

The Powys Review

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“John Cowper Powys reading *Glastonbury* in Hillsdale to Max Schuster, Clifton Fadiman (Editor of *Simon & Schuster*), . . . Rosenberg (in the firm). They had driven up from New York.”
(Phyllis Playter’s description of the photograph)

Editorial

This is a *Glastonbury* number in which we present diverse new critical approaches to that massively audacious novel. These we preface with the author's own, daunting "Review" of his novel in the month of its first publication, a review no critic of *A Glastonbury Romance* should be without.

This year is the centenary of the birth of Louis Wilkinson (17 December 1881-12 September 1966), novelist, essayist, friend of all the Powys brothers, brilliant portrayer and critic of them all. He was himself an eccentric. Sent down from Oxford for "blasphemies", at Cambridge, as the writer of his *Times* obituary puts it, "Even in such distinguished company [his contemporaries, Llewelyn Powys, J. C. Squire, Ronald Storrs and Ralph Straus] he was so outstanding that he was nicknamed 'the Archangel', for his intellectual powers, epigrammatic wit, and sense of fun were allied to a handsome presence". Yet it might easily be asserted that his amply described fascination by the characters of the Powys brothers is the main strength of his writings. We are grateful for Louis Wilkinson's several depictions of John Cowper Powys, satirised as Jack Welsh in his second novel, *The Buffoon* (1916), sketched in action in the first autobiographical novel, *Swan's Milk* (1934), analysed with both Theodore and Llewelyn in *Welsh Ambassadors* (1936) and in *Seven Friends* (1953). He was certainly a vigorous publicist for the brothers, also celebrating two of them by editions of their letters: *The Letters of Llewelyn Powys* (1943); *Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 1935-1956* (1958).

Wilkinson's critical appraisals of the works of the three most literary Powys brothers, however, were by no means even, and were much mixed with his personal responses to their personalities which he perceived

were reflected in their writings. Again we quote from the *Times* obituary: "His own fastidious taste and economy of style were alike offended by the undisciplined prodigality of [J.C.] Powys's genius; he declared himself unable to read Powys's long novels and always preferred to praise the work of the younger brothers." His accounts of John Cowper Powys are characterised by an ambivalent response, that is, by a mistrust of Powys's spiritual values counteracted by admiration for his extraordinary generosity of spirit, creative vigour and "genius of personality". His emotional sympathy is with Llewelyn, and he has given us impassioned defences of Llewelyn's "lust for the complete possession of life, which gives to all his writings their prime creative impulse". A greater literary admiration is usually shown for the brother with "the most individual genius", Theodore, "one of the most notable artists in our literature". (Our quotations all come from *Welsh Ambassadors*.)

A critical study of Louis Wilkinson's works, his novels in particular, apparently has yet to be written. Some impressions of Louis Wilkinson himself are to be found in this *Review*, within the recollections of Theodore Powys by his adopted daughter, "Susan" (Theodora Scutt). Within this *Review*, the young Llewelyn, so well known to Louis Wilkinson, emerges in the study of his *Ebony* and *Ivory* stories as a more complex writer than Wilkinson presents to us.

We should like to record our thanks to the ever-generous Mr. E. E. Bissell who has supplied the photographs of Llewelyn within this *Review* and also the snapshot which accompanies this Editorial, John Cowper Powys on the steps of Phudd Bottom reading the manuscript of *A Glastonbury Romance* to his American publishers.

John Cowper Powys

Glastonbury

(*The Modern Thinker*, March 1932, Vol. 1, No. 1)

AUTHOR'S REVIEW

A literary forum for authors, wherein are presented those largely intangible factors which go into the writing of a book—its genesis, its motivating ideas, its form, its subtler and less apparent qualities.

THE CREATION OF ROMANCE

A GLASTONBURY ROMANCE, by *John Cowper Powys*. Described by the author in the form of a Dialogue or of an Author's Catechism.

How long were you writing this book?

A year and nine months.

Why did you write it?

I wrote it for seven reasons.

Name them.

1. To earn my living.
2. To get the sensation of reading what I wrote; that is, of writing the sort of book that it pleases me most to read.
3. To get the pleasure of my friends' liking what I wrote.
4. To get the pleasure of imagining complete strangers liking what I wrote.
5. To get the pleasure of triumphing over my enemies.
6. To express certain moral, philosophical and mystical ideas that seem to me unduly neglected in these days.
7. To get the pleasure of having my imagination for a long space of time fixed intensely upon England.

Are your characters taken from life or are they pure inventions?

Everyone of them, save the grandfather who is dead and the architect who only appears in his buildings, is a pure invention.

Why is it such a long book? Why is it so crowded with characters?

Because a long book is the kind I like to

read; because a great many characters, by thickening out such a book, convey the impression of a convincing world, of many dimensions, in which it is possible to fancy yourself moving about freely and recognizing houses, streets, gardens, lanes, alleys, people and things, down to the least stick and stone.

What is the main idea of *A Glastonbury Romance*?

The main idea is a life, not a theory or a speculation, and in this case the life of a particular spot upon the earth's surface.

Enlarge on this a little, if you please. You speak too enigmatically.

The main idea was to isolate a spot on the surface of the earth, a spot known to the author from his boyhood, and to write a story about this spot, making the spot itself the real hero or heroine of the tale.

Upon what method is the tale composed?

Upon the method of making the story exciting and arresting in the precise way in which I myself like things in real life to be exciting and arresting.

What way may that be?

The use of epical and ballad interest *as against* lyrical and dramatic interest; and the use of *physiognomic* observation—as Spengler names it—*as against* scientific observation; and finally the use of philosophical psychology free from slavish adherence to the new psycho-analytical phraseology.

How can a spot, or region, or locality, be treated psychologically?

By describing it and analyzing it under the moods of the weather and under various chemical and spiritual influences and in regard to its flora and fauna and geological strata; and in regard to the historic changes that have come to its human inhabitants in connection with these things; and to its

whole being from zenith to nadir, and from circumference to centre.

You speak of "spiritual" influences and "chemical" influences. What do you mean to imply by such extra-telluric forces?

I refer to certain astronomical powers or bodies, possessed of sub-human or super-human consciousness, who have a definite effect, magnetic and chemic, and even personal, upon the characters of the story.

What powers and what bodies are you talking about?

The Sun, the Moon, the Evening Star, the Milky Way, the Constellations. All these are to be found exercising both psychic and physical influences upon this particular region of earth, according to the revolution of hours, months, and seasons, and for as long as the story lasts.

How long does the story last?

For a little over a year.

Who is the hero of the story?

Glastonbury herself. The story is concerned with Glastonbury's struggles against both Chance and Fate.

How can a mere place, or region, have a personality?

I cannot tell. But I know that it has one!

What supernatural forces, if any, enter into your story?

The First Cause enters into my story as a super-human entity; and it is manifested as a dualistic force, partly beneficent and partly malefic.

God and the Devil in one, you mean?

You have said it.

What other supernatural power have you introduced into this presumptuous narrative?

The Grail.

In these modern times? Contemporary with airplanes and "wireless" and the Quantum-theory?

No less.

What effect does the Grail have?

It divides the characters into two hostile camps.

Is that all?

No. The spiritual differences discovered by the Grail blend themselves, in our industrial age, with economic and political forms

of conflict; and thus it works out that the protagonist of the story is an energetic Industrialist, hostile to the Grail, and bent upon converting Glastonbury into a prosperous industrial centre; while the antagonist is a prophetic visionary, anxious to rouse into being the beginnings of a new "Culture"—in the mystical Splenglerian sense—towards which all the western nations might draw, for a fresh growth of life. It has interested me also to re-create the profound symbolism of the Grail mythology and to discover it re-enacting itself in various significant groupings of animate and inanimate existence in these modern days. All this, though it will clearly reveal itself to anyone with a *penchant* for mythology, does not in any way interfere with the philosophy of the book or become an encumbrance to any reader's enjoyment and understanding of the conflict in it between its two main forces.

Does the struggle between these two cover the whole field?

Not by any means; for the life of any spot, like that of any person, is too rich and chaotic to be accounted for by one tension alone.

Name another tension.

Another? Why I have the whole life of a community on my hands; with housewives, lawyers, doctors, chemists, innkeepers, procuresses, clergymen, servants, old-maids, beggars, madmen, children, poets; landowners, labourers, shop-keepers, an anarchist, dogs, cats, fish, and an air-plane pilot . . . There are no less than six major love affairs, one murder, three births, two deaths, and one raising from the dead . . . In short my Glastonbury world resembles all other worlds on this planet and is a melee of adventure, tragedy, comedy, chance, hopes, despairs, triumphs; and all these take their course on their own level; while the greater forces—thrones, dominations, principalities and powers—advance and retreat on theirs.

What force produces the denouement of the plot?

I have already explained that this tale is so prolific in plots and denouements that the outcome, like that of life itself, will appear in different forms to different readers.

Penny Smith

The "Cave of the man-eating Mothers": its location in *A Glastonbury Romance*

This enormous book of 1,174 pages is priced at 10. 6d., and it is cheap at the price. Cheap and nasty.

So began Glastonbury's Mayor, H. F. Scott Stokes, in "Sensuality in Somerset", his review of *A Glastonbury Romance* which appeared in the July 15, 1933 issue of *Time and Tide*.¹ Whilst working on the novel John Cowper Powys had wondered "if the present potentates whoever they are . . . will any of them make any protest about my description of them?"² and he had again expressed this curiosity on the novel's publication in America in 1932, exclaiming "Aye! but I do wonder what they will think of it in Glastonbury itself . . ."³ After John Lane, The Bodley Head, brought out the English edition in 1933 Powys was not kept in suspense for long; the English edition went into its second impression in July 1933 and the July 8 issue of *Time and Tide* included E. M. Delafield's parody, "Romantic Glastonbury or Happy Haunts for Summer Holidays".⁴ The Mayor's outspoken article appeared the following week, making quite clear his feelings about "pen-and-ink pundits of adultery" and staunchly defending Glastonbury's "captains of industry" as being:

of all men the most riddled with respectability and the least lecherous. God knows they have their faults (and so have I), but they are uxorious to a degree. They haven't the imagination to be anything else.⁵

One can imagine Mr. Geard happily defending Philip Crow in a similarly back-handed fashion but there is no doubt that the real Mayor was not amused at Powys's depiction of his town nor at what he interpreted as the novel's "frontal attack on the whole Christian ethic".⁶

By August Powys had read Scott Stoke's

review and declared himself "tickled by that Mayor of Glastonbury's article"⁷; whether this amusement was long-lived is another matter however, for when the English edition went into its 4th impression in September it bore along with the existing disclaimer (which one reviewer had already drawn attention to as "more than usually emphatic"⁸), an additional "Author's Statement and Apology". This addition states that:

The Author's attention has been drawn to certain external resemblances between his character, Philip Crow and Captain Gerard William Hodgkinson, M.C., who was for sometime the owner of Wookey Hole Caves and who is now the Managing Director of the Company to which this property has been transferred.

It is stressed that Philip Crow "is an entirely imaginary figure" and "sincere apologies" are made "for any annoyance" caused to Captain Hodgkinson.⁹

On a first glance there is nothing to suggest that this impression differs in any other way from its predecessors. However a more thorough examination reveals that alterations were also made to the text: certain descriptions of Wookey Hole are missing and a crucial three-paragraph portrayal of Philip Crow's seduction of Persephone Spear has been cut (see table below). According to Powys the English edition was actually printed in America by Simon and Schuster and the sheets sent to England where they received the English publisher's imprint.¹⁰ Any revisions would thus have had to have been made to the plates in America or the offending pages would have had to have been reprinted in England; in the 4th impressions the Statement and Apology and the revised pages all

appear in a smaller type, suggesting that the plates themselves were not altered for these revisions at least. (Where "Sherborne" in the Simon and Schuster edition is changed to "Greylands" in the English edition the type is the same size.)

Powys must have become used to the idea of revising the novel by this stage. Before publication Simon and Schuster insisted on major cuts¹¹ and in a letter to his brother Theodore, Powys expressed his feelings about this, saying:

My book is like a tall man (a Freak at a Fair) and I have to thin him, lean him, plane him, scrape him, gouge him, emaciate him, till—tho' still the tall man of the Fair—he'll be tottering from the weakness of mal-nutrition—in plain language half-starved. But what I am obstinately refusing to do is to cut out any *characters* (though they want me to do that) for that *wd* be worse than starving my tall Freak-Man—that *wd* be cutting off his ears or nose or foot or arm. And this I *won't* do. & I shall say like Luther, AT WORMS, there stand I. I can none other—and if it is *then* so big that the sale will be hurt—well it can't be helped for I am acting in a worldly enough way by scooping & gouging my Giant of the Fair—"Tallest Man ever fed on a milk diet!" in order to get the crowd to pay money to see him.¹²

Even after this painful process Powys still planned to make revisions of his own to "future editions" and asked his brother Littleton for any suggested alterations, especially anything "mistaken & wrong over the nature descriptions".¹³ When Littleton requested that the name of Sherborne School be omitted Powys replied:

Sure I'll add to my other revisions which I am collecting together for the 2nd edition the changes you mention, cutting out Mr. King's name as you say & substituting "bullied at School always bullied" for the other more definite phrase.¹⁴

"Sherborne" was altered to "Greylands" in the English edition (although Mr. King's name was kept). I have compared the first impressions of both the American and English editions but have found no sign of the "other revisions" Powys mentions.

Indeed it seems that the changes in the 4th impression are not the aesthetic revision Powys was originally thinking of making but are more directly related to fears that he and the publishers were going to be sued for libel; it may well have been hoped that the revisions would avert this calamity but if so such hopes were badly disappointed. On Saturday, 28 July, 1934, *The Times* reported that in the court of Mr. Justice Acton, the King's Bench Division, a libel action had been brought by Captain Gerard William Hodgkinson against Powys, the publishers John Lane, The Bodley Head, and the printers Ebenezer Baylis and Son in respect of statements contained in *A Glastonbury Romance*.¹⁵ The Captain's counsel claimed that "anybody reading the book might identify—and in his . . . opinion would identify—Captain Hodgkinson with Philip Crow." The case was settled with the defendants paying a sum of money to Captain Hodgkinson, plus his costs. "They had agreed that subsequent editions of the book should contain a special imprint headed: 'Author's statement and apology' . . . They had also agreed to remove offending passages from the book so that it should not be injurious to the plaintiff." Powys's lawyer expressed his client's "deep regret" to Captain Hodgkinson—as well he might for this affair complicated the publishing of later novels and may have prompted Powys to turn to historical subjects.¹⁶ The ensuing financial burden resulted in J. D. Beresford, Theodore Dreiser and others contributing towards a fund to help Powys out of financial difficulties in the mid 1940s.¹⁷

The effects on the text of *A Glastonbury Romance* did not stop at the 4th impression either. The 5th impression which came out in October 1934 is the same as the 4th but the "New Edition" published by Macdonald in 1955 includes not only a new preface but also a massive eight-page cut to the chapter "Wookey Hole" and in view of this it is useful to list where the cuts are made and then to evaluate what effects the absence of the deleted passages has on the novel. I have listed the shorter revisions below, giving under the 1955 heading the phrases

immediately before and after the excisions. The page and line numbers refer to the beginning of each cut passage. Within my following text I have prefixed references to the 1st and 2nd impressions of the Simon and Schuster edition of *A Glastonbury Romance* and the first 3 impressions of the John Lane, The Bodley Head edition with the letter S. (These impressions all appear to be the same except for where "Sherborne" has been changed to "Greylands" in the English edition.) References to the Macdonald edition (which is the same as the 1975 Picador edition) are preceded by the letter M. Deletions which are too long to be reproduced in the following table are discussed in my text.

1955
page 235
line 13

. . . reckless roguery. Barter's lecherousness
. . .

1932
page 229
line 25

"Better join my first lot of sight-seers tomorrow, Percy," he had said, "and I'll show you the stalactite mentioned by Clement of Alexandria. I only show it to pretty young women like you, and among *them* only to the naughty ones! I shan't show it to Dave. It would corrupt his pure mind! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" Persephone had retorted in kind; and thick and fast had their rough pleasantries been bandied about.

1955
page 235
line 39
Greylands

1932
page 230
line 19
Sherborne

1955
page 239
lines 12, 14, 18, 23
Greylands

1932
page 233
line 38
page 234
lines 2, 6, 11
Sherborne

1955
page 240
line 9

. . . the light of his flashlight./ /They went on again . . .

1932
page 234
line 37

There she saw a single bright lamp burning, throwing morbid shadows upon an expanse of grass. By this radiance a little lawn with chairs and tables set out became apparent, all these things motionless and deserted, looking ghostly, and even ghastly there. "I keep it lit," whispered Philip in her ear. There was no obvious need for him to whisper. It was hard to raise his voice just then. "It's my electric plant. That's where we serve tea to visitors. I expect you've been there yourself, only you came in a different way."

1955
page 240
line 39

. . . bottom of the sea./ (In this edition chapter 8 finishes here.)

1932
page 235
line 36

There was only one entrance to Wookey Hole Caves . . .
(This is the beginning of a major 8 page deletion. In the 4th and 5th impressions of the English edition only the following passages from this section are missing.)

1932
page 236
line 26

But it was *the shape* of these stalactites and stalagmites that was so overpowering to the imagination. They were all of them phallic. Not one single excrescence in that huge cavern that was not wrought, for the imagination of men and women, into some variety of phallic form. They were like the phalluses of hordes of cyclops and of herds of behemoths. It was as if the Witch of Wookey—the mere idea of whose legendary personality, described to that friend of Louie and Lily Rogers, had made the woman fall into hysterics—had hung these trophies, as memorials of her monstrous encounters, upon the walls of her obscene cave.

1932
page 238
line 30

and upon frieze after frieze of gigantic phalluses, rising up and hanging down between what represented the surface of the earth, but was really "full fathom-five" beneath earth, and what represented the sky, but was really the cellar-roof of the Witch of Wookey Hole.

1932
page 242
line 1

"Kiss me, kiss me, Philip!" she cried, when they reached the place.
(The rest of this passage is discussed below. In the 4th and 5th impressions the abrupt break caused by the deletion of this passage is indicated by double spacing.)

1955
page 331
line 39

. . . strip of shingle / /over which . . .

1932
page 340
line 5

beneath that huge array of phallic symbols

1955
page 331
line 40

. . . held her/ /vigil . . .

1932
page 340
line 7
obscene

1955
page 333
line 34

. . . Philip's electric light./ /Beneath his feet
. . .

1932
page 342
line 2

Over his head the Stone Witch stared at her morgue of petrified indecencies.

1955
page 334
line 30

. . . astonished to see (the still recumbent figure of Mr. Geard.)

1932
page 343
line 1

(completely different)
a second figure, couchant, in-bend, sable, lying beside that stalagmitish sorceress.

1955
page 385
lines 35, 39
Greylands

1932
page 397
lines 14, 18
Sherborne

1955
page 501
line 16

. . . hasn't been born./ /I hate the way . . .

1932
page 519
line 12

In Wookey Hole it was exciting. Just the
shock of it. Just the pain of it. But

1955
page 852
line 34

. . . this floating bed./ /Her only desire now
. . .

1932
page 890
line 26

Her mind flew to that grey strip of subter-
ranean shingle under the Witch of Wookey.

1955
page 854
line 39

. . . his overpowering physique./ /When
Philip . . .

1932
page 892
line 35

After Wookey Hole

Why some of these changes were made is hard to understand—I can only assume that the comparison of Wookey's stalactites with monstrous phalli might have been considered off-putting to potential tourists. The reference to Clement of Alexandria may have been too close to the sort of thing guides actually included in their spiel¹⁸; similarly the disappearance of the tea-tables may also be due to Powys's detail being a shade too close to reality. But the most interesting deletion of course is that which describes Philip and Persephone's adventure in the caves. In the 1955 edition the chapter "Wookey Hole" concludes with Philip leading Persephone into the caves where they are as isolated "as if they had descended into some cavern at the bottom of the

sea" (S 235; M 240). Philip has conducted Persephone "to his subterranean kingdom" (S 244; M 241) and the reader is left with a faint intimation of the abduction of Demeter's daughter by the grim ruler of Hades. The first edition is much more explicit, both in its mythological element and in its description of what actually takes place between the cousins. Wookey Hole takes on Plutonian dimensions: it is as if the river Axe "might indeed have been the Styx" (S 237) until by the end of the chapter comparison has metamorphosed into fact—Philip and Persephone are on "the banks of the Styx" (S 243). "Are you a devil?" Persephone challenges the echo (S 237), and although unanswered on this point she does manage to identify her lover—"You are Charon!" she whispers "into the back of his Bayeux Tapestry skull". (S 238)

Persephone is ferried across the Styx to lose her virginity in the kingdom of the dead; an experience which at the time includes "indescribable tenderness" (S 243) but which she later remembers as simply exciting, "Just the shock of it. Just the pain of it" (S 519). The intimate link between heterosexuality, violence and pain is even more pronounced in Powys's next novel, *Weymouth Sands*: after Perdita and the Jobber make love the latter's thoughts turn to murder, "whirling on in the same blood-stained circle".¹⁹ On Peg's return from Sark House, where she has come close to being initiated into the brutalities of sex, Sylvanus welcomes her "back from the Dead".²⁰ *Weymouth Sands* also develops the theme of non-consummated sexuality which is present in *A Glastonbury Romance* in Mary and John Crow's relationship and also, in the first edition, in Persephone and Dave's marriage. "Did you know? Did you guess, Philip, that he had let me stay a virgin?" (S 242) Persephone asks, and if this virginity comes as a surprise to Philip it is as great a surprise to the reader—especially to the reader who has previously read the later versions in which there is no suggestion that Persephone is sexually inexperienced as well as disillusioned. John and Mary's sexual difficulties (and I think their sexual relation-

ship is presented in terms of difficulty, not advocacy) are entirely comprehensible in relation to their characters. The non-summation of Dave and Persephone's relationship is not as understandable although it can later be seen as part of Persephone's general drawing back from men. This puts a different emphasis on her character, moreover her entry into Philip's underworld as a virgin underscores the Persephone-Hades parallel.

Not that this parallel needs more emphasis however for, if anything, Powys has been rather heavy-handed in this regard, especially as the mythic element goes no further than the cave walls. There is no Demeter pounding on the locked door; no Ascalaphus to betray to what extent the communist has collaborated with the capitalist (unless the author can be seen in this role), and certainly no suggestion that this union is necessary if Spring is to follow Winter. But there are reverberations throughout the scene of a different vegetation ritual, that of Cybele.

In a letter written on 11 May, 1931, Powys confided to Melrich Rosenburg of Simon and Schuster that:

There is all the way through the book a constant under-current of secret references to the Grail legends various incidents & characters playing roles parallel to those in the old romances of the Grail not without various furtive dips into that world of weird ritual & mythology made so much of by T. S. Eliot in "Wasteland"—It does not go to work with the pedantry of Joyce using "The Odyssey" in "Ulysses"—but there is a vague sort of parallel to all that!²¹

In *John Cowper Powys and the Magical Quest*, Morine Krissdottir has provided an important insight into these "secret references" and has emphasised the significance of Cybele in relation to Geard's quest in particular.²² In her discussion Krissdottir quotes from the 1955 edition of the novel so her analysis does not deal with Persephone and Philip's pilgrimage to Wookey Hole; had this come within her scope however I think Krissdottir's comments on it would have been particu-

larly valuable for in the description of the cave Powys does seem to be alluding to the practices of Cybele's cult.

As the cousins enter the "vast cathedral-like cavern" (S 236), Philip's flashlight plays upon the vividly-coloured "phallic" formations of the cave, "memorials" of the Witch of Wookey's "monstrous encounters" (S 236). In an essay also published in 1932 Powys discussed D. H. Lawrence's fiction and used the image of "the half-conscious if not the sub-conscious Cave of the man-eating Mothers"²³—an image highly applicable to his depiction of Wookey Hole. The myth of the castrating Mother has a long history and in *The Golden Bough* James Frazer explains its relevance to the cult of Cybele and her son Attis who, driven mad by desire for his mother, rather drastically escapes his incestuous longings by castrating himself.²⁴ ("Incest", Jung helpfully explains, "leads logically to ritual castration in the Attis-Cybele cult".²⁵) Priests of Cybele emulated this act and emasculated themselves on entering the service of the goddess—the mutilated genitals were then buried in subterranean chambers sacred to the Magna Mater. In related cults goddesses' statues were decorated with a necklace of testicles²⁶; Wookey's Witch is of a powerful family.

To the Lawrentian mind activities of this nature constitute the ultimate nightmare, the result of allowing the "accursed Syria Dea" to run amok.²⁷ Unlike Lawrence however, Powys's dreams were of an androgynous nature and it is in keeping with this, and with the irony that runs throughout *A Glastonbury Romance*, that Philip, a virile, dominating, 'Lawrentian' male, should choose as his centre of power an area which may have once been sacred to a Cybele-like goddess—that feminizing influence whose eunuch priests often dressed as women. Wookey Hole is crucial to Philip's life-illusion. It is "as impenetrable to invasion as the private thoughts in his own mind" (S 236) and his control over it casts him as a "solitary magician" (S 236), thus making him a fitting opponent of Cybele's champion, Geard.

It is in Wookey Hole that Philip experiences 'a sensation of power . . . beyond anything he had ever known' (S32: M50); it is here that he satisfies his desire for "his secretest, most private 'possession'", Persephone (S 239); and it is here that he believes he is actually stamping his will "on life . . . on woman . . . on . . . on . . . on the Future" (S 238). The ancient worship of Cybele offered an extreme, even if singularly effective, solution to such male aggrandisement. *A Glastonbury Romance*, itself an argument in favour of Powys's idea of the feminine principle, also offers a solution to the problem—not through castration but through a change of consciousness. As Owen Evans, that expert on the Grail realises, the realm of miracles is "In the mind!" (S 137; M 149).

The revising of the "Wookey Hole" chapter robs Cybele of her gory relics, Philip of his magushood and Persephone of her surprising virginity whilst restoring to Dave Spear a sense of humour. As Philip gravely rows their boat towards an "unusual lovers' bed" (S 241) of grey sand, Persephone recognises in him the same lack of humour which has apparently been the "deepest rift" between herself and her husband (S 240). This lack does not tally with the earlier

description of a Dave with "merry, blue eyes" (S 30; M 48) and its absence detracts from his gradual deterioration into a man hardened by practical politics. Throughout the scene there is the suggestion that Powys felt some confusion over Dave and Persephone's relationship; the deletions overcome this but at the cost of undermining the integrity of his overall vision.

It would appear then that *A Glastonbury Romance*, like so many of Powys's novels, is in need of the patient ministrations of a textual bibliographer whose job it is to "provide the principles and materials for a critical edition which will represent as nearly as possible the author's intentions for his text".²⁸ Until then care must be made in choosing which edition to use in discussions of the novel.²⁹ The 1932 edition, and the early impressions of the English edition, offer a virgin Persephone, a humourless communist and a stalagmitish sorceress in possession of a cave-full of unusual trophies. The revised versions offer a textual problem which demands that readers decide whether or not they wish to brave the murky and somewhat confusing lair of the Mothers. Most can in good conscience refuse: critics who do likewise might find hesitancy an impediment to their quest.

NOTES

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¹London: Vol. XIV. No. 28, pp. 855-856.

²Letter to Littleton Powys, 20 November 1931, in *Essays on John Cowper Powys*, ed. Belinda Humfrey, Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press, 1972, p. 329.

³Letter to Littleton Powys, 19 March 1932, *ibid.* p. 331.

⁴London: Vol. XIV. No. 27, pp. 818-819. Throughout this paper I have used Derek Langridge, *John Cowper Powys A Record of Achievement*, The Library Association, 1966, as the source for Powys's publication dates.

⁵*Op.cit.* pp. 855, 856.

⁶*Ibid.* p. 855.

⁷Letter to Littleton, 12 August 1933, collection of E. E. Bissell.

⁸J. R. Theobald, "John Cowper Powys", *The Bookman*, No. 493. Vol. LXXXIII, October 1932, p. 36.

⁹Signature 1, 2. The most interesting parallels in the novel are not however between any characters and real people but between the Pageant and commune & the Glastonbury Festival School; see Michael Hurd, *Immortal Hours: The Life and Period of Rulland Boughton*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962).

¹⁰Letter to Littleton Powys, 15 April 1932, collection of E. E. Bissell.

¹¹See letters to Littleton Powys, 11 September 1931 and 20 November 1931, in Humfrey, ed., *op.cit.* pp. 328, 329. John Hodgson has discussed how Powys revised as he wrote the novel, see "John Cowper Powys and the Art of the Novelist", Dissertation, Univ. of Newcastle 1980, pp. 48-50.

¹²Letter to Theodore Powys, 11 October 1931, collection of E. E. Bissell.

¹³Letter, 19 March 1932, in Humfrey, ed., *op.cit.* p.330.

¹⁴Letter, 15 April 1932, *ibid.* p. 332.

¹⁵"Libel Action by Director of Wookey Hole Caves,

Limited, Settled. Hodgkinson v. Powys and Others", p. 4, col. f.

¹⁶See Timothy Hyman, "The Modus Vivendi of John Cowper Powys" in Humfrey, ed., *ibid.* fn 35, p. 147.

¹⁷See *Letters of Theodore Dreiser, A Selection*, ed. Robert H. Elias (Philadelphia: Univ. of Philadelphia, 1959), vol. III, pp. 1003—1004.

¹⁸See H. E. Balch, *Mendip—The Great Cave of Wookey Hole*, Wells: The Cathedral Press, 1929. In this Balch points out that Clement supposedly refers to Wookey Hole in his *Stromata*.

¹⁹*Weymouth Sands*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1934, p.360.

²⁰*Ibid.* p. 243.

²¹10 June 1931, MS Colgate, quoted in Hodgson, *op.cit.*, p. 188.

²²*John Cowper Powys and the Magical Quest*, Macdonald and Janes, 1980, see all of Chapter 4, pp. 80-99.

²³"Modern Fiction", Chapter 3 in *Sex in the Arts: A Symposium*, ed. John Francis McDermott and Kendall B. Taft, New York: Harper and Bros., 1932, p. 61.

²⁴*The Golden Bough: Adonis Attis Osiris. Studies in the History of Oriental Religion*, (1906) Vol. 1, 3rd. ed., Macmillan, 1927, pp. 265-268.

²⁵*The Collected Works of C. J. Jung. Vol. 5. Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, ed. Herbert Read et al, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956, p. 204.

²⁶M. Esther Harding, *Woman's Mysteries, Ancient and Modern: A Psychological Interpretation of the Feminine Principles Portrayed in Myth, Story and Dreams* (1955), Rider, 1971, p. 142.

²⁷See *Women in Love* (1921), William Heinemann, 1954, pp. 192, 238. I believe Powys was consciously attempting to undermine D. H. Lawrence's philosophy in *A Glastonbury Romance* and in *In Defence of Sensuality*.

²⁸Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, Oxford: University Press, 1972, p. 336.

²⁹It is interesting to note that the most complete text currently available is the French translation by Jean Queval, *Les Enchantements de Glastonbury*, Gallimard, 1975. This appears to be based on the early impressions of the John Lane, The Bodley Head edition.

Ned Lukacher

“Between Philology and Psychology”: Cronos, Dostoievsky and the Language of Myth in John Cowper Powys’s *A Glastonbury Romance**

Although Northrop Frye never mentions John Cowper Powys’s *A Glastonbury Romance* (1933) in his *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*, his remarks nevertheless offer an interesting perspective on perhaps the greatest work of the most neglected master of twentieth-century English literature. The remarks I should like to emphasize occur in the context of Frye’s discussion of the theme of descent to the lower world, which, in his system, is one of the four basic narratives which generate the body of world literature, the other three being: descent from a higher world; ascent from a lower world; and ascent to a higher world. For Frye, romance as a genre is, in part, defined by the primacy and explicitness of one or more of these themes. The recovery of a “sacred myth”¹ is, for Frye, the ultimate objective of the writer of romance. The writer who pursues the theme of descent to a lower world will reach, argues Frye, “the night world [where] we find the cannibal feast, the serving up of a child or lover as food.”

Such a theme merges readily with the theme of human sacrifice in its most undisplaced form, which is the swallowing of a youth or maiden by a subterranean or submarine monster.²

Though only a few pages earlier Frye had discussed the role of the sky-father in the ancient creation myth,³ he fails to consider that in the Greek myth of Cronos we have a sky-father who is also a devouring monster. Cronos, whom the Romans called Saturn, devoured his children because he was fearful of a prophecy which foretold his deposition by one of those offspring. Zeus, whom the Romans called Jupiter, was saved by his

mother’s ingenuity and lived to overthrow his father and install himself as the sky-god. Zeus imprisoned his cannibal father in the underworld. Cronos enjoys a privileged ambivalence in the classical pantheon; for while he was the ruler during the Golden Age, he became the deity of the underworld.⁴ The myth of Cronos and its attendant sequels play a central role in Powys’s work beginning with his earliest romance, *Wood and Stone* (1915), through his greatest fictions, *Wolf Solent* (1929), *A Glastonbury Romance*, and *Porius* (1951) and in his late fantasy novella *Up and Out* (1957). In *A Glastonbury Romance*, the myth of Cronos constitutes one of the work’s central metaphoric legends. As we shall see, it not only organizes the work’s metaphoric language, but also provides the linguistic register in which Powys is able literally to enact the myth rather than simply to thematize it. Operative within the work’s complex of metaphors concerning the Holy Grail is the myth of Cronos. The search for the Holy Grail in *A Glastonbury Romance* becomes the descent into the underworld of Cronos. Powys’s mythological syncretism constitutes a highly eccentric and personal version of “sacred myth”.

In his preface of 1953 to a new edition of *A Glastonbury Romance* Powys argues that the Grail mystery’s primordial antecedents are Celtic rather than Christian. His allusion to “the earth-goddess” and “her cauldron of the food of life” is a reference to the cauldron of Annwn, the Celtic word for the demonic and magical underworld. But when Powys proceeds to link these Celtic mysteries “in our Island of the West” to the underworld dwelling of Cronos who “still awaits under forest heaped upon forest and mountain piled upon mountain his final release from the tyranny of Zeus,”⁵ he

*a paper read to the Powys Society.

enters into a purely personal world of myth. Plutarch's account of the traveller Demetrius, which Powys found in Sir John Rhys's *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* (1891), and which he twice cites verbatim in *A Glastonbury Romance* (334; 1066), represents a very fragile historical basis for such a grandiose scheme. Rhys also demonstrates the Welsh origins of the Grail in the legends of Bron and Merlin.⁶ What is important to Powys about Demetrius's claim that Cronos was imprisoned in an undersea cave somewhere off the western coast of the British Isles is that it suggests that the transmigration of the mysteries of ancient Greek and Roman myth proceeded in a westerly direction and finally found a haven and a promise of rebirth by assuming a dissimulated form in Celtic mythology. The intense interest in the continuity between classical and Celtic myths, that characterizes Powys's writings, receives its greatest impetus in the speculative syncretism of *A Glastonbury Romance*. Interested readers will find in *Morwyn, or the Vengeance of God* (1937) a programmatic exposition of Powys's Greco-Celtic hybridism. While Sir John Rhys's book clearly had an important impact upon Powys, we will see that Powys's fascination with the Golden Age has an equally indispensable source in Dostoievsky's *The Possessed*.

Frye writes: “In romance the descent theme often has a great deal to do with one's descent in genealogical sense.”⁷ In *A Glastonbury Romance* numerous characters are figuratively revealed as descendants of Cronos and as inheritors of his multi-faceted nature. But for the Crow family the genealogy is literal. When they arrive to hear the reading of the will of their grandfather, John and Mary Crow are told that their family “goes further back than History”.

‘There's not one of ye Crows when 'a comes to die, that has a son left to bury 'un. They be all sons' sons that lay 'un in ground. There must be Scripture for't; though why it should be as 'tis is beyond *my* conjecture. Some man of old time, amidst 'en, must have done summat turble . . . eaten his own offspring like enough, in want of kinder meat . . .

summat o' that . . . and ever since such doings they all outlive their sons. 'Tis a kind of Divine Dispensation, I reckon.’ (32)

That “‘Scripture’” is, of course, the myth of Cronos. Through this simple labourer's impromptu conjecture, Powys makes a plausible speculation on the naturalistic origins of the Cronos myth. The lifespan of the descendants of Cronos figuratively consumes the offspring which their progenitor would have literally devoured; in other words, as Time becomes the devourer, Cronos becomes *Chronos*. More importantly, Powys has managed to let us know that the name Crow is an eponym of the house of *Cronos*. Though John and Mary ignore this discourse, I believe Powys would have us note it well and see in it a warning of the negative aspect of Cronos's heritage. As Powys notes a few pages later, “pure Romance was harsh and grim and a man must be grim to embrace it” (39).

Descent in the most primordial, genealogical sense occupies Powys's attention throughout *A Glastonbury Romance*. In the opening chapter, the news that the bulk of Canon Crow's fortune will go to the eccentric mystic, John Geard, and not to the family, provides the context for the general emotional and mental fervor which besets all the characters. The sudden diversion in the flow of capital is also a disruption in “the divine-diabolic soul of the First Cause of all life” (1). Powys's formidable opening sentence signals the initiation of a changed relation with this “First Cause” that is also a questioning of the cosmic origins of paternity. For Powys paternity is ultimately a transbiological concept. As we will see, to discover paternity means absorbing “the Feminine Emanation”. Paternity, like identity, has little to do with gender. John Crow's “heightened consciousness” unknowingly elicits a cosmic imbalance, a change between mankind and what Powys calls “the Invisible Watchers”. This is Powys's euphemism for the creative/destructive force of the First Cause which inheres in man's organic and inorganic environment. This force is also related to what Powys calls “thought-*eidola*”. These are the residue of

the sum of human feeling and thought. For Powys human thoughts exist in a psychic dimension which has the power to "survive long after the organism that projected them is buried in the earth" (500). For Powys one enters the world of Romance "when an exceptional stir of heightened consciousness agitates any living organism in this astronomical universe" (1). John Crow unknowingly elicits a "tornado of paternity" from the solar sky-god and jealous hostility from the earth-mother (23). John Crow has somehow exacerbated both of these powers by returning to the place of his familial origins. The other family members, like the ambitious industrialist, Philip Crow, who arrive to hear the will, are in a similarly excited state. Geard's extravagant dispersal of his capital through his revival of the Grail mysteries and his Pageant play at Glastonbury precipitates an ever-increasing psychological and social imbalance. The ambivalent legacy of Canon Crow will indirectly generate both John's vision of Excalibur and the tragic and "devouring passion" (779) which the mad old crone, Mad Bet, will feel for John. The descent of the timeless into time, which is the appearance of the Grail, also entails the descent of the characters of *A Glastonbury Romance* into the ambivalent world of Cronos.

Philip Crow's desire to "electrify the bowels of the Mendips" (51), and John's early intuition that Persephone Spear possesses the "fatal" nature (75) of her namesake suggest that the journey from East Anglia to Somerset is also a descent to the underworld. Philip's goal of harnessing the power of underground rivers to produce electricity announces, even as it trivializes, the underworld quest for illumination which all the major characters undergo. John Crow's visit to Stonehenge is part of the important interlacing of the motifs of sacred stones, quarries and excavations which abound in Powys's *Romance*. In Wookey Hole, Philip and Persephone re-enact the Greek myth of her namesake's descent (240). John Geard, cast in the role of the dormant Cronos, discovers in Wookey Hole

the primal "metallic elements out of which all organic entities are formed" (332). Powys gives excavating and hollowing-out the widest possible metaphoric range. The sacred cave of Cronos, like the *Esplumeoir* which is the Old French term for the secret underground dwelling of the enchanter, Merlin, like the "hollowed-out oak trunk coffin of King Arthur", like Mother Legge's silver bowl, like the Holy Grail which Sam Dekker sees and finally like Glastonbury itself when finally inundated by floodwaters, is one of several receptacles which receive the overflowing energy from human minds, from "thought-eidola", and from "beyond the deepest pools of emptiness between the uttermost stellar systems" (1). "That plaintive yearning of the vegetable world" seems finally "to come from some underworld of Being, where tragedy is mitigated by a strange undying acceptance beyond the comprehension of the troubled hearts of men and women" (786). For Powys romance is essentially a deferral, or an evasion of tragedy, which is accomplished by the essentially self-preservative descent to the underworld. Like Merlin in flight to his *Emplumeoir*, Powys's excursions into romance are exemplary of the ruses of the underground imagination.

The Dostoevskian echo is not fortuitous. While Dante, Malory and Goethe are often explicitly mentioned in *A Glastonbury Romance*, Powys's greatest debt is to Dostoevsky. In the general configuration of his narrative, in his numerous depictions of psycho-pathological states, and in his concern with the problem of a communist revolution, Powys's chief imaginative inspiration is *The Possessed* (1872). Powys managed in *A Glastonbury Romance* to write a novel about the Grail mysteries in the school of Dostoevsky. Stepan Trofimovitch's "Fête" in *The Possessed*, like Geard's Pageant, provides a mid-point at which destructive forces begin actively to emerge. Shatov's execution and Kirillov's suicide, like Tom Barber's sacrificial murder and John Geard's suicide in *A Glastonbury Romance*, are the symptoms of a form of total psychological possession. An intensely

probing search for the meaning of Christ is also prominent in both texts. In his portrayal of the communist organizers Dave Spear, Paul Trent and Red Robinson, who plot successfully to channel Geard's dwindling fortune into a Glastonbury commune, Powys revised Dostoevsky's account of Pyotr Verhovensky's terrorist colleagues in *The Possessed* for use within a provincial English setting. The horror and violence which Pyotr's revolutionary cell perpetrates are indeed unthinkable for Powys's often laughable conspirators. Nevertheless, through his inflated rhetoric Red Robinson unwittingly ignites Codfin Toller's homicidal instincts. And it is Toller who, on behalf of Mad Bet, attempts to murder John Crow. His stroke misses, felling Tom Barter instead.

Powys's depiction of Owen Evans, the antiquarian bookseller and writer of a life of Merlin who is also a repressed sadist, is a brilliant evocation of the desperate perversions of Dostoevsky's Stavrogin. The emergence of Evans's sadism is, like Stavrogin's, the product of a futile and furious attempt to inhabit a spiritual underworld beyond good and evil. Theirs is a tragic inversion of the quest for a momentary glimpse of the cave of Cronos. They attempt to regain the Golden Age by passing through a truly infernal underworld. Powys, who wrote two essays as well as a book on Dostoevsky, unquestionably knew the famous suppressed chapter of *The Possessed*, “At Tikhon's”, where Stavrogin confesses his cruelty and intimacy with an eleven-year-old girl who hanged herself soon afterwards. Stavrogin goes on to describe how years later, he had travelled to Dresden to see Claude Lorraine's “Acis and Galatea”.

I have always called it ‘The Golden Age’, I do not know why myself. I had seen it before, and about three days earlier, on my way through, I had seen it again. I went on purpose to look at it, and, perhaps, I had even stopped off in Dresden just for that reason. It was this picture that I dreamed, yet not as a picture, but as if it were a real thing.⁸

The painting inspires a vivid dream of the Golden Age in which the “gods came down from heaven and united themselves with people, and the first scenes of mythology took place”. Stavrogin's dream is, I believe, the source for Powys's fascination with the reciprocity between the two themes of the Golden Age and man's substratum of destructive sadism. All readers of Powys's major works are familiar with a repeated scene in which a central character is permeated and covered by the slanting rays of the sun. Wolf Solent sees Gerda “through a diffused golden light, like that of the pictures of Claude Lorraine”. Wolf's culminating vision is a catalogue of mythological images amidst “a floating sea of liquid, shining gold”. This “plenitude of gold that surrounded him” is the effect of the setting sun, “fallen almost horizontal”.⁹ It is precisely this figure of the sun's rays that is most central to Stavrogin's dream. Having just dreamed how “the slanting rays of the setting sun” spilled over his Golden Age, Stavrogin awakes to find it was “already evening,

a whole bundle of the bright, slanting rays of the setting sun cut through the foliage of the flowers on my window-sill, and falling through the window of my little room, covered me with light.¹⁰

Though Stavrogin has this Saturnian vision, he hangs himself by the end of the novel. For Powys, Stavrogin's reverie symbolized the transforming moment when man overcomes his desire for cruelty. John Crow's vision of King Arthur's sword, *Excalibur* (which in Sir John Rhys's entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* derives from a Welsh-Breton word meaning “voracious”), Sam Dekker's of the Grail, and John Geard's of the sacred under-sea cave of Cronos are elaborations of the Saturnian vision. Through his fascination with and encouragement of Toller, Owen Evans succumbs to the vice of cruelty. As the crucified Christ in the Pageant, Evans symbolically played the role of sacrificial victim. After Barter's murder his guilt drives him to premature senility. Powys condemns him to a Sisyphus-like fate, futilely obsessed with

“the real meaning of the mystical word *Esplumeoir*” (1056); for it is precisely that enchanted Golden Age that will be forever denied him.

In *A Glastonbury Romance* Powys translates his reading of Dostoevsky’s metaphor of the Golden Age into a Celtic context. Only once, as Mary watches John disappear into an “afternoon sun [which] seemed more obscuring, more vaporously concealing, more hopelessly swallowing”, does Powys recall the explicitly golden visions of *Wolf Solent*. The scene Mary witnesses is characteristic of Powys’s way of combining the splendour of the Golden Age with the devouring energy of its ruler. The sun’s devouring “golden-haze” mingles with John’s receding figure “as if the slanting sun-rays had hollowed-out all substance, all solidity” (126). The son is devoured and thus possessed by “that tornado of paternity” which the sun had earlier jetted across the astronomical universe. To the “slanting sunrays”, which is the metaphor for the paternal influence of Dostoevsky’s *The Possessed*, Powys adds his own revisionary element: the figure of Cronos the devourer. But it is Powys who at the same time he is devoured also creatively ingests the legacy of the literary father. In *A Glastonbury Romance* Powys takes his place beside Lawrence, Mann, and Joyce as one of the pre-eminent novelists of the post-Dostoevsky generation.

Possession is a theme reiterated throughout *A Glastonbury Romance*. John Crow’s reply to Party theorist Dave Spear’s comment on “the unnaturalness of private property” announces the variety of interests this theme brings together.

‘*To possess*—doesn’t the whole world, for every one of us, turn upon this great pivot? Our philosophy, what is it but the act by which we possess the cosmos? Our love? That surely is the essence of possession.’ (60)

The impulse to possess is a cosmic as well as a human instinct. Unable to possess the repressive soul of Matt Dekker, the sun-deity curses Matt for his resistance to the creative force of the spring solstice: “we will

let loose his own offspring upon him” (17). Sam, in turn, rejects paternal, amorous and material possession. He denies the prerogatives of “great creative Nature” and pursues the ideal of a Christ “like Lucifer—only he’s not evil”.

‘He’s the enemy of God. That is, He’s the enemy of Creation! He’s always struggling against Life, as we know it . . . this pricking up of fins, this prodding with horns . . . this opening of mouths . . . this clutching, this ravishing, this snatching, this *possessing*.’ (815-16)

Sam is utterly incapable of separating possession from cruelty. While Sam resists most strongly man’s ineradicable and potentially destructive impulse to possess, Owen Evans succumbs most readily to it. Evans “*became* the terrible craving . . . *became* the loathing that refused to stop doing what it loathed to do . . . *became* the shapeless mouth that . . .” (506). It is no surprise that Sam should be the one to tell Owen that “the world can’t go on devouring itself” (821).” Unlike Wolf Solent, whose struggle with the “worm-snake” of narcissistic sadism was successful, Evans is completely overcome by the “terrible nerve-worm that devours hearts” (1052). In a passage reminiscent of Melanie Klein’s case-histories, Powys attributes the origin of Evans’s “dark congenital perversity” (349) to prenatal sex; “it is quite possible that the whole thing started from his father’s forcing his mother to let him enjoy her long after the child’s conception had begun” (1020). In this sense, Evans becomes a man fatally devoured by his paternal legacy. Evans, the “human carnivore” (1026), lingers nearer that “great invisible planetary Malebolge” than any of the other major characters in *A Glastonbury Romance*. For Powys this Malebolge is the “dark reservoir of our race’s psychic garbage” (798). Unconscious intra-uterine memories of violence constitute for Evans a fatally fascinating Malebolge. Moreover, for Evans the Malebolge represents the way to Merlin’s nirvanic *Esplumeoir*. The devouring mouth of Cronos as well as the maternal womb can become an

infernal Malebolge in the alimentary and generative passage of the metaphoric language of *A Glastonbury Romance*. It is at least as much the possessive, devouring nature of human passions as it is the matter they ingest. We will see how the Cronos metaphor itself signifies sexual ambiguity. The image of the devouring father will merge with that of the mother.

In the antipodal progress (358) of Powys's "Glastonbury Divine Comedy" the underground *Esplumeoir*, which he translates as "Great Good Place" (179), is synonymous with that "golden-haze, far up above the rest of the vegetable world" (128). Like Dante, Powys's pilgrims descend in order to reach a higher world. Powys speculates that the heightened consciousness of the inhabitants of Glastonbury may portend "a catastrophic change imminent in human psychology itself" (128). The release of "that underground tide of the old ancestral chaos" (214) and any change it may portend are inscribed within a Nietzschean "sequence of spiral recurrences—in which past events are eternally returning, but with momentous difference" (342). And "it is the amount of life-energy thrown into them [i.e., the thought-*eidola*] that makes the difference" (500). Like the Golden Age, this eternal return of sameness-in-difference is, in turn, inscribed within the figure of Cronos the devourer. Powys develops an alimentary philosophy of history reminiscent of Rabelais.¹² The "great suction-process of cosmogonic matter" sucks into "its huge, blind clay belly, these rapturous overtones of its foster-children" (308). The generation by heightened consciousness of thought-*eidola* of great intensity accelerates this process in the psychic as well as the material dimension. *A Glastonbury Romance* is the expression of such an acceleration in the "sequence of spiral recurrences". The Glastonbury environment is figured as a living organism which has devoured too many intense thought-*eidola*. One solution to over-consumption is to induce vomiting. Geard's Pageant functions like an emetic to relieve a breakdown in the system; "Like an animal organism that has taken an emetic,

Glastonbury now disembogued from the obscurest recesses of its complex being, all manner of queer chemical substances" (561). But the excess continues, and the problem becomes constipation. That Sam should feel that "a gigantic spear was struck into his bowels" at the very moment he sees the Grail (939), and that immediately following his vision he should administer an enema to the aged Abel Twig, suggests that in both instances a necessary purgation is taking place. As John Brebner observes, the flood at the conclusion "comes like a giant enema bearing the purgative, life-giving, salt-water into the interior."¹³ The imminent catastrophe in the spiral of history becomes a series of stomachic and intestinal disorders. We see history in *A Glastonbury Romance* on the verge of backing up upon itself.

In *Capital* (1867) Marx makes an observation which could serve as an epigraph to *A Glastonbury Romance*.

Modern society, which already in its infancy had pulled Pluto by the hair of his head from the bowels of the earth, greets gold as its Holy Grail, as the glittering incarnation of its innermost principle of life.¹⁴

Like Powys, Marx is concerned with the problems of accumulation and circulation. For Red Robinson, the Grail is a symbol of the degeneracy of the bourgeoisie: "'It's because you've 'ad your leisure from our sweat that you've got any spunk left to fuss with the 'Oly Grile'" (970). Robinson is significantly the "master-plumber" (651) who would unplug the obstructive hoarding of the bourgeoisie and restore circulation. The Glastonbury proletariat are "imprisoned Titans" who threaten "violent upheavals of class against class" (569). But the flood reduces the modest successes of the commune, as well as the machinations of the capitalists, to "tragic neutrality" (1077). Nonetheless, I believe that Powys's predilection for visions of Saturnian gold and the Holy Grail is a celebration of the life-principle of modern capitalist society largely because the effect of such visions is to devalorize historical and dialectical materialism for the sake of an idealist, psychic, di-

mension of pure ethereal substance. Powys's aim, unlike Marx's, is finally not to satirize capitalism's fetishism towards things drawn from the bowels of the earth, but rather to use a complex mythological syncretism to substantiate that fetishism.

Powys's satiric portrayal of Red Robinson provides the occasion for one of the most subtle and revealing manifestations of the legacy of Cronos. While Toller derives pathological pleasure from Red's rousing speeches, Powys discovers in Red's private musings a linguistic context in which to register the devouring and possessive energy of Cronos. Obsessed as much by his hatred for Philip Crow as by his lust for Philip's former mistress, Red mutters "I 'ate 'im! I 'ate 'im! I'll 'ave 'er! I'll 'ave 'er!" as his passion mounts before a fruitless visit to the brothel where she works.

There can be no doubt that when in his cockney fashion, he used the word "'ate" instead of "hate," this curious difference between two monosyllabic sounds was not without its own faint psychic repercussion upon his nervous organism. Between the human feeling expressed by the same word without the aspirate there may be little difference; and yet there probably *was* some infinitesimal difference, which a new science—halfway between philology and psychology—may one day elucidate. Some would say that when Red muttered to himself . . . "I 'ate 'im, I 'ate 'im!" what he really focused in his mind was the emotional state—symbolised as a sensation in his lower jaw. (481)

Red's masticatory reverie is the effect of his having devoured the possessive impulse of his capitalist enemy. His assault on the aspirate 'h' enables Powys to materialize in a linguistic register the cannibalistic excesses to which the legacy of Cronos is liable. The revolutionary spirit seems thus inevitably overcome by the acquisitive capitalist negativity it tries to extirpate. For Powys, "this curious difference between two monosyllabic sounds" intimates the presence of "that delicate nerve-region of the human mind, where philology and psychology merge their margins" (482). That "nerve-region" becomes the cavernous interiority of one's

desire to devour and contain the other: "Deep in his soul shone still the illuminating lamp of 'ate'" (651). Powys's playful philological conceit implies not only that hate has an etymological link to ate, but also, and here the link is solely on the level of the written word, that Robinson's "'ate" is related to the Greek *ātē*, which means precisely the sort of blind impulse and infatuation that consumes Red. The hollowing-out of hate into "'ate" exhibits on the level of the signifier the inherent tendency of any organism to accumulate, to possess, more than it can readily circulate. Red's "philological malice" (166) parodies the line from the Mass often repeated in *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Verbum caro factum est*, the Word was made Flesh.

Though Robinson is the "master-plumber", neither his resourceful twentieth-century Jacobinism, nor any other human agency, can free the halted progress of the "spiral sequence" and, in so doing, liberate both the invisible psychic dimension which Cronos and Merlin inhabit and the visible world of squalor evident in Sam's glimpse of the wretched Mr. Bagge (932). The flood itself is a function of the equivocal position which can abide neither revolution nor the status quo. We must content ourselves by hollowing-out a psychic space in which to conjure forth primordial, mythical memories. For Powys, such an evasion was the grim compromise of Romance. Powys's four great West Country romances, *Wolf Solent*, *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Weymouth Sands*, and *Maiden Castle*, are all marked by an ambivalent deferral of, rather than a conclusion to, the problems which the works pose. We should perhaps recall that the divine-diabolic First Cause is always divided against itself.

The ambivalence of Cronos's legacy is also evident in the figure of the Commune's legal advisor, Paul Trent. In his "curious double nature, . . . his mother's masculine soul concealed in his father's effeminate body, divided his energy and confused his purpose" (997). Trent is from the Scilly Islands which are just off Land's End. And as Evans reminds us, "'it was in the Scillies

that the oldest of the gods—Cronos himself—was kept in prison!” (804). Trent’s ambiguous sexuality and his divided energy reiterate the self-division of the First Cause. The uncertainty regarding his gender and purpose already suggest what the concluding chapter, “The Flood”, will confirm: that Cronos is itself a dissimulating metaphor which conceals the Eternal Feminine behind a devouring patriarchal possessiveness. The devouring mouth of Cronos is itself metaphorically transformed into the mouth of the goddess Cybele. To Cronos’s own ambivalence we must add the ambivalence of Cronos/Cybele. As it approaches its end, *A Glastonbury Romance* seems to immerse itself in a metaphoric uncertainty which may be a measure of Powys’s own anxiously divided energy and confused purpose.

Jacques Lacan’s analysis (1955) of Freud’s famous dream of Irma’s injection provides an appropriate gloss for the reading I propose of the conclusion to *A Glastonbury Romance*. Lacan notes of the first phase of the dream, in which Freud looks down Irma’s throat in order to determine the nature of her infection, that what occurs is:

the revelation of something which is really unnamable . . . the bottom of this throat, in its complex, indeterminable form, which makes of it the primitive object par excellence, as well as the feminine organ from whence emerges all life, or the abyss of the mouth where everything is devoured, and also the image of death.¹⁵

The revelation of the devouring fatality of the Eternal Feminine is precisely what emerges as flood-waters rise in Glastonbury. What Lacan calls the “spectral decomposition of the function of the ego”¹⁶ in Freud’s dream is enacted in *A Glastonbury Romance* through the complete immersion of all human efforts in “the great maternal womb of all organic earth-life” (1105). While

Philip Crow is aware only of a “down-swallowing, in-sucking enemy” (1078), John Geard seeks in the “one swallowing gulp of drowning suction” (1108) in which he perishes an “undersea of undying Being” (1085). The cave of Cronos becomes the mother’s devouring womb. Metaphors of the paternal alimentary apparatus are themselves absorbed into the feminine body of Cybele, the “neolithic goddess of fertility”.

Readers of *A Glastonbury Romance* are presented with a grotesquely sublime vision in which the Eternal Feminine, which is Cybele, administers an inundating enema upon which the release of paternal superfluity depends. She is “that beautiful and terrible Force by which the Lies of great creative nature gave birth to Truth that is to be” (1120). Cybele is the true “master-plumber” who frees the “spiral sequence” from the lie of voracious possession. But inextricably bound with her curative power is a destructive capacity more awesome than that of Cronos. While the birth of “Truth that is to be” remains an explicitly problematic assertion, Powys does not hesitate to depict the rising force of Cybele as the emergence of the death-drive. The death-drive here is not so much the inherent entropy of any productive cycle as it is the thematic impasse and the metaphoric ambivalence of language itself in *A Glastonbury Romance*. What emerges is something unnamable, something that cannot be symbolized or assimilated in the text except through the negative mode of indirect representation which is ambivalence and uncertainty. That *A Glastonbury Romance*, no less than the vision-haunted characters who inhabit it, should be unable to disentangle the possessive presence of Eros from the spectral uncertainty of Thanatos may constitute Powys’s most profound insight into the nature of Romance and into the reasons why “a man must be grim to embrace it”.

NOTES

¹ *The Secular Scripture*, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976, p. 183.

² *Ibid.*, p. 118.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁴ See *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, Thomas Nelson, 1964, by Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl. I examine the classical sources of the Cronos/Saturn myth and consider Freud's use of the myth in "K(Ch)ronosology", *Sub-Stance*, 25, 1980, pp. 55-74.

⁵ *A Glastonbury Romance*, Macdonald, 1955, p. xiii. All page references in my text are to this edition, which I have chosen because it is more accessible than the uncut first edition. See my note 11.

⁶ Rhys writes: "The more important parallel, however, is the one which may be drawn between the slumbering Cronus here described, and the owner of the Holy Grail, who under the name of Bron dwells in one of those 'isles of Erinn', or Merlin with his bardic satellites entering the Glass House in Bardsey, never more to appear among men. This brief story of Demetrius might serve as the text for a dissertation on the ancient mythology of the British Isles." *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1891, pp. 368-69.

⁷ *The Secular Scripture*, p. 122.

⁸ *The Possessed*, tr. Constance Garnett, New York: Dell, 1966, p. 720. The suppressed chapter had been available to readers in Western Europe since World War I. Powys's essays on Dostoevsky appear in *Visions and Revisions* (1915) and *The Pleasures of Literature* (1938). His book, *Dostoevsky*, appeared in 1946. Dostoevsky's source for the image of the Golden Age may have been Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine et les fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1754).

⁹ *Wolf Solent*, Macdonald, 1961, pp. 56; 609-10. I examine the role of the Cronos myth in *Wolf Solent* in "Notre-Hommes-fleurs: Wolf Solent's Metaphoric Legends", *The Powys Review*, 6, 1980.

¹⁰ *The Possessed*, p. 721.

¹¹ Powys interestingly explores the subtle distinction between possession and cruelty in a passage in the first

edition of the novel which was cancelled from the 1955 edition. It occurs towards the end of the "Wookey Hole" chapter of which the last nine pages were unfortunately later omitted.

While at one extreme we have Sam Dekker's conflation of possession and cruelty and his subsequent rejection of sexuality on those grounds, at the other extreme we have Owen Evans's total acceptance of and subsequent immersion in this very identification of possession and cruelty. In the course of his depiction of Philip Crow's subterranean seduction of Percy Spear, Powys writes:

There was not in all Philip Crow's profoundest being one least little grain, one tiniest atom, of what Mr. Evans suffered from. With all his maniacal lust for power, his was probably the least cruel human soul within a radius of twenty miles from that singular spot. That his high-spirited Percy—his secretest, most private "possession"—should suddenly be seized with an excess of trouble to which he lacked the clue, shook the foundations of his pride. [*A Glastonbury Romance*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1932, p. 239].

¹² In *Rabelais*, The Bodley Head, 1948, Powys describes "the alimentary urge" in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* as "cosmogonic lust" . . . something very like amorous desire towards the elements" (p. 64). Powys characterizes Rabelais's work as "this tale of the Welsh-Breton giants called up 'from the vast deep' by the magic of Merlin" (p. 48).

¹³ *The Demon Within: A Study of John Cowper Powys's Novels*, London: Macdonald, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973, p. 123.

¹⁴ *Capital: Volume One*, tr. Ben Fowkes, Penguin/New Left, 1976, p. 230.

¹⁵ *Le Séminaire: Livre II: Le Moi dans le théorie du Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse*, Paris: Seuil, 1978, p. 196. My translation. Freud's dream is in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, tr. James Strachey, New York: Avon, 1971, pp. 139-40.

¹⁶ *Le Séminaire*, p. 197.

John Hodgson

Springtime Out of Winter: John Cowper Powys, *A Glastonbury Romance* and Spengler

In *The Mabinogion of Pwyll Prince of Dyved*, Gwawl Son of Clud brings Pwyll a small bag, and asks that it be filled with meat. A number of attendants begin to fill the bag, but for all they put into it, it remains no fuller than at first. Then Gwawl puts his two feet into the bag to press down the contents, the sides of the bag are brought up over his head and thus caught he is beaten about with sticks. This is the game of "Badger in the Bag". "Verily, Lord," says Gwawl when he is let out, "I am greatly hurt, and I have many bruises. I have need to be anointed, with thy leave I will go forth."¹

A Glastonbury Romance is often like a game of "Badger in the Bag", and the reader can emerge at the end teased, bruised, and discomfited. Powys stated in 1932 that one of his aims in writing the novel was "to express certain moral, philosophical and mystical ideas that seem to me unduly neglected in these days."² Yet "ideas" are put into the book only to be subjected to sceptical commentary. Vision may be charlatanism, and vice versa. Even the elegiacally evoked dreams of Cybele have their codicil of doubt—"Never or Always". Powys is not interested in giving any kind of theological framework to Geard's religion; there is merely a mixture of street-corner evangelicalism, Celtic fertility myth—and a hint of the primacy of St. John's Gospel. A working Commune is founded on the sketchiest of political analyses. It is clear that "concepts" do not matter very much, and that even the imaginative insights of the book do not add up to any settled conviction (as they clearly do in *Wolf Solent*). The potency of the novel is not so easily named.

In his 1929 article, "Sacco-Vanzetti and Epochs", Powys somewhat startlingly uses a specific political event as an excuse for a

short essay on Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. It was in 1929 that the creative process which resulted in *A Glastonbury Romance* began, with Powys visiting Northwold and Glastonbury in the summer of that year. In 1932, on the publication of the novel, Powys interviewed himself in the magazine *Modern Thinker*. This interview refers to Spengler twice. The cast of *Glastonbury* includes, says Powys, "a prophetic visionary, anxious to rouse into being the beginnings of a new "Culture"—in the mystical Spenglerian sense—to which all the western nations might draw, for a fresh growth of life." This remark seems to promise some fairly straightforward parallels to be revealed by a reading of Spengler, and these parallels do exist. The second mention appears to indicate a deeper engagement: Powys writes that the "method" of the novel involves "the use of *physiognomic* observation—as Spengler names it—as *against* scientific observation."³ For the reader who has been provoked and delighted by the evasive "method" of *Glastonbury*, these are arresting words.

First, a word about *The Decline of the West*. Spengler's work was published in Germany in two volumes in 1918 and 1922, and in English translation in 1926 and 1928. Its size is formidable (it is even longer than *Glastonbury*), the scope of its subject matter staggering, and its prose portentous. Nonetheless the work was briefly a great popular success, and certainly there was much in its title and thesis which chimed with the mood of the western world in its post-First World War disillusion. Because Spengler envisages the total collapse of western civilization, he is popularly known as a pessimist. Powys, on the other hand, wonders whether this prophecy is "too good

to be true". But strictly Spengler leaves no room for either optimism or pessimism, but merely for the acceptance of an inevitable cycle of growth and decay repeating itself in different parts of the world over many millennia. *The Decline of the West* attempts to project itself out of the point of view of the civilization of its time, and to see "the world-as-history" as opposed to a linear progressive history leading up to the present. Spengler tries to write, not as if surveying the world from Germany in the twentieth century, but as if he were God. He compares the "local and temporary values" which govern conventional history (for instance, "France from Napoleon to the Present Day") to the Ptolemaic System—his own view is Copernican. So there are sudden leaps from the Indus Valley to Tenochtitlan, from man's "enclosed" feeling for space in Byzantium to his "upward" feeling for space in the modern West. It is the kind of "world-book" such as Powys loved.

And what Spengler discerns are cycles of rising and falling cultures, like seasonal rotations. This is considered less an analogy than an almost mystical intuition:

Here indeed are colours, lights, movements, that no intellectual eye has yet discovered. Here the Cultures, peoples, languages, truths, gods, landscapes bloom and age as the oaks and stone-pines, the blossoms, twigs and leaves—but there is no ageing "Mankind" . . . These cultures, sublimated life-essences, grow with the same superb aimlessness as the flowers of the field. They belong, like the plants and the animals, to the living Nature of Goethe, and not to the dead Nature of Newton. I see world-history as a picture of endless formations and transformations, of the marvellous waxing and waning of organic forms. (I, pp. 21-22)

Each culture, then, has its "Springtime" birth, its maturity, its eventual petrification in the "Winter" of civilization, and final relapse into historyless primitivism. So different cultures can be compared as "contemporaneous" in seasonal development, though widely separated in conventional chronology. "Spring" for the Classical

world was the Homeric age, for the Eastern "Magian" world the time of the Gospels, and for the Western "Faustian" world the time of the Eddas and Teutonic myths. "Summer" brings the arrival of more purely philosophical and mathematical forms, and a rationalist impoverishment of religion (the pre-Socratics, Pythagoras; St. Augustine, algebra; Luther, Galileo, Descartes). With "Autumn" comes a cult of "reason" and "the great conclusive systems" (Plato, Aristotle; Avicenna; the French Encyclopaedists, Kant). And in "Winter" there is the agglomeration of men in great cities, and the "cult of science, utility and prosperity" (Imperial Rome and Epicureanism; Baghdad, "the practical fatalism in Islam after 1000"; the modern cities of the West, utilitarianism and socialism).

The Decline of the West is a survey less of political or social institutions, or the growth of philosophical systems, than of the different "world-outlooks" through which men interpret the world, and which only consequentially find expression in art, religion, literature, economic structures and social relationships. Because so many of Spengler's insights are not accessible to usual methods of historical analysis (which Spengler himself would of course reject as "local and temporary" manifestations of the late-Faustian "Winter" world-outlook) it is not surprising that among historians he has remained a kind of gigantic outlaw. In fact, his reputation among philosophers of history is comparable to that of Powys—until recently—among novelists.

Spengler's greatness, says Powys in *The Pleasures of Literature*, "is rather that of a poet than a logical thinker".⁴ And indeed Spengler's "Copernicanism" is not at all free from either the marks of the culture of his own time and place, or from marked personal preferences. His prose is so German that his English translation is barely English, and his call to a brutal acceptance of cultural destiny lacks personal conviction. He announces that the proper activity of twentieth-century man is to accomplish the work appropriate to his situation: ". . . I can

only hope that men of the new generation may be moved by this book to devote themselves to technics instead of lyrics . . ." (I, p. 41) Yet *The Decline of the West* is lyric—romantically inflamed by a passionate, fastidious hatred of the mass-civilization of the city, and yearning for the lost "lived, felt and unconfined 'Nature' of Homer and the Eddas, of Doric and Gothic man." (I, p. 98) It is this vision—and the suggestion that the old nature-magic will return with "The Second Religiousness"—that Powys seizes upon and quotes in "Sacco-Vanzetti and Epochs", and from this point on there is a pronounced congruence between the Spenglerian and Powysian imaginations. In *A Glastonbury Romance* there is a Spenglerian commentary upon the conflict of "Winter" industrialist (Philip Crow) and "Springtime" visionary (Geard). And Spengler's account of the death of urban rationalism bears some striking resemblances to Powys's own strange "charlatan" out-witting of the twentieth century.

John Cowper Powys's response to city life is more complex than has perhaps been realized. Although, of course, he never lost touch with the rural values of his youth, for twenty-five years he lived the life of the "intellectual nomad" who, for Spengler, is the final product of glamorous, meretricious city-civilization.

Once the full sinful beauty of this last marvel of all history has captured a victim, it never lets him go. Primitive folk can loose themselves from the soil and wander, but the intellectual nomad never. Homesickness for the great city is keener than any other nostalgia . . . Even disgust at this pretentiousness, weariness of the thousand-hued glitter, the *taedium-vitae* that in the end overcomes many, does not set them free. (II, p.102)

This does not sound much like Powys, whose travels have been regarded as a purely circumstantial imposition upon a naturally settled personality. Glen Cavaliero contrasts Powys's wanderings with Lawrence's:

. . . what was the result of an intense inner restlessness in Lawrence was the necessary

result of Powys's career as a lecturer, and when the latter was able to do so he settled down instinctively.⁵

Yet there was a definite "inner restlessness" in his choice of career, as Powys admitted in *Confessions of Two Brothers*:

I suppose my craving for change is really not so much a desire to be somewhere, as to be somewhere else.⁶

These words are almost as astonishing as Wordsworth's "I begin to wish much to be in town. Cataracts and mountains are good occasional society, but they will not do for constant companions."

In fact, Powys achieved an intimacy with the megalopolitan city in its most advanced, American form exceeding that of any other English novelist. He knew the stimulus of intellectual life in Greenwich Village, and also the grime of Pennsylvania and Ohio coal and steel towns. It is clear from the *Autobiography* that Powys's American experience was finally a liberating one. Both the ugliness and excitement of New York are present in *After My Fashion*. Even urban nihilism can be embraced with a kind of savage exultation, as when Powys found a "monstrous sublimity" in the bleak naturalism of Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*:

It seems a strange use of the word "realistic" to apply it to this stupendous objectification of the phantasmal life-dreams of so many tin-tack automatons of a bastard modernity; but when one grows aware how Dreiser's own Deucalion-like mind murmurs, weeps, laughs, and gropes among them, a queer oppression catches at the throat and a kind of grim hypnosis . . . makes us almost ready to cry out, in kindred delusion, "It's the truth! It's the truth!"⁷

More commonly the city is a grim background against which the self learns to assert its independence:

All this I owe to America and I like to think I especially owe it to those perpetual walks to escape from the pavements of Kansas City, of Saint Louis, of Cleveland, of Cincinnati, of

Denver, of Des Moines, of Buffalo, of Detroit, of Pittsburgh, of Boston—I never needed to “escape” from the old brick sidewalks of my favourite Philadelphia—for it was in these walks that my life-illusion of myself as a perambulatory skeleton isolated from the competitions of humanity, if not from humanity itself, took what may easily prove to be its last and lasting avatar.⁸

The stance is almost always of resistance, although there may be a more “other-worldly” solace, as in “The Moon Over Megalopolis” (“Megalopolis” is a Spenglerian technical term), where there is a healing power “in spite of iron and stone!”

Powys looks for and finds routes away from the city. In Spengler, the collapse of the city from within is inevitable. Nihilism is the end of every civilization:

This is a matter not of mere political and economic, nor even of religious and artistic, transformations, nor of any tangible or factual change whatsoever, but of the condition of a soul after it has actualised its possibilities in full. (I, p.352)

Various kinds of nihilism are sounded in early Powys novels. Baltazar Stork in *Rodmoor* carries aestheticism to its nihilistic conclusion; the essentially metropolitan philosophy of aestheticism was an attraction to the young Powys. There is William Hastings of *Ducdame*, whose mechanistic philosophy of destruction is a product of his unhappy London childhood. And there are the suicides of the Powys-heroes. In the novels the urban threat is always present, if off-stage (as in “the face on the Waterloo-Steps”). But there are the scenes of preternatural urban desolation in the small towns of the novels—Mundham, Bishop’s Forley, Black-sod, and the “Paradise” area of Glastonbury. If these scenes are sometimes strained and extreme, I think this is because, in these modest towns, Powys is really describing Pittsburgh or Scranton, Pa. Dorothy Richardson wondered if Powys would ever write an American novel. “Do you think I’ll write about it?” replied Powys, “Sideways I always must.”⁹

In Spengler, following the collapse of the city, in the de-civilized desert, “The Second Religiousness” begins. The way to this next stage is “from Skepsis”. “Men dispense with proof, desire only to believe and not to dissect.” (I, p.424)

The first heralds of “The Second Religiousness” are not unlike John Cowper Powys himself. Spengler discerns them in fourth century Rome, and today:

And, over and above this, there were the numberless charlatans and false prophets who toured the towns and sought with their pretentious rites to persuade the half-educated into a renewed interest in religion. Correspondingly, we have in the European-American world of today the occultist and theosophist fraud, the American Christian Science, the untrue Buddhism of drawing-rooms, the religious arts-and-crafts business . . . Materialism is shallow and honest, mock-religion shallow and dishonest. But the fact that the latter is possible at all foreshadows a new and genuine spirit of seeking that declares itself, first quietly, but soon emphatically and openly, in the civilized waking-consciousness. (II, p.310)

Here indeed are creative lies. Eventually there is “a deep piety that fills the waking consciousness”.

It starts with Rationalism’s fading out into helplessness, then the forms of the Springtime become visible, and finally the whole world of the primitive religion, which had receded before the grand forms of the early faith, returns to the foreground, powerful, in the guise of the popular syncretism that is to be found in every Culture at this phase. (II, p.311)

How like Geard of Glastonbury this is; there is the same popular syncretism, and the revivifying use of charlatanry.

Elements of the growth of a Spenglerian “Culture” run throughout Geard’s Glastonbury experiment. Significant is the autonomous activity of the soul of Glastonbury herself. In the birth of a Culture, writes Spengler, “The real miracle is the birth of the *soul* of a town . . . Thenceforward, in

addition to the individual house, the temple, the cathedral, and the palace, the town-figure itself becomes a unit objectively expressing the form-language and style-history that accompanies the Culture throughout its life-course." (II, pp. 90-91) Now of course towns have souls, and Powys did not need Spengler to tell him so. But it is worth noting that Powys's counter to desolation of the spirit or of society is never hermetic retreat, but a civic ideal—the "visionary polis" or "urbs beata"—Glastonbury, Maiden Castle, Mathrafal, the essences of Weymouth or Dorchester, or the Dürer engraving of old Nuremberg which hangs on the wall of Dud No-Man's lodgings.

In the case of Glastonbury, the town's cultural experiment permeates every aspect of life, including the artefacts of the communal workshops:

The result of this was that there began to spring up—out of the void as it almost seemed—a very exciting and most original school of Glastonbury design, genuinely indigenous and wherein the roughnesses and crudities of drawing, colouring and perspective, and their variations too under so many different hands, possessed the imaginative freshness and child-like appeal of an authentically primitive art, an art for which the whole western world seemed especially to thirst for, an art which embodied in it not only the communal spirit of the town's socialistic rulers but something—a nuance, a tinge, a suspicion—of the new religion of Glastonbury's Mayor! (923)

Wistful, perhaps—but this is the direction of Powys's hopes. It is also for peculiarly Spenglerian reasons that Geard insists that his building at Chalice Well should include a Saxon Arch and a Byzantine dome—architectural forms suitable for the world-feeling of "Magian" Springtime (I, pp. 208-214). The Johannine basis of Geard's religion (1040), is perhaps gleaned from Spengler's belief that the religious life of the West may be refreshed by such a new form of Christianity arising out of Russia (II, p. 495n).

But these are decorative flourishes on Powys's part. The most important point of

agreement between *Glastonbury* and *The Decline of the West* is the recognition that cultural transformation arises through alteration of consciousness not of policy. Hence the failure in practice of the Glastonbury Commune, and Powys's lack of real imaginative engagement with its political theories—to which Spengler would devote even less attention: "The power that these abstract ideals possess, however, scarcely extends in time beyond the two centuries that belong to party politics, and their end comes not from refutation, but from boredom—which has killed Rousseau long since and will shortly kill Marx" (II, p. 454). Neither in politics nor in religion are Powys and Spengler interested in the application of concepts.

Both are much more interested in ways of looking at the world, and there is Powys's statement that the "method" of *Glastonbury* involves "the use of *physiognomic* observation—as Spengler names it—as *against* scientific observation."

Among the characters of *Glastonbury*, there is an astonishing variety of perceptual philosophies. And the author or narrator puts his oar in too. In fact, I believe that the conflict or debate between these "world-outlooks" is the very centre of the book. Most simple are the materialistic, mechanistic philosophies of Philip Crow and Red Robinson. There is the comic triumph of Mayor Wallop, and it is a distinctively Powysian achievement that his straight-forward acceptance of the apparent world reads much more strangely than the transcendental insights of Geard or Sam Dekker.

At the other extreme is Geard, the natural (and equally straight-forward) visionary, who really sees the towers of his New Jerusalem rising beyond his wife's window-box of begonias. This is the simple, baffling vision of Blake. When Blake looked at the sun, he saw "an Innumerable Company of the Heavenly Host crying 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty'". Blake's friends saw "a round disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea." There seems very little that these two parties can say to each other. There is just no common ground for discus-

sion. But Powys, in *Glastonbury*, attempts such a dialogue.

Other characters occupy intermediate positions. Some are active enquirers in the central question of how far the world is a magical or sacramental place, or how far it is merely inert matter for the empiricists. Sam Dekker is a victim of dualism, loathing the sensual and unredeemed world of matter and possession. "We are all scales, scurf, scab, on the same twisting, cresting dragon of the slime. The tide of *life itself* is evil!" (820) His Christ enters the world from without to "redeem matter". Sam Dekker's Grail vision confirms this redemption, in a most characteristically Powysian union of the opposites, combining the visionary with the gross and excremental. The meaning of this scene has been discussed by Professor Wilson Knight in *Neglected Powers*,¹⁰ but it is worth adding that Powys does not consider even this "union of opposites" enough. Its visionary intensity is followed by another earthier vision, tender against all possible odds, in which Sam administers an enema to the aged Abel Twig. This scene again, in a fashion which in context is not grotesque, involves a symbolism of lance and cup. One seeker now has a magical world view, and for Sam, Christ is now "in matter" (943).

Another seeker is Owen Evans, involved in his clumsiness with "perennial struggles with the inanimate" (248). His mental outlook is entirely determined by his struggles against his horrible fantasies, which makes the world of matter almost a sacrament of evil:

"There are endless occasions when I loathe Nature. I think the truth is that God is outside Nature . . . altogether outside . . . creator of it . . . but often loathing it as much as I do! I feel sometimes that Matter is entirely evil . . . and that to cleanse our minds we must destroy its power . . . destroy . . . its power." (260)

Like Sam Dekker, he attempts to share the sufferings of Christ. But his exorcism is not successful. It is not clear at the end of the book how far even his hideous experience on Glastonbury Tor has purged his vice, for we

last see him still searching for the magical meaning of "Esplumeoir". This ambiguous conclusion is no doubt appropriate, for the subject of sadism remains a charged one for Powys.

Most difficult of all is John Crow, the Powys hero whose judgement throughout is suspended. When offered vision (or is it vision?) in the fall of King Arthur's sword, he rejects it. Yet his animistic absorption in the natural world is the basis of a possibly mystical world-outlook which he is perhaps afraid to develop. "I simply cannot understand what people mean when they talk of life having a purpose. Life to me is simply the experience of living things; and most things I meet seem to me to be living things." (107) This is a half-way position on the way to that of Geard, who after his death is characterized by a quotation from Blake:

He believed that there was a borderland of the miraculous round everything that existed and that "everything that lived was holy." (1117)

Although John Crow's work with Geard does erode his scepticism, the final judgement is equivocal, and his despatch to Norfolk to live in circumscribed happiness with Mary is a denial of spiritual possibility. Yet Geard and John Crow exploit each other's skills, and a dialogue between their types continues in Powys's work. Dud No-Man is forced to recognize Uryen Quirm as his father, although he rejects his father's magical quest. The rapprochement is not completed until *Porius*, where Porius climbs Snowdon to release Myrddin Wyllt from imprisonment.

Now all these differing outlooks are expressions of the doubts and complexities in the outlook of their creator, though we may say that the materialism of Philip Crow is as unacceptable to him as the natural vision of the Blake-like Geard is inaccessible. But the dismissal of John Crow both to the periphery of the drama, and to Norfolk at the end of the book, shows that Powys is no longer content, as he was in *Wolf Solent*, to conduct his

philosophical enquiries through the consciousness of his Powys-hero figure. In *Glastonbury* the narrator starts playing his own tricks. What is this “physiognomic observation” to which Powys lays claim?

Spengler’s definition of “the physiognomic” is a difficult one:

All modes of comprehending the world may, in the last analysis, be described as Morphology. *The Morphology of the mechanical and the extended, a science which discovers and orders nature-laws and casual relations is called Systematic. The Morphology of the organic, of history and life and all that bears the sign of direction and destiny, is called Physiognomic.* (I, p.100)

Fortunately, in both Spengler and Powys, there are further elucidations. The whole question devolves back to Goethe—and the very word “Morphologie” is a Goethean coinage. Of Goethe, Spengler writes:

For him the world-as-mechanism stood opposed to the world-as-organism, dead nature to living nature, law to form. As naturalist, every line he wrote was meant to display the image of a thing-becoming, the “impressed form” living and developing. Sympathy, observation, comparison, immediate and inward certainty, intellectual *flair*—these were the means whereby he was enabled to approach the secrets of the phenomenal world in motion. (I, p.25)

Spengler elsewhere quotes Goethe in conversation with Eckermann: “The Godhead is effective in the living and not in the dead, in the becoming and the changing, not in the become and the set-fast; and therefore, similarly, the reason (*Vernunft*) is concerned only to strive towards the divine through the becoming and living, and the understanding (*Verstand*) only to make use of the become and set-fast.” (I, p.49n.) Spengler adds “This sentence comprises my entire philosophy.”

In *The Pleasures of Literature*,¹¹ Powys also quotes this sentence from Goethe’s *Conversations*, and identifies “that *physiognomic eye* of which Spengler speaks so eloquently” with the observation of nature in *Faust*.¹² It is an approach “at once more mystical and more realistic” than that of mathematical science.

Faust remains an imperishable refutation of our modern preference for a mathematical universe over a magical one. I am not referring merely to all the thaumaturgic paraphernalia which of course was implicit in the Faustian legend, but to what might be called the living magical element in the mysterious processes of Nature herself.

This is familiar territory for Powys, and for the great poets. We are with Goethe and his “exact sensory fancy” (*exakte sinnliche Phantasie*) versus Newton, with Blake versus Newton, Bacon, and Democritus, and with Wordsworth giving “a moral life” “To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower”. Powys enters the anti-empirical lists with explicit polemic in the “Hell’s Museum” sections of *Weymouth Sands* and in *Morwyn*. With much greater success, the contest is built into the dramatic situation of *Glastonbury*. But it is also in the authorial voice, and we have the animate winds, the thoughts of the earth, the communicating trees.

What is odd is that this is the voice of a *novelist*. As P. J. Kavanagh perceptively remarks of Powys’s animism, “This is no more than Wordsworth did in his poems but then the English never believe poets mean what they say. Novelists they call to account.”¹³

It is right that Powys should be called to account, and I think there is in his gradual abandonment of verse for the novel a desire to express his startling insights, which might seem less exceptional in lyric, in the medium which most closely imitates the affairs of daily life. He wanted his books to be impressed by “the teeth-marks of reality”.¹⁴

But it is understandable that objections have been raised. For instance, there is the passage where John Crow walks to his grandfather’s funeral, with “the soundless roaring of the great solar furnace” “indifferent” above him, and “the thoughts of the earth-mother” below him, which “throbbed with a dull, indefinable, unappeasable jealousy of a human mother” (23). “And how can the author know?” Glen Cavaliero wants to ask.¹⁵ It is certainly not a satisfying passage, perhaps because Powys here is simply “physiognomically” wrong. But elsewhere Powys is just as

clearly right, as where the Somerset landscape is allowed its autonomous thoughts and feelings at the lyrical close of the "Consummation" chapter.

"Point of view is where you find it", commented *The Times Literary Supplement* critic on Powys's novels.¹⁶ This need not be a result of technical failure. Physiognomically, it is a correct position. Spengler has to assume a God-like stance to survey every known human culture. So must Powys, if he wishes to free his enquiries and insights from the limitations of the viewpoint of any one of his characters (and as I have indicated, Powys's views are in *Glastonbury* far too complicated to allow himself such limitation). Of course, he enjoys "playing God", just as he enjoyed the creation of a world in his childhood aquarium.¹⁷ Powys also enjoys the god-like liberty of moving his "point of view" to strange places. That the action of a novel can briefly be seen through the eyes of a flock of sheep is almost a practical joke on Percy Lubbock.

And yet it is all charlatanism, because Powys is not really sure what the nature of the world he writes about really is. He insists it is not like Philip Crow's. It *might* be like Geard's, and it is probably rather more than John Crow's. But this is charlatanism used to a quite definite end. Geard cries:

"People say these things are lies . . . People say we must have the naked Truth in place of these lies. Now what the Spirit and the Blood command me to tell you is this— . . . *Any lie*, he shouted, "I tell you, *any lie* as long as a multitude of souls believes it and presses that belief to the cracking point, *creates new life*, while the slavery of what is called truth drags us down to death and to the dead! Lies, magic, illusion—these are names we give to the ripples on the water of our experience when the Spirit of Life blows upon it. (891)

This speech harks back to Powys's reading of Goethe:

When I read what the shrewd old Goethe says about not destroying the essential Illusions, I feel a grim satisfaction in noting that sly world-child knew well enough that they were illusions.¹⁸

Powys does not give his source for this saying, but "the true illusion", like "the open secret", is a common motif in Goethe, pertinent to his alchemical studies. There is the poem "Epirrhema":

In reflecting upon Nature
Always consider the One as the All;
Nothing is within, nothing is without,
For the inner is the outer.
So do not hesitate to grasp
The holy open secret.

Rejoice in the true illusion,
And the serious game,
Nothing living is a One,
It is always a Many.¹⁹

It is tempting to believe that Goethe's Weimar was strongly present in Powys's mind as he created Geard's *Glastonbury*. Of his own visit to Weimar, Powys remembered, "Never, I fancy, has Goethe received such admiration from an introverted Celt as I offered to him then."²⁰ Goethe's Weimar is another tiny autonomous state under the political ministry of a visionary genius—who combined his genius with a sturdy physical nature. Geard, sitting in the cosy stuffiness of Cardiff Villa with his knitted socks and protuberant stomach, is perhaps not so far from the poet of the Eternal Feminine with his graceless proletarian wife.

Powys claimed a Goethean direction for *A Glastonbury Romance*:

I have dared to follow my admired master Goethe in gathering up and driving forward, as he does in the second part of *Faust*, a vast crowd of mythological influences toward a quite definite mystical and philosophical end.²¹

Faust begins in the visible world—in Saxony, with a very earthly Gretchen—and penetrates ideal regions, with a hymn to the Eternal Feminine. So *Glastonbury* moves from the local and particular to the Eternal Feminine in the goddess Cybele.

When Powys acted as Goethe and Eckermann in one for the American magazine *Modern Thinker*, he asked, "What is the main idea of *A Glastonbury Romance*?" Powys

recorded Goethe's reply to this question asked of Faust:

"Do you suppose," announced the Sage, "that a thing into which I have put the Life-Blood of all my days is able to be summoned up in anything so narrow and limited as an idea?"²²

Powys's own reply is similarly, in Spenglerian language, "physiognomic".

The main idea is a life, not a theory or a speculation, and in this case the life of a particular spot upon the earth's surface.²³

Again we are led away from a reading of *Glastonbury* in search of concepts. Powys wanted a view of the world "at once more mystical and more realistic".

Of Powys's world-view in *A Glastonbury Romance*, perhaps its most "physiognomic" feature is its instability. We see it as something "becoming", not "become". And it is, of course, emphatically Powys's own, springing from his own creative imagination. There is no methodical application of Spengler or Goethe. But what we do find in a parallel reading of Spengler and *Glastonbury* is a deepening knowledge of Powys's intellectual milieu. Without this sense of milieu, a loved book—particularly one as individual in its genius as *Glastonbury*—can become a cult object.

But there is, fortunately, a point where a novelist and a writer of a "morphology of world history" part company. Although Spengler in Germany enjoyed the honour of

being burnt by the Nazis and proscribed by the Communists, he has something in common with both ideologies. If not race destiny or class destiny, then culture destiny determines the lives of men, and *The Decline of the West* is a ruthless book. Whether Western civilization collapses or not, there is no possibility of caring either way. Powys, when he wonders whether Spengler's prophecy is "too good to be true", does not really mean it; he equates Spengler's "Second Religiousness" with the poet's legitimate imaginative vision of a "Golden Age" or "great good place". Although Powys is fascinated by the grandeur of metaphysical systems, and the interplay of macrocosm and microcosm is important in his books, it is the novelist's humane attention to the lives of individual men and women which always wins out. In his political activities, too, Powys was always concerned with the particular and individual. His "philosophical anarchism" was expressed in a defence of Sacco and Vanzetti or Eugene Debs. "Western Civilization . . . has to be *mentally destroyed* by the individual before any subtle imaginative life becomes possible." Not "physically destroyed".

However, when he came to write *Porius*, Powys found the horrors of physical destruction already accomplished. Amidst the ruins of the Roman Empire the religious faiths and imaginative faculties of men, in all their syncretic diversity, create a new culture. October, 499 A.D., is a Spenglerian "Springtime".

NOTES

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¹*The Mabinogion*, trans. Lady Charlotte Guest, Bernard Quaritch, 1877, pp. 350-1.

²"The Creation of Romance", *Modern Thinker*, I, No. 1, March 1932, p. 76.

³*Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁴*The Pleasures of Literature*, Cassell, 1938, p. 96.

⁵Glen Cavaliero, "Phoenix and Serpent: D. H. Lawrence and John Cowper Powys", *The Powys Review*, No. 2, Winter 1977, p. 51.

⁶*Confessions of Two Brothers* (with Llewelyn Powys), New York: Manas Press, 1916, p. 93.

⁷"An American Tragedy", *The Powys Review*, No. 6, Winter/Spring 1979/1980, p. 40.

⁸"Farewell to America", *The Powys Review*, No. 6, pp. 61-2.

⁹Letter to Dorothy Richardson, 19th January 1930, MS Yale.

¹⁰G. Wilson Knight, *Neglected Powers: Essays on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Literature*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971, pp. 153-5.

¹¹*The Pleasures of Literature*, pp. 599-600.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 582-3.

¹³P. J. Kavanagh, "A Glastonbury Romance", *New Fiction*, No. 9, October 1976, n.p.

¹⁴*Autobiography*, Macdonald, 1967, p. 83.

¹⁵Glen Cavaliero, *John Cowper Powys: Novelist*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, p. 67.

¹⁶"A Magician and his Multiverse: The True Nature of John Cowper Powys", *The Times Literary Supplement*, 8th February 1974, p. 121.

¹⁷*Autobiography*, p. 59.

¹⁸*Confessions of Two Brothers*, p. 125.

¹⁹"Müset im Naturbetrachten
Immer Eins wie Alles achten;

Nichts ist drinnen, nichts ist draussen;
Denn was innen, das ist aussen.
So ergreift ohne Säumnis
Heilig öffentlich Geheimnis.

Freuet euch des wahren Scheins,
Euch des ernstesten Spieles,
Kein Lebend'ges ist ein Eins,
Immer ist's ein Vieles."

²⁰*Autobiography*, p. 398.

²¹Advertisement for Simon and Schuster, in the Press-Cuttings Book given to the Library of Churchill College, Cambridge, by James D. Watson, Sr.

²²*Visions and Revisions*, Macdonald, 1955, p. 110.

²³"The Creation of Romance", p. 74.

²⁴*A Philosophy of Solitude*, Jonathan Cape, 1933, p. 8.

John Hodgson Introductory Notes to John Cowper Powys's "Sacco-Vanzetti and Epochs" and "The Moon Over Megalopolis"

"Sacco-Vanzetti and Epochs" was first published in *The Lantern* of January—February 1929. "The Moon Over Megalopolis" followed in the April—May—June issue. *The Lantern*, "Focusing upon Fascism and Other Dark Disorders of the Present Day", was published irregularly in Boston between October, 1927 and October, 1929. Its purpose, the editors announced, was "to present the truth concerning Fascism wherever it exists and to do so without any other purpose than that. We have no panacea to offer. We are concerned with no economic cause. Our function is simply to expose."

Much of the stimulus for the magazine came from the "Sacco-Vanzetti" scandal, which concerned the execution in 1927 of two Italian-American anarchists found guilty of murder in a trial of extremely dubious judicial correctness. The affair provoked protests from many writers of the

time, including Dos Passos, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Shaw. There is an account of the case, "The Last Days of Sacco and Vanzetti" by Phil Stong in *The Aspirin Age, 1919-1941*, ed. Isabel Leighton (Penguin, 1964), pp. 179-99.

The Lantern also mentions a contribution from Powys of twenty-five dollars to its precarious finances, and records that Powys spoke at the unveiling of a memorial tablet to Sacco and Vanzetti in Boston on August 23rd, 1928—the first anniversary of their executions.

Neither of these two pieces have been entered by Powys bibliographers, but Derek Langridge's *John Cowper Powys: A Record of Achievement* mentions, in his section on "Queries", the manuscript of "The Moon Over Megalopolis" in Mr. Bissell's collection, inscribed "given to Sacco-Vanzetti paper *The Lantern*."

John Cowper Powys

Sacco-Vanzetti and Epochs

(*The Lantern*, January-February 1929)

The judicial murder of these two free-thinkers by the respectable public opinion of Massachusetts was an event full of weighty implication in support of Spengler's notable theory. Considering the contemporaneousness of the present moment, in this Western or Faustian "Civilization", with a similar moment in other dying "Cultures", our present age exactly corresponds with the Hellenistic-Roman epoch! Here, according to Spengler, we have "existence without inner form . . . megalopolitan art as a common-place . . . luxury, sport, nerve-excitement, rapidly changing fashions in art . . . pretentious architecture . . . imitation of exotic motives . . . imperial display by means of inventions, machinery, material and mass . . . domination of Money ("Democracy") . . . economic powers permeating the political forms and authorities . . ."

Spengler would indeed make parallel together, as precisely "contemporaneous", not merely the Hellenistic-Roman period, a few decades previous to the Caesars, but the Buddhistic epoch in India and the later Taoistic epoch in China. Buddha's teaching, the doctrines of Laotze, and the lecture-room philosophy of the Stoics would, therefore, according to this formidable kestrel-hawk view of the irreversible destinies of all social organisms, correspond almost exactly with the sort of living protest, tender or cynical as it might happen, of individual thinkers (of the type of these two men and others like them) against the money-monopolizing World-Cities of our day. But the particular epoch of a "Winter" Civilization (all iron and stone and machinery) in which it is our present fate to live is not, we may be thankful to learn, destined to survive more than a couple of hundred years (a mere

bagatelle in the vast aeons at the disposal of the forces of life) and is to be followed, according to this "physiognomic morphology" by an epoch corresponding to the Theodorics, Attilas, Caesars, Odoacers; when the invisible power of money will be broken by the arbitrary will of conflicting conquerors; when the hordes of ordinary men and women will subside into a "fellaheen" state of international endurance; when we shall wander amid grass-grown cities that have lost their wealth, amid remnants of scientific mechanisms that have lost their inventive secret; and human existence, returning, for thousands of years, to a patient, historyless monotony of a natural struggle with the elements, will attain the mystic wisdom of the Second Religiousness!

With the formed State thus dead, "high history," says Spengler, "also lays itself down weary to sleep. Man becomes a plant again, adhering to the soil, dumb and enduring. The timeless village and the eternal peasant reappear, begetting children and burying seed in Mother Earth—a busy, not inadequate swarm, over which the tempest of soldier-emperors passingly blows . . . Only with the end of grand History does holy still Being reappear. It is a drama noble in its aimlessness; noble and aimless as the course of the stars, the rotation of the earth . . ."

Is such a speculation as this—such a prophecy as this—too good to be true? Perhaps. But, after all, who can tell? The very inhumanity of the convoluted mechanism that hypnotizes our megalopolitans to such lively "service" may work its own downfall. The chemistry of destruction is easier to acquire than the chemistry of creation. The mob can be more quickly stan-

andardized into efficiency for the death-purpose than for the life-purpose. Poison-gas can be produced faster and more scientifically than ploughs for the soil or keels for the sea. Against an armoured civilization like ours the disillusioned patience of an Indian Buddhist, a Chinese Taoist, a Philosophical Anarchist, a Hellenistic Stoic, are all "Contemporary" protests. They are search-lights of warning in the midst of our electri-

fied darkness such as no persecution can put out. Back and forth across our sky they will continue their spiritual indictment until the hour before the next dawn arrives. Then will be heard the prophet of what might be called "The Fifth Gospel"; and the planetary forces will begin to stir again for another Spring-time, the lineaments whereof no man as yet can read!

THE MOON OVER MEGALOPOLIS
(*The Lantern*, April-June, 1929)

Iron and stone are cruel things
For mortal hearts to bear.
They front life's mystic eddyings
With scaffolds of despair.
In vain the loveliest morning stirs . . .
They tower above the town
In masks like executioners
To bring their axes down!

But look! The moon is over all!
Lightly she floats along,
As if these houses harsh and tall
Were the place of some old song.
See how she steers her crescent boat
While the sap of all green things
Flows round her path as she doth float
In primrose-coloured rings!

Look! From the crescent shape there drops
A dew, a mystery—
There are green leaves on the roof-tops!
Green ferns up in the sky!
Iron and marble now put on
Lichen and moss and grass;
And over each grey bastion
Shadows like branches pass!

A miracle! She hath drawn up
From field and hedge and wood
Sap that spills over like a cup
Of Jesus Christ's dear blood!
A heavenly balm, an anodyne,
That lonely sap rains down
And medicines with release divine
The torture of the town.

O blessed Power your own strange heart
Remains withdrawn and cold
Voyaging ever far apart
From sorrows new and old.
But while dark roots are anywhere
By brown rains rained upon
What you have drawn up thro' the air
You can pour down on our despair
In spite of iron and stone!

John Thomas

“The King Edgar Chapel Man”: Bond, Glastonbury, and the ‘Alternative’ Theory of Gothic Architecture.

Frederick Bligh Bond,

An Architectural Handbook of Glastonbury Abbey with a Historical Chronicle of the Building, 3rd edition, 1980. Research Into Lost Knowledge Organisation. Thorsons Publishers, Wellingborough. Preface by Keith Critchlow and Janette Jackson.

The Gate of Remembrance, 5th edition, 1978. Thorsons Publishers. Introduction by Janette Jackson.

In the thirty years before John Cowper Powys published *A Glastonbury Romance*, the small Somerset town became the focus of much attention. As well as an Arthurian interest, one central concern was the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey. After 1908, when they passed from private hands into those of the Church of England, they were extensively studied and excavated under the direction of Frederick Bligh Bond, whose principal writings have recently been republished.

Like so many facsimile reproductions of older books, these claim to be new editions. The *Architectural Handbook* claims to be the third, but the *BM Catalogue of Printed Books* records a third edition published in Glastonbury in 1920: what we have here is the second edition of 1910. The 1978 *Gate of Remembrance* reproduces either the third (1919) or fourth (1921) edition (these contain an additional chapter (IV) and illustration (fig. 16) concerned with the finding of the Loretto Chapel in 1919). Both, however, add new introductions, which help to give today’s reader a context for these works and their author.

This is perhaps the place to reproduce and add to this background information. Frederick Bligh Bond (1864-1945) was an architect, a F.R.I.B.A., who practised in Bristol and environs. He was articled to the Catholic architect, C. F. Hansom, in 1882, and later went into partnership with him. He later entered into various other partner-

ships, but practised alone after 1900. He designed many educational buildings, and some public buildings (in a charming Queen Anne style); he also did church restorations (e.g. St. John, Chilcompton, 1897). His architectural talent has been described as “real though erratic”,¹ and he possibly typifies the lesser provincial *fin de siècle* eclectic. His Gothic church of St. Mary Magdalene, Stowell, has been dated 1913.² In 1907 he became involved in a quest to re-establish the architectural history of Glastonbury Abbey, a concern that was to be with him for the rest of his life. He wrote various books, and his *Roodcreens and Roodlofts* (1909) has been seen as a significant work of scholarship. It might be appropriate to warn, at this point, against confusing FBB with the very different figure of Francis Bond. Francis Bond (1852-1918) was an academic, not an architect, who devoted his life to restoring the declining English interest in Gothic scholarship. His major work (of many) is *Gothic Architecture in England . . .* (1905). His book on screens (there was a mood of virtual ‘ambonolatry’ in this period), *Screens and Galleries in English Churches*, appeared in 1908.³

Frederick Bond’s involvement with Glastonbury no doubt contributed to the decline of his practice, and his use of spiritualism in the work of historical research, as described in the *Gate of Remembrance*, finally led to his dismissal as Director of Excavations by an

embarrassed Dean of Bath and Wells. Janette Jackson tells us that he decamped to America, returning towards the end of his life, to live in Wales.⁴ However, his *Mystery of Glastonbury and her Immortal Traditions* (1938) shows us that his obsession (we must surely call it this) had not evaporated. His *Hill of Vision. A Forecast of the Great War* (1919) was also based on spiritualist 'information', and contains contributions by the principal architect of the later American Gothic Revival, R. A. Cram. I have also seen it suggested that Bond designed the ornately-hinged cover of Glastonbury's Chalice Well.

Bond's activities in Glastonbury, which went on till about 1922, were only one manifestation of a growing interest at this time in the town and its religious and mythical connections. Poets such as Tennyson and Swinburne in the nineteenth century had produced an interest in Arthurian legend of inestimable effect. In the twentieth century, Masefield's poems (published 1927) and the work of Charles Williams (1938 and 1944) involved a non-Tennysonian approach, a concern with a different, non-Mediaeval, Arthur. Masefield in particular returns to the true, Celtic, Arthur, thus preparing the way, as it were, for Powys. Two years after the publication of *Glastonbury Romance*, the occult emerged again, with the 1935 *A Guide to Glastonbury's Temple of the Stars*, by K. E. Maltwood. This involved the siting of vast astrological symbols all over the surrounding landscape, based on the presence of physical features.⁵ Another vital ingredient in the Glastonbury scene was the first attempt at a festival. This was launched in 1914, and continued in the 1920s, and took the form of a Bayreuth-like presentation of Arthurian music-dramas. These were the work of Rutland Boughton (1878-1960), an imitator of Wagner. The festival was supported by Bernard Shaw and Laurence Housman, but musically it proved impractical. (One of Boughton's operas is to be revived at the forthcoming Three Choirs Festival.) However, Geoffrey Ashe suggests that Powys made much use of the idea of a Glastonbury festival when conceiving of John Geard's Pageant, which included

Arthurianism in its many elements.⁶

Certainly, Powys's novel is concerned with pre-Christian Glastonbury, with the pagan grail, and so the Abbey ruins themselves are never central to the story (the Chalice Well has much more importance). Most likely, however, he knew of Bond and his works. Also, he does seem to have had something of an interest in architecture (not surprisingly, since his brother, A. R. Powys, was Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (1912-1936), and wrote *The English Parish Church* (1930), etc. When Geard's Saxon Arch is opened ("Saxon"—the eighteenth century name for Norman-Romanesque—is surely a conscious anachronism) Nancy Stickles tells John Crow of a recent archaeological discovery, "a stone with funny marks on"; John Crow suggests that this is the find of "this new antiquary . . . not the King Edgar Chapel man" (1955 ed., p.883). Is this a reference to Bond?

The re-printing of Bond's books, after so many years, can only be understood within the context of the recent explosion of interest in what might be called the mystical approach to architecture, particularly the Gothic. There are now many works available which involve this 'alternative' view of Gothic: they include *The Mysteries of Chartres Cathedral* (Louis Charpentier, repr. RILKO 1972, etc.), *The Mysteries of King's College Chapel* (Nigel Pennick, Thorsons, 1978), *Westminster Abbey. A Pilgrim's Guide* (N. Woodward Smith, RILKO, 1978), and *Sacred Geometry* (Nigel Pennick, Turnstone Press, 1980). Publications seem to be appearing faster in this field than in the world of conventional, academic, Gothic scholarship, which treats most of this writing as very suspect. The basic elements in the 'alternative' view are: a specifically occultist interest in geometry and numerology; an *arcana disciplina* as the source of Mediaeval design and intentions; and a strongly dualist sacralist approach to nature. The first involves numbers, shapes and proportions, not just as an aesthetic device (as used, say, by Palladio) but as a supernatural source of the sacral validity of a building. The *arcana disciplina* theory (at least as old as Edward

Clarkson's *Essay on the Symbolic Evidences of the Temple Church* (1838),⁷ holds that Gothic builders had acquired some secret (occultist and technical) knowledge from the days of Solomon via the Knights Templars, and this knowledge, alone, enabled the Gothic cathedrals to be built. The 'theology' of the 'alternative' view involves the theory of 'two worlds' (and more), with its concomitant, the divine locus. These can be found in traditional Catholicism, certainly, but here all is taken to fantastic lengths, involving a mass of disorganised occultist ingredients: Cabbalism, Alchemy, Druidic lore, Gnosticism, leylines, astrology, etc. It is all far outside the bounds of Christianity. These books err most by their presentation of many kinds of notions and theories *as though they were established fact*. But while architectural historians are rightly wary of all this, they cannot, remembering Durandus, ignore the factual nature of the Mediaeval obsession with symbols and numbers.⁸ The truth, unacceptable to those concerned with lost knowledge, is that we simply do not know enough about the concerns, knowledge, and intentions of the Mediaeval builders, and most likely, we never shall. However, RILKO is certainly an interesting feature of the present scene. Keith Critchlow, one of its central figures, it seems, is an art school graduate who taught at the Architectural Association School of Architecture (London) during an interesting period in its recent history, when alternative ideas were being sympathetically considered. A follower of R. Buckminster Fuller, he also lectured on architectural geometrics. His article on the Chartres maze (another central 'alternative' concern) appeared in the *AA Quarterly* (Vol. 5, No. 2, 1973), along with John James's article on the western rose window of the same cathedral.

An Architectural Handbook

In an Afterword to *The Mysteries of Chartres Cathedral* we are told that fifty years before the book was written, its ideas were being unveiled by Frederick Bligh Bond. However, they were not unveiled in the *Architectural Handbook*, which, for all the dark hints

in the 1980 Preface, is a very ordinary little work of Edwardian scholarship, devoid of controversy. Its reproduction of several topographical prints is useful. The interesting *fin de siècle* photographs (originally collotype?), with the trees growing out of the masonry, have reproduced quite well, but it would have helped if Thorsons had included a clutch of *modern* photographs at the back. Here, however, we come to the nub of the matter, for is this to be regarded as a guide for modern visitors? Rather, I fancy, it is a monument to Bond (as the Preface-writers present it), and to the late-twentieth century's 'alternative' interest. Its information, and its scholarship (in the best English amateur tradition) is now out of date. Today, we think of Gothic and its development in entirely different terms. In fact, Bond's documentation was good, but the lapse comes on page 79: "An XVIII century manuscript, found in a private collection, gives the precise dimensions of this chapel" (?)—and we are immediately in the realms of the Edgar Chapel discovery (*see below*). An oddity is the reproduction of the Declaration of Royal Supremacy, in original Latin, in an Appendix: is it relevant here? But, one advantage of facsimile reproduction is that it preserves the whole character of the book, with its soft, attenuated type face (Goudy's 'Pabst Old Style'?). In all, it is a period-piece.

The Gate of Remembrance

This is a book of a very different order. Not long after Bond's Glastonbury work commenced, he began to use the spiritualistic method of automatic writing, in order to obtain answers to various questions concerning the Abbey. Early antiquaries' accounts referred to the presence of the 'Edgar Chapel', at the east end of the church. As to precisely where it had been, Bond had a choice between Robert Willis's theory (a projection from the main volume at the eastern extremity), and James Parker's idea that the Edgar Chapel was in the south transept, east of the *nave*. What began as a gap in his knowledge became a fascination that took hold of his imagination. His

operative in this quest ("medium" is perhaps the wrong term) was his friend John Alleyne. Bond was already a member of the Society for Psychical Research, then in its hey-day. He explains his theory of how the communications came to them (pp. 19-20), rejecting notions of "*the action of discarnate intelligences from the outside*" in favour of the idea that "the embodied consciousness of every individual is but a part . . . of a transcendent whole, and that within the mind of each there is a door through which Reality might enter as an Idea . . ." However, information eventually came from a former monk 'Johannes' (who was conveniently a stonemason), and the exact details of the chapel are supplied. Another monk, 'Camillus Thesiger' gave information about the Loretto Chapel, mentioned by Leland. Both of these chapels, though lost, were subsequently excavated by Bond. This is to simplify a very complicated and curious book, a simplification without which the reader may drown in a mass of ancient language (English and Latin), fragments of messages, weird scrawled diagrams, historical facts, poems, dimensions, purple prose, and homespun philosophy. It is a very disconcerting, even unpleasant, book, and its author must have been a very strange person indeed. If he did discover the remains *before* the alleged séances⁹ (there were at least forty-nine), why write the book? He must have realised its effect on his reputation. Or can we accept some portion of it, as it stands, bearing in mind recent experiments in hypnosis, etc.? Often, he seems to be a brave, honest man, with much intellectual integrity ("Intuition must bring all her results to the bar of Reason for provisional acceptance . . . Above all, let us not be superstitious . . ." (p. 157)), and yet on pages 20 and 21 we can read his pseudo-Mediaeval address, given in 1909 to royal visitors, and purporting to come from "ye monkes of Glaston": was this a little Edwardian buffoonery, or evidence of a crankish mind?

It is towards the end of this book that one of the 'sources' tells Bond of the mystical-geometric idea of church planning: the Lady

Chapel was laid out, not on the basis of conventional,¹⁰ structural or aesthetic considerations, but as a volume within whose ground plan a *vesica piscis* (mandorla) could be inscribed, and a hexagon drawn around the outside of the whole (see pages 147, 150, 151). Planning on the basis of mystical geometrical considerations is central to the 'alternative' approach. Cynics might claim that any plan can have, superimposed upon it, a series of magical shapes. If the dimensions don't readily fit the shape, they can easily be tinkered with, or another shape tried. Even an honest scholar can be overaffected by presuppositions, and doubts have been cast on such works as George Lesser's *Gothic Cathedrals and Sacred Geometry* (1957). Also, Bond here introduces *gematria*: the substitution of letters for numbers, with a result that dimensions are translatable into words, that is, cryptic phrases. Bond also quotes a communication referring to one 'Braineton', "Geomancer to ye Abbey of old tyme" (p. 147).

What do we make of all this? The answer, again, must be to admit ignorance and avoid groundless solutions, however attractive or fascinating. Pursuit of the occult, today, is surely the struggling of modern man, whose being is stuck fast in the mire of materialist poverty, a struggle towards some kind of spiritual enlightenment. Bond would surely have agreed with this analysis. But are the 'alternative' writers struggling in the right direction? I, also, would hold that great cathedrals can play some part in the human experience of the divine, but not like this, not as a calculable, definable, formulistic thing, or one clasped in a web of vague notions, at once Gnostic and scientific (most of the books listed above require that their reader invest in a fairly sophisticated pocket calculator). Rather art, beauty, is the key. The stunning beauty of a large Gothic church can instil more wisdom and vision than any amount of confused occultist gnosis, with its 'Telluric currents' and its 'omphaloi'. Magic negates the world we live in. But would the author of *A Glastonbury Romance* agree with me? If we look at sentences from *The Mysteries of Chartres*

Cathedral (p. 33), Powys’s readers may see some similarities:

Earth turns with its aerial envelope; but there is another and invisible thing that does not turn with her, not at the same time that is, the medium in which the worlds swim . . . This ether in which we move, supposed, I say

supposed, to be immobile, is animated, by reference to ourselves, by a movement contrary to our own, East to West.

Are we not, to some extent, in the same world as he who wrote that great modern mystical novel?

NOTES

¹Andor Gomme and others, Bristol. *An Architectural History*, 1979, pp.430-1; see also pp.400ff. (*illus.*)

²Nikolaus Pevsner, *South and West Somerset* (“The Buildings of England”), 1958, p.306.

³David Watkin, *The Rise of Architectural History*, 1980, pp.108-110.

⁴In her introduction to the 1978 *Gate of Remembrance*.

⁵See Geoffrey Ashe, *King Arthur’s Avalon*, 4th imp., 1976, pp.23, 306, etc.

⁶*The Quest for Arthur’s Britain*, 3rd imp., 1969, p.255. I have made much use of Chapter 11 (‘The new Matter of Britain’) in writing this article and also of Ashe’s book cited Note 5.

⁷See Robert William Billings, *Architectural Illustrations and Account of the Temple Church, London*, 1838, pp. 1-26, plate XXI.

⁸Suger, the builder of St. Denis, however, seems to have been principally interested in holy martyrs’ remains, precious materials and organisational problems: see Erwin Panofsky’s *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St. Denis*, 1948.

⁹An idea reported by Critchlow and Jackson in their Preface to the 1980 *Architectural Handbook*.

¹⁰Mediaeval builders used conventions, rules of thumb, and these certainly involved much geometry and proportion, but they were devices for designing and construction, not mystical devices for the benefit of future users. See, for example, B. G. Morgan, *Canonic design in English Mediaeval architecture*, 1961 (not an ‘alternative’ book).



Peter Foss

Llewelyn Powys: The Heart of Darkness

I

In the Introduction to his own *Black Laughter* of 1924, Llewelyn wrote that his aim in *Ebony and Ivory* (published in book form in the previous year) was “literary and aesthetic rather than personal”, and it appears from letters to his brother, and to his friend Louis Wilkinson, that Llewelyn was fully aware of the uncompromising nature of these first attempts at encapsulating his African experiences. Speaking of his story “How It Happens” which, conscious of its controversial nature, he changed from its original title “The Black Pox”, he queries whether it would “shock” the editor of the *New Statesman*, to whom he had sent the manuscript in 1919. “Is it strongly written?” he says; “Do you think you will be able to typewrite it? I daren’t let these little wenches at the Weymouth place have it in hand.”¹ He concluded that “How It Happens” was the “most sinister of all my stories”,² and certainly the contemporary *Times* review spoke of their disturbing effect upon the reader’s “peace of mind”, echoing no doubt the sentiment expressed in Edward Shanks’s Preface to the first English edition, published by Grant Richards in 1923, that “the sensitive reader is not to expect anything but pain”. Kenneth Hopkins recalls that after reading the book the first time, he promised himself never to read it again; “It is a determination I have not held to, but there are still pages and paragraphs which leave me uneasy and distressed; pages in which cruelty is not only recorded, but seemingly accepted without protest”.³

For all this, and both the author’s reservations and the reviewers’ acknowledgement of the shock element of the

stories, *Ebony and Ivory* was treated very well by the critics. Admittedly, it was launched auspiciously by Theodore Dreiser’s Preface, in which he spoke of “a temperament, an emotion, a taste, a judgement and an understanding altogether artistic and therefore distinguished.” The *Times* reviewer spoke of the “clean workmanship . . . and instinctive colouring . . . In these stories, part African, part English, life is seen as a thin, senseless impulse which creates, sooner or later, those little human stories which dream a purpose into themselves . . .” For many years afterwards, Llewelyn was known as the writer of *Ebony and Ivory* and *Black Laughter* over and above those works which we would now consider greater achievements.

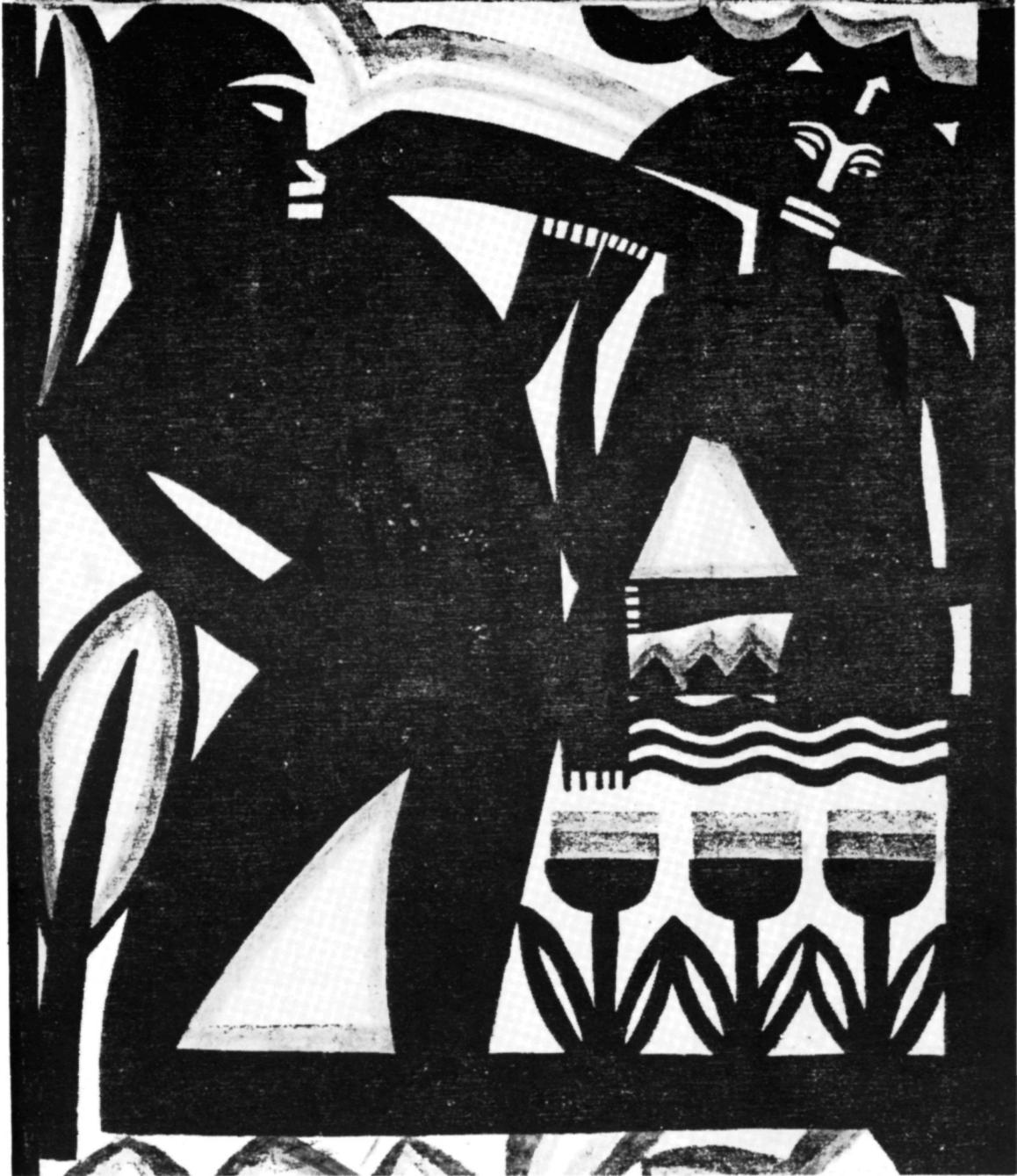
What then are we to make of Llewelyn’s



Llewelyn Powys, c. 1902.

EBONY^{AND} IVORY

BY LLEWELYN POWYS



Dust-cover to the first American edition of *Ebony and Ivory* (Am. Library Service, N.Y., 1923).

first collection, what was his intention in putting together these seemingly heterogeneous pieces? In this context, the chronology of the stories is of some importance. The *Ebony* pieces (which I shall chiefly consider in the first section of this essay) were written several years after the *Ivory* set. They were largely completed at Weymouth in 1919, after Llewelyn had returned from Africa, where he had worked with his brother, Willie, on a sheep-farm in what is now Kenya. At Weymouth, Llewelyn lived with his father, the Revd. C. F. Powys, retired from his vicarage at Montacute, and his sister Gertrude, at 3 Greenhill Terrace. The first story of the collection "Black Gods" is mentioned in November 1919 in a letter to Louis Wilkinson,⁴ and was published in July 1920 in *The New Statesman*; while it appears that "How It Happens" and "Black Parasites" also date from November 1919.⁵ The earliest of the stories, however, was "Rubbish", written, according to Elwin, on 15th November 1914 and taken from an incident in Llewelyn's Journal, of 20th October 1914.⁶ "A Sheepman's Diary", the second of the *Ebony* stories, is ostensibly a record of Llewelyn's return to England from Gilgil between May 28th and August 2nd 1918 "with some omissions and alterations". How far this second incorporated in its "alterations" parts of Llewelyn's diary of his journey from Montacute to Gilgil in 1914, quoted in *Welsh Ambassadors*,⁷ is a moot point. We might note the reference to the monkey he saw at Durban Zoo, "indicating . . . the grotesque element in this fantastical universe", also mentioned in "A Sheepman's Diary" of the return journey: "The more extravagant the creation the more in keeping with this brave fantastical universe." A. R. Orage of *The New Age* had already accepted a diary "from Montacute to Gilgil" in January 1915; and it was Orage, the dedicatee of the later *Cup-Bearers of Wine and Hellebore* (1924) who gave Llewelyn his first literary break in America by publishing the *Ivory* story, "Death" in 1913. This story, together with the other *Ivory* pieces, "The Brown Satyr", "The Stunner" "Spheric Laughter", "Un

Mufle", "The Wryneck", and "The Food of Man" were all written in the summer of 1913 at Montacute, after Llewelyn's return from Clavadel sanatorium and during bouts of illness, which was caused by kidney-stone as well as his tuberculoid condition.

It is interesting that during the period 1913 to the end of his African exile, Llewelyn was thinking either in terms of "writing for the papers" or of a large-scale work such as a novel. In 1913 he writes of "embarking on a minor novel. But whether to write an aggressive exposition of the Paganism we love or a treatise on the disillusionment we believe in, I cannot determine;"⁸ and he several times refers to an "African novel"⁹ in his 1918/19 letters. Parts of the 'diaries', of course, appeared in the 1916 publication *Confessions of Two Brothers*, the idea of John Cowper whose expansive psychological self-analysis takes up most of the book and impressively outweighs Llewelyn's weaker contribution.

The significance given by Llewelyn to his diaries as literary works is interesting in the light of the "aesthetic" gloss he put on his African experiences at the time, as he recorded them either in diary form or story form. It is important to note that the stories of *Black Laughter*—a quite different record from the stories of the *Ebony* section—were written from the perspective of distance in time and place—that is, in America from 1920 onwards. They show a more sober, more innocent, more detached understanding of his African experiences—perhaps even "a glow of romance", as he himself acknowledged. "Past experiences, bitter though they may have been, have a way of losing much of their anguish when viewed in retrospection."¹⁰

Certainly *Black Laughter* is a book in an altogether different mode, while the *Ebony* stories show a stark realism amounting almost to revulsion which serves to register well the "shock" of the African experience on "a receptive nature". It is also a shock for the reader, which after almost fifty years, has lost none of its power and edge. It is my contention that the form of the essays in *Ebony and Ivory* owes much to this combinat-

ion of Llewelyn's sense of psychological revulsion at the immediacy of his experiences, and his attempt to make his writing "literary" and "aesthetic." The revulsion we as readers feel is as much a part of Llewelyn's revulsion from himself and his social background as it was a kind of purgation of his own weaknesses and fears. It is, I believe, this kind of reading of the stories which justifies their disturbing aspects of cruelty and callousness.

Let us take, for example, the record "A Sheepman's Diary" (No. 2), in which we would expect to find a fairly faithful rendering of the author's own personal reactions to his journey home. However, we are shocked to encounter a 'persona' who is in many respects as unpleasant as the boorish settlers of some of the other *Ebony* stories. It appears that Llewelyn goes out of his way to present himself as both callous and ignorant—at one point riding down and whipping an aged native, and kicking him when he is on the ground "just as I would any dog—any dog *without teeth*" (a remark which conveys his cowardice as well as his cruelty). In the same story, he describes how he longs to crush a sick Greek "as I would a mutilated and unpleasant insect" simply because he looked horrible and was suffering from syphilis. In "Dead Matter in Africa" Llewelyn is shown as committing the very crime he lays at the door of the white settlers: he shoots a zebra for no more reason than to fulfil a bet.

We can take these incidents in a number of ways, but never I believe at face value. Llewelyn's psychology, like the import of his stories, is never simple. We can, for instance say, like Elwin, that Llewelyn's vision was "prejudiced by a fretfulness under the burden of distasteful labour, loneliness . . ." ¹¹ etc. and that in Africa "he shared a similar emotional experience with those of his sensitive contemporaries compelled into cold-blooded slaughter (in the first World War)." ¹² We know, for instance, that Llewelyn had to perform unpleasant tasks forced on him—battering to death a maimed cat with a cedar stick, ¹³ or administering rough surgery to a native boy whose hand

had been cut through ("a long white sinew, white and red, hanging down. I cut this off with the scissors and stuffed the torn flesh into place as well as I could"). ¹⁴

In the 1914 Diary, he speaks of killing two humming birds and of having misgivings about it; "I must learn to be ruthless, and more ruthless . . ." he says. Undoubtedly Llewelyn's hyper-sensitive nature in the face of suffering underwent in Africa a number of psychological blows that forced him to try to harden his heart against the casualness of life and death in the veldt. ¹⁵ His letters to his brother show very well this inuing himself to cruelty, and this achieved partly by way of a dramatisation of incidents. The "strange sadistic lust" ¹⁶ that may sometimes have taken hold of him was not only a way of counteracting the intolerable truth that came home to him that the laws of nature are indifferent to suffering, but it was also a way of channelling the "cruel" force in his own nature.

Naomi Mitchinson once remarked that Llewelyn "might like people to suppose he could be unkind" ¹⁷ because he was almost embarrassingly aware of his own fear of being so. All the evidence in his life points to his being exceptionally careful in his relationships with people because of his anxiety not to hurt them, and his compassion for humans and animals ¹⁸ was a very real thing in his life, if not in the pose he sometimes creates for himself in his writings. This, I believe, is the crux of the problem. The 'I' persona Llewelyn creates in his "Sheepman's Diary" and in those other stories in which it is clearly Llewelyn who is speaking, is a mock-tough persona he has contrived for himself, in order, firstly to offset what he saw as the extravagant weakness and timidity in his own character and, in the second place, to point up the critique he affords us of the society of which he is a part.

The real cruelty in the *Ebony* stories is invariably the work of the 'conventional' white settler, a boorish archetype of whom appears in many of the pieces. ¹⁹ In dramatic terms it is Llewelyn's identification through his own callous 'persona' with the typical settler, which emphasises the rotten-

ness at the heart of colonialism and the disgust engendered by the ignorance of one culture about another. In terms of the author's 'personal' motive, as I have suggested, it may be that Llewelyn was exorcising a guilt-complex about his middle-class upbringing and his European inheritance. By scourging himself through exaggerated self-dramatisation he was not only overcoming his own 'problem' of sensitivity towards cruelty, but also purging himself of the guilt of his hated 'civilized' background.

We can see how 'hated' this was in a story such as "How It Happens" (No. 5) in which Gerald Littlemore (whom I believe it is not too far fetched to say is another Llewelyn 'persona') goes out to British East Africa to make quick money in order to marry his love, Clare Heneage. There, he is repulsed by his compatriot settlers on the reserve, and, conscious of their contempt, gets involved with a native girl in order to prove his manhood, contracts syphilis and shoots himself. In this short, brilliant, painful saga, no-one comes off lightly. The portrait of upper middle-class society at home in England is racked with prejudice and hypocrisy, Gerald's father the squire "feeling a strong prejudice against this upstart country (Kenya) which nobody had ever heard of till lately and which was inhabited by black people." Friends of the family are "mean and conventional", their "superficial chatter" jars. Gerald's dream of love in the first place is marred by society's requirement that he should have money,—and hence the reason for the journey to British East Africa. And when there, his compatriots are described as "vulgar and banal . . . bearing that peculiar atmosphere . . . which is created by Anglo-Saxons anywhere out of England." Tompkins the overseer and McFarlen the manager, are both thoroughly second-rate, and the rest of the men are idle, prejudiced and ignorant, diverting themselves with arbitrary sexual encounters and needless shooting of animals. Even the doctor is unsympathetic, but then syphilis is the European's disease not the Africans; and Littlemore is as damned at the close of the story as are his benighted compatriots. We

feel that by having him commit suicide, Llewelyn is purging his own guilt, and the story thus becomes a powerful paradigm for an aspect of the author's personal conflict. No wonder Llewelyn called this the "most sinister" of the stories!

Llewelyn's indictment of the Anglo-Saxon society to which he belonged, with its "commercial instincts, whiskey and vulgar unseemly conversations" remained with him into his maturer years, and made occasional sallies in angry asides in works such as *Damnable Opinions* (1934). For the moment it was confined—as in "A Sheepman's Diary"—to splenetic outbursts against symbols of decadence such as the deck chairs on the front at Durban, "proclaiming their essential philistinism . . . it will require generations before these parochial, acquisitive minds can become even partially civilized." But to Llewelyn the colonial materialists of Durban and the English settlers in the veldt are guilty of the same 'single vision'. Let it be remembered that the typical boorish settler too was a creation of that same class which Llewelyn sought to reject in his own person, and—in the case of the settlers in the stories "Rubbish" and "Black Parasites"—could hail from the heart of Llewelyn's own paradisaical country. The cruel settler in "Rubbish" had been a butcher in England, while Black Rhino's father in "Black Parasites" had come from a Wiltshire pig-farm. Their provenance is significant, for these two stories are the most 'shocking' of the *Ebony* set, and display human cruelty carried to an extreme. In "Rubbish" (the first of the set written, and immediately after the incident it describes), a sickly 'goigoi' or 'not wanted one' is sent to a settler on a distant farm, who maltreats him so much that he runs away. He is later caught, taken back to the cruel settler and is severely beaten, after which he is taken ill and returned to the first settler with whom he worked. In loneliness and sickness, he goes away to a hut, lies down and, after a little while, dies. The settler sets light to the hut and cremates the body; "In the middle of the raging furnace could be seen the body—the little human-shaped body—lying quite still

and undisturbed like an infantile Abednego."²⁰ The story ends with the wife's comment: "it's like burning rubbish . . ." "Yes, it's just what it is", answered the settler."

The one redeeming feature of this story is Llewelyn's intimation that the cremation was necessary because it was a purification—a purification, of course, in the sense that the decomposing body of the boy was beginning "to stink like a dead porcupine,"—but also in a strange way for the boy himself, whose Abednego-apparition in the flames is like a transfiguration. It is also a metaphor for the author's desire for a purgation of his own conscience, particularly in view of the fact that the incident upon which the story is based involved Llewelyn as a spectator and his brother as the "farmer" who set the hut alight.²¹

There is no such amelioration in "Black Parasites" where a similar kind of cremation involves the burning to death of a native boy who is unlucky enough to be caught stealing a sheep. Black Rhino—another version of the boorish settler—stakes the boy down on the floor of the valley and sets light to it on the pretext of burning the grass to rid it of ticks. In a final fillip of callous indifference, the settler refers to the blacks as vermin:

"You have a lot of ticks about?"

"Yes."

"What kind of ticks?"

"Oh, the usual kind, red ticks, blue ticks, and *black ticks*."

It is in keeping with the 'callous persona' which Llewelyn adopts in, for example, "A Sheepman's Diary" that these stories—"Rubbish" and "Black Parasites"—should be related in a stark, casual style, which can in itself seem callous.²² It is this which, paradoxically, distinguishes them from the other *Ebony* stories, "Black Gods" and especially "A Leopard by Lake Elmenteita", and yet, at the same time, connects them in tone to the *Ivory* stories, such as "Un Mufle" and "Spheric Laughter" (both of which again show the Llewelyn 'persona' in an unflattering light). On the whole, the *Ebony* set are more consistently ordered than the *Ivory* stories; they start off with a

generalised introduction to the 'African experience' in the form of the essay "Black Gods" with its philosophic tone and more elaborate phraseology, pass through the 'reportage' of "A Sheepman's Diary" and the specific incidents starkly rendered in Nos. 3, 4 and 5, and end with two stories which stand apart from the others because they provide a hint of redemption through a different angle on the 'African experience'.

The account of the leopard in story No. 6 is suffused with something of the awe and sense of wonder that we find in parts of "Black Gods", and reminds us of the actual conflict at the heart of the title, *Ebony and Ivory*; while the story of the shot zebra in "Dead Matter in Africa" is a version of the 'amor vincit omnia' theme of the *Ivory* story "The Stunner." Both stories serve to prepare us for what we imagine to be a contrasting experience in the *Ivory* set, one in which the dark heart of Africa can be viewed, retrospectively, as a distant interlude and an 'alien' experience. But this is not to be, and instead we find that the same dark heart is carried over into the fragile decency of an English rural setting.

II

Ostensibly, the collection "Ebony and Ivory" takes its name from the Arab proverb which Llewelyn chose to place as a motto at the opening of the book:

"On Ebony and Ivory the same dark doom is writ."

It is an ominous 'motto', but two things are apparent at the outset; firstly, Llewelyn's formative understanding of the world as built upon paradox and antithesis, and secondly, a very "17th century" view that everything in the world tends towards its end and is a victim of the whim of fate. The title as a pointer to the 'meaning' of the collection is perhaps not so simple as we might imagine. True, the *Ebony* and the *Ivory*, sections—the 'black' and the 'white'—represent, on the one hand, Llewelyn's experiences in Africa, and on the other,

memories mainly of his youth and manhood in England, but that is not to say that the formula is simply one in which 'ebony' represents the dark continent and 'ivory' represents white Northern European civilization. Neither is it merely convenient to say that the dark heart of Africa is the dark heart of man—though indeed, as we have seen, there is plenty in these cruel stories to illustrate vividly the underside of human nature. But, also as we have seen, the cruelty is as much a part of the European tradition, as represented by the typical boorish settler, as it is the legacy inherent in the dark continent with its 'indifference to death' and its cruel urge to dominate through slaughter (see especially "Black Gods" for a meditation upon this aspect of the 'African experience').

The same forces we find can operate through the culture represented in the *Ivory* stories, and it is not surprising, therefore, that many of these pieces deal with a far-from-pleasant range of subjects, including treachery²³ and cannibalism. Perhaps we are nearer to an interpretation of the title if we apply it, not so much to the separate locations of the stories, but rather to the conflicts in Llewelyn's own character, for it is he who, in his guise of the 'callous' or 'detached' persona, is located at the subjective centre of these pieces, and is portrayed on occasions in an unflattering light. The 'ebony' and 'ivory' is therefore as much the paradoxical nature of the author's state of mind as it is an understanding of the antithetical nature of the universe. In the Arab proverb it may be that two continents and two cultures are contrasted, and that the dealings of fate operate through both; but it is also a recognition that the 'heart of darkness' is the white man's as much as it is the African's, and both are contained in the soul of the writer himself, condemned to be born into a society which produces Tompkins of "How It Happens" and Black Rhino of "Black Parasites", and other representatives of a 'civilization' he hates but with which he is forced to align himself. One of the results of this conflict is the implied self-revulsion through self-

dramatisation of the 'callous' persona, expressed powerfully in that significant line from "A Sheepman's Diary"—"when he was on the ground . . . I kicked him, just as I would any dog, any dog *without teeth*." It is as though Llewelyn's critique is directed as much at those cowardly aspects of his own exaggerated timidity (a "cowardice" at the heart of the "sadistic lust" he wrote about in his *African Diary*²⁴) as it is against the cruelty and abuse of colonialism. Like this, it becomes a kind of self-scourging.

In at least two of the *Ivory* stories—"Un Mufle" and "Spheric Laughter", the Llewelyn-persona is presented in an equally unsympathetic light. In "Un Mufle" set in a seaside hotel at Weymouth in the year 1908, Llewelyn tells of how, bored and unfulfilled, he walks the streets at night in hope of a sexual encounter; he sees a woman whom he thinks is leading him on, he follows her, she stops, they kiss, but the woman turns out to be a handicapped servant-girl from the hotel, a deaf-mute. The story is poignant in its treatment of the anti-climax, and also because it shows us that the girl herself may be unfulfilled, and it is her disability which bars her from love. But it is also desperately sick in its exposition of the author's revulsion, and in the fact that the girl's inarticulate whimperings are taken to be encouragements to her pursuer. We feel that Llewelyn wishes to spare us none of this "revulsion": even the noise she makes is described as being that of a "snouted swine" ("The Snouted Pig" was the original title of this story);²⁵ and the ending can be interpreted as 'callous' if we see it purely from the point-of-view of male-domination:

Full of shame and embarrassment I stood by the side of this unfortunate mute, who continued to purr and grünt in high rapture at having at last found someone to love her, to embrace her passionately.

"Spheric Laughter" is also a story about lust, and, although the 'I' persona is tender in his dealings with the girl, it cannot reflect upon him advantageously. The derision which he feels is his lot in the scheme-of-things is part-and-parcel of the technique of

self-revulsion we find in these stories. At the end of "Spheric Laughter" the stars are described as "many bright eyes twinkling *derisively*" down on his lamentably misjudged performance, just as, at the close of "Black Gods", Llewelyn meditates on the fact that the uncomfortable and stark reality of life's terms in Africa makes a mockery of our own deluded notions of immortality and religion.

This sense of mockery, and self-mockery, is a constant theme behind the stories of *Ebony and Ivory*. Death itself is, of course, a mockery of life in the two essays on that theme in *Ivory*, while the meditation upon the moon in "Treachery in the Heavens" is as much about the mockery inherent in its "feminine" perfidiousness as it is about the author's paradoxical feelings towards her.

"Treachery in the Heavens" provides us with a good example of the essential conflict in Llewelyn's own 'heart of darkness': "How beautiful she is and yet how I hate her," he cries in the opening paragraph of this extraordinary piece. The essay is full of antithetical devices which are also echoes of the 'ebony' and 'ivory' theme. Sentences such as, "Is she in actual fact merely an illusion?" and "How gladly I would hold her in my hands and strangle her perfidious loveliness to death," show an oxymoronic wit. This love-hate relationship is carried to a necrophiliac extreme which is interesting in the light of what, even in his most affirmative works, we can recognise as a morbidity which is not so much sentimental as pathological; that is, not merely what Glen Cavaliero called "this macabre Webster-like feeling for the physical actualities of death"²⁶ (of which there is plenty of evidence in Llewelyn as well as in John Cowper), but also in that particularly consumptive characteristic of being "half in love with easeful death". The emphasis at the end of "Treachery in the Heavens" is on the deadness and inertness of the moon, an "eternal dead planet . . . a leprous and detestable corpse", which paradoxically is still able to search for its "lost life" through infinite space, and still commands influence over us. The moon, of course, is a symbol of

that same 'heart of darkness' which is part of the human inheritance, and it is Llewelyn's skill in this essay that he manages to combine that idea with the protracted illusion for most of the essay that the moon is in fact a woman, and that therefore she is both a 'femme fatale' (in which the 'feminine' nature represents the dark or deadly aspect of life), and also a goad to the author's own 'darker' instincts.²⁷

I said at the close of the first section of this essay that the implications inherent in the 'ebony' half of Llewelyn's title—that which corresponds to the 'dark heart of Africa'—are carried over into the *Ivory* set to reveal the 'heart of darkness' in the English rural setting—and not only that but couched, as it were, in the very bosom of Llewelyn's 'paradisaal ideal'. It is my contention that, seen in this light, the placing of the story of "The Brown Satyr"—set in a mythic paradisaal England which is both Dorset and Arcadia—at the forefront of the *Ivory* series, conforms to the purpose Llewelyn intends of showing a paradisaal vision in which the dealings of death and the derision of fate are still at work.

An allegorical interpretation of "The Brown Satyr" would recognise the conflict between Llewelyn's inbred alignment with the society into which he was born and his wish to reject that society and to escape from it into the world beyond the "parsonage garden". If we interpret this story in terms of an allegory in which the brown satyr represents the dark, hedonistic side of Llewelyn's character, and the 'priest in the garden' as symbolic of his father's vocation as well as his Montacute background, we can then understand the trenchency of this very conflict. The 'ebony and ivory' formula then takes on the character of a far more personalised crisis amounting to disorientation (hence the ostensibly 'confused' nature of the story and its subconsciously-suppressed allegorical significance); the 'ebony' symbolising not only the 'dark heart' of Llewelyn's latent paganism, but also in a painfully inverted way the destructiveness of the established opinions of that church and state into which he was born.

The questions raised in the story are as much Llewelyn's as they are ours; in what sense is the 'ivory' of the story an acceptance or rejection of Christian values, and how far does the formula, "What you will—for nothing matters", represent the affirmative or the negative side of the author's conscience?

It is interesting that the same formula, "nothing matters", occurs in the first story of the *Ebony* series, "Black Gods", one of several links between the mythic treatment of the two stories. The "nothing matters" formula is there more simply rendered as a motto for the indifference of the African gods in a land where "matter alone rules", but it is also a jibe against the suppositions of civilised Western man that he can put a transcendent meaning onto the "vast innumerable manifestations of inscrutable nature". It is part of the more convincing personalised conflict in "The Brown Satyr" that Llewelyn attempts in part a reconciliation between the 'Pan' and the 'Christ' mythologies—'pagan' and 'Christian', 'hedonistic' and 'deist', 'black' and 'white'—in the figure of the carefree youth on the bank, because it was Llewelyn's endeavour, in the long term, to find a way beyond the balance of antithesis, either through a kind of synthesis of 'religious awe' and 'epicureanism' or, as I believe he does in the later works, through his own version of 'earth-mysticism'.

We can see from the implications alone of this allegory of "The Brown Satyr" how this particular story points to developments in Llewelyn's ideas far beyond even the boundaries of the 'ebony and ivory' formula in this first volume of published essays. For the while, its placing at the forefront of the *Ivory* set serves its purpose as something of a shock to the supposition that 'ivory' will offset 'ebony'. Fear, disillusionment and death are also the inhabitants of Eden, and this truth is nowhere so poignantly expressed as in the third story of the *Ivory* set, "Threnody", about the sudden death of Llewelyn's young sister Eleanor when he was nine years old in 1893, an event which left a profound and lasting impression upon him. The 'Et in

Arcadia Ego' theme is beautifully given voice in the closing lines of "Threnody":

If our days in the garden of the earth are in reality so uncertain, so brief, if there is indeed so little time for any of us to play under the blackthorn, if indeed, as was made clear to me then, death cannot be gainsaid, then surely the secret of so sorry and insecure an existence must lie in detachment, for he who would lose his heart to a life so beset with tragedy had best have a care for his wits.

Death of course, whether it comes about by the workings of an irrevocable fate or the laws of Nature, can appear even in Eden with something of the "gloss of romance". But brutality and horror is never 'romantic', never poignant. It is merely 'shocking', and one of the major links that connects the 'heart of darkness' of the *Ebony* stories with those of *Ivory* is that the cruelty shown by the boorish white settler towards his native servants in for instance "Rubbish" and "Black Parasites" is carried over into stories such as "Spheric Laughter" and "The Wryneck" where cruelty is displayed, in the one, by a rafish husband and, in the other, by a brutal father.

Butchery is the key-note of the stories "The Food of Man" and "The Wryneck". In "The Food of Man", a troublesome cow, sold to a country butcher for slaughter, bolts in the village street, is chased and harassed by an inconsiderate crowd, collapses in a state of terror and is then dealt with by the butcher, who simply comments that "she is sulky, sir, that's what's the matter with her." The emphemistic close of the story, no specific reference being made to its actual slaughter, is in Llewelyn's finest mode of stepping up the tension through casual obliquity. But it is the cow's inarticulate protest which remains in our minds (as it remained in Llewelyn's mind); "out of the dust of the road there rose a terrible sound, for the whitish cow had begun to scream." In "The Wryneck" we get another portrait of a "brutal ugly man", this time the father of a malformed girl whom he ill treats. Her cruelty consists in cutting off the heads of young birds to impress her schoolmates. She soon graduates to thieving, to get food and

drink for her sister, develops a liking for meat, finds an abandoned gypsy girl and apparently kills her, cooks the body and serves it up for Christmas supper. On the face of it, the story is fantastic and improbable, but Llewelyn's reportage style combined with the enigmatic rendering of the cannibalism-theme is remarkably effective. Both stories treat the theme of casual or perverse brutality, in human and animal alike, in the quiet lanes of the English countryside. Both are related in that stark, uncompromising fashion we have come to expect.

Where, then, is the 'ivory' of *Ebony and Ivory*? Where is there an intimation of a positive, affirmative side to life? From the outset we are meant to expect little joy from these stories of brutality and disillusionment and death. Life is presented throughout as a desperate and tragic affair pervaded by the "dark doom" of the Arab proverb. But there are, in fact, several significant intimations in *Ebony and Ivory* of values which over-ride the indifference and meaninglessness of the "dark doom", and which strike directly at the 'heart of darkness', sometimes in a quite unexpected way.

In the first section of this essay I remarked that the last two stories of the *Ebony* set stand apart from the others in their possible intimation of a contrasting experience to be awaited in the *Ivory* section. The description of the leopard in "A Leopard by Lake Elmenteita" presents us by way of a Blakean similitude with the antithetical nature of the world and its creation within a single creature, "Did He who made the Lamb make Thee?" The whole tenour of this piece drives towards a celebration of the leopard's fearful symmetry through a series of oxymorons: "terrible precision", "treacherous beauty", "bizarre beauty", "miraculous spotted body". Even the birds of the forest sing "a song of praise . . . to the creator of the world . . . The whole air became vibrant, quivering, palpitating." It is strange that the shooting of the leopard at the end of the piece seems almost an irrelevancy, though appropriate of course in the light of the 'struggle for survival' which

is Africa's law. We learn at the beginning that the leopard has killed a calf, and so the white man with his shotgun sets out on his trail, and the sentence is immediately passed on the animal. But the more the anticipated doom hangs over the fate of the leopard the more Llewelyn steps up the celebration of its life and vigour. In a similar way, the cruel and arbitrary shooting of the zebra at the beginning of "Dead Matter in Africa" is starkly contrasted with the animal's display of devotion over the dead body of its mare at the end. Callous man, now remorseful of his "carelessness", is 'put to school' by the unexpected revelation of a love which defies the casual laws of nature and death:

I knew that this untamed, fantastical animal, restlessly running to and fro in the vivid sunshine of that tropical moon, had thrown out a challenge against the material universe, more desperate, more beautiful and more convincing, than any I had ever heard from pulpit or platform.

'Amor vincit omnia' is also the theme of "The Stunner", the second of the *Ivory* stories, one which had a basis in fact from an incident of Llewelyn's Montacute childhood.²⁹ "The Stunner" is about a villager who falls in love with a girl, Nelly, but is forbidden to see her by his mother. When he sustains a fatal fall from a tractor in the field, he is so obsessed with this girl that, when his mother prevents her from seeing him, he leaves his sick bed and walks "like a corpse" three miles to see her, and then dies in her arms. Like the stallion zebra in "Dead Matter in Africa", the man defies death through an overriding passion not to be separated from the one whom he loves. Llewelyn's 'moral', put to us in his harangue against the church missionary deputation at the opening of the story, emphasises that "unexpected force" in man and animal alike:

Love, this is the great urging power, the very God of very God, pervading, permeating, penetrating the whole of our planet, as it sways and dances, round the sun . . . All creation spins, cries, and rushes hither and thither, in a mad desire to embrace, in the

forests, in the deep waters, in the lighted cities. Possibly for our unfortunate and deluded race it is the only solace, the one unfailing consolation.

This passion 'not to be separated' is the compelling hope and fear of Llewelyn's meditation on death in the story of that title. It need hardly be said that none of these stories, in which the "dark doom" is partially mitigated, was written with the aim of giving us a consistent philosophy. The 'philosophy', if such it can be called, is almost fortuitously arrived at, and is never 'worked out'; the circumstances of the essays' composition, their individuality, what may be termed their experimentation, all militate against their positioning in a coherent sequence with a development of meaning throughout. Yet, Llewelyn intended "Death" to be placed at the end of the

Ivory series,³⁰ and it is not surprising therefore that the essay contains much of what we find familiar in Llewelyn's thinking from his later years as a writer. There is, for example, the stock formula of Llewelyn's writing that breathing life is an "unspeakable privilege" given the pervasiveness of death; there is also the "macabre feeling for the physical actualities of death" ("countless human beings lay prostrate there, evilly smelling and wrapped in musty cements . . ."); and there is the characteristic locality of the churchyard, the dead below, the living above. The 'black and white' formula is also a formula of 'life and death', and that is why it is part of Llewelyn's vision that the "dark doom" of the Arab proverb relies upon the urgency given to life in the 'dark continent';



Llewelyn Powys in Africa with his dog "Egypt" and his baby baboon "Tony", c. 1916.



Llewelyn and William Ernest Powys, c. 1926.

while in the English countryside Eden can be a graveyard and the 'heart of darkness' may stalk the lanes of paradise: "We had loved loitering here, we two, and under that very tree, now so black against the sky, had sat reading to each other, coming to understand, as the tiny rose-red berries were scattered above us, the unspeakable privilege of merely being above ground."³¹

The answer Llewelyn gives in "Death" is in no way profound, but it does assert very early in Llewelyn's career, that "simple song" concerning the value of sense-experience and love of life which we associate with his mature 'philosophy'. In "Death" it is the limits set on life which give it its "tang" and "relish": "The very pride of man indeed rests upon his mortality, for so and only so does he appear an heroic figure under the sun." This "pride", this heroism constitutes the entire tone-of-voice of this memorable piece. The "Roman dignity" of his brother's last words is transferred also into the bravado of the style. Its passionate and defiant tone rise above the nostalgia and wistfulness of "Threnody" and the bitter stoicism we find in some of the other stories, and is reminiscent of Sir Thomas Browne's words in *Urne Buriall*: "Man is a Noble Animal, splendid in ashes and pompous in the grave."³²

A haunting image at the close of "Death" is of two moths, for whom "the strange ordering of chance and accident" is recorded without comment. One "flew into the lamp and lay on the dressing table in a fluttering agony." Another "passed out into the soft,

odorous darkness of the garden." It is haunting not only because of its miniscule encapsulation of the arbitrary nature of life and death, but also because of the way that the images of light (the lamp) and dark (the garden) are reversed. Here it is the light, like the "cruel, killing" sun³³ in many of Llewelyn's *Ebony* pieces, which is the agency of death, and the dangerous freedom of life's terms is the "sweet-smelling" darkness of the world outside. It is, I believe, this ambiguity of Llewelyn's response to the 'ebony' and 'ivory' formula in this book which makes these stories the enigmatic collection it is, rendering our response to it uncertain and problematical. True, this is part of Llewelyn's own psychology, but the reality of the 'heart of darkness' idea is never simply a matter of a right view or a wrong view, a positive attitude or a negative attitude. As I have tried to show in this far-from complete examination of *Ebony and Ivory*, the correspondence between the antitheses contained in the formulaic title, embrace responses in the author's persona which are themselves a problem for the author. In addition, these correspondences are at times unexpectedly reversed or inverted, so that, for example, the dark side of human nature may appear to be symbolic of man's essential life-force just as the urge towards life in, for instance, "A Leopard by Lake Elmenteita" is a natural concomitant of death and destruction. The 'black' and 'white' in *Ebony and Ivory* is never quite 'black and white'.

NOTES

¹Letter to Louis Wilkinson, Dec. 1919, quoted in *Welsh Ambassadors*, 1936, p. 258.

²Letter to J. C. Powys, Feb. 1920, *The Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, ed. L. Wilkinson, 1943, p. 104.

³*The Powys Brothers*, 1967, p. 73.

⁴*Welsh Ambassadors*, p. 257.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁶M. Elwin, *The Life of Llewelyn Powys*, 1946, p. 119.

⁷*Welsh Ambassadors*, p. 256.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁹This was called "Aliens in Africa" in a letter to Louis Wilkinson, Aug. 1918, *Welsh Ambassadors*, p. 254.

¹⁰Introduction to *Black Laughter*, 1924.

¹¹Elwin, p. 147.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹³Diary of 1914, and in a letter to Lucy Penny, 14th November, 1914. *Letters*, p. 69.

¹⁴Diary of 1914, *Welsh Ambassadors*, p. 247.

¹⁵Elwin, p. 121.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁸See the incident of releasing a rabbit from a gin, in Elwin, p. 115.

¹⁹It might be added that Llewelyn's brother, William

Powys objected to what he called the "misleading" picture Llewelyn gave of the "country which he lived in and loved"; though we can be sure that Llewelyn never saw his brother as a "conventional white settler". See Elwin, p. 147.

²⁰To be fair, one must record the incident as it is given in a letter to J. C. Powys of Oct. 21st 1914, *Letters*, p. 66. We may note how in the true account of the incident Willie's action is perfectly justified; and furthermore, Llewelyn can give an 'edge' to his descriptions even when they are factual and not "aesthetic": "A black boy—a Kikuyu—died two days ago and last night they came to say he had begun to stink 'like a dead porcupine'. It is not their custom to bury bodies and as the parents were away nobody else would touch the body (the father usually throws the body into the forest for the hyenas to eat) so Willie decided to burn the hut as he was told nobody would ever live in it again. He did so after dinner, I came out in my pyjamas and stood watching . . . Presently we saw the body quite still in the middle of the flames and all night the air was tainted with the smell of roasting flesh."

²¹See above.

²²John Cowper Powys remarked on Llewelyn's "calm, poetical, wise . . . and controlled description" of horror. He believed that Llewelyn's desire was "to exteriorise and so exorcise what pained and shocked him." Elwin, pp. 114-5.

²³Llewelyn considered his chief "fault" as a person was "treachery"; see Alyse Gregory's Introduction to his *Letters*, p. 19.

²⁴Elwin, p. 121.

²⁵Elwin, p. 108.

²⁶Glen Cavaliero, *The Rural Tradition in the English Novel 1900—1939*, 1977, p. 131.

²⁷It is interesting to note in this context that a destructive, indeed almost a necrophiliac urge, was part of Llewelyn's pathology as a young man, and was associated with his desire to embrace the beauty of life, whether in the form of natural objects or a woman, to a 'smothering' degree. Cf. the ravishing of the harebells passage in *Apples Be Ripe*, 1930, p. 35 and p. 214 ("when I see something beautiful I want to ravish it", he said, and in a moment he had stretched himself out upon the flowers"). See Elwin, p. 67, for relevant Diary entries.

²⁸Elwin, p. 108; and the incident also occurs in *Love and Death*. The man who ran into the road asking what was the matter was, in fact, Llewelyn. See also *Apples Be Ripe*, p. 128.

²⁹Elwin, p. 108; *Letters*, p. 131.

³⁰*Letters*, p. 83.

³¹See Elwin, p. 59, for the way John Cowper and Llewelyn frequented churchyards to talk. See *Dudame*, (1925) 1974, pp. 11, 380, where Rook and Lexie Ashgrove sit talking on tombstones. Also, *Wood and Stone*, (1915) 1974, pp. 211, 505.

³²Sir Thomas Browne was a favourite author of Llewelyn's and there is evidence he re-read *Religio Medici* a number of times. Llewelyn's development of paradox and antithesis in his style owes something to his reading of 17th century literature, as also does his "Webster-like feeling for the physical actualities of death".

³³It is not quite true to say that the "cruel" sun is an *agent* of death in some of the *Ebony* stories, but it is certainly associated with cruelty and indifference and is often described as the "Gorgon's eye" of Africa: see "Black Gods", "A Sheepman's Diary", and "Dead Matter in Africa".



Engraving of Llewelyn Powys by Reginald Marsh, dated 1930.

Mr. Philip Larkin owns the copy of the engraving which belonged to John Cowper Powys and bears a holograph inscription on the back of its frame. He has supplied the following information about it.

"The photographs are rather larger than the original. The overall dimensions of the frame are 7.4" (18.8 cms) x 5.4" (14 cms). The plate size of the engraving (that is, the area marked by the impression) is 5" (12.5 cms) x 4" (10 cms).

The engraving is signed in the plate 'Marsh 1930'. There is a signature 'Reginald Marsh' in pencil in the right-hand corner of the surround, which is also marked 'B' in the left-hand corner.

Regarding the inscription, 'Eve' is Mrs. Eve Elwin, widow of Malcolm Elwin. It is written in ink, and may be readily interpreted as:

This is the only Head in the world that I John beheld when a few days after birth—the Skull—where is it now?—was not yet closed up—that Skull that in Life was more open than any other ever was to Life & all Life contains.

The engraving was sent to me by Mrs. Elwin when she disposed of her husband's papers in 1976. It normally hangs at the foot of the stairs in my house."

For
 Eve from
 Phyllis & John
 The Fifth of November 1954

This is the only
 head in the
 world

That I have beheld
 when a few
 days ago I laid
 the skull —

— Where is it now? —

— Was not yet
 closed when
 that skull that in

Life
 was more open than
 any other ever was

Life is all
 Life contains.



Theodore Powys reading, East Chaldon, 1924
Pencil drawing by Clifford Webb R.E. (1895-1972).

The size of the drawing is 13.5" (34.1 cms) x 10" (25.4 cms). With her kind permission, we print an extract from Mrs Clifford Webb's letter to the Editor accompanying the drawing "which Clifford did one very wet afternoon in July so long ago".

"We had been lent a cottage in Chaldon for our honeymoon by Clifford's friend Stephen Tomlin. When we saw him in his studio just before our wedding he mentioned that Theo and his wife lived near and suggested that we called. He also told us that the book *Mark Only* had at his instigation been transferred from several large handwritten exercise books to typescript.

The Powyses were both very charming and friendly and we exchanged teas. I wish I could remember more

details but I do recall that we often encountered Theo on our walks over the countryside and he did not seem to wish to avoid us. I do remember one remark of his, "I saw you both striding over the fields like gods". Clifford may have been striding but I expect I was trotting behind trying to keep up. In this fashion we covered much of the Cotswold country, North Wales and the Pyrenees, in following years.

I do not know if it had influence on me, but it was during that first honeymoon, we had several more, that I began to try to write. I have achieved a mild success with children's books and wrote the scripts for Clifford's animal books. Clifford, of course, became a notable watercolourist, wood engraver and teacher."

Theodora Scutt

Theodore Powys, 1934-1953

The very first thing that I remember about Daddy (my adoptive father) is my sitting, bored, cold and unhappy, in my pram one dark grey day—it must have been autumn—in the passage at Beth Car, Daddy's house at East Chaldon, and he came out of his study, probably because I was crying, tore up a lot of paper, drew trains on the bits and used them as "railway tickets" to go from Weymouth to Wool (from the front door to the back) and from Wool to Weymouth (from the back door to the front). The trip was chosen not only for the alliteration, which of course made it easy for my baby brain to take in, but because the Waterloo-Weymouth line and the passage at Beth Car run in a rough parallel. Wool is the local station on the London line, that is, if "They" haven't closed it down.

My next really clear memory is of going up to the obelisk above the White Nose cliffs with Daddy and Tommy Tomlin (whose name wasn't Tommy at all, but Stephen). Tommy was wearing a red neckerchief. When Daddy got tired of carrying me—he'd picked me up after I'd grizzled for miles that I was tired, which I wasn't, but they were so deep in conversation that I was afraid I'd be forgotten—Tommy carried me the rest of the way. It was a hot day, and the sky and the Downs and the ploughed fields were dark, bright blue and green and brown, and the larks sang.

When I was little—in fact until I was grown-up—I walked with Daddy almost every afternoon. While his friend John Fisher still owned Place Farm, one of our favourite walks used to be to, into, or round his copse, Cockrow Copse—it had been planted, about a generation back, for pheasant rearing, and hence the name, not from barnyard rooster but from pheasant

cock. Very little of its wood was really big; one or two old oaks and some whitethorns, but all the rest was hazel with a sprinkling of young oak and beech. Daddy loved it. The hedge on the south side was very thick blackthorn, and at the furthest corner there was a deep bay into it, running up to a hunting-gate into the copse; but, except in the season, the gate was only used by us. The slope in summer was absolutely covered with blue scabious—"sheep's bit" I think—and soft rough grass; it was very sheltered and sunny, and on fair days Daddy used to put his little rubber sheet on the grass ("in case it is damp, Susie my dear") and sit there for hours, reading or meditating. He would possibly smoke a cigarette, if he had one with him—he always rolled his own, and never smoked more than four a day; now and then he'd smoke a pipe instead. And he would sit quite still, delighting peacefully in the sunny day and the clouds of butterflies on the flowers around him. There was a large oak just inside the gate with a red squirrel's drey in it, and sometimes the squirrel would appear and call us awful names in its small shrill voice. Once, when Daddy went there alone, he saw the whole squirrel family playing in the oak, but of course that never happened when I was around, I was too noisy—it took me years to get over the chatter-habit.

I must have been a terrible nuisance to my adoptive father, with his love of quiet and his habit of watching wild creatures. Another of his favourite walks led to an old claypit, where he was watching a litter of fox-cubs and their mother, and on the days I went with him they didn't show. When he went out alone he'd almost always come back saying he'd seen something—roe deer, the squirrel (red squirrels were scarce even

then), a weasel or a fox. One of his seats was on a bank above the little brook we called the "Oxus", well hidden by brambles, and all one summer long he watched a pair of kingfishers, watched them nest, hatch the eggs, rear their young. I hardly ever went there that summer, I can't remember why, and so I never saw the pair; however, I did make repeated but unsuccessful attempts to see them, as they nested in the same place for several years.

I recollect well the morning Daddy had his stroke. The weather had been fine for days, and we had had Francis and Sally, his son and daughter-in-law, staying with us with their new baby not long before. Francis had just joined-up. The war was getting ready to start.

The weather was still quite wonderful that morning; the sun was streaming in at the little landing window, and the hens were cackling cheerfully in their run. Daddy came into the room where I slept with my adoptive mother, his wife Violet, and said that he felt a little dizzy and heavy in the head. He wasn't sure that he would let out the fowls, thought he might lie down. Violet said oh, and oh dear Theeroo, (she never could, or would, say Theodore) and got, woman-like, into a flap; and Daddy said irritably that he was only making a fuss and he'd go and finish digging some part of the vegetable-garden; that would clear his head. He went downstairs and out; we got up and Violet set me at the table with a boiled egg. As I began it Daddy came in and sat down, saying thickly that he was sick and giddy. He slid off the sofa and lay on the floor; Violet ran about frantically trying to find some remedy, while insisting that I get on with my breakfast, but nothing made matters any better and finally she snatched me by the hand and ran out onto the road to try to stop some passer-by to send a message to the doctor. There was noone; and she began to run, pulling me, up the hill towards the village. It's not very far, but the nearest telephone was at the post-office; and that's about half a mile. Mercifully before we reached the top of the knap, Uncle Willie, home on one of his infrequent visits from his Kenyan farm, met

us in his car. He and his eldest son leapt out and ran down to the house, while his wife Elizabeth took the car and swung it round and disappeared like a bat out of hell for Winfrith and the doctor. By the time Violet and I returned to Beth Car, Uncle Willie had Daddy upstairs already. They were of the utmost use; calm was restored and except for the regular visits of the doctor, I thought precious little more of it.

It took me months to realise that Daddy was never going to be well again. Eventually he came downstairs, very shakily, held firmly by the two strong young sons, Joe and Jim, of our farmer neighbour, Mr. Cobb—and after that Daddy slept downstairs, in his study. I think he never again climbed stairs in any house, he was so subject to vertigo, although previously he had had a head for heights like a mountain goat.

That winter an oil-tanker got set ablaze somewhere under the cliffs, and there was soot everywhere and the smell of diesel; bombs dropped, heavy guns were fired; Daddy's head ached all the time. Also, Aunt Gertrude was with him a pretty deal. She certainly didn't deliberately allow him to see her anxiety, but he was a very sensitive man and it would have taken a better actress than Aunt Gertrude to fox him, so it was as much to Daddy's mind as anyone else's that we should move, "for the duration".

We moved to Mappowder, on the skirts of the Blackmore Vale, twenty-one miles inland. From a six-roomed house, standing solitary in a field and owned by Daddy, we came to a four-roomed cottage which, on becoming the lodge for the new rectory instead of the church school (this because a new school-house had been built as well as a new rectory) had been re-named The Lodge although sundry people did still call it the Old School. It was Church property, which made the Rector, Dr. Samuel Francis Jackson, our landlord; it was absolutely next-door to the church and the churchyard yew overhung the backyard. The garden was completely shut-in, between the high churchyard wall, the biggest box-hedge I've ever seen, and, at the top, a tall privet hedge. There were two graceful young ash

saplings in the garden, and a profusion of roses; but it was many days before Daddy got out to see the garden, because the move, although undertaken most carefully in a good car driven gently by the Chaldon taxi-driver, Mrs. Webb, made him very ill for a long time.

We left East Chaldon and came to Map-powder when I was about seven, so I can remember walking with Daddy at Chaldon. One of his walks began up the Gravel Lane. (That's the road that goes up over the Five Marys to the main road on the other side; it has been tarred for years, but it wasn't then, only gravelled; there was an open ford where a tributary of the Frome, very young and small, crossed the lane, and the main road was still called the Turnpike.) Then he or we went along the ridge of the hill to the northwest, down onto the West Chaldon road, and so home. We called the West Chaldon road the Punishment Road, because if I hadn't been good during the walk, he'd make me hold his hand all the way down this road, which was quite a distance. Usually I ran loose, like a puppy; but if I was rude or wouldn't come when I was called or deliberately did something silly, I was "put on the lead", and like a puppy, I hated it. Not holding Daddy's hand—his hands were always dry and soft and light—but being put on the lead!

I don't recollect ever walking with him to Chydyock, the solitary and beautiful farmhouse where Aunt Gertrude and Aunt Katie lived; but I can remember walking up past Rats' Barn often enough, and along the tops of the valleys. (Rats' Barn was the house, far up on the downs, that Uncle Willie tenanted on his occasional visits to England.) Very occasionally he would make some brief remark about things his sons had done as they accompanied him and played together on these walks in earlier days. "I remember Francis once lost an arrow here. We searched for it all afternoon and never found it." "This is where one of Mr. Todd's horses died. I remember the boys running back to meet me and complaining of the stench." Francis, the boys, but, I think, never Theodore (or Dicky, that was his pet

name) by name.

Once Daddy showed me a deathcap mushroom. "Remember this one, Susie," he said, "you must never touch it." He didn't know an awful lot about mushrooms, but he did know that a little knowledge, abused, can be very dangerous indeed. He would only pick the field mushroom, which he was very fond of. Violet wouldn't eat them. "They might be poisonous," she said, while she served us almighty plates-ful, and Daddy would grin—he very rarely laughed—and say, "Well, my dear, when you've buried me you can keep as many cats as you like," and she invariably took the bait, said "Oh, Theeroo!" and stamped out of the room. Her inevitable mispronunciation of his name enraged me, but he didn't seem to mind it at all, and luckily she almost always called him Daddy.

I can remember walking over High Chaldon with him, too. When we went over High Chaldon we usually went to the Jar Stones. These were—and I hope still are—though I cannot find them now—two little boulders, quite the right shape to have been turned out of two gigantic jam-jars, which was the reason I gave my child's self for their odd name, as none of the grown-ups were forthcoming (as far as I can remember, not even Daddy) with an answer to my query. There was an equally strange threequarters-blocked-up small cave behind and above them. It was a short walk, but not one of Daddy's favourites except in summer, as the Jar Stones are on the north slope, and in the winter always in the shadow of the hill, so that it would be too chill for him to sit and smoke one cigarette, which he always liked to do at the turning-point of his walk. I know the light value of conjecture, but it does seem to me now that the Jar Stones are probably the remnant of some pagan place of worship, and that Daddy, holding the same opinion, named them after Tinker Jar, whose name, when at home, is Jahveh:

"Jehovah Jahveh is my name,
My friends they call me Jah;
The Virgin Mary is my girl,
And I am Christ's Papa."

Louis Wilkinson, Daddy's oldest and dearest friend, explained Tinker Jar's name to me with this, by now, at least seventy-year-old under-grad's bit of doggerel, which Daddy must have heard from him or picked up while visiting his rooms at Cambridge. I never ever heard any local name for the Jar Stones, so I do think I'm "on the right track", as Daddy would have said.

The only time I can remember going up on High Chaldon without visiting the Jar Stones, we went up to pick foxgloves for Violet, and, while I was playing about by myself and Daddy was picking the foxgloves, which were taller than I was, he upset a wild bees' nest in the hedge, and they bit him most furiously. He howled with the pain, and we rushed straight home for Violet to dress his hand with bluebag. That's the only time I've been on High Chaldon without visiting the Jar Stones, the only time I've known any wild thing to hurt Daddy, and the only time I've ever seen a wild bees' nest, and I was too little to remember that.

While we were walking he used to tell me stories. My favourite hero was Georgie Wormie—he was a little worm boy who lived (of course) in a worm village and used to get up to no end of adventures. Georgie Wormie began his career as a result of Daddy's habit of picking the worms out of the road and putting them back in the grass, and he went on for years—I must have been eleven or older when finally I got fed-up with Georgie. Daddy was a marvellous storyteller and he hardly ever repeated himself.

One case of continual repetition, however, was when I asked him to tell me "about when you were a little boy, Daddy". That was the way I heard about his mare, Fanny, and Nip the terrier—well, almost; he'd been telling me stories and something, probably Jeanetta Fisher going by on her black horse, started me off chattering about ponies and remembering a remark of Violet's that losing his own horse and dog had "turned Daddy bitter" and that that was why he wouldn't let me have a pony or a dog. I asked, "Didn't you ever have a horse, when you had the farm, Daddy? Didn't you have a pony when you were a little boy?"

"We did have a pony at Montacute . . ." Daddy considered. "The girls and Willie learnt to ride on it. I believe it used to pull the governess cart."

"But why didn't you learn to ride too?"

"I didn't wish to, my dear."

A very lonely only child is not likely to understand the torment of an equally sensitive child, the butt of a too-large family. I only marvelled at Daddy's "not wishing to" learn to ride, and did not see that if he had wished he would have had not only to wait his turn, but probably to fight for it; and also, being as a child very timid, while his brothers and sisters simply had no sense of fear at all, he would have become an even bigger butt for their humour. I knew it wasn't any use asking him why he didn't wish, so after a few paces I said, "But did you only drive when you were at Sweffling?" (His farm was at Sweffling in Suffolk.) "How did you manage, Daddy?"

"Oh, I rode. Old Montacute the groom taught us all. You had to ride in those days, there were none of these cars or bicycles then; it was either ride or walk and often it was quicker to ride. But I was not very interested in it."

"Did you ride to market, Daddy?" I asked, for that was a question he couldn't sidestep by reminiscing on his childhood.

"No, I drove. I had a gig."

"What sort of a horse did you drive?" (To this day I have never seen in the flesh the Suffolk Punch, the breed that Daddy owned and swore by. In my childhood I'd never even seen a photo' of one and so for all I knew he might have put one of them in the gig.)

"Oh, I drove Fanny, my mare. Fanny was broken to ride and drive."

"What was she like, Daddy?"

He hesitated, he made quite a pause, before he spoke. "She was black. Not so tall as these big hunters the Fishers ride. What was called a useful cob. A very gentle, willing mare."

"Did she have a long mane and tail?"

"Her tail was docked. I believe she had a hogged mane, it was the fashion for cobs in those days. I used to ride her round the

farm. And I drove her to market, of course."

"Did you hunt?" I was obsessed with the romance of the call of the horn, the hounds' cry and the galloping hooves.

"Good God, no! I never had any time for that. Besides, I don't get on very well with these fine hunting gentlemen."

There is a type of roistering, boistering, insensitive person who only gets on a horse in the hunting season. They are not "Legion," but they are too many.

"Did you have Fanny long, Daddy?"

"Most of the time I was at Sweffling."

Children are often insensitive too, and callous to the sensitivity of others, especially where their curiosity is concerned. "Why did you get rid of her, Daddy? Did you sell her?" I asked.

"Oh, no. No, I didn't sell her. She broke her leg; she had to be shot."

"Oh, Daddy! How did it happen?"

"I was going in to Saxmundham. There was a long sheet of ice on the road, and she fell and broke her leg." We walked for a pace or two in silence, and presently Daddy said again, but very quietly and as if to himself, "A gentle mare. A very willing, gentle mare."

I don't recollect his ever referring to Fanny again. He did mention, quite frequently, his terrier Nip, who must have been an excellent ratter. "On rainy days sometimes Nip and I would go ratting in the barn." "In the threshing season my terrier Nip would account for more rats than most of the village dogs," "I always found ratting with my terrier Nip as exciting as any of this fox-hunting." But he never actually told me any stories about Nip, except that he did describe him (but only because I'd asked) as "a yellow and white terrier, rather rough-coated: I suppose you could say he was a fox-terrier type." And when, with the unintentional cruelty of an inquisitive child who has never known sorrow, I asked "What happened to Nip, Daddy?" he merely and shortly replied, "He died from poison." But when I voiced a theory of Violet's that Nip's death had not been an accident, his eyes flashed; youth returned to his face on a wave

of rage far more cold, deep and deadly than I realised until very many years had passed; and he said, violently although he did not raise his voice, "Nonsense. Utter rubbish." And he flushed, and walked on in silence, with his mouth trembling as after his stroke mental stress always caused it to tremble. After a while he said in his usual gentle tone, "You see, Susie my dear, in those days vermin poison was not very well understood, and a great deal of it was used. Foxes were a great pest, and so were rats. And the poor people used a lot of poison to keep the rats from their food and the foxes from the few hens."

Once again in my childhood I asked Daddy to tell me more about Nip and Fanny, and his reply stayed in my mind. "No, Susie, I don't like to tell about them—I don't like to think about them." I didn't need much experience of life to realise that he thought about them a great deal and that their memory was as clear to his mind as the view of the wooded hills two miles away was to his exceptionally keen eyes. Violet was right; and I never asked again for stories about Nip and Fanny.

But we were both very fond of the stories of his father. "Tell me about the time you and your father" (because he never referred to his father as my grandfather) "were walking on Lodmoor, Daddy!" for that was the favourite; and Daddy would say "Ah! yes!" and after a bit he would begin, "Well, I was walking with my father across Lodmoor, and in the field next to us there was this great red bull. He was on the other side of the field, but only separated from us by a shaky barbed-wire fence, like that one up on the Five Marys, you remember, Susie." And I would say, "Yes, Daddy," and think of that flimsy, sagging, rusty old fence back on the Five Marys at Chaldon, and wait in breathless anticipation; a thriller story is so much better if you know it ends well. "My father always wore a long black coat, and it was flapping a little in the wind. Perhaps Master Bull didn't like it; anyway he started to pace up and down, and he was grumbling—if you are in the same field with a bull, Susie, and he is grumbling," Daddy imi-

tated the deep rhythmic muttering of a displeased bull, "you know that the best thing to do is to run and jump over the hedge. But my father wouldn't run, he didn't understand the matter at all; I can tell you I was very frightened. And then the bull got down on his knees and began to tear up the turf with his horns and to roar properly, and when they do that you can be certain they're going to charge as soon as they get up." Here I usually interjected, "But wouldn't the fence have stopped him at all, Daddy?" and Daddy always answered, "Oh, no. He would have tossed it aside like a reed." Of course the whole story hinged round old Mr. Powys's mental senility, which rendered him quite incapable of recognising danger but left him the clear recollection of his clergyman's dignity and that to run was undignified. Daddy offered to race him to and over the substantial hedge or wall, which it was is about the only detail I've forgotten, standing fifty yards or so ahead. But Mr. Powys had never, ever, run races with his children and he wasn't going to start now. He gently rebuked his son, who by this time was hot and cold by turns and sweating. "So I pointed out the bull to him, and told him that when he got up he would charge us, but he only said, 'He is only playing, he won't hurt us, Theodore,' and took no more notice than if the brute had been a kitten. I didn't know what to do. I was in a sweat, I can tell you. And then I thought of something that might help. My father was a prodigiously fast walker, and very proud, you might say vain of it. I suggested a walking race into the next field, and my father chuckled and rubbed his hands and strode forward and was over the gate in no time. I wasn't far behind him, I can tell you—but I ran."

"Where was the bull, Daddy?"

"The bull charged the fence just as my father started walking forward. I just waited for a second; and he was through the fence and not very far behind me as I got over the gate."

"How far behind, Daddy?"

Daddy gave the little muttered chuckle that was the nearest he could safely come to

laughter without hurting his head, and, "He was much closer than I liked to have him," he said.

I didn't like so well the story about Daddy's father escaping from the care of his elder daughter Gertrude and finding his way back by train from Weymouth to Stalbridge, where he'd been a little boy. Somehow the pathos of that tall dignified figure sitting in Templecombe station, waiting for a gig of which the driver and horse had long been dead, was too intense. Daddy didn't like it either.

One that we both preferred was of his Studland days, about the Big Sea and the Little Sea. I've never been to Studland. Daddy had a cottage in that vicinity for some time, after giving up the farm at Sweffling and before meeting and marrying Violet, but I have no idea just where his cottage was, and he would continually have to explain the geography of the story to me, and, as to this day I've never seen a map of Studland, I never did understand his explanations. However that may be, being, like the rest of his family, a very good walker, Daddy was in the habit of walking to Swanage whenever he wanted anything that the village shop didn't stock. One very black and stormy night he was coming home wet to the skin, and in a hurry to get indoors and light the fire; so despite the dark (which his eyes were used to) he decided to stick to his usual short cut, which entailed walking along the beach between the Big Sea (Studland Bay) and the Little Sea (a big "fleet", or backwater) and incidentally, if the tide were in, getting wet perhaps to the knees; but he was already too wet to care about that, "and besides, sea water wards off chills". He left the road and started off along the beach; the tide was in. He waded on, beginning to consider tea, the rain falling in sheets so that he could hardly see his hand before him—and all at once he was in water to his waist and a wave broke over his head. He stood still, thinking that he'd walked out into the bay and wondering if he should try to retrace his steps or make up his mind to drown as comfortably as possible; but there was no undertow, and the wind

hadn't changed—and then the rain stopped, and in front of him, as usual, was the light from a farmhouse. Daddy at once waded on, watching the light, and came out of the water (wringing wet) where he usually did. The explanation was that the wet weather had caused the Little Sea, the backwater, to rise; then a neap tide and the gale to back it had resulted in an abnormally high tide, so that the Little Sea and the Big Sea had met on the beach with unusual force.

Being a child, I asked the obvious question. "Weren't you frightened, Daddy?" to which he answered quietly, "Well, I was not much afraid to die, but I did wish that John Death would allow me to die more comfortably."

"But you could swim, Daddy?"

"Yes!" (He and most of the family were exceptionally strong swimmers.) "But it is not so very easy to swim in clothes, and also, I did not know which way to go—I might just as easily have swum straight out into the Big Sea."

"Did you ever use your short cut again?"

"Oh yes, very often, but I kept a good watch on the weather and the tides after that."

Another story that was a great favourite with both of us was also of a wild night, one autumn. Daddy was walking home, I think, again from shopping, but this time in Studland village; there was a high wind, but no rain, and although the sun had set it was not dark, only dusk. Down by the sea, on the grass above the strand and barely out of reach of the spray, he saw a little tent, the sort that nowadays hikers carry in their knapsacks. It was lit, by a candle or a lantern, and the light showed the silhouettes of someone in bed and someone else moving up and down. "Campers," Daddy thought, "not a very sensible night to choose," and he watched for a second or two, but the tent was obviously in no danger from the wind, and being always very shy of interfering, he continued on his way. But he felt enough curiosity about it to ask the village shopkeeper on his next visit in a day or two's time, "Who was camping on the shore the other night?" The man looked blank;

nobody, he said, nobody at all had camped on the shore for a year, in fact not since that poor young man was drowned last autumn while he and his mother were camping there, and she sat up all night in the tent with his dead body.

"Oh, I see. I thought I saw a light there, that was all," said Daddy, "Boys, playing, I suppose." He took up his purchases and returned home, meditating.

We were very fond of that one, perhaps because there was "something" at Beth Car. The doors would occasionally open and shut of their own accord, particularly the front door and the livingroom door. Sometimes "it" knocked first. We always said "Come in!" and finally we said it was a she, and called her Goldilocks. (I wonder if she's still there.) Beth Car was disgustingly new, the building not having been completed when Daddy bought it; it couldn't possibly have had a ghost. I suppose Goldilocks was a very little poltergeist. I don't think they take gender! But it was nice to think of a little gonk-like thing, with a merry friendly face and shining golden ringlets, playing silently around the house. I missed her when we moved.

It was some time before we found out why Mappowder was afflicted with a very large, plain, ponderous and fairly new Rectory—the building was painted either white or bright light grey, and really, looking back on the war years with all their attendant absurdities, it does seem a wonder that someone didn't insist on its being painted in camouflage—and Daddy had a story about that too, only it was really his father's story to him, that he repeated to me. He had often told me that his father had been tutored by the then Vicar of Mappowder, and he and I would puzzle over the great, brash, scarcely-sixty-years-old Rectory. "It must have been pulled down, my dear, and this fine new house built instead," Daddy conjectured. "My father described it to me as a long house of two storeys, thatched, rather dark inside for studies, he said." Eventually somebody, one of the villagers old enough to remember, explained that the old Vicarage, long, low, thatched, gentle and gracious in

its surround of lawns that ran down to the little brook, had stood half-a-mile outside the village on Mappowder Common. It had been burned right down, about when Daddy was a little boy at Montacute, and, as the Rev. Charles Francis Powys must have heard of the disaster, it is surprising that he didn't ever mention it to Daddy. On the site now stands the ugly little brick farmhouse known as Parsonage Farm.

That gave me a shock, somehow, and caused me to realise that not so very long ago the old Rectory (but it was only a Vicarage then) had really been; people whom I knew and spoke to could remember it; and, how long ago? a hundred years, or a little less, a quiet, studious little boy, his lessons over for the day, wandered out among the horse-bushes on the now all-too-grimly reclaimed Common, watching and listening to the larks as they soared and slid, and (from a safe distance) scrutinising the lively, noisy gipsy camps. And that little boy had been Daddy's father. Very much interested, when I next found an opportunity I asked: "Daddy, when your father used to come here to school, how did he get here?"

I think I rather expected and also hoped that Daddy would say, "By stage-coach," but what he did say was even more startling and romantic to a child of the twentieth century.

"Oh, the groom would drive him in the gig. It's not so very far." That same groom, that same gig, probably the same horse older by some years, later would fetch the Weymouth Preparatory School scholar from Templecombe station at weekends and holidays. For the step of that horse, the roll of those wheels, that groom's smiling "Maister Charles!" the boy's ears and eyes, clouded by the fog of old age, listened and watched in vain on Templecombe station platform some sixty years later. "Only about twelve miles," said Daddy. "They would start after breakfast and be at Mappowder well in time for lunch. The groom would probably have his dinner with the servants, and then drive home again."

I pictured the ruddy, muddy road and the gig, pulled by a big bay horse, grinding

rapidly and roughly along under the tall elms. A gig is a very open vehicle. In my mind-picture it began to pour with rain. "Daddy! What did they do when it rained?" "Didn't your father get very wet?"

"You used to carry a great umbrella in a trap, big enough to cover it all. If it rained, the groom would put the umbrella up."

"What if it were very cold?"

"Then you had a thick rug to wrap around you."

"Wasn't he lonely all by himself at Mappowder?"

"Oh, no. The vicar tutored one or two other boys as well. No, I believe he was very happy here. He learned Latin, I believe, and Greek; and the usual things, of course, history, geography."

Daddy had not been tutored away from home. But he used to tell me about School. This is a place which I have only fleetingly visited, but I have heard it called a "House of Correction" by a witty lad who was "doing time" in a house of the same popular Public School to which Daddy had gone. Of course to a shy, reserved and timid boy like small Theodore, such a place must have been prison indeed, and his brief and dreadful mentions of it were hardly stories. But presently his parents had the sense to remove him to a private school, where he met little Louis Wilkinson, the son of the owner-cum-headmaster; and Daddy, with a grin and a twinkling eye, would tell a story about that: "of course, the first time I met old Louis, I knocked him down." "Why, Daddy?" "Well, my dear, it was my first day at the school, and Louis was the first boy I saw, and he was smaller than I. Of course, I didn't realise at the time that he was the Headmaster's son." The grin would broaden; Daddy would smooth it away with his hand, but his eyes would twinkle for some time. I never could credit it, and often wondered what really had happened—I wish I had asked Louis. There are so many things that one should have asked Louis. Possibly Louis, with his incredibly short sight, ran into Theodore standing still (and therefore to Louis, who suffered from carelessness as well as short sight, invisible), tripped and

fell; possibly some other boy was tormenting the headmaster's shortsighted little son and Theodore intervened. Whatever really happened, it triggered off a deep friendship that lasted unbroken all their lives.

And I think Daddy enjoyed himself at Aldeburgh. He used to tell me that he had been in love with Louis's elder sister, Christabel. "But all the boys were in love with Christabel, my dear. She was the most beautiful creature, and gay. I remember skating with her on the pond," said Daddy, "a whole party of us. There had been a hard frost, and she and some others made up a party and danced on the pond. I was much envied by the other boys because I was invited; but I felt terribly awkward, because I couldn't skate very well. And then we went back to Mrs. Wilkinson's drawing-room, for sherry, I think. She had wonderful hair, Christabel; most beautiful. She died very young, in her late teens, I think, or early twenties, of consumption." Christabel symbolised to me the apparently meaningless tragedy of Fate. Young, beautiful, much beloved, she died. I often thought about her and wondered about her beautiful hair, for Daddy, who always noticed women's hair, never told me what colour Christabel's was or how she wore it. I imagined it shining gold, in long natural ringlets.

But there was one subject on which Daddy told no stories. He hardly ever even spoke of his eldest son, killed in Africa by natives. Violet talked about "Dicky" frequently. But Daddy almost never mentioned him, and, when he did, called him by his right name, Theodore.

* * *

The winter of '47-'48, when we had the worst frost and snow since that described so thoroughly in *Lorna Doone*, was the winter when Daddy met Mr. Weston.

He went out as usual for his afternoon walk, but for once he went alone, as I'd gone to feed the ponies, who were boarded at Thernwood Farm, nearly two miles away. There had already been a lot of snow, and the roads were not easily passable. Daddy walked slowly and quite safely as far as Evil

Wood Lane, almost threequarters of a mile, but then he slipped, fell and couldn't rise. He had in fact broken his foot. He crawled to the bank, propped himself up against it in the snow, and leaned there contemplating the possible length of time that it would take me to return from Thernwood and come and look for him, and, also, the point that I would then have to walk back to the village for help.

Then a car came along. It stopped; the driver got out, asked Daddy what was wrong, lifted him—no mean feat, for Daddy was a big man—into the front seat; turned the car, another task, on that road and in such snow, of some magnitude; and drove him back to the Lodge, where, again, he had to partly carry him indoors and lay him on the sofa. He then departed, refusing with a smile either thanks or hospitality.

The car was an old Ford, the only make that Daddy could be relied upon to recognise; the driver, a man in early middle age, was a wine salesman, on his way to the 'Fox Inn' at the Folly. Now there was very little wine indeed ever drunk at the old Fox, and the few firms which were hopeful enough to send salesmen to such an outlying place had no employees answering to the description of Daddy's rescuer.

"It was Mr. Weston," Daddy said, and indeed it did seem the right and logical answer. Violet asked, "Then where was Michael?" But the stranger had told Daddy that he was to rejoin a friend that night who usually travelled with him, so Violet's question was answered.

Daddy didn't stay in bed very long. Within a few days he was hobbling about the house and long before anyone expected it he was walking again, rapidly losing his limp. But now if by some mischance I were out when it was time for his walk, he'd wait until I came back to go with him. He didn't much like to walk with Violet, she was a slow walker and tended to potter in the hedges, little-dog-fashion; whereas not only was Daddy's long stride as deceptively slow as the flight of a heron, but he liked to keep on going and never pottered. Also, to be merely practical, if he had again fallen, his

diminutive wife would have had as much chance of lifting him up, or even lending a helping hand, as a child of raising one of the Suffolk Punches that Daddy used to use on the farm, if one of these had got "cast" somehow. So, I walked with him.

He hated the cold. The livingroom of the Lodge, heated by the big Victorian basket-grate and two large oil-stoves, was never the less, probably because of its terrific height, very cold indeed; and his little bedroom, where he refused to have a fire for fear of incommoding the "little birds" (he meant the church jackdaws) who lived in the chimney, was nearly as cold; though the third oilstove, which I still own and use, kept it habitable. But the strange beauty of that winter enthralled him. "Look at it, my dear," he said frequently to me, "remember it. You may never see another snowfall like this."

I had to walk two slippery, wearying miles every day to attend to my ponies, and much as I like walking I detest slithering; and also I too had had quite a fall, earlier in the year, badly cutting my head. I was sick of the snow, couldn't see how it was unique, and said so.

"Snow usually brings wind with it, and a lot of drifting. It blows off the trees and the roofs. This windless snow is most unusual, Susie. You may regret it later, if you don't memorise it now."

As the year drew on, every day the spring sun would thaw the snow, and every night the frost would freeze it diamond-hard again, until at last everything seemed a diamond, even the telephone wires were strings of them, and the trees were carven from diamonds. When the moon was full Daddy would take a second walk, after moonrise, I going with him again; and I have never before or since seen such a marvel of beauty as that countryside sparkling under the moon. It looked like a scene from a fairytale or from one of the poles; and above the frost-haze the moon and stars were crystal-clear and thrice their normal size. For at least a month the weather was continually fair, until it broke in cold rain and the thaw-fogs, but any new

fall of snow was promptly patterned by tracks, and Daddy was very fond of pointing them out to me.

"This is a rabbit's. No, he was going the other way. When a rabbit hops his hind feet land in front of his front feet and the track looks as if he were going backward. Ah, look at those clawmarks, like a bear; that's a badger-track. What's that?—that's a deer, Susie. No, my dear, I can't tell whether it's a doe or a buck—I'm not old Jacob Armitage. Here was a fox. I wonder if he was after the rabbit."

But as it really began to seem that the Lady Persephone had forgotten us, he began to watch the wind, that had blown consistently from the East all the time; and so did I—I don't think I'd ever troubled about it before—and one sunny bitterly cold morning he called me into the garden and pointed out a cirro cumulus of cloud—only Daddy merely called them "high clouds"—moving up from the south. "We've seen the last of it, Susie," he said; and he was right. Within a week or two everything was a sea of mud; it was raining as usual and the hedgerows showed green.

I learned a fairish bit of woodcraft from Daddy. He like to move silently, mainly to watch the wild things, but also so that if he came across some labourer or sportsman while walking, he could slip away unnoticed—for he did not much like to have his thoughts disturbed, and also to talk to strangers, even to pass the time of day, made him uneasy. (He couldn't teach me to keep my trap shut, but eventually experience, and solitude, taught me that.) He taught me how to forecast the weather and how to find the points of the compass by the stars; he discussed with me the difference, between county and county, district and district, even between field and field, of the quality in the ground. He told me about the deep Suffolk clay and how after ploughing it would lie like boulders in the field, almost impossible to break with roller or harrow. He described the autumn ploughing, the weight of the plough as you swing it at the end of the furrow, the snort and stamping of the team and the tossing of the great proud heads as

the horses kept the furrow straight and superintended their inexperienced ploughman. Daddy longed to plough really well, but only (he said) achieved passable ploughmanship. At a guess, probably he was quite good but wished to be the sort of ploughman who wins cups at matches, although he certainly never even wanted to try for a cup. He told me that a really good ploughman turns the plough at the headland almost entirely by balance, and that if one cannot achieve this, the weight of the plough is something to be reckoned with. He loved to see a good team ploughing; even in those days the sight was rare. Once John Fisher hired a professional horseman to plough the field called Lynch, and Daddy took me to watch. (The man worked for a local farmer, but his team of dappled grey Shires were his own and he was as proudly independent as a Highland chief. He eventually left the district in a blaze of rage because his employer had presumed to use the horses without his permission.) It was a sunny day; the great horses and their harness shone in the sun, the coulter and the ploughshares gleamed, the gulls wheeled and cried and settled in the furrow, and the little dark man bent over the plough handles was dwarfed by the two Shires and the two big men, Daddy and John Fisher, standing to watch.

"Remember this, Susie," Daddy said. "You won't see this sight any more in a year or two." He was right. And although, nearly forty years later, the Great Horses are regaining something of their natural place, I have never again seen such a team as Devereaux and his two dapple-grey Shires.

Another time something similar happened was when we were walking home one afternoon, and above us on the hillside a man was going to and fro, broadcasting grain by hand. It was our neighbour Mr. Kelly; with the slow rhythm of the movement and the natural grace of the Celt he made a strangely lovely and memorable picture. "They're doing away with all these old things, Susie. I dare say it's a good idea," said Daddy with a resigned sigh.

He liked life to be gracious, tranquil, ritualistic, running to a pattern; he liked to

seem to conform. A lot of people wanted to know why he went to church every summer evening, to the Compline service. He gave most of them different replies; "he liked the service", "he liked the quiet"; to his son Francis he said that he liked to please old Frank—"old Frank" was the rector, the Rev. Samuel Francis Jackson—and to me he said that he liked to be in the church and it was a good excuse. All these answers were the truth, but I think that his main reason was to follow out the pattern and the ritual of tradition. As a little boy, his father had gone to that same church; Daddy, unable in many things to agree with his father, could yet cause them both to seem to agree by following his father's tradition. He loved the gentle ceremony of Compline and had taken a lot of trouble to get "old Frank" to resurrect the long-dead habit of the seven o'clock bell and the little service. The church was "a great place for quiet", as he would have said, especially as nobody else went to Compline except Aunt Lucy, who came to live at Mappowder some years before Daddy died, occasionally a visiting relative or friend, and, even more occasionally, me. He never ever went to the Sunday services and, anyhow, I don't think he believed in it. Most certainly he believed in God, but he did not expect to find God among the pious members of a Sunday congregation! Unless Mr. Weston—or Tinker Jar—dropped in for a laugh or to investigate twentieth century church-going habits.

Daddy felt that the Christian Church, at least the Episcopalian, was mistaken in "Not having enough of the Mother in it". "They don't think about the Mother enough, Susie; they make a great mistake in that. The Mother is everything. Now the Roman Catholics have more sense in that; they worship Our Lady; but—I don't know—But the Mother is all-important; much more than the Father. He's really only a secondary figure." However, the Church of England was the Church of *his* father . . . and of his mother. And it is "free from the priests". He never would have left it.

Another thing that he certainly didn't believe in was the resurrection in entirety of

our bodies at the Day of Judgement as they were in this life. "We go back to the elements. In them is no evil." He wanted only the grasses on his grave. "These expensive tombstones are too grand for me. What's wrong with the good grass?" for he loved the grass. He'd put it in his buttonhole if he couldn't find a flower.

He didn't like an empty buttonhole. I've seen him with catkins in it in January, and then would come the celandines and dandelions. He'd put a pretty feather in his coat if he found one. Violets he especially fancied, but they are such fiddling little things to pick, and owing to the damage to his head caused by his stroke, he couldn't stoop for long enough to get a decent buttonhole-ful. If he could find any high up on a roadside bank he'd pick enough to put in a little glass when he got home. Of course it pleased Violet enormously to see him wearing her namesake; but later in the year, not only because he liked them but also out of a schoolboyish longing to tease, he'd come home with a buttonhole of garlic star-flowers—and they didn't smell like stars either, but merely like themselves. "Oh, stinking things! Daddy, take them out!" Violet would yell with her hand to her nose; and another one she couldn't bear and Daddy and I adored, was the elder blossom. I loved to see the great round blooms in his coat, but oh, my goodness, the wail as the perfume entered the house with him! "Daddy, you know I don't like that!"

She was perhaps a little odd about scents. Daddy had a great liking for blue cheese—it does smell a little strong, and Violet simply couldn't stand it on the table. If someone had given him some she wouldn't produce it at mealtimes unless he asked for it, which he probably would with a sly grin: "Where's my stinking cheese, Violet dear?" and Violet would flounce up from the table and go and get the cheese, saying crossly, "I don't know how you can eat that stuff, Theeroo!" Although if we had a prim teaparty, she would gleefully tell me to go and fetch Charlie in to tea. Charlie, who was the pet ferret, and stank to high heaven, would sit on the table amid the best china

and eat bread-and-milk, while everyone save Violet and myself backed off with squeals of horror and snorts of disgust. As I say, she was perhaps a little odd about scents.

A scent Daddy and I both loved and waited all the year for was the scent, or perhaps more properly I should say scents, of the leaves in spring. Beech and hazel, oak and ash, and the smell of grass torn by the harrow; the young bracken, not very easy to find near Mappowder; the yews in the churchyard next door smelling sweeter than pine in the sun. And if you hold a very young beech leaf up to the sun, it will make a soft green rainbow. The greater part of Daddy's life he'd spent on the Dorset Downs, where nearly all the trees are windbent thorns and not very many of those. I know he loved the wide spaces, the sky and the sea and the gorse coverts; but I think he was starved for trees. He planted trees at Beth Car, chestnut for quick growth and a weeping ash for mere decoration, and outside the back door we had an enormous elder tree, too; but compared to the Blackmore Vale the Downs are bare and cold. And around Montacute, where Daddy spent his childhood, the country is even more wooded than it is in here in the Vale. "The Downs are all right when one is young, Susie," he said, "but when one gets older one needs something more sheltered." This to explain to the small uprooted child, his surprisingly great happiness in what to me was the alien country of wooded hill and valley, marshes, brooks and sudden floods. I think the truth was more likely to be that he hadn't realised how much he'd missed those Montacute woods, and he knew very well that it was no use telling me that. I wasn't old enough to understand. I love the trees myself, but even to this day I miss the wide green Downs with the golden gorse and the singing larks. I would understand Daddy's meaning now; but I'm nearly thirty years too late to tell him so.

Daddy was extremely tolerant. He reckoned a person's religion to be that person's business and not his—unless it might provide an interesting discussion; but it must be a discussion and not an argument.

I've never known Daddy argue. He considered it discourteous and a sign of lack of self-control; and of course in his later years to "get steam up" for an argument would have hurt his head terribly. He and Valentine Acland would discuss religion for hours: she was interested in Bhuddism at one time, and religion in general at any time. I think she used to get a bit wound-up over it, but Daddy never did. It suited him, of course, to profess strait-laced Protestantism—Puritanism, I suppose, looking back; after all, to someone of an introverted and melancholic mind, Puritanism is a useful shield.

As a kid I was as interested in politics as I am now, and that's not at all; so we scarcely ever talked about them. But he told me once that the only person who ever had or ever could practise perfect Communism was Jesus Christ. He admired Cromwell as a great statesman and general, but had no time for the means he used to reach his ends. He believed in a Parliament, didn't think the Sovereign should be absolute, but certainly didn't reckon on doing without one—"they're too friendly to murdering and killing in these Republics"—and yet he'd take infinite trouble to explain to a bored and deliberately stupid child all about the system of Presidencies in the U.S.A. I wish very much that I could remember his careful balancing of the monarchical system against the presidential. He admitted that it was a thing he didn't know much about, and I believe he made them weigh out quite evenly. But he preferred our system: "I'm used to it, you see."

I think it is in *Soliliquies of a Hermit* that Daddy remarks that the lack of beauty in a thing of utility does not worry him—the fireplace which was "a square hole in the wall, with three black iron sunflowers over it." I hope that the orange-painted fire place in his bedroom at the Lodge worried him as little as that one with the black iron sunflowers in his study at Beth Car. But he certainly did not mean exactly what he said, for he very greatly loved beauty of all kinds. What he did mean was that as a philosopher (although I don't think he would have called himself that) he was capable of rising above

his surroundings, as indeed a man of only adequate means had better be, especially if he be a lover of beauty; otherwise he will probably fret himself to death, illness or insanity, and, without doubt, on a winter's evening one only sees the bright beauty of the fire and does not notice the three black sunflowers. It was artificial beauty that Daddy really had a dislike for: a very well-kept garden, perfectly weeded, the lawns swept clear of the fallen leaves from the expertly pruned trees, everything neat, well-ordered and in its season.

"Too prim and proper, my dear, there is no room in it for an old man like me."

A woman, exquisitely made-up, every hair in her coiffure restrained, dressed to perfection, her manners just-so, however beautiful, would draw from him a wry grin and the remark, "I wouldn't care to be her servant."

He "liked things to be natural". Well, within reason. The vegetable garden should be tidy (ours, thanks to his disability and my laziness, never was) but the flowers, especially the roses, of which we had a terrific supply, must be left as free as practically possible. Come to think of it, perhaps this point of view was a family one, for up on the Downs at their house, Chydyock, his sisters Gertrude and Katie had their very large vegetable plot in perfect order, but over the even larger rest of the steep terraced garden, roses, peach trees, lavender and old-fashioned clove-pinks, with dear only knows how many other flowers, ran absolutely free and, except along the terraces, almost smothered the grass.

Actually it was restriction, of any kind, that Daddy disliked. Certainly his illness restricted him; he had been "a great one for long walks", and he may have become, through this, more strong in his feeling against any form of restriction, be it schoolroom, Army, prison or merely keeping the roses in their proper bed, than he was before or would have been had he not been ill. I don't think so, though. He used to tell me perfectly awful tales of his first prep-school, and I think that had finished him where the ordinary meaning of the word

Discipline could be applied. Except for his dislike of dogs in the family and his shrinking from any sort of society, which, as I didn't go to school, kept me from playmates and so made life very lonely indeed, I think he was perhaps a first-class parent. He believed entirely in Rule by Reason; the usual "do as I say, because I tell you to," was foreign to him.

Being a very timid, introverted child among a family mainly composed of loud cheerful extroverts, as given to reasoning as most extroverts and as kind as most small children, Daddy had spent a good deal of time alone when he was little, hidden in his "Bushes Home" with a book, or walking by himself and observing, more minutely and appreciatively than most children, the things that went on around him in the woods and fields. It was not possible for him to understand a lonely child's need for other children *of its own kind*—how should he understand? All his childhood had been spent in fear of his own kind, and fear is in-eradicable.

I rather think that his sister Gertrude was for all his life his favourite companion. The family tended to pair off, like going to like; I don't remember for sure, but I think this is how Violet said that they went, in order more or less of seniority, from the eldest down: "Jack and May, Theodore and Gertrude, Bertie and Lucy, Willie and Katie." That leaves Llewelyn and Littleton spare, and one suddenly remembers that there was a sister Eleanor, who died. I wonder which of them would have been her "pair". Probably, Llewelyn. Uncle Littleton wasn't a bit like the others: he was, except for his good looks, quite ordinary, and he didn't, on the whole, hunt with the rest of the pack. He was very self-sufficient. However that might have been, Daddy and Aunt Gertrude were a pair right enough, from childhood onwards; she kept house for him at Sweffling, in the gracious Georgian farmhouse (The White House), and later at Studland, in the cob-walled low-ceilinged pint-sized cottage. About then Aunt Katie, who was a very good but also a very reckless horsewoman, had a severe accident and was ill,

off and on, for years after. Aunt Gertrude gave up everything else, including her own favourite brother, to look after her; and while she was doing so Daddy married and no longer needed a housekeeper. Also their mother became ill and died, their father became senile and then ill and eventually also died, and Aunt Gertrude took the responsibility for all these events. I know she didn't think that she was doing anything out of the ordinary, but there are few today who do as much. She was a very remarkable woman; but perhaps not entirely suitable as a companion for Daddy. She had the courage of a whole pride of lions and a fine, wry, dry sense of humour (and she was beautiful too) but she was rather an introvert herself, rather too much inclined to remember that "life is real, life is earnest"; perhaps she had once too often said to some joyous invitation, "It is my duty not to!" Anyhow she was not gay company, happy perhaps, but not gay; really to be at his best Daddy needed someone who was both.

Louis Wilkinson, for example. Louis and Daddy were truly friends, best friends, even from that moment of their first meeting when Daddy, according to himself, punched Louis's head—"All my lies, my dear," I can hear Daddy's voice and see his gleeful grin, although in fact he stuck to his lie all his life. Louis was gay, happy, reasonable, intelligent and intellectual, a perfect man of the world, exactly the sort of companion for a shy, retiring, self-doubting person like Daddy. The pity was that they did not see more of each other.

Violet didn't like Louis at all! Like most women, she tended to jealousy, especially of husbands' best friends. And Daddy brightened up so much in Louis's company, even laughing aloud; discussing, suggesting, moving more quickly, his hand steadier and seldom going, with the tremulous gesture too familiar to us, to his head as if to press back the pain. He didn't even read as much when Louis was with us; they talked, talked, talked and walked and laughed, and my goodness, Louis was the one for humour. Once, when he'd been sleeping, our house being too small for guests, at Place Farm

where John Fisher, living alone, was as glad as Daddy (almost) of his occasional company, one morning he came in and said that on his way to bed the night before (a very fair summer night with a full moon), crossing the little paddock to the back door of Place Farm, he had mistaken his way and walked into the duckpond! Gods! how he laughed, and Daddy laughed with him, and Violet muttered "Old fool!" in the kitchen. Another time he had hired a room at the Kelly's, only a hundred yards away, but in the dark he mistook the gateways and travelled into the farmyard and up onto the mixen. Luckily Daddy heard his yells and went out. Violet wouldn't go and said she heard nothing. Daddy rescued Louis and after that walked him to the very door every night. "Pity he hadn't stayed there," said Violet, referring to the muck-heap. "Why should you lead him? You might slip on that nasty gateway of theirs . . ." Daddy wiped the grin off his face and said, "Then you could nurse me, Violet dear!" The thing was that Louis was incredibly shortsighted, apart from his lack of a sense of direction. It was or could have been a serious handicap, but Louis's humour and great power of mind brushed it aside, and if one had commiserated with him, his answer would almost certainly have been that he could see well enough to tell a pretty girl from a plain one!

Daddy's utter lack of self-confidence kept him, I think entirely, from trying his own luck with the pretty girls. He liked to look at them and talk to them, but the thought of the refusal that might come at him like a whip-lash absolutely stopped him from anything else. I've often wondered how he came to marry Violet, but for one thing he must have been really in love, and for another it's a different matter if you're intending to marry the girl. Besides, she always did have bags of self-confidence and determination (trouble was that usually she couldn't direct it) and I dare say she meant to marry him right enough.

They certainly were devoted in a baffled sort of way. Violet had completely missed her vocation: she should have been a nurse,

and in this day and age so she would have been, but nursing then was by no means the attractive career it is now, which was a dreadful pity. She was a first-class amateur nurse; her aunt, a professional nurse, I would think was nowhere near Violet's standard as an amateur. Daddy and I (when in health) and the house suffered handsomely for her baffled talent, for she hadn't the slightest interest in housework or cooking—it is a pretty dreary lark. Thank goodness that nowadays women can have careers without all the social shenanigans of those days.

Anyhow, Violet had without doubt been an extremely pretty girl—"A pocket Venus," Louis said to me one. She could sit with ease on her thick raven-black tresses, but she was so very small that the hair was not as long as one might suppose. Her complexion was like rosepetals, her huge eyes were the colour of violets, and her legs were perfect. So said Louis (and perhaps the fact that he did not find all this avowed perfection attractive was one of Violet's reasons for not liking him), but alas, save for the perfect legs, by the time I was old enough to notice all that I saw was a plump little woman with a double chin, smelling of strong tea; very nice when one was ill but mighty liable to slap one for unexplained reasons when one was well.

Plenty of intelligent and/or beautiful women liked and visited Daddy. Violet to her great credit always put on a very good face and an excellent meal (she could cook, if she thought it worth the trouble, like an angel), but she did not like it and usually made some tart remarks after the visitors or visitor had left. It was less to the point for her than for most women as Daddy simply never even flirted with girls. He didn't believe in it. "It's all very well for Lulu and Alyse to talk about this Free Love, my dear," he said to me more than once, "it's the poor little bits of children who suffer."

He dearly loved children. This was the real reason for his apparent Puritanism. What his attitude would be in these days of the Pill, and National Assistance for Unmarried Mothers, I don't know—

probably not very different. The girl might forget to take her pill or might be denied the Social Security. (She might indeed.) Daddy was an anxious man, a great worrier, he liked security, and there is no security like abstinence. But I have often heard him quote, "Dalliance hurteth no one", and although he never dallied himself, he loved to have women, beautiful, intelligent women, around him; and if they were generous too, so much the better, provided they didn't embarrass him with their gifts! His other great friend, Bernie O'Neill, married a beautiful, generous and intelligent woman, by name Belle—I think it must have been short for Isobel. Daddy and Belle were great friends; when he lay dying, as he lapsed into the final coma he said "Belle, Belle", pointed to where she stood and held out his hands to welcome her, though I suppose really it was she who was welcoming him, for she was dead at least three years before. I only met Belle O'Neill once, when she was very old and I suppose no longer beautiful, yet she so radiated beauty, youth and gaiety that, perforce, it is as a young and lovely woman that I remember her.

Our first visitor at the Lodge I believe, the very first—was a tiny, fragile old village woman who must have been a little beauty until she had rheumatic fever. She crept into the house like a bedraggled, crippled wren, and perched on the sofa—roosted rather, for she was quite bent with her ailment. But she looked up at Daddy with eyes as wide and bright as a wren's, and in a wren's small sweet voice she said, "I come to this house as a bride, sir. Ah, I did come as a bride." Daddy went quite white and stood speechless, and it was Violet who stepped into the breach by asking had she been here long? I think her wedding and the writing of that particular short story ("She Came As A Bride") occurred at roughly the same time; or it could have been the publishing of "The House With The Echo". I'm not sure now, after forty odd years. Whichever it was, without doubt it gave Daddy food for thought. We called little Lucie Fewgate "the bride", and she was always welcome, fleas and all—for she was far too crippled to be

able to maintain any standard of cleanliness—until her rheumatics prevented her from walking even the two or three hundred yards up the village street. Eventually separate "Homes" claimed her and her husband, and they died within weeks of each other like wild things that had been confined. Daddy said "Better dead than parted," and grieved that they had been parted even for so short a time—barely three months, I think.

I cannot now, and I never could, see the close link that there must be between my courteous, considerate and philosophic adoptive father and the books that he wrote, with their current theme of lust and violence at their lowest worst. Perhaps Louis knew; but I never asked him. Louis was immortal, he would always be there, a question forgotten now could be asked next time, and I never asked, and presently there was no "next time". Perhaps it was that if one has a horror of a thing, and with pen and ink expresses that horror, it partly leaves one. I can't be sure. But all his life, I think, Daddy feared pain beyond all else; pain for himself or for others. He could not bear to see—the not uncommon sight then—of a horse or a dog being beaten; but he would never interfere, partly because he considered interference to be one of the main causes of trouble in the world, and mainly because he knew that ninety-nine men out of a hundred, instead of saying, after he had gone on, "By Jove, Mr. Powys was right. I'd lost my temper. Thank God he spoke when he did," would say, "Interfering bugger, what's it matter to him if I kill the bloody . . ." whatever, and beat it ten times harder. Daddy would walk miles about, sooner than go where he knew a man to be who was "friendly to cruelty".

He was a great believer in and practiser of diplomacy. Very many times he has quoted to me, "Suffer a fool according to his folly, Solomon says. But he also says, Suffer not a fool according to his folly. Solomon was a very wise man, my dear." This seems to me to mean that Solomon's very sensible motto was Diplomacy at all times and according to the times. Apart from Solomon's womanising, Daddy was a great admirer of his, a

great believer in diplomacy. Here is another lesson that he tried to teach me—learned by him not from Solomon but from that strange teacher, Life. “You can’t expect happiness in this life, my dear. Contentment, if you strive hard for it, but you must not expect happiness. Try to be content.” At the time, a restless, energetic and lonely teenager, I was merely exasperated; since then I’ve wondered and puzzled over it. It isn’t true. Happiness does exist in this life. Different people experience it differently, but that doesn’t make it nonexistent. Surely Daddy can’t have been quite without experience of it? He was happy when he was with Louis or Aunt Gertrude; or when he was watching Devereaux ploughing with his great grey team or any other beautiful sight. Was he so dreadfully sad, between whiles, that he forgot those moments? Or was he merely trying to save me from the disappointment and disillusionment of expecting too much? I hope that was all. Still I wonder what he meant: the contentment of Mark Only, ploughing with his horses on the hill? Of the

little lizard on a sunny wall? Or of a strongly passionate, easily despondent nature, its every hope dashed until there is nothing left but a weary content, the content of an old crippled dog, waiting in comfort for his master Death. All the vanquished hopes and passions curdled into a grim bitterness that “made pretty stories”, as he would say, using the word pretty in the same sense as Apuleius does. Perhaps it’s as well that I don’t know. The key may be in his books, but I cannot find it myself, and as he had given up writing before I was born it seemed to me like something he had done in another life. I still cannot connect the gentle, simple country gentleman whom I knew with the author of those strange stories. I have heard it said—I was too young to question it at the time—that his illness changed him for the better. I cannot prove this untrue, except that Louis, a better witness than myself, said that it was nonsense.

These recollections will be continued in the next ‘Review’.

Ronald Hall

The Old Man With The Praise* (1952)

We stood before a blazing fire in the small hotel at which he'd invited us to stay. I looked out of the window and the hot tea burned my tongue. I saw Owen Glendower swinging in the wind and rain outside the opposite hotel. After some minutes the proprietress told us the way and we set off. On the outskirts of the market town we made our way in drizzle up what was like the stony bed of a swift stream.

"Must be somewhere here," I said as we stood uncertainly. A door before us opened and a very fragile-looking woman called, "Are you Ron Hall?" The next thing either of us recalled later was passing into the house, into the kitchen, and being overwhelmed. Now as I try to relive that moment I find I cannot. It was too vivid, filled with such an intensification of life that I must ever fail to evoke it with words. He came towards us shouting, "Hello—hello my dear old friend Ron! And *Hello!* Mary. Oh this is so good! Shake hands Ron my old friend—shake hands!" He pressed our hands to his lips quickly in blessing and friendship.

It was as though I had seen a vision—of a man enraptured with life. We had expected to find an almost bedridden, enfeebled old man, full of his struggles with the "devil's acids". We found a man ALIVE.

I shall never find the sight of him as he came through that door hand outstretched undimmed by time: an old-young face, striking in its features yet arresting beyond these with the rapture it started up in one. His head and face were illumined with what I have thought of ever since as an endless motion of rooted ecstasy.

"Shake hands again Ron my old friend, shake hands again!" He plied us with ques-

tions as to how we'd travelled. I suddenly felt marvellously at ease, in the most real of worlds. Everything in the room delighted me, entranced me. I didn't have many moments to look around though. There was so much to say. The pale morning light of an overcast wet day came in through the "council-house" window.

As he hugged his old knees and clapped his hands together I *saw* what I had long known. John Cowper Powys was Praise and Exaltation. He sat on his "boy-scout" camp bed with ink spattered all down one side, and I saw as it were a living river of books, affirmation, "arts" pouring before me through the room. And I felt an uprising of my own identity such as I'd never known before. Everything was an affirmation in this man's presence.

Phyllis was already getting us a snack in the kitchen. As John let go his cries of delight and rocked to and fro or expanded warmly on one thing after another his face burned something deeper into me than memory; it burned so far in that when we came away *I could not call it up*. How I had dreamed of such a human power in life! Mary sat in the wicker chair. I looked at her too. She had opened to the day and there was joy in her face. Phyllis called, "Is that the boy with the newspapers?" John told us then how this boy and others would come in the mornings to see him swallow a raw egg.

"They stand there and watch me crack the shell—then they watch it going down my throat like this." He threw his head back and pretended to swallow the egg. In a flash the intricate subtleties of his heathen, religious, elemental philosophy of life were transformed into the pleasure he got from his performance before the kids.

When Phyllis sat down with her sewing he

*First published by Roye McCoye in his little magazine, *Elegerba*, 1959.

declared roundly, "Writers, artists—we all want praise you know! That's what we all want: praise!"

"John," I said, "I heard a reviewer refer to your Rabelais book once as 'not a study at all, but a panegyric'."

"Panegyric, that's it!" he cried, and smacked his hands together.

I do not attempt here any appreciation of the multiform yet integrated aspects of John Cowper Powys's creation—this down-to-bed-rock Iberian Cave-man Idoliser, fetish-worshipper and enemy of all white idealism. All I want to make clear is that with him one feels the great human bond of *sharing the miracle* to a tremendous degree. Past, present and future are one immediate living breath.

Homer was living round the corner of Cae Coed with the rest of the Merioneth Greeks. Rabelais, if given a call, would be round in a trice for a good glass of Pantagruelion juice, brewed in the Cauldron of Ceridwen. Dostoevsky and his substantial vapours were moving ever in from the mountains, over the grey Welsh horizon.

In the simple little room with its few bookshelves and John's father on the wall, draining his cup to get the unstirred sugar, with the loaf of bread from which "Prester John" tore pieces and the bottle of milk he gulped at now and then, all the things that are disintegrated by our tormented age were given wholeness again, miraculously.

I reached out and touched the great club in the corner next to me. It was John's companion on his two-hour morning walk up the mountainside. It was as unique as its companion. No human hand could grip around the head—it was like a small boulder there. To grasp it lower down must have been to grasp a forest! And its name is a secret to the world at large!

"It's the sense of *smell* I want to know to the full now. I want to smell everything! Oh I do so much enjoy this sense. Yes, I want to smell everything! I want to smell the arse of God." It was intoxicating to witness his zest. We were talking of one book after another. Strings of asides came from him, and not "literary" ones either. He was up and down off his couch, showing us things: a book of

mythological and legendary figures which he'd been asked to write a preface for but could not for lack of time; a letter from Dostoevsky's daughter—a prize possession this.

The morning rushed on without time. I pulled from the book-case two books by Henry Miller and read the inscription on the fly-leaf of one of them: "In remembrance of thirty years ago, the book I should like to be remembered by." It was *The Colossus of Maroussi*. We spoke of Henry, our mutual friend. After a while John said, "I can't understand why he thinks so much of Rimbaud." I tried to say why I thought this was and I ended up reading Miller's last paragraph of his *The Columbus of Youth*. When I reached the end of the glowing, visionary words I looked up and saw he was bursting to pronounce something.

"It's always the same"—he drew himself up with a fine noble gesture—"whenever I hear of that splendid golden visionary future I want to cry out . . ."—and here he delivered such a cadence of Latin finality that I felt the Boulder of the Cave had been rolled into place for ever.

"But how do you reconcile that with your 'other dimensions', that 'crack in matter'?"

"That's what I've said before, Ron," Phyllis put in.

John laughed. "Oh I don't *reconcile* it at all, I say I'm like a swarm of gnats—kill me in these"—he whacked his hand down on the bread-board—"and I'm in those that got away."

We all laughed. Phyllis bade John not to talk so much or he'd tire himself out. Obediently he lay back and drank some milk.

"Yes, I mustn't talk so much. You talk Ron, you talk."

Talk! I couldn't say a word. Back he came again, to my rescue, after his long rest! He got me talking about the numerous and varied jobs I had had: the carpet cleaning, crematorium, garage, office, tractor work, and the umpteen books I'd devoured furtively at the same time.

"Why, you ought to write about all those

jobs and people, Ron,” Phyllis was saying in her soft Kansas voice.

“Ah yes, and your *best* writing is that *rich, eloquent prose* such as Henry Miller does so well.” I can hear him saying it now—“rich, eloquent prose”—the most delicious, stimulating dish in his cosmological stew-pot! Talk veered to my chances of publication. I’ll be a genius in no time, I thought. And that was just it. I suspected that all those who came to this room and talked with them were brought to realise themselves as unique human beings, with genius hidden in their finger-prints.

We were supposed to be back at the hotel for lunch. I knew, however, that we would not be leaving until we said farewell. I hardly dared ask the time in case there were no clocks. One of the ways they knew the time of day often was by the knocking on the door of their “regular” tramp. We were listening to how he called for his bit of provender—“. . . just a little tea and sugar and bread we put by for him. The old chap is such a lover of pictures of foreign places. He sits on the seat between these two houses, looking at the Catholic magazine we give him, for *hours*, completely absorbed in the pictures of Rome and Italy. You should see, Ron and Mary, how his face lights up when I hand it to him! And how miserable he is when he hasn’t got it!” A life-long sympathy with tramps, hoboes, down-and-outs, nobodies, was self-evident.

While Mary and I ate at a small table, Phyllis told us that *Porius* had to be cut by five hundred pages for publication, and that *A Glastonbury Romance* was cut by a third.

There were a host of things swirling in the air about our heads. Some of them were the things we talked about: Lawrence, the pristine quality of his descriptive power—my own physiog—John’s manias (“Why do I have such a horrible shivering loathing for my own body, except for my hands and knees?”)—Goya (“Look at this one here, Satan Devouring His Sons. Oh, he’s a great one is Goya!)—Dreiser, his friendship with him—obscurity and pornography.

Yet it was not so much *what* we spoke about that afternoon and morning but *how*

we spoke, freeing into the air the voice of the heart, the blooded spirit, the great past, the legend that man creates and that he is. Good it was indeed to hear John’s brother Llewelyn spoken of so casually as if still alive. *For who and what was dead?* Llewelyn’s death-mask upstairs was alive, the row of Greek plays were breathing, the Dürer watercolour on the stairs was still wet.

Living on the bare necessities they could afford, these two people were overbrimming with riches. Were they apart from “the modern world”? There was no “modern world”, only the world that endureth. The difference of many years between us did not concern anyone. Life itself spanned everything, a bridge into the Present.

Once, standing by his camp-bed couch, I said, “I was thinking the other day, John, that the more you write the farther you get from writing.” He applauded delightedly.

“That’s it, that’s very good! I should like that on my tombstone!”

Mary talked with Phyllis in the kitchen. The fluorescent light over the couch and writing-board was switched on. The “old borgne,” as he called himself (for the life of me I could not detect which eye it was that was useless!), listened intently to my relating a parable of Michael Prishvin’s. It told how he would walk in the Russian forest surrounded by trees laden down with snow so that their crests touched the ground. As he walked along he swung his stick at them “and with swift, deft blows I liberated a great many trees.”

“I know just that, I’ve done just that—on the mountain, yes!”

When we were gathered together again, America became our subject. Like a fool, forgetting Phyllis’s Kansas, I spoke of America as a kind of disintegrative force breaking down finally a decayed society.

“But, Ron, that’s all *abstraction*,” she said quietly, passionately. “Open up, Ron, open up!” I had to remind myself quickly of Whitman, Melville, Miller, Jeffers, Patchen.

Phyllis suggested John show us the “museum” as they called it. He led us upstairs into a small icy room where I

couldn't stop my teeth chattering. Many books—twenty books of twenty years diary entries; a painting by someone called Meisener that reminded me of Breughel. "These are the greatest of them all," he declared, sweeping his hand along a row of Greek classics.

Down again in the hall I saw a number of extraordinary sticks. John picked one up and stood before me with it held out.

"I call this the Tortured Stick," he said, "see how it's twisted. It was a cruel thing to do. You look after it, and see! it's got an eye!" Sure enough, there in the handle was its eye. Wire had been wound round it when it was a thin thing and it had grown into a strong spiral. I swore to look after it. Now I, too, had a magic stick! Now I'd begin to sound the bed-rock of reality with it!

It was quite dark outside, and time to go. We seemed to have traversed a lifetime of friendships together, the four of us. Phyllis was going to see us down the road. John's tall, bowed figure dwarfed us both. I fancied he was feeling tired. Tired! The past six hours of intense animation would have tired an ox—a young one, not an octogenarian. I was exhausted—and charged to the brim.

I asked him if he wrote his books on the camp-bed. He showed us a sheaf of foolscap covered with huge script, crossings out, insertions, the words revolving, corkscrewing, rocketing and then massing in solid phalanxes, armies, hosts. I thought of *Porius*

and *Wolf Solent* in this form.

I grasped my Tortured Stick, shot a glance at the giant's club in the corner, at the bread and milk—the room, the living room.

Outside it was pouring with rain. As we went off down the road he stood momentarily in the doorway, with his arm raised like one of Walt's aged plainsmen.

"There's the hill that's in *Porius*," Phyllis shouted against the wind. As we neared the town she told us that John wrote letters most of the day and his books in the evening.

The night howled and swirled about us as we said goodbye to Phyllis. It was an uncommonly vivid parting in the blackness. We each felt we'd known her most of our lives.

Next morning, in sunlight, we ran for the train and sat in the empty compartment looking back at the valley. The swollen river was in spate. What thanksgiving was in us! In truth we were changed from what we had been twenty-four hours ago. There was no assessing this thing that had been added unto us.

I see now in so-called "memory" the whole valley under great clouds, riding in on wind and sun, mysterious as those winds that course through the life and books of John Cowper Powys, bringing the fruitful rain that is endlessly streaming down the sides of that "bed-rock" of life itself—his waters of Life.

Reviews

The Poetry of Edward Thomas,
ANDREW MOTION.

Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, £8.95.

Andrew Motion, one of our accomplished younger poets, has written an informed, perceptive, and invaluable guide to our growing awareness of the significance of Edward Thomas's poetry for late-twentieth-century readers. Along with the earlier interpretative work of De la Mare, F. R. Leavis, C. Day Lewis, Alun Lewis, John Danby, John Lehmann, Vernon Scannell, Edna Longley—and not least of all, Harry Coombes and William Cooke, two significant precursors—his study *The Poetry of Edward Thomas* concentrates sharply on the poems as a fairly complete testament of what it was like to become an English poet in the dauntingly difficult period between the end of Victoria's reign and the Treaty of Versailles. Mr Motion claims that his book is the first to deal exclusively with the poetry and he addresses himself especially to an understanding of the hidden reasons behind Thomas's final rejection of the world of prose for the practice of poetry. In addition, he develops two other interwoven theses: first, the damage done to Thomas's sensibility by the unresolved conflict between his suburban beginnings and his unrealized quest for an ideal rural way of life; and a second, complementary (but never fully worked-out) argument about Thomas's eventual acceptance of his inability to respond spontaneously to those he met in a bewildering variety of social and personal relationships. I am probably shortcircuiting this second point in summary, but it is one that Andrew Motion returns to frequently in his cyclically arranged study.

His six-pronged approach—best shown by his successive chapter-titles: "Introduction", "Biographical", "Double Vision", "The Sound of Sense", "Patriot and War Poet", "Friend and Countryman"—begins with the state of English poetry after Thomas's death and ends, *via* the close study of carefully selected poems constantly related to much of Thomas's prose, with a thought-provoking analysis of "Old Man" and the poet's attitude to childhood. *En route* he gives sensitive, detailed, interpretative scrutiny to the following poems: "The Other", "Haymaking", "The Unknown Bird", "Lob",

"This is no case . . .", "'Home'", "Lights Out", "Roads", "The Green Roads", "Out in the Dark", "The Unknown", "Wind and Mist", the Household Poems, and "Digging". Although I think Mr Motion has attempted too much and could have included many other poems of equal significance for our fuller understanding of Thomas's mature stance as a writer, this is an ungracious comment. For his adopted method, with its use of wide-ranging quotations from the poet's prose, reviews, and letters, with its occasional presentation of complete poems with marginal comment only in place of laborious explication, and with its neat summary (e.g. p.155 and elsewhere) of related themes within the poetry, supplies the reader with guidelines and touchstones that will enable him to discover for himself the truth of Andrew Motion's final claim that, despite "the elusiveness so scrupulously reflected in the disarmingly low-keyed tone", Thomas's refusal "to let language betray his vision, and his use of 'the minor modes' to make insights of 'major psychological subtlety', entitle him to a prominent and permanent place in the history of twentieth-century literature".

Andrew Motion's book helps to substantiate this large claim, but forces me to extend the argument a little beyond the confines of his own "Biographical" chapter. I cannot accept the view that Thomas's identification with Jefferies did not "simply loosen the ties of his 'accidentally Cockney nativity', it sapped his inherited sense of belonging to Wales as well". The two brief quotations from letters in John Moore's rather unsatisfactory biography are insufficient support against a mountain of contrary evidence. Again, everyone agrees that Thomas was a complex person, difficult to get at, but it seems futile to subject selected bits of his scattered writings—or even his concentrated verse—to therapeutic comment of a psychoanalytical kind when we have no records of any kind of the possible clinical explorations of the many doctors he consulted. As with his summary dismissal of Wales from the poet's life, I find it difficult to accept Mr Motion's rather *Animal Farm*-like formulation: Prose bad, Poetry good, for the man Thomas. He could justifiably reply that Thomas's prose is also ripe for a close study along the lines of his present book and that he has gone some way towards mapping out that territ-

ory. I agree, but would suggest that such a study of all the prose would clarify the difficulty inherent in making special, overriding claims for the poetry on its own; such claims, linked possibly with our knowledge of his life and death as a soldier, tend to over-value the putative "integrated personality" of the soldier-poet at the expense of the man who, all his working life, was "trying to catch some shy intuition on the edge of consciousness", to use Leavis's perceptive words. I find an awesome, chilling, honest clarity in all of Thomas's scattered writing—journals, notebooks, letters, sketches, jottings, essays, reviews, natural observations, recollections—as well as, at times and in different quantities, in all his books. This honesty of outlook matches the numerous unpublished memoirs of his friends and intimates. For despite his own adverse comments at various stages of his development as a prose-writer, Thomas was always capable of writing clearly, perceptively, ironically, humorously, fancifully and forcibly. He may have disliked the publishers' terms he accepted, but he fulfilled his contracts scrupulously. For he was excessively honest in personal, public, and social relationships; never devious and, when necessary, quite forthright in expression. And he maintained this wilful sense of rightness of purpose in spite of the puzzlement with which he records, privately, the recurrence of regular bouts of depression from the age of sixteen. Rarely dogmatic—possibly a reaction against his relations with his father?—shy of expressing publicly his deepest convictions, he held firmly to a belief in the permanent curative value of an informed, well-balanced country upbringing for his own children, and for those of his friends. In all, despite his well-recorded wanderings, he was a tough, concentrated, hard worker at his chosen trade of writer; and he varied the nature of the work, and the conditions under which it was done, in many different ways between 1902 and 1915. There is no single prototype with the label "Edward Thomas, Prose Writer" to place neatly against "Edward Thomas, Poet". He is all of a piece.

Beneath the wry, ironic self-depreciation was a man who cherished his days of solitude for the sustaining insights of quiet joy they gave him, who often sought out the companionship of friends and family (including his wife, children, parents and brothers), who kept in touch with the best writers of his day, and who, while never commercially prosperous, was never destitute enough to offer the public anything that did not attempt to reach his own high standards. His life

as a soldier was a renewal of the financially care-free existence of the lad who had explored London Commons, and Surrey and Wiltshire "Woodland Life". A modest Civil List grant, relieving mundane worries, and frequent short leaves spent at home, revived—if it had ever died, which I doubt—the strong sensual and affective links that had bound him, early and late, despite depression and irritation, to his wife Helen. (It is surprising how much of the poetry so effectively interpreted by Andrew Motion is totally immersed in the life of the Thomases at Steep.) Nothing that I have read or heard, in or outside print, has prepared me to accept any sense of Thomas having a will to die, except as a kind of literary expedient—although the fear haunted Helen—and certainly not in his life as a soldier in France, according to the trustworthy record of one fellow-subaltern. Curiously, as his Commanding Officer records, Thomas was the only fatal casualty sustained by his battery for the remainder of the war. Those who knew him best throughout his life, recall his capacity for good companionship and stress, in equal parts, his "Celtic melancholy" and his stubborn "Welsh pride". He remains an enigmatic personality and I believe the poetry can still benefit from the buttressing support of a fuller knowledge of the best of his prose. And there is a great deal of that still to be judged impartially, apart from the verse.

R. GEORGE THOMAS

Britten and Auden in the Thirties: The Year 1936,
DONALD MITCHELL.

Faber and Faber, 1981, £7.50.

Donald Mitchell's four T. S. Eliot Memorial Lectures, delivered at the University of Kent at Canterbury in 1980, provide a riveting profile, not, as one might expect, of two major twentieth-century figures, but predominantly of one man—the composer Benjamin Britten. It is he who basks in the limelight, like the prince in *The Sleeping Beauty*, while Auden, making the odd solo appearance, vanishes all too often into the wings.

On leaving the Royal College of Music, Britten worked in the G.P.O. Film Unit, which made documentaries; there, between 1935 and 1939, he was associated with W. H. Auden, writing music for films and the radio. Out of this collaboration came *Our Hunting Fathers*, a

symphonic song-cycle for voice and orchestra, and other works. It was the song-cycle, in particular, that highlighted Britten's instinctively accurate and imaginative response to words, which he set to music with no trace of artifice or artificiality. Dr Mitchell discusses at great length not only the nerve-stretching agony of effort that Britten experienced in scoring, with a Schubertian simplicity, the poems chosen by Auden for this work, but also the intellectual spirit, the political *Zeitgeist* of 1936 that influenced the symbolism of *Our Hunting Fathers*. The song-cycle, regarded by Britten as being "about animals", took as its target the hunting habits and customs of the local gentry, as well as the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Germany, this being implicit in "Dance of Death".

How fortunate for Dr Mitchell that Britten kept a diary. From these he draws a wealth of information. The composer must have purred with ecstasy when he wrote "Auden was very sympathetic towards my Socialist inclinations", but the purr is replaced by a patronizing grimace when, recording his mother's disapproval of the song "Rats Away!" in *Our Hunting Fathers*, he adds ironically "but that is almost an incentive". Into the diary went remarks about politics and such events as the Italian invasion of Abyssinia—Britten is seen as a champion of peace, his *Pacifist March* of 1937 revealing a noble anti-militaristic strand that was ultimately to be woven into the fabric of the *War Requiem*. From the diaries we learn also of the concerts he gave to boys in private schools, gathering experience out of which the plays, the poems and the music were created.

Dr Mitchell shows the impressionable side of the youthful Britten, his near-adulation of Shostakovich and Mahler, who, assimilated into his compositional techniques and processes, were "part of the realism, the guarantee of authenticity". Britten's creative partnership with Auden, the sharing or conflict of views between them—these are carefully described, with the author hovering judicially over every situation, analysing, expounding and, not infrequently, reinforcing his opinions with diary quotations. We are told of the strength and fortitude that Britten found in T. S. Eliot's poetry, and of his hatred of "the bloody fascists in Spain".

The book makes no reference to the homosexuality reputed to have existed between Britten and Auden—but how could it without forming conclusions of dubious or unproven validity? Hans Keller suspects that the break-up of the Britten-Auden relationship "was due to psycho-

sexual complications, artistically incidental". He may be right, but even if one sees that relationship merely as a narcissistic friendship, its final dissolution was inevitable. Britten's nostalgia for the innocence of childhood, his passionate sympathy with the victims of prejudice or misunderstanding, were the attributes of a sensitive, highly individualistic "loner" for whom the worldly sophistication, the dogmatic self-assurance of Auden must, over the years, have grown distasteful. The book quotes Basil Wright's opinion that "Auden dominated the scene and was a great talker, while Britten was very quiet and withdrawn", and it repeats his remark about the poet's "magisterial attitude" and his "compulsion to advise his friends about their mode of life . . . to lay out their failures (as he saw them) for inspection and correction".

In his imagination Britten, like Sir James Barrie, inhabited a heterosexual world of fantasy, transmuting the laughter, the heartbreak and the sweetness of youth into music of dazzling beauty and poignancy—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Saint Nicolas*, *A Ceremony of Carols* and *The Little Sweep*, to name only a few works. In such a world a man like Auden can seem like a noisy magpie in a forest of nightingales. Dr Mitchell sums up shrewdly:

I am not sure that Auden ever wholly comprehended that while words are words, words written for transformation into and by music—are something entirely different. I think that it was in fact an increasing inability to see this that finally brought about the end of his creative association with Britten; and there was also the equally important factor of Britten's increasing need to escape, to free himself, from an exhilarating, inspiring but ultimately dominating collaborator.

Beautifully produced, with splendid illustrations and copious notes helpful to scholars, this compact book supplements handsomely the slender bibliography relating to one of the greatest, and most enigmatic, of modern composers.

NEIL TIERNEY

The Short Story in English,
WALTER ALLEN.

Oxford University Press, 1981, £9.50.

Near the opening of this substantial and penetrating book, Walter Allen accepts as still valid a definition of the short story offered by Edgar Allan Poe. It is a "short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal". This is not in itself a very striking remark, but Professor Allen continues to quote:

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or *single* effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbrining of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design.

Professor Allen accepts the essence of this too. He sees himself as "trembling on the verge of saying that the modern short-story writer is a lyric poet in prose", and in an admirable brief account and analysis of Sylvia Townsend Warner's "A View of Exmoor" he declares that it "lingers in the mind with the resonance of a lyric poem". He certainly approves of Poe's emphasis on the "very initial sentence"—or, more broadly, paragraph—since again and again he opens his discussion of a story by quoting generously from its beginning. I believe a captious critic could here and there point to a thoroughly satisfactory short story that takes off only after an uncertain start. But the general proposition is sound. For here is a region of fiction in which selectivity and concentration are cardinal virtues, and there is very little room for random felicities or adventitious elements of any kind.

The short story then deals with, dramatizes, a single incident and in doing so utterly transforms it. What we might call the basic anecdote is as it were dissolved in the multitude of implications that is apparent to the reader . . . It is this sense we have of the short story being rooted in a single incident or perception that principally differentiates it

from the novel . . . We recognize a short story as such because we feel that we are reading something that is the fruit of a single moment of time, of a single incident, a single perception.

Professor Allen thus admirably expresses his point of view, but I own to a suspicion that what he is here contemplating is the ideal short story as it is laid up in Plato's Elysium. He names as among the "most advanced stories ever written in English" Kipling's "Mrs Bathurst" and Joyce's "The Dead". But whereas "The Dead" (which Professor Allen acclaims, boldly and surely truly, as "one of the supreme stories in literature") does indeed move towards "a single incident, a single perception" in the paragraph beginning "Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes", I cannot see "Mrs Bathurst" as conforming to the tests presented in the paragraph just quoted. Where is the "single incident or perception" and of what "single moment in time" is the story the "fruit"? Of the two bodies found in the teak-forest, grotesquely "burned to charcoal", at the end of the story, one is of course Vickery's: he is identified by his false teeth and by certain tattoo-marks still distinguishable just as "writing shows up white on a burned letter". The other body I suppose to be that of a tramp—simply thrown in, as it were, to emphasize the low company into which Vickery has fallen as a result of his obsession with Mrs Bathurst. Professor Allen makes no mention of the second corpse, and so presumably also thinks it of little significance. But Miss J. M. S. Tompkins, a distinguished authority on Kipling's art, believes the second corpse to be a woman's—in fact Mrs Bathurst's. But may not Vickery have taken to going around with a female vagrant? Little can be confidently asserted about this story except that its creator had buried in him an overwhelming sense of the destructive power of sex.

Professor Allen's title informs us at once of the breadth of the field he proposes to cover, and under "Contents" are ranged the names of 83 writers of short stories. To render such a survey useful and readable requires more than exceptionally wide and retentive reading. And these qualities, indeed, which Professor Allen abundantly commands, are precisely what he must not take for granted in others. Few of us are likely to "remember" except in an almost vestigial way many of the stories that fall to be discussed. The method used by Professor Allen to obviate this difficulty may be called that of

critical exposition. Regularly throughout the book he presents in *précis* and with substantial quotation at least the many stories that he judges to be of particular account. "The Dead" is a case in point. After reading the three pages devoted to it, we are either vividly possessed of it once more or persuaded that here is a work of exceptional power which we must certainly read. Much academic teaching of literature in English makes use of this method, and the result can be very humdrum. But here we feel ourselves almost at once to be in the hands of a virtuoso performer. Professor Allen brings outstanding critical ability, enthusiasm, and invariably exact taste to whatever he surveys.

J. I. M. STEWART

Virginia Woolf,
MICHAEL ROSENTHAL.

Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979, £7.95.

This is a truly unpretentious study. It sets out to aid the reading of Virginia Woolf for those unacquainted with her writings, and, hence, it assumes little other than a modicum of interest or the bare knowledge that there is something called Bloomsbury and a novelist called Virginia Woolf who writes demanding novels. Who such readers might be who know the name but lack the cultural experience is puzzling. Truer to say that this is a book for the students. It is certain that they will find this book useful and informative. Its contents are conveniently laid out in chapters on the life, Bloomsbury, the problems of the fiction, each novel, the biographies, the social writings, the literary criticism. The first two chapters are excellent summaries of, in the first instance, the Bell biography, and in the second, the cultural skirmish that has been waged for seventy years or so.

The most interesting thing about this book is that here is an American writing a book of literary criticism in plain understandable prose (much relief for that) which offers not one single concession to either structuralism or feminism. The first omission is not the worry; the second is significant. The feminists *en masse* are sharply dealt with:

The polemical grinder of the feminist movement has greedily devoured Woolf, spewing her forth as the appropriately

committed feminist whose preoccupation with the cause is somehow the key to her fiction. Such a view of Woolf is not particularly useful. (p.36)

In a book which carefully avoids too inflammatory a language Rosenthal reserves his polemic for the champions of the feminist Woolf. He also thinks little of the androgynist claimants. I happen to think he is right on the second of these, and very wrong on what he takes to be the thrust of the feminist movement's arguments. I say "takes", because who the feminist "grinders" are or what they say or any attempt to differentiate between them is not clear because not made. I don't doubt for a moment that there are articles and essays dressed up in fancy academic jargon which have the simple logic of "All men oppress all women—Virginia Woolf revealed that oppression—therefore she told the truth—therefore she is a great writer", or the even cruder version of "Virginia Woolf said that all men are pigs—therefore she is a great writer". But this crudity is not what the fine insights of some feminist writings on Virginia Woolf have discovered. And what Rosenthal does is make the assumption that "feminist" critiques of Woolf are all inferior, and, thus, not worthy of attentive debate, but merely of a brief dismissal. It is one thing to argue that the opposition has not a case to make, without showing what the case amounts to; it is another to argue against it and, most importantly, to combat it at its strongest point. This is not to say that Rosenthal should have written a different book from the one he did. It is to say that he should not have entered these shark-filled waters in a rowing boat. However, the fact that he did have to say *something* is possibly indicative of the unavoidable. He cites Elizabeth Hardwicke's comment on Woolf, "yet in a sense, her novels aren't interesting", and one wonders in what sense they are not. Is it that Virginia Woolf is only interesting because she is a case in the way that Orwell is not a particularly great, sometimes not even good novelist, but is a "case"? And is not part of that "case" of Woolf bound up with the fact that she is a woman who is writing novels and criticism at a particular time in history? In a word, can one say anything about Woolf without taking on feminist criticism and still have something interesting to say? Writers have the autonomous right to define what they think of greater significance. Rosenthal's definition is a sound critical conventional exposition of the individual works, an account which stresses form

and Woolf's literary experimentation. It is a book which will clarify and ease understanding. My reservation would be that it is an understanding that is, in the end, not the essential Virginia Woolf at all.

ALLEN SAMUELS

Joseph Conrad: Language and Fictional Self-Consciousness,
JEREMY HAWTHORN.

Edward Arnold, 1979, £5.50.

With a sub-title as promising as "Language and Fictional Self-Consciousness", Jeremy Hawthorn's book promises much. The coherence one naturally reads into its terms is not, however, truly there and one does better to take the sub-titles of individual chapters as a more reliable description of the contents. These—"language and truth", "facts and ideas", "materialism and idealism", "animism and alienation", "words and visions"—might themselves suggest that this study is much more loosely organized round its given theme than we are at first led to suspect.

It does not seem to me altogether fair to give the study this title and then to deal so very superficially with "language" (or for that matter "fictional self-consciousness"). Trifling with modern linguistic concepts rather than putting them to productive use, inevitably detracts from the rigour of the book's critical scrutiny; while the attempt to link language and imperialism is so casually done as to seem simply amateurish. It is, in fact, hard to avoid the conclusion that this is a lazy book; and that Mr Hawthorn should have spent a great deal more time thinking and reading about his subject.

Measured by the amount of light it sheds on Conrad's achievement its success cannot but be considered as very limited. His attempted clarification of the importance of the dream motif, for example, seems to me to be both naive and unilluminating. It takes courage to write so blandly that "the dream recurs throughout Conrad's work as the symbol of unreality and unconsciousness". To be fair, he shows himself uneasy about the role of the dream and his treatment of it, and comes back to the issue at various points to enlarge his interpretation. The meaning of the term, however, becomes cloudier rather than clearer when he follows this sentence—"Both life on land and the life of a writer were, in different ways, evocative of the dream

state and in his work the two serve as symbols or tokens of each other"—with this one:

But the dream Marlow is trying to tell his listeners is of Africa. Now if the life within the England of Conrad's time was unreal and dreamlike, the life of imperialist exploitation of the Congo was even more so.

The explanation that follows cannot dispel the impression created of the author dealing in very cavalier fashion with a symbol—the dream—which is of large and complex significance in Conrad's work, and a political concept—imperialism—which is also very complex and not at all to be used to bolster an argument in this rather shallow way. Such connections may be asserted, but their verification is troublesome: to deny us the argument is, at best, to reveal a taste for railroading. By the same token it seems to me even more of a liberty for Mr Hawthorn to write as follows in his not-very-satisfactory discussion of Marlow's interview with the Intended in *Heart of Darkness*:

Marlow cannot tell the Intended the truth. He recognises that it would be 'too dark altogether'. Imperialism demands that sections of the domestic power retain their illusions, and thus the human relationships of that domestic power are pregnated by the lies of imperialism through and through.

And without further argument, too, it is very difficult to be fair to this sort of casualness:

Jim's predisposition to dream, to separate himself from the life surrounding him, makes him vulnerable to error. But this is no innate fatal flaw. As I have suggested, it cannot be understood without at least some reference to the various forms of escape implicit in the workings of imperialism.

He justifies his contention by drawing attention to the fact that Jim has been nurtured on "the sea-life of light literature"—and such literature is essentially imperialist:

Saving people from sinking ships, confronting savages on tropical shores, quelling mutinies on the high seas—all these are activities connected with Britain's imperial position.

Even more partial is his remark that what Brierly is unable to face is that the two Lascar seamen stick to their post. While his comment that "the

sea" is "a topic bound up very intimately with British imperialism", is a very British comment. (His meagre bibliography could easily stand the accession of Auden's *The Enchafed Flood*.) Sometimes his very confidence makes one want to respond with an equal and opposite force. As an example:

it is because the English are at the time of Conrad's writing the imperialist nation that the English cannot act without idealizing feelings, desires and achievements.

The chapters on *Nostramo* and *Under Western Eyes* are indeed more coherent and make more substantial points. But in neither case do they leave the reader with the feeling that he has been vouchsafed any particularly novel insight. In the end one's feeling is of disappointment at the author's failure to make more profitable use either of language-theory or of Marxist doctrine.

ALAN SANDISON

Eden Phillpotts on Dartmoor,
KENNETH F. DAY.

David and Charles, 1981, £6.95.

Writing to Nicholas and Adelaide Ross on January 11th, 1953, John Cowper Powys passed on to the latter's father, the novelist and playwright Eden Phillpotts, an august if back-handed compliment: "How well I remember Hardy . . ." (over sixty words omitted) "telling me how much he liked your Adelaide's Daddy who was, he said, though he didn't care so much for his books, one of the nicest human beings he'd ever met".

Kenneth Day admires both the man and his books. There were an enormous number of the latter: Phillpotts was even more prolific than Powys, producing over a hundred novels while living to the age of ninety-eight. He is probably most well remembered now for his plays *The Farmer's Wife* and *Yellow Sands*, but it was the cycle of eighteen novels about Dartmoor which he took most seriously. In their day these were likened to those of Hardy, and superficially there is a resemblance: elaborate descriptions of landscape and weather accompany complex narratives of romance and murder, intrigue and rustic comedy, laced with plenty of dialect and the propounding of an austere humanistic phil-

sophy. The books are all very much alike, though set in different quarters of the Moor. *Widecombe Fair* (1913) has probably been the most popular, but *The Secret Woman* (1905) and *Demeter's Daughter* (1911) reveal an austere tragic vision, and suggest a talent lost in a plethora of writing. Whatever else, Phillpotts was no mere hack.

He himself was modest as to his own achievement, writing to Kenneth Day that "I am no master, but just a rank and file teller of tales, most of which are already forgotten". That this was an underestimate the production of this book makes clear, even though it appears by subscription and with the author's waiving of royalties and the publisher's acceptance of a diminished return. Such a labour of love is heartening to find in these repulsively commercial days. And it suggests that Phillpotts still commands his devotees.

Indeed, at a time when the marketing of books is increasingly confined to the strictly academic and to diversely pornographic fields, it is worth remembering that there remains another reading public, one loyal to old and tried favourites and still unaffected by fashionable reading trends. To consult the list of authors published by Cedric Chivers or the Lythway Press at the request of public librarians is to find the names of not only such dead and (one would have thought) done-with best-sellers as Ethel Boileau or Isabel C. Clarke but also those of both Elizabeth and L. H. Myers, of James Hanley and (before her re-emergence) Barbara Pym. John Cowper Powys himself is represented by *Owen Glendower* and *Atlantis*, Eden Phillpotts by *The River*, *The Mother* and *The Forest on the Hill*. To follow the output of Penguin and Virago—alarming collocation!—is to discover excellencies long kept quietly in print elsewhere, not because they were significant or fashionable but simply because people enjoyed reading them.

Mr Day is certainly concerned with pleasure rather than with criticism: he attempts no discriminations or assessments. His book relates each of the Dartmoor novels to its setting, telling us what happened where, and supplying the originals of pseudonyms. There are a great many quotations from Phillpotts's descriptive passages, all too few from his dialogue. Much of the former is over-written and distracting in its detail; his chief strength lies in his observation of human nature and sense of dramatic irony. However, despite a fustily bookish vocabulary at times, he can write of the Moor with a memorable vivid-

ness. Like John Cowper Powys he is a master of sky-scapes.

The wind sang dryly in the dead rushes on the hill-top, and above, great separate clouds were scattered in a long procession from east to west. At the zenith only they revealed their true proportions, but rising and receding they huddled into pearly masses and vanished behind the haze. Higher yet, on a plane above the cumuli, long white streaks of freezing vapour stretched southward and obeyed another current of air. Their true motions were so slow as to be invisible to any but a patient watcher.

Such a watcher is also to be found in the author of *Porius*, but Powys's approach, in keeping with his philosophy, is far removed from the impersonal detachment of Phillipotts. His descriptions, except in the four early novels, are mediated through the consciousness of his characters and thus fully integrated into the fabric of the novel.

Phillipotts, in fact, is now principally interesting as an honourable example of the kind of landscape novelist whom the Powys brothers transcend, but with whom they have been too readily identified. At times he can seem their superior, especially if one's standard is that of naturalistic fidelity to the seen and heard; his peasants are less quirkily mannered than are those of John Cowper and Theodore, his philosophy takes more account of human suffering than does that of Llewelyn. But where they soar, he plods. Ultimately the difference between their work and his lies in the superior quality of their imagination, imagination fired by untrammelled self-expression and informed by wit—wit in its fullest sense. Phillipotts certainly loved Dartmoor with a knowledgeable passion that makes him, as this book demonstrates, an ideal author to read *in situ*; but *in situ* one remains. Hardy's Wessex, John Cowper's Glastonbury, and Theodore's Madder Hill, on the other hand, are both local and universal, so that to visit the original is to see it enlarged and transfigured by their art. To publish a book about them similar to this one, even with photographs as excellent as Mr Day's, would be to miss the point of their achievement.

GLEN CAVALIERO

Moth or Phoenix?

J. R. LLOYD THOMAS.

Gwasg Gomer, 1980, £3.50.

Even many people who do not know St. David's College, Lampeter, will, I guess, find much of interest in this book, while for past and present members of the College and well-wishers from the outside who have followed its fluctuating fortunes during the last quarter of a century, it will come as something of a revelation. The author, who retired as its Principal in 1975, describes how the College was saved from what appeared to be inevitable closure in a series of events which read like a cliff-hanging drama of which he was the undisputed hero. It was mainly thanks to his dogged perseverance and refusal to accept defeat that success was finally gained—an achievement which, not uncharacteristically, has had less public recognition than it deserves, though the award of a doctorate to Lloyd Thomas on his retirement may be seen as some acknowledgement of his services to higher education in Wales.

When in 1953 the Reverend J. R. Lloyd Thomas, at the time Dean of Monmouth, was persuaded by his friend the then Bishop of Monmouth to apply for and accept the principalship of St. David's College, he seemed to be joining a rapidly sinking ship. Founded in 1822 by Thomas Burgess, the Bishop of St. David's, to provide university education (but not vocational training) for Welsh ordinands as an alternative to the less accessible foundations of Oxford and Cambridge, the College had survived, not without difficulty, for well over a century, including two world wars, and had watched a newer and much larger institution, the federal University of Wales, grow up as its powerful rival. By 1953 the College had become to many people an embarrassment and an anachronism. As an Anglican foundation it was viewed by the Welsh Nonconformist establishment with suspicion, and to extreme nationalists it appeared an outpost of English culture in a Welsh-speaking environment. Its academic credentials were also questioned, while it continued, wrongly, to be thought of, especially in Wales, as a theological college because of its continuing strong links with the Church in Wales, in which generations of its graduates had served. Indeed, the Church in Wales provided its only outside source of revenue, but one which, even when added to the College's own modest endowments, would obviously not guarantee its

financial viability in an age of inflation and severe competition from the many new universities. To survive, the College needed recognition by the University Grants Committee, which would enable students going to Lampeter to receive the same degree of financial support as those in other British universities. The U.G.C. was willing to consider Lampeter's application for such status, but insisted that it was conditional on its becoming part of the University of Wales. Here the stumbling block, as on earlier occasions, was the unyielding opposition, not unmingled with disdain, of University College, Aberystwyth, Lampeter's unhelpful neighbour in the county of Cardigan. Many in London would have let Lampeter disappear with equanimity; seen through a Whitehall telescope it was but a spot on the map. But some members of the U.G.C. showed sympathy and a willingness to listen, while even in Aberystwyth certain highly placed individuals were well disposed towards St. David's College.

What we have in this book is a close-up view of the complex and often tense triangular relationship that developed between Lampeter, the U.G.C. and the University of Wales. Lloyd Thomas soon showed himself a shrewd negotiator, one who could hold his own among the mandarins of Whitehall as well as in Wales, where university politics, like rugby football, excites high passions. He was particularly astute in sizing up his friends and opponents and in taking advantage of any weaknesses displayed by the latter. Having discovered that some of those in London in whose hands the fate of the College lay had never been to Lampeter, he invited them to visit it, an experience which encouraged in them a more positive approach to the problem. Finally, Anthony Steel, the Principal of University College, Cardiff, offered to sponsor Lampeter vis-à-vis the U.G.C. under a scheme which provided help and oversight from Cardiff for a limited period, during which Lampeter would expand and re-adjust its courses to conform to the University of Wales standards. This proved the decisive step in the inevitably lengthy process whereby St. David's College entered the University of Wales and thus made sure of its future. Honour was satisfied on all sides, and old feuds were forgotten when St. David's was welcomed into the federal University as a constituent member. It is very unlikely that any other principal would have shown the same commitment or an equal combination of tenacity and tactical skill. He played what was initially a weak hand with a

confidence few would have shown in such circumstances.

The style of the book, brisk and bluff, outspoken and relieved by touches of humour, reflects its author's personality. The story is well documented and will remain an invaluable first-hand source of information to any future historian of St. David's College—in particular to the Reverend William Price, whose first volume of the official College history, published in 1975, carried the story to 1898. Although he goes into considerable and often fascinating detail, Lloyd Thomas discreetly omits the names of the more controversial figures with whom he crossed swords, and the reader is aware that some of the deeper cross-currents, involving leaders of the Church in Wales, are only hinted at. My one regret is that the author has chosen to say very little about the exciting period of expansion that began with provision of U.G.C. grant aid. Whatever may be thought of the "old Lampeter", the academic standards of which Lloyd Thomas staunchly defends, it cannot be denied that the College's expansion has been marked by many advantages, such as more specialized teaching by a vastly increased staff and the provision of adequate library facilities. Such developments were vital if the College was to hold its own in the fiercely competitive university world of the 1960s and since. And there were unavoidable changes in the life style brought about by, for example, the admission of women students. There was loss as well as gain, and the permissive age brought its own problems. Lloyd Thomas looks back with mixed feelings in his final chapter:

I was aware, more than most, that the Lampeter to which I had gone as an undergraduate in 1927, and as Principal in 1953, had been replaced by something different, and although so deeply involved in the change, I always had sympathy for those Old Students who preferred things as they used to be, and still tell me so. The sad fact is that "Lampeter as it used to be" would have ceased to be. I had also understood the puzzled wonder of those who could not see any place for the College in the second half of the twentieth century, and who thought, with Sir Emrys Evans (a former Principal of University College, Bangor) that the moth should have burned her wings and long ago fluttered to her death. Lampeter had to change to survive . . .

Little of the purpose for which the College had

been founded seemed to have survived in 1980, but more of the original ethos has been preserved than might have been expected. Lloyd Thomas also writes: "I hope that I was always enough of a realist to recognise that we were obliged at times to make a 'virtue of necessity' in our propaganda". Those who know the College well

might conclude that the virtue is real enough, and that much of the credit for it lies with the author of this book. What might so easily have perished as a moth has been reborn as a phoenix.

JOHN RYDER

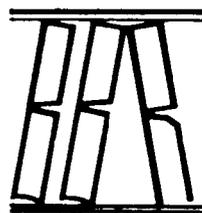
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THEODORA SCUTT is the adopted daughter ("Susan") of T. F. Powys. She farms, with her husband, in Dorset.

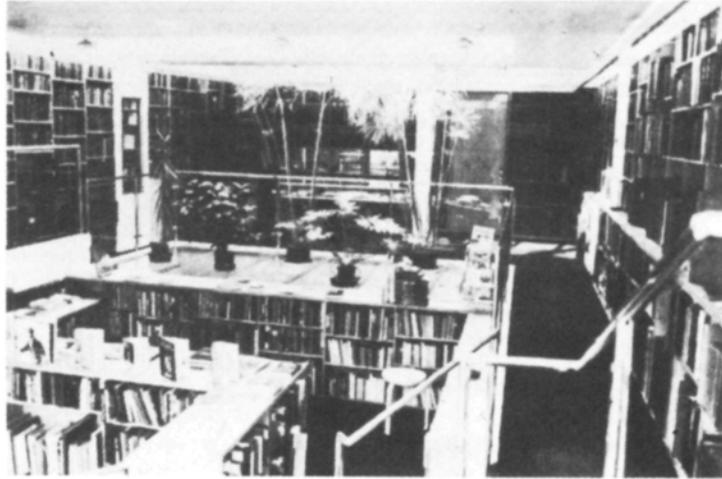
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NEIL TIERNEY is northern music critic for the *Daily Telegraph*, and has recently accompanied the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra on a tour of Germany. He has written for such journals as *Music and Musicians*, *Musical Opinion* and *Opera*, and is author of *The Unknown Country: a life of Igor Stravinsky* (Robert Hale, 1977).



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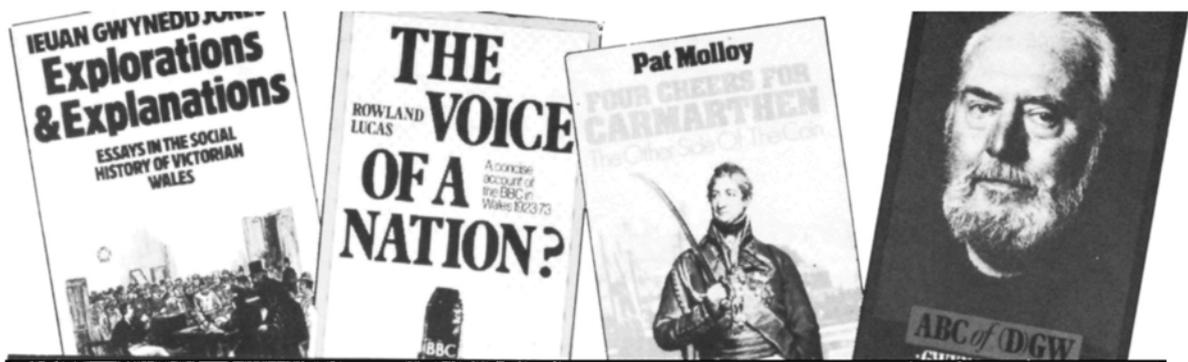


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