconclusiveness here.

A notable inclination toward James's view is expressed in the famous passage telling about the morning after Sam has the vision of a "globular chalice that had two circular handles" (939). He goes to help old Abel Twig with his constipation and piles:

Sam was not, it must be confessed, a born nurse; but he was a born naturalist and an unfastidious countryman. As he struggled with his task, bending over the old gentleman's rear, the tension of spirit brought back with a rush the miraculous power of the vision he had seen. The two extremes of his experience, the anus of the aged man and the wavering shaft of an Absolute, piercing his own earthly body, mingled and fused together in his consciousness. Holy Sam felt, as he went on with the business, a strange second sight, an inkling, as to some incredible secret, whereby the whole massed weight of the world's tormented flesh was labouring towards some release (948).

Sam gains a type of cognition with "hosts upon hosts of conscious personalities, some greater, some less, than themselves" (948). These are the immortals mentioned in *The Complex Vision*, and they lead Sam to good deeds. In contrast, when Geard sees something, presumably the Holy Grail in its fifth shape, during the great flood, it is connected with his "dying his chosen death by drowning" (1116). Powys does not associate this religious experience with good works, as in Sam Dekker's case, but with withdrawal and release from human life.

In calm, inviolable peace Mr. Geard saw his life, saw his death, and saw also that nameless Object, that fragment of the Absolute, about which all his days he had been murmuring. He was now totally free from remorse about Megan and Crummie. The ruthless element in his leaving them, purely for his own satisfaction, seemed to him justified in these last moments. He was at peace, too, about what should happen in the future to his new Religion (1117).

Powys believes that Geard's religious vision is justified because he is gaining some access to the goddess Cybele. No right action is needed. In the stirring, but intellectually confused, closing

paragraphs, Cybele seems at times only to come to those who have abandoned science and logic altogether.

James would never go this far. In "The Value of Saintliness" in *Varieties* James wrote against any revival of the ancient deities:

So soon as they appeared childish, contemptible, or immoral when reflected on, the deity grew discredited, and was ere long neglected and forgotten. It was in this way the Greek and Roman gods ceased to be believed in by educated pagans; it is thus that we ourselves judge of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Mohammedan theologies; Protestants have so dealt with the Catholic notions of deity, and liberal Protestants with older Protestant notions (263).

James would look down on Powys's attempt to revive Cybele as retrogressive because her followers failed to produce as much good as Christ's did. Such an argument would not interest Powys, whose Cybele both is and is not the ancient pagan deity, but who is certainly one of the immortals more concerned with visionary experience rather than good deeds. Although in *The Complex Vision* Powys had listed reason as the first of the eleven attributes of this state of heightened consciousness, reason here seems to have been discarded, connected to masculine forces in the old essentialist dichotomy.

The conclusion of *A Glastonbury Romance* also alludes indirectly to another issue in *Varieties*, the difference between the world-views of the once-born and the twice-born. Powys sympathizes with the twice-born, proclaiming:

"For the turrets upon the head of Cybele are made of those strange second thoughts of all the twice-born in the world; the liberated thoughts of men as they return from their labour and the brooding thoughts of women as they pause in the midst of their work. The powers of reason may number the Stones of Stonehenge and guess at the origin of the Grail of Glastonbury; but they cannot explain the mystery of the one, nor ask the required magic question of the other" (1120).

The twice-born are those such as John Geard and Sam Dekker who have had the revelation, and their experiences seem to be validated

over those who have not had such an encounter.

In discussing the two religious types, James had based his dichotomy on Cardinal Newman's *The Soul. Its Sorrows and Its Aspirations*. The once-born have no conception of the qualities "in which the severer majesty of God exists" (80). They are not self-righteous, but they are not reflective people. Like Powys, James sides with the twice-born. Although he comments that on the level of "religious solution" there is nothing wrong with the healthy-mindedness of the once-born, he personally feels that on the philosophical level the world view of the twice-born is more capable of coping with the problems of daily life (140). In short, life is too full of evil and melancholy for James to prefer the once-born to the twice-born. When we turn back to *A Glastonbury Romance* we see that if Powys's appeal to Cybele accomplishes anything, it is to suggest this sense of the world as a "double-storied mystery" in which the cosmic bank account will finally give the twice-born an appropriate dividend.

In his own *Autobiography* Powys presents himself as one of the twice-born while at the same time describing transcendent experiences so early in his life that one can not really call him a type of convert. He writes:

There have been occasions—I can recall two such out of my American travels, one as I walked along a squalid interminable slum-street in Cleveland, and one as I sat eating buttered toast in a dingy little cafe in Scranton, Pennsylvania—when I have emerged through my demonic postern-gate into the world of normal reality and normal solidity to find this natural home of the human senses a place of intoxicating sweetness and charm. What I felt on those two occasions I have never forgotten. It was a unique feeling, a new birth! It was like that escape from "The Will to Live" described by Schopenhauer (34).

Even as he mentions a new birth, Powys works a partial variation on the typical conversion process. He is not wakened from the world of everyday life into a heightened spiritual realm. Instead he moves from the interiority of obsession into the light of everyday objects. He says, "I had turned from my dead-sea with its apples of ashes and those terrible mirages in the unreal sands back to the sweet securities of the homely chemistry of de-sorcerized matter!" (35). Although we are dealing with a type of secular mysticism, the

experience is still noteworthy in light of *Varieties of Religious Experience* since James does include technically atheistic worldviews, as when he talks about both Buddhism and Emersonianism, and other abstract idealities (43).

In *The Complex Vision*, despite the idealizations of its secular mysticism, Powys wants to think of Christ as a useful symbolic figure, and so he remains in *A Glastonbury Romance*, even if he does not occupy center stage. Considering that Christ (mostly unconnected to the historical Jesus) was so important a figure to him, it seems odd that he does not refer to William James's famous essay on contemporary theism and Christianity, "The Will to Believe," which was presented at the philosophical clubs at Yale and Brown in 1896 and then published the next year. As soon as it was delivered, it met with much commentary both over its meaning and its merits. As a response to W. K. Clifford and Julian Huxley it was generally taken, according to Wernham, as "either a duty-to-believe or a moral right-to-believe doctrine" (3). As Wernham suggests, even if we can suspend belief in theism, we cannot suspend action. Life requires living. Any choice is a gamble, so it is foolish not to gamble on theism. It gives the immediate reward of a strenuous mood for approaching life without despair (103).

"The Will to Believe" has relevance to Powys's work in evaluating the kind of Christian conversion experience that a character like Sam Dekker undergoes in *A Glastonbury Romance*. Does Powys approve betting or gambling on Christian revelation, or taking it as a working hypothesis? As Wernham says with reference to doctrine p, for which we can here insert Christianity: "If p turns out to be false and I believed it, I am surprised but not necessarily disappointed. If I gambled on it, I am disappointed but not necessarily surprised. If I had taken it as an hypothesis, I am not necessarily surprised, nor necessarily disappointed either. My purpose was to find out whether p, and I am satisfied to have an answer, no matter what it is" (102). When we try to adapt this clear type of philosophical reflection to get a grip on Powys's thought, we are again stuck with obvious contradictions or at least sloppiness in Powys's arguments. In the chapter on "The Nature of the Gods" in *The Complex Vision*, Powys warns us to "beware of the old pathetic fallacy of human thought, the fallacy of assuming that to be true, which we desire to be true" (219). This warning is probably aimed at Christianity as a wish fulfillment. However, it is soon followed by the following ungrounded assertion about the immortals:

That the gods are aware of our existence can hardly be doubted. That they feel pity for us, in this

or that significant hour, can easily be imagined. That the evil in us draws towards us what is evil in them seems likewise a not unnatural possibility. That the love in us draws towards us the love in them is a thing in complete accordance with our own relation to forms of life lower than ourselves. That even at certain moments the gods may, by a kind of celestial vampirizing, use the bodily senses of men to "fill out," as it were, what is lacking in their own materiality, is a conceivable speculation (220).

What we need to do here is to substitute the idea of proposition p as theism or Christianity with the different but related idea of faith in the immortals. To Powys, it seems as if belief in the immortals is a gamble that we should make because, like James's belief in theism, it is going to give the believer a more concerted life-effort. If we extrapolate this idea to *A Glastonbury Romance*, the gamble relates back to Sam Dekker's conversion in that he will produce good works through a renewed vigor in life after his disappointment in love with Nell Zoyland.

In conclusion, I hope that I have shown that we should resist both the overvaluation of Powys as a philosopher and the notion that Powys was a student rather than a fan of William James. The fact that in 1920 he could not clearly identify his similarity to James and instead lashed out at him justifies speculation that Powys's reading of James was only a catalyst for his own views. We would do well to remember the claims in Powys's discussion of his college years at Cambridge that he did not read a single volume of the least importance all the time he was there, and that he did not gain much in general from his university education (*Autobiography*, 201, 182). Certainly he failed to concentrate on literature or philosophy. He prepared a second class History Tripos, and partially as a result of this course of study knew next to nothing about Pater, Henry James, or Thomas Hardy when he graduated. Furthermore, Powys's post-Cambridge career as a literary popularizer did not create the conditions whereby intensive study of James would be feasible. Powys today is hardly considered a major philosopher, despite all the supposedly philosophical essays that he wrote. In some of his greatest novels the abstract philosophizing is either inconsistent with itself, as in *A Glastonbury Romance*, or the weakest part of the work, as in *Porius* (where the discussion of causality is really quite inadequate). Powys learned more from novelists such as Scott, Tolstoy, Eliot, Hardy, and Lawrence than he had from formal

university work; his writing is at its strongest where he is responding to them. Not surprisingly, Powys's best work describes human nature, giving a broad panoramic view of social relations. Since our own society has a tendency to legitimate philosophical ideas rather than the fabrications of the imagination, it is no denigration of a marginalized author such as Powys to think that he may have felt this pressure in offering up comments suggesting an exaggerated view of William James's influence on his life's work.

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Notes

¹ On the other hand, by the 1890s, James had completed *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), *Psychology: Briefer Course* (1892), *The Will to Believe and Other Essays* (1897), *Human Immortality* (1898), and *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals* (1899). Thus when Powys came to America for his first lecture tour in 1909, James was still alive, his philosophy much discussed.

² In "Powys's Complex Vision" (1972), Michael Greenwald has noted Powys's early distancing of himself from James. Concerning *The Complex Vision*, he writes that Powys "repeatedly takes James and Bergson, whose work in many respects seems to have provided the impetus for his own, to task for their 'pseudo-scientific, pseudo-philosophical methods of thought' which fail to take into account man's 'aesthetic sense' " (63; see CV 302). Unfortunately, the essay does not have a chance to develop this perception. H. W. Fawcner notes the same contempt for James and Bergson in 1916 in *Confessions of Two Brothers* (IV, 53) where Powys states, " I once fancied that I shared with Bergson and James—those plausible sophists!—a predilection for the 'instinctive' over the 'logical'" (Fawcner 70). Does this mean that while James was alive and publishing his books, Powys generally agreed with him? It is hard to tell. In his *John Cowper Powys in Search of a Landscape* (1982), C. A. Coates reminds us that *Confessions of Two Brothers* rejects the multiverse for dualism (CTB 48), whereas by 1930 in Powys's *In Defense of Sensuality* dualism is replaced by an appeal to the previously scorned "multiverse" (15). Thus I find it hard to agree with Fawcner that *The Complex Vision* is in essential agreement with the philosophical works that come after it (41). Morine Krissdottir in *John Cowper Powys and the Magical Quest* (1980) tries to account for the inconsistencies in Powys's view of James's pluralism; her evaluation has a strong metaphysical rather than ethical slant to it. She notes that Powys is unsympathetic to mystics who want to read

the seeming plurality of the world as unreal, and she quotes the *Autobiography*: "To be a Pluralist rather than a Monist, is as much of an instinct to me as it is to every East Indian to be obsessed by Unity" (Krissdottir 25). She cites James's definitions of monism, pluralism, and the multiverse, and she finds it surprising that Powys renounced the monism implicit in most forms of mysticism. Turning next to *The Complex Vision*, she discusses the battle of malice and love within Powys's personality, and declares that for him it is malice that makes us desire multiplicity rather than identity. Her analysis lines up "love," "mysticism," and "monism" against "malice," "science," and "pluralism" in a way that underlines the problems with logic in Powys's thought. I sense here the problems of the metaphysical approach to Powys, although it has a long tradition. For example, G. Wilson Knight, Powys's first major defender, says that Powys sees the universe, "in the manner of Whitman or William James, as multitudinous, or 'pluralistic'; and he avoids all tidy systems" (1964: 63).

³ These include Henry Samuel Levinson's *The Religious Investigations of William James* (1981), Robert J. Vanden Burgt's *The Religious Philosophy of William James* (1981), Jacques Barzun's *A Stroll with William James* (1983), Howard M. Feinstein's *Becoming William James* (1984), Gerald E. Myers's *William James: His Life and Thought* (1986), James C. S. Wernham's *James' Will-to-Believe Doctrine: A Heretical View* (1987), and George Cotkin's *William James. Public Philosopher* (1990). Levinson's book contains a useful bibliographical essay on scholarship on William James's ideas on religion up to 1980.

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- . *Obstinate Cymric*. Carmarthen: Druid Press, 1947. and Llewelyn Powys. *Confessions of Two Brothers*. Rochester: Manas Press, 1916.
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A Full-Time Occupation

Charles Lock

Peter John Foss, *A Study of Llewelyn Powys: His Literary Achievement and Personal Philosophy*. Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991. Pp. 396. \$89.95.

For students of Llewelyn Powys (1884-1939) and of Llewelyn's brothers this book is of considerable importance. The little attention that Llewelyn has received in the half-century since his death has almost always been framed in the context of the Powys family as a whole, Llewelyn invariably being the "third brother." The strategy of Peter Foss's work is to treat Llewelyn rigorously on his own terms and without reference to any other Powys. The influence of John Cowper, a somewhat overbearing older brother, is of course discussed; and the influence is not passively acknowledged, for Foss holds JCP in part responsible for the "myth of Lulu," sunny, hedonistic, a young god, handsome and vital even while being wasted by disease: all very flattering, no doubt, but with the effect, Foss surmises (and even with the design, one might cynically add), of preventing anyone from taking Llewelyn seriously. Foss provides a brief survey of Llewelyn's reputation, so high in the thirties and forties, and after 1950, suddenly, in oblivion. In the past twenty years it is likely that Llewelyn has never been taken up by new readers for his own sake but only for the sake of the Powys family.

The outline of Llewelyn Powys's life and writings is thus well known to any likely reader of this book, and Foss spends little time in either a biographical narrative or a book-by-book appraisal. Instead he argues a thesis, that Llewelyn was a profoundly mystical writer, whose proclaimed and declaimed atheism and hedonism are part of a distinctively modern religious sensibility. Foss cites Llewelyn Powys describing Blake as "the most honourable mystic known." That is an odd phrase, mysticism and honor having no

manifest connection; whatever Llewelyn may have meant, it does prompt the thought that if Llewelyn really was a mystic, he was surely among the least honorable.

Foss's case is argued systematically and synthetically, rationalizing contradictions and incoherences in terms of a larger unity, and often appealing to non-Powysian terminology, as in a chapter heading, "The Ontological Basis of Llewelyn Powys's Philosophy of Life Affirmation." If this approach brings new readers to Llewelyn, then it will have been eminently justified. For old Powysian hands, however, loose talk about Jung, Fritjof Capra, David Bohm and other popular gurus merely gets in the way of Foss's important and assiduous research, which constitutes the true value of this book.

Extracts from Llewelyn's unpublished diary are always illuminating, and the Appendix containing extracts from the diary of 1919 shows the feasibility of a one-volume abridgement. Though Llewelyn always wrote with the public in mind, the diary has what seems, after too many of Llewelyn's perfectly rounded and balanced phrases, a refreshing lack of polish.

Particularly valuable is a listing of all the books from Llewelyn's library extant in the collection of Mr. E. E. Bissell, with inscriptions recorded. Many of these were gifts from family and friends: who would have guessed that in 1895 John Cowper would have presented Llewelyn with Kipling's *Barrack-Room Ballads*, or, the previous year, with Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, or, the following year, of Longfellow's *Poetical Works*? The only extant gift from Theodore to Llewelyn is of Skelton's poems. And we learn that Llewelyn stole John Cowper's copy of William James's *Pragmatism* in order to give it to his first love (and cousin) Marion Linton. Revealing of the favour and acceptance which Llewelyn found in his various brief sojourns in America are inscribed gifts from Van Wyck Brooks and George Santayana. Brooks's gift was his *Life of Emerson* (1932), and one is not surprised to find much Emerson and Thoreau in Llewelyn's library. One regrets that these influences and models continue to be overlooked in favor of Nietzsche, much adduced by Foss, not one of whose works is known to have been in Llewelyn's possession. Interestingly, the Emerson and Thoreau volumes were presented to Llewelyn between 1902 and 1904 not by John Cowper but by his brothers Littleton and Bertie.

Foss's research has turned up all sorts of friendships and literary connections previously neglected, I suspect, only because they did not involve John Cowper or Theodore as well. A

particularly good find, therefore, is a hitherto unknown description of both Llewelyn and John Cowper Powys in the *New York Times* of 7 September 1924:

To see them ambling down the streets of the village [sic: a charming reversal of Randall Jarrell's wondrous amendment to Frost's "Whose woods these are I think I know./His house is in the Village though"] always draws a crowd toward which they remain detached and slyly amused. They are both the big type of Englishman—loose jointed and a bit shambling, they both carry enormous briary walking-sticks, and one will wear a bright pink and the other a brilliant sky blue shirt . . .

That "slyly" expresses well the sense of the Powyses always acting as if they were Powyses, a sense which Louis (Marlow) Wilkinson captures so well in John Cowper as Jack Welsh in *The Buffoon*, and, Foss tells us, in Llewelyn as Cyprian Strange in *A Chaste Man*. Being a Powys seems to have been a full-time occupation, at least in America, and Llewelyn's writings could well be explained as primarily the cultivation of a persona. There is nothing ignoble about that; the same could be said of Emerson and Thoreau, or of Lamb and Carlyle. But it does alleviate the burden of explication and definition: each of these writers wrote not what cohered as an argument but what, however incoherent it may be as discourse, cohered both with a life and with an image of that life.

In explaining the origins and development of the image or "myth" of Llewelyn Powys, Foss efficiently gathers and organizes diverse materials, all of which culminate in the mid-1930s with three striking portraits of Llewelyn, in John Cowper's *Autobiography* (1934), Richard Heron Ward's *The Powys Brothers* (1935), and Louis Wilkinson's *Welsh Ambassadors* (1936). Far more important than Foss allows, however, was the libel trial in Dorchester brought by the manager of a home for young girls in Chaldon Herring. For some reason Foss refers to this as the "Winfrith Girls Mental home", which is wrong on many counts. Unhappily the enormous press coverage—*The News of the World* headline: "DYING AUTHOR IN COURT DRAMA"—has not been surveyed and consolidated with the ample documentation in the correspondence of the Powys family, Sylvia Townsend Warner and others. Much the best account is to be found in Judith Stinton's *Chaldon Herring: The Powys Circle in a Dorset Village* of 1988 (reviewed in *Powys Notes*, vol. 5, no. 2), a

volume surprisingly ignored by Peter Foss. I here add to Judith Stinton's account the report in the *Dorset County Chronicle* of 24 January 1935:

I doubt if any Assize court in the Kingdom ever experienced the thrill of emotion that swept through the public galleries when the court was told that a dying man was to be brought in to give evidence. As Mr. Llewelyn Powys, propped up in a wheeled chair, was giving evidence his brother, Mr. John Cowper Powys, the author of "A Glastonbury Romance," was looking down at the frail, whitefaced, broken form . . .

Foss's tale of the development of the "myth" of Llewelyn needs to be modified by the recognition that the books of John Cowper, Ward, and Wilkinson would have had little impact without the national attention focussed on Llewelyn in the Dorset Assizes.

On Llewelyn's distinctive style Foss writes well, though not I think with sufficient detail or attention to the variety of modes available to Llewelyn. Of the matter of "Luluizing"—as John Cowper labelled the hermetically personal quality in Llewelyn's prose—Foss writes well, taking as exemplary Llewelyn's observation that a cedar in Kenya has the same shape as a "Tintinhull elm." Which, Foss continues, "begs the question, not only what kind of elm is a Tintinhull elm (and why is such an elm different from any other elm), but what and where is Tintinhull anyway, and what relevance has it?" The point is precisely that the relevance is to Llewelyn's life, and to his image: one reads Llewelyn not to find out about his subject but only to augment the image of Llewelyn. That is a function of his style, learnt from Lamb, Stevenson, and others, and very efficiently mastered.

In treating another passage and another characteristic of Llewelyn's style, Foss himself misses a most arcane piece of Luluizing: "Llewelyn writes in *Skin for Skin* about becoming like a little child and going to Heaven 'along with the Master of Corpus' . . . (Is becoming like a little child to become senile, like the aged Master of Corpus Christi College who had recently died thinking he would go to Heaven?)" . . . and a string of further questions. These questions are by no means invalidated, though they are certainly given focus, by the knowledge that the lately deceased Master of Corpus, E. C. Pearce, was John Cowper Powys's brother-in-law. That information, and a discussion of this very passage, is to be

found in my entry on Llewelyn Powys in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 98 (1990). I assume that this, like Stinton's book on Chaldon Herring, is unknown to Peter Foss; when so little research has been carried out on Llewelyn in recent years, it seems unwise to ignore all of it.

One other area in which I have conducted some research concerns Llewelyn's friendship with Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, the German (not, pace Foss, Austrian) Expressionist artist. Foss discusses at length Kirchner's portrait of Llewelyn, which the sitter disliked intensely, and which has only once been reproduced. Foss writes that "it is a surprisingly calm painting . . . and in its calmness, iconic." He does not reproduce the painting, nor does he tell us either where it is or where a reproduction (minuscule) might be found: in Donald E. Gordon's catalogue raisonnée of 1968 (no. 786v). What Foss does reproduce (Plate 13) is a sketch of Llewelyn by Kirchner of 1938, which Foss describes as "Previously unpublished." Not so: it was published in Eberhard W. Kornfeld's *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Nachzeichnung seines Lebens*, Bern, 1979, p. 322. It is odd, chiefly because it is so little a likeness, gives us so little of the sense of Llewelyn familiar through photographs. As for the painting itself, I made enquiries of Herr Kornfeld, and learnt that after Llewelyn's rejection of his portrait Kirchner used the reverse for another painting, "Tangotee," which was sold by the estate of Lisa Gujer (to whom Llewelyn dedicated *Swiss Essays*) in 1982, and is presently in a private collection in Germany. There is now a Kirchner museum in Davos-Platz, and Herr Kornfeld also informed me that he hoped to have a section devoted to Llewelyn Powys. That no doubt will contain the photograph of Llewelyn and Lisa Gujer in 1938 reproduced in the catalogue to the exhibition of Gujer's tapestries in 1974, but never reproduced in a Powysian context. Clearly there is much more research to be done.

If I have taken space in this review to note gaps and indicate fields of research and lines of enquiry that might be pursued, that is not to belittle Peter Foss's achievement. Nobody who has been touched by Llewelyn can fail to be challenged, provoked and inspired by Foss's work, which is quite simply the most substantial contribution to our knowledge since Malcolm Elwin's biography of 1946.

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Gestures of God

Marius Buning

T.F. Powys, *The Market Bell*. Edited with notes by Ian Robinson assisted by Elaine Mencher. With an Afterword by J. Lawrence Mitchell. The Brynmill Press, Doncaster, 1991. Pp. 322. £14.95 trade edition, £39.00 de luxe edition limited to 150 numbered copies.

It is a sad but undeniable fact that T. F. Powys's novels, short stories, and fables are little known and even less published. Only *Mr Weston's Good Wine* (1927) appeared in several Penguin editions and received a small place in the literary canon. There are a number of possible explanations for Powys's marginality as a modern writer: not only his hermit-like existence in rural Dorset, far from the London-centered literary world, but also his apparently whimsical descriptions of the comic and savage aspects of rural life could hardly appeal to the sophisticated modernist literary climate of the twenties and thirties. Nor were his highly unorthodox views, rejecting such hallowed notions as immortality and the Trinity, and presenting sexuality and sadism unashamedly, palatable to the average Christian reader at the time. It was (and still is) above all, I think, the failure to come to terms with that unique brand of realism and symbolism, expanding into a distinctive kind of modern allegory that characterizes Powys's best work. Clearly, his fiction belongs to the tradition of meditative prose rather than to the realm of psychological realism for which it has been mistaken. From a postmodernist viewpoint, however, Powys's very marginality constitutes its attraction and value for us today.

There are encouraging signs of a growing appreciation of his work, not least thanks to recent scholarship and criticism, however. There is also a new audience for Powys and thus a strong need for his books to become available. Fortunately there are also some small British publishing houses that appear enterprising enough to bring Powys's work back into print. In 1991 the Brynmill Press published posthumously that delightful parable *Father Adams* (1919?); *Selected*

Early Works and three late stories under the title *The Two Thieves* (1932) are to appear soon. This year also saw the publication (by Hieroglyph 1993 Press) of *Fables* (1929), a collection of twenty stories which, beyond question, belongs to Powys's most mature work.

The Market Bell, composed in 1924, criticized by his friends Sylvia Townsend Warner and David Garnett, revised and presented to Chatto & Windus in 1927 and shelved there ever since, is in many ways an enjoyable and important book, although in its present state it cannot be said to belong to Powys's best work since it lacks that final stroke of genius which makes every textual element fall into the right place and order. It is full of Powysian characters and reflections that can be understood on several levels at successive readings. On the surface it tells the story of Mr Glen, an ambitious, materialistic, evil-bent young man, who by wicked means manages to become the mayor of the market town of Stonebridge, causing death, humiliation, sorrow and pain to his several victims in the process. Like his companion in evil, Mr Bromby, the village rector, anxiously waiting for his wife's death in order to take a young girl, his ward Nancy, who is to him no more than a slice of veal, he is obsessed by sex and lusts after pretty, young village girls, who are brutally victimized by him. The wicked pair eventually find their punishment in death, a solution the reader will readily accept, although from the point of view of plot it may be a little less convincing.

But, then, the reader will soon discover the deeper symbolical, or theological level in the story: it is not just a story about good triumphing over evil, but a fictive discussion about good and evil as emanating from the same source, namely God—referred to several times as a "bad grocer," some of whose customers are "bad pots of jam." Has God in making man, perhaps, made "an awful mistake," as one of the simple villagers tends to think? God and the Devil are depicted by the narrator as shaking hands in the sky and as playing at Oranges and Lemons with the lives of men, while looking down at "the little world below." Powys's own belief can be extracted from the following reflection: "All things, the going down of the moon, the moving of the stars were gestures of God, sad wild gestures, that may well fill the heart of man with fear."

The seasoned Powys reader will recognize the author's perennial, obsessive concern with the problem of theodicy—the profound questioning of God's righteousness in establishing or allowing evil and human suffering. These formidable metaphysical issues are dealt with most concretely, with a superb eye and ear for local scenes, characters, and stylized country speech, as on the very last page of the novel, describing the dying of one of the truly good

characters:

'We be only borrowers,' said Mr Tapper. 'We did only borrow Mr Cobby, and 'e be gone where'—
Mr Crocker held up his hand
'Hush Mr Tapper, no more names; the Spring flowers are come.'"

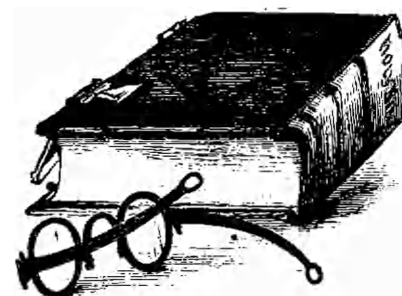
It is this selfsame Mr Cobby, the local brewer and purveyor of ginger beer, who may be regarded as a precursor of Mr Weston, God in the guise of a wine merchant, in the later novel bearing his name and ware. Although there are several allusions to the double function of wine, giving both pleasure and woe, it is only a minor motif in *The Market Bell*, in which the bell itself is the controlling image with moral significance for all the important characters, striking both joy for the innocent and terror for the wicked. This bell has many intertextual ramifications, picked up from the Bible, from literature (Shakespeare, John Donne, and George Fox—from whose *Journal* the ambivalent title comes—and Edgar Allan Poe), from popular legend and from botany (a Wessex dialect name for a flower called the Snake's Head or the purple Bell of Sodom).

Such intertextualizing practice underpins the allegorical nature of the text and allows Powys's market bell in the novel's climactic scene to summon the locals to an auction in which such lots are up for sale as a mansion in heaven, peace that passeth all understanding, everlasting life, and—in the final lot—Death and Hell. It also summons the reader to attentive reading and to pondering over life's great, unanswerable questions.

One cannot but be grateful to see *The Market Bell* in print in such attractive form and appreciative of J. Lawrence Mitchell's highly informative Afterword, with details about the various extant manuscripts, the problems of dating, and a compact, intelligent account of the novel's main themes and symbols. I have rather more mixed feelings about the *Notes* provided by the editor and his collaborators. Much though one must admire Ian Robinson's zeal to record all alterations, deletions, and additions—a Herculean job in the face of Powys's notorious wilfulness in matters of spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing—his account does not allow quick consultation anyway. In part this is due to the inelegant typographical layout, particularly troublesome when one is referring to the words or phrases in the original manuscripts; in part it is because Robinson's laborious editorial account is interspersed with matters of interpretation and comments, often of a rather subjective kind, including disclaimers and personal guesses (e.g. the excessively long note 17 on the story's perplexing theology) that one

does not usually encounter in editorial practice. For no good reason a number of notes are reproduced in bold type (nos. 13, 31, 184). Occasional errors can still be spotted (e.g. "a french widow" for "a French window," p.63) and one wonders why certain paragraphs should not have received further editing (e.g. second paragraph p. 19). Some alterations do remain puzzling enough, for instance, the notes to pp. 102-105, informing us that Mr Cobby found the receipt for his home-made ginger beer "in his Bible" rather than "in his copy of *Pamela*" as the original has it. Surely the difference is not unimportant and ought to have been accounted for. Anyway, it is to be hoped that future editions of Powys's work will resort either to straightforward annotation (as was the case with *Father Adam*) or to full variorum edition format, for which the time does not seem ripe yet.

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Voltairean Cadences . . . Powysian Phantasmagoria

William Olmsted

John Cowper Powys, *Les Montagnes de la lune* (*The Mountains of the Moon*), translated by Michelle Tran Van Khai. Paris: Minerve, 1991.

One of my earliest memories concerns a visit to the movies. The film was *Fantasia*, the theatre was a converted auditorium with a domed ceiling. Somehow the fragmented images of this recollection came to mind while reading *Les Montagnes de la lune*, Michelle Tran Van Khai's translation of John Cowper Powys's *The Mountains of the Moon*. I imagine that Powys himself, as a grateful captive of the demon of analogy, might have appreciated this reader's association of the "lunar love-story" with, say, the animated sugarplum fairies waltzing to Tchaikovski.

In a work whose charm springs chiefly from the poetry of its images and the half-humorous speculations of its less- or more-than-human orators, it seems wiser to speak of music and choreography than of plot and narration. Powys's *Moon* contains a mixed population of indigenous beings and Earth creatures, the latter comprising a collection of "terrestrial milestones" possessed by the baronial lunar giant Oom. The core of Eve's apple, the bone of a Chinese emperor's big toe, the feather of Noah's dove, Achilles's heelbone, Boadicea's spearhead, Nero's fiddlestring, a fragment of the tablets of the Ten Commandments are among the items—all capable of motion and speech—pressed into service as Oom strives to prevent the consummation of the love between his son Yoom and the lovely Lorlt, daughter of another lunar lord. Oom at one point prompts his milestones into a dance and here, in such pairings as that of Nero's fiddlestring with the fragmentary Commandment

against adultery, we can share Powys's sense of the playful meaningless of history's monuments.

As for the love story, there is not one but several, all serving to illustrate JCP's contention that the "ultimate life-sap which alone makes the world's future possible" derives from the ecstatic fusion of lovers. Powys makes no pretense of jeopardizing such unions and even takes the opportunity to mock the flimsy pretext of his own central story. As one of the milestones remarks, ostensibly speaking of Oom, "he could perfectly well have prevented this crazy kid from meeting this silly girl without sending all of us off on this mad expedition." Indeed! but then we would not have had this "idylle lunaire" (as Ms. Tran prudently subtitles the work) with its philosophizing, its fairy-tale blend of the monumental and the prosaic, its happy satire of the vanity of European culture and rationality.

The translation, which I read before the original, offers a Powys whose crispness and intelligibility reminded me of the Voltaire of the *contes philosophiques*. How can we not recall the naive Candide in passages like this?

Mais le pire, pour notre jeune héros, était qu'il conservait le souvenir extrêmement vif de la querelle bouleversante qu'il avait eue avec sa sœur dans le sanctuaire de leur dieu Koosk; et chacun des mots brûlants d'indignation qu'ils avaient échangés le blessait aussi profondément dans sa chair que les deux pointes acérées d'une fourche.

«Je veux un amoureux!» s'était écriée Lorlt d'un ton passionné.

Et comme Rorlt tenait de la raisonner en évoquant l'amour que lui-même et leur père nourrissaient à son égard, elle s'était exclamée, d'une voix aiguë et frémissante, à vous fendre le cœur:

«Tu ne comprends pas, tu ne comprendras jamais! Toi et père, vous êtes trop stupides pour comprendre!»

Such Voltairean cadences apart, the translation generally

strives to reproduce the linguistic peculiarities that mark Powys's late style. But this is not an easy task. When the son of the Moon complains of his enemy the Sun that "cela fait des millions d'années que ce monstre de lascivité, vantard et cruel, engendre par la fluorescence désinvolte et sans retenue de ses rayons procréateurs," I had no sense of the jokey word-play of "that burning and blustering and blighting old bully has for millions of years been begetting children by the careless casual and incontinent fluorescence of his procreative beams." Similarly, the description of a "salle couronnée d'un dôme, et dont la forme peut-être n'était autre que celle du destin" can't capture "this domed and perhaps also this doomed hall." Puns and verbal fireworks are the bane of translators; yet I can only feel admiration for "nous—folles créatures tourmentées, tâtilloignes, tâtonnantes, batifolantes, farfelues, fébriles, flamboyantes, effarées, téméraires, flageolantes et fugaces du maniérisme contemporain" as a rendering of "we, feverish, fussy, fumbling, frisky, feckless, febrile, flamboyant, flurried, foolhardy, foppish, floundering, fugacious fol-di-lols of modern frippery."

Ms. Tran carefully reproduces the bizarre proper names but sometimes errs minutely or opts for clarity over accuracy. Thus Woom-o-Rim, for reasons known only to JCP, becomes Woom-o'-Rim for the story's last twenty pages, a possibly insignificant change which Tran elides by using "Woom o'Rim" throughout. The evening star named Ditty emerges somewhat mysteriously as "Kitty" and the assertively Welsh name Myfanwy Cellwair anglicizes into "Maggie Cellwair." Such peccadilloes aside, Michelle Tran Van Khai makes her translation a graceful and readable addition to the already considerable number of Powys's works in French. An extract from G. Wilson Knight's appreciation of Powysian phantasmagoria, translated by François Xavier Jaujard, offers a helpful preface.

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Peter Powys Grey: An Obituary

Charles Lock

[This piece was written for *The New York Times* but not published. Though composed, Lock says, in great haste, and addressed specifically to readers of *The Times*, the piece is printed here for readers of *Powys Notes* without alteration or refinement. It can be supplemented by the memorials, in a different register, of Lock, Glen Cavaliero, and Morine Krissdóttir, *The Powys Society Newsletter* no. 17, November 1992, as well as by the commentary of Richard Maxwell in *Powys Notes* 1992 ("Work on Powys and America").]

Peter Powys Grey, who died on the fifth of October 1992 at his Manhattan apartment, achieved distinction in a variety of fields and made diverse contributions to the business and cultural life of New York. He was seventy years old.

The son of Marian Powys Grey, of Snedens Landings and the Devonshire Lace Shop in Washington Square, and consultant on lace to the Metropolitan Museum, Peter Grey was the nephew of the writers John Cowper Powys, Theodore Francis Powys and Llewelyn Powys. At Snedens Landings Peter Grey was raised in a distinguished milieu: his uncles and their friends, including Theodore Dreiser and Edgar Lee Masters, were frequent visitors, and the clients of his mother's lace shop included many of the important families of New York in the 1920s and thirties.

Educated at Exeter Academy, N.H., and at Harvard, Peter Grey graduated with an AB *cum laude* in English in 1947. Rather than continuing graduate studies with his mentor, Prof. F.O. Matthiessen, Peter Grey became the co-founder of the Salzburg Seminars in American Studies in 1947. This was then an ambitious vision; today it continues to flourish as an institution of cultural exchange for the benefit of graduate students at European universities.

In 1952 Mr. Grey was appointed to the American Express

Company as a specialist in public relations. For twelve years he was largely responsible for the drafting of corporate statements and executive speeches. He was in this capacity closely involved in the development of international links, particularly with the Soviet Union. It was while organizing a trade fair in Moscow that Peter Grey contrived an opportunity to visit Boris Pasternak, an occasion that he often recalled as the most extraordinary and enriching of his life.

In 1964 Peter Grey left American Express to become Director of Public Relations and Coordinator of Urban and Environmental Affairs for the New York Chamber of Commerce. Here he was responsible for the reclamation of many vacant lots as miniature parks; the smaller the site, the more care he seemed to lavish on it and on its tenuous arboreal life. The renovation of the Battery and the establishment of the Lower East Side Maritime Museum were among the schemes in which he was deeply involved. Mr. Grey was responsible for the annual Wall Street Flower Show, sadly discontinued, and he initiated numerous schemes, notably the Downtown Center, to combat drug abuse and addiction within the business community. He also pioneered a scheme for the recycling of paper in offices.

In addition to his many professional activities, Peter Grey was a most active counsellor with the Samaritans for more than twenty years. There were many other acts of kindness, often expressed in the surreptitious planting of flowers and shrubs in neglected sites.

Raised in a literary family Peter Powys Grey was expected to become a writer himself. At Harvard he won the short story prize adjudicated by members of the English Department, and it amused him in later years to recall that second prize had been awarded to Joseph Heller. But in literary endeavours Peter Grey fell victim to the "enemies of promise." Apart from the one short story, his only publication was *The First Two Centuries: An Informal History of the New York Chamber of Commerce*, of 1968, a brief and official work, though not devoid of wit and whim. He was to be valued not for his writings but for his readings. These, from the writings of John Cowper Powys, or Walt Whitman, or, especially, from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, were celebrated among those privileged to be in the audience.

Peter Powys Grey was twice married, first to Barbara Tyler in 1948, and secondly to Matilda Morley. He is survived by the two children of his first marriage, Katey Philippa Pagerey Grey of Becket, MA, and Christopher Hamilton Grey of Santa Fe, NM.

Notes on This Issue

We are pleased once again—*extremely* pleased, we might add—to acknowledge our 1993 grant from Wilfrid Laurier University for the preparation and publication of *Powys Notes*. A further word on the Wilfrid Laurier grant—and on the future of this journal, as of the Powys Society of North America—might be appropriate here. First of all, a word of clarification: the grant is intended to help small academic journals get a firm footing; in other words, it is by its nature an interim measure. We have made significant progress over the last few years towards building membership and regular income, but our efforts have not yet been conclusive. It is crucial that readers who wish to support the Society should help in whatever way they can—for example, by paying dues, by circulating *Notes* to people who might be interested in it, and by convincing their libraries to subscribe. The latter activity—of special interest, since libraries display periodicals and make them available to relatively large numbers of people—is perhaps becoming more challenging. As John Sutherland wrote recently, "One of the reasons that the average sale of academic monographs has sunk so catastrophically over the past five years is the electronic efficiency of libraries in cross-cataloguing and inter-library loan. A battle is looming between the publishing and library industries." (*London Review of Books*, 22 July 1993) The number of libraries subscribing to *PN* appears to be increasing rather than decreasing, surely a good sign given the fatal logic of the library-publisher war described by Sutherland, but even very good small journals may soon be under pressure to go electronic—in our minds a highly problematic and undesirable alternative, despite a good deal of cheerleading from Hugh Kenner and others. (For a subtle treatment of on-line publishing, when it makes sense and when it doesn't, see Geoffrey Nurenberg's essay in *Representations* 42, "The Place of Books in the Age of Electronic Reproduction.") Worse yet, such magazines may shut up shop altogether. What *PN* can realistically hope for, it appears to be getting—that is, a slow but steady increase in support from both individuals and libraries. This will be enough

to keep *PN* in existence, most probably, but only if the present trend is sustained. Readers, take note.

The death of Peter Powys Grey (see Charles Lock's obituary in this issue) left a vacant space on our editorial board. That space has now been filled by Morine Krissdóttir, whom most readers of this journal will know as President of the British Powys Society. We welcome her cordially and hope that her presence will help us, among many other tasks, to define more precisely the relation between the British and the North American Powys Societies. (Officers of PSNA met in Toronto during the post-Christmas MLA rush: a report will be forthcoming on the results of that consultation.)

The present issue of *Powys Notes* features Peter Christensen's essay on John Cowper Powys and William James, first presented to the Powys Society of North America at our May 1992 conference on Powys and America. Most readers of Powys will be familiar with the supposition (much encouraged by JCP) that he was influenced by James's concept of the "multiverse;" Christensen argues that this influence was, on the whole, trivial. If he is correct, then we will never need another essay on Powys and James, a not altogether unattractive thought, given the sterility of most influence studies. Nonetheless, feeling that the debate isn't quite over, we invite any interested readers to respond to Christensen's vigorous and informed debunking of Powys's own claims to intellectual kinship with James. Our own response—a bit outside the range of Christensen's specific claim—has to do with the nature not only of James's influence on Powys but on the quality of his thought taken in itself and on the recent revival (via Richard Rorty and others) of the traditions of liberal American pragmatism. Drifting through the British Museum this summer (and waiting for a myriad of books, some of which never arrived due to a post-Thatcherian circulation crisis), the editor of *Powys Notes* encountered Shamoon Zamir of the University of London, who proved to have some striking thoughts on James. According to Zamir's forthcoming book on W. E. B. Du Bois (to be published by the University of Chicago Press), "James's conceptualization of individual freedom blocks the possibility of formulating radical opposition to the drift of social process. In the end, the will to believe and the will to action only confer a blessing on the status quo." Or to quote a later comment, "The way James conceptualizes the relationship of history and action leaves no way to describe a self-consciousness struggling for critical understanding

and self-realization in the midst of alienation and the mediations of power. All that James dismisses as pessimistic subjectivism." One possible conclusion: a critical view of James, such as that provided by Zamir and others, might afford a worthwhile starting-point from which to rethink the question of Powys's own depictions of individuals in modern society. Powys's "pessimistic subjectivism" might be the gulf that separates him from James. Perhaps it is finally in these terms that a Powysian multiverse would turn out to be different from a Jamesian one.

Observations, Social and Bibliographic, by the Editor and Others

We always like to get mail intimating that subscribers have read and perhaps even enjoyed *Powys Notes*, not to mention the Powys (or Powyses) of their choice. Glen Cavaliero writes to congratulate us (a genuinely collective "us," not merely the editorial one) on "a particularly good issue" (1992, *Powys and America*), and to add a few comments of his own to Ian Duncan's study of *Owen Glendower*. "Ever since reading Roland Matthias I'm just a shade uneasy about my own magisterial pronouncement about its being his crowning work—and yet, and yet—The concluding chapter at any rate is more majestic, eloquent, Shakespearean in some ways, than anything else he wrote. It still takes my breath away. It has a grandeur that puts most twentieth century writing to shame. And it's so moving." Sally Connely responds to the previous issue (7.2) that she is "very glad indeed to see that at last Malcolm Elwin's name is being quoted in connection with JCP. And that he and Eric Harvey are being given their due for taking up John, and thereafter publishing all that he wrote for the rest of his life (as well, of course, as reprinting many out-of-print titles)—thus freeing John from financial anxiety." We hope to have more to say about the publishing history of Powys's later work after the impending publication of Wilbur Albrecht's *Porius* edition, which so many other readers of this journal have been asking after: to those readers who have made inquiries, *Porius* can be expected before the end of 1993. Finally, responding to the editor's comments on Naomi Mitchison and matters Powysian, Tony Hallet cites a passage from Judith Stinton's *Chaldon Herring: The Powys Circle in a Dorset Village*: "One

visitor was Llewelyn's friend Bernie O'Neill and niece Isobel, who came with the writer Naomi Mitchison. Mrs. Mitchison gave a fictionalized account of the journey in her novel, *The Corn King and the Spring Queen*. Some of us (including the present writer) will find this a useful hint for future reference. Mr. Hallet adds (less usefully but perhaps more intriguingly), "I know Tim Hyman . . . expressed puzzlement over the ending of *Glastonbury Romance* as he didn't understand where Cybele was coming from. Well, just so you know SHE'S COMING FROM SHERBORNE AND HER NAME IS MRS."—but here I must break off, fearing that the revelation of Cybele's everyday identity and her real-life presence in an actual Sherborne location might well disrupt the affairs of that idyllic town. (Those who were on Mr. Hallet's guided walk through Sherborne in 1992 evidently know the secret anyway, but let that be.)

Vanity Fair for April 1993 includes Christopher Hitchens's essay on the recent edition of Philip Larkin's letters. Like just about everyone else who has reviewed this volume, Hitchens spends a good deal of time (and space) quoting Larkin's hissy comments about x, y, and z (see any page of Larkin to fill in the blanks). He concludes, perhaps a bit hastily, that Larkin (whose father was, says Hitchens, "an active pre-war supporter of Nazism") remained throughout his life a kind of closet fascist. Powys is drawn into Hitchens's argument in a rather striking fashion. Citing John Harrison's now venerable study *The Reactionaries*, Hitchens reminds us of the right-wing sympathies of certain great modernists: Eliot, Yeats, Pound, Lawrence, Lewis, in other words, the usual suspects. "Harrison," Hitchens adds, "located the core quotation [indicating the ideological underpinnings of modernist fascism?] in *The Meaning of Culture*, by a now forgotten English author named John Cowper Powys, who in 1930 wrote, 'Outworn, misused, misapplied for so long, the aristocratic ideal is now quite dead. There is no escape from machinery and modern inventions; no escape from city vulgarity and money power, no escape from the dictatorship of the uncultured.' Powys found his own solution: 'An individual man or woman, carrying to a comfortless job through clanging streets the cheapest editions of some immortal book, can mount the stairs of his secret psychic watch-tower and think the whole ant heap into invisibility.' A real shock of recognition here—recognition of the crabbed, rancorous old librarian retreating behind his bound volumes to snarl and bark at the lapping tides of democracy and modernity. And the coincidence is not purely textual or biographical. Larkin's letters breathe a continual admiration for

Powys ('Picking up the trails of Powys is a thing I'd dearly love to do') as well as for Lawrence, and especially for Lawrence's emphasis on blood." It's interesting, and not utterly implausible, to imagine Larkin as a Powys character, though Hitchens should be reminded that Powys's advice, as quoted, has nothing to do with barking and snarling at mass society and much to do with suggesting to its inhabitants—secretaries, bookkeepers, etc.—that they use literature to forget it. Not precisely a fascist case, though the harping on timeless and autonomous works might remind American readers of William Bennett's Reagan-era appeals for Worshipful Study of Great Books. (How much better and more committed an advocate for this practice was JCP than the fawning and destructive Bennett!) Does Hitchens's rhodomontade lead us any further? A subtler critic, with greater knowledge and more time than quick-draw Christopher, would probably want to place Powys in a much more oblique relation to twenties modernism than Hitchens manages to do, yet the Powys-Larkin connection, however awkwardly formulated in the *Vanity Fair* essay, is worth further thought: like the irritating conundrum of Powys and James, it's more than a matter of influence.

The Powys Society Newsletter, nos. 18 & 19, contains Charles Lock's pained and painstaking analysis of the Hitchens commentary cited above; Lock's essay is titled "Philip Larkin, John Cowper Powys and Other Fascists." Lock is no doubt the "subtler critic" for whom my commentary (directly above) yearns. The same issue includes an important bibliographical check-list of forgotten works by John Cowper Powys (compiler, Paul Roberts), a reminiscence of JCP which originally appeared in the *Haldeman-Julius Monthly*, August 1928 (?), and many other items of interest.

Looking around Berlin this summer, I stopped at a bookstore in the Gendarmenmarkt and saw—displayed prominently in the window—a translation of John Cowper Powys's *Autobiography*. I didn't buy it, but somebody will: what will JCP mean, or seem to mean, in that context, so different from either British or North American literary culture? While we wait for the full answer to that question, which may be quite a while in coming (see Elmer Schenkel's comments in the *Powys Newsletter* for an early reaction), we can turn to other reports of Powysian fortunes on the continent: Letters from Sweden by Sven Erik Täckmark and Janina Nordius (PN, 1992) are followed in the present issue by William Olmsted's divagations on Powys in French translation. It should be noted, for those with a further interest in such matters, that *The*

Mountains of the Moon, the volume discussed by Olmsted, is only one among many Powysian works recently translated into French. We do not preclude reports on the others, but found the thought of late Powys in French of particular aesthetic interest.

Rita Pappas has sent us a poem by Marcia Lee Masters ("The House in Chicago," originally printed in *Poetry*; also in *Wind Around the Moon*, Dragon's Teeth Press, 1986), mostly about her famous father. "The House in Chicago" begins, "Mostly I remember all the books/And statues—the one of Powys—/Culling the light above the centuries of shelves." The poem sustains itself vividly for another seventeen lines, ending with E. A. Masters reading his *own* poems: "They stung me—/As if some great imported traveller/Had scared up all the dust upon a country road." Marcia Masters has written a number of lyrics concerning her father, but most of them have a tendency toward sentimentality. This one seems fine, as do many of her other poems. Rita Pappas comments: "I was talking about [Marcia Masters] with Gwendolyn Brooks a few years ago, and she was shaking her head and saying that she was one of the fine neglected poets of American literature." A question for Powysians: what is the "statue" (possibly a bust?) of (presumably) JCP mentioned in "The House in Chicago," and does it still exist?

As *Powys Notes* goes to press, *The Powys Review*, nos. 28 & 29 (a double issue), has just arrived. Featured is J. Lawrence Mitchell's commentary on, and catalogue of, portraits of T. F. Powys, no doubt a definitive iconography of its subject. Also included in this number is Susan Rands's "The Topicality of *A Glastonbury Romance*," particularly interesting for its treatment of Bligh Bond, "the architect in charge of the excavations at the Abbey from 1908-1913," who was finally dismissed from his job after claiming guidance from automatic writing; its treatment of the libel suit against John Cowper Powys by two Glastonbury worthies (a pivotal event in Powys's career, for aesthetic and financial reasons alike); its citation of lurid, pseudo-mythical writing on Wookey Hole from the *Somerset Year Book* for 1928 (how Glastonbury culture does reproduce itself!), and its reproduction of photographs of the great flood of 1929. Rands also cites research by Joy Burden which the rest of us are unlikely to encounter unless we subscribe to the *Parish News for Battonsborough, Burleigh, Lottisham and W. Bradley*, on a local historical pageant (at Butleigh) of the kind enacted in *A Glastonbury Romance*—and apparently (cf. *Between the Acts*, 1941) quite a typical feature of early twentieth-century English culture. (As an appropriate cross-reference: *The Powys Society Newsletter*, no. 17, includes Mary

Warden's account of a 1905 historical pageant at Sherborne, with several direct Powysian connections.) Rands notes, in passing, that some people in Glastonbury are convinced to this day that they or their ancestors feature in Powys's novel. Nonetheless—or should I say *therefore*?—neither library nor bookstores in the town do much to acknowledge JCP's existence.

The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center has mailed us their announcement of 1994-1995 Research Fellowships, for one or three months. The deadline of 1 February 1994 will be past when this issue of *PN* reaches its readers, but Powysians who wish to plan ahead should consider applying by next February 1 to study in this great collection. Write to the Director's Office, attn: Research Fellowships-PS, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, P.O. Box 7219, Austin, Texas 78713-7219.

A Dorset Landscape

Michael Ballin reports on the British Powys Society Conference, 21-24 August 1993.

At the end of a family visit to the United Kingdom this August, I attended the three-day conference of the British Powys Society held in Kingston Maurward, Dorset, at the agricultural college. The college was originally an eighteenth-century house often visited by Thomas Hardy as a young boy and is a couple of miles away from Dorchester. Its combination of landscaped setting, open pastures, and formal gardens provided a suitable background to a conference featuring the Dorset landscape as reflected in the writings of the Powys family.

I was welcomed by the society in my role as an ambassador of the Powys Society of North America—a strange experience for a former British resident to be a representative from North America in his own country. Since I hailed originally from South Wales, I referred to myself jokingly as a "Welsh Ambassador," a title with appropriately Powysian associations.

The conference invited meditations upon the differences between English and American responses to Powys's work. The issue of responses to landscape was a poignant one for John Cowper Powys as for me: I had begun to read *A Glastonbury Romance* in North America before I went to Britain on August 4; Powys, of course, wrote the novel in New York State and I think he sometimes

blended the two landscapes in his mind. For example, he refers in the *Autobiography* to a "New York Tintern Abbey"—a place he had christened Tintern Abbey in Dorset, not the Wye Valley! What landscape does a North American reader envisage when perusing the Dorset/Somerset novels?

The conference provided three papers on landscape and physical setting: "Visionary Landscape" by Lawrence Mitchell, on T. F. Powys, and Judith Stinton on the community of East Chaldon. Glen Cavaliero presented the last paper in the conference, offering a wide-ranging and witty discussion of J. C. Powys's relations to the picturesque, Coleridge, and the rich literary traditions of landscape writing.

In the afternoon of the first day of the conference the members of the society put the word to the deed and set out upon a walk. (At least the hale and hearty of conference, including myself, did so!) The route was determined by JCP's daily excursion with his dog "The Old," punctuated by exquisitely rendered extracts from JCP's diary by Neil Curry, our poet in residence at the conference. We strolled through the town of Dorchester, past such landmarks as 38 High Street East where JCP/Dud Noman resided during the period of *Maiden Castle*, the site of The Antelope (now no longer an inn) where JCP and "TT" took baths (none were available in their rooms at number thirty-eight) and out along the Mill stream, past a "scummy pond" to the open countryside of Dorset. We passed the "Quincunx," a set of five horsechestnut trees Powys revered and named, the site of what he refers to in the diaries as the Demeter Tree, an aspen sadly felled in the last violent storm to hit Britain and the field referred to by Thomas Hardy as Her Immortality Field.

The experience of walking in the physical landscape of Powys's "Wessex" fiction stimulated my reflections on the extent to which the landscapes of the novels are "countries of the mind" as much as physical landscapes. Glen Cavaliero was to point out that *Ducdame* fuses characteristics of Somerset and Dorset as a quintessence of different physical associations. Mitchell's paper on Theodore praised his multiple associations in the representation of nature—though the pastoral is exploded as a fake since human evil is as apparent in the country as in the town.

The conference brought together the contrary impulses towards solitude and towards society. Janina Nordius from Sweden presented a poignantly expressed exploration of the impulse towards solitude as presented, psychologically and thematically, in *Maiden Castle*, a novel whose protagonist, Dud Noman, reflects Powys's later philosophy of solitude but who feels an urgent need to

resolve that impulse with the demands of human relationship with Wizzie Ravelston, a character who appears to challenge the idea of solitude.

Nordius's paper blended well with the others on the program insofar as landscape is itself an inspiration for solitude and singular reflection. Kingston Maurward supplied an opportunity for solitary rumination as well as social contact and interchange with nearly eighty conferees. This support came from academic and other professional groups. I learned that East Chaldon was a literary-social community, attracting to T. F. Powys's dwelling a constellation of figures such as Sylvia Townsend Warner, Elizabeth Muntz (a Canadian sculptor), Edward Garnett, and F. R. Leavis.



A view of the "Quincunx" (photo by Michael Ballin)

Although Nordius's paper focused attention on the solitary preoccupations of John Cowper Powys, the conference provided for a stunning revelation of his public persona. Anthony Head, who has been in Japan until earlier this summer, presented a seven minute video of a film presentation obtained after much devious research from the Fox company in the United States. His caginess in revealing the exact nature of the presentation helped to arouse conjecture and build suspense. We privately thought we might see some blurry picture of JCP at a forgotten social event which had accidentally been

preserved on film. But—lo and behold!—JCP appeared in our midst in startling clarity orating in a style long forgotten as he debated with Bertrand Russell the topic "Is Modern Marriage a Failure?" in New York City before an audience of two thousand in 1929 (I feel impelled to indulge in a few Powysian exclamation marks!!!) We heard the summing up of an argument which, though scarcely memorable in content, demonstrated something of his famous lecturing style. Though rooted to the spot by necessity of camera and microphone, Powys's body moved energetically to reinforce his argument, and the rhythm of his Ciceronian, balanced sentences. All were stunned and requested a second showing of this remarkable visual find.

I heard about another visual media representation of JCP to appear later on in the year on BBC Welsh television. The director of a television documentary on JCP's Welsh years was at the conference; he told me that there would also be some retrospective material dealing with the Dorset period.

The conference opened with another kind of visual feast: a special exhibition at the Dorset museum marked the acquisition of an outstanding book and manuscript collection of Powys material from Zimbabwe, donated by Francis Feather and obtained by the redoubtable efforts of Morine Krissdottir. The Feather collection inspired (perhaps) Mr. E. Bissell to donate his distinguished collection of Powys manuscripts to the British Society and both collections will be housed the Dorset museum, already a center of international scholars of Thomas Hardy. The combinations of the Feather and Bissell collections will make Dorset as important a center for Powys studies as anywhere in North America, including Austin, Texas. The cataloguing task is a formidable one which will absorb much energy for some time to come. I recommend a visit to Dorchester in the interests of Powys scholarship, aesthetic beauty, and the rich human interchange of the Powys conference which is planned to be in Dorchester in alternate years.

