

The Powys Review

NUMBER TEN



The Powys Review

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Two portraits of Phyllis Playter:
top, by Adrian Bury, 1935;
bottom, by Gertrude M. Powys, 1944
(by courtesy of Mrs. Lucy Penny)



Editorial

We lament the death, early this springtime, of Phyllis Playter, companion of John Cowper Powys whom she met sixty years ago. Phyllis Playter was not only outstanding in her own right as a person, but, self-effacing as she was determined to be, it is apparent that she was of inestimable mental and spiritual value to John Cowper Powys as a writer. Also, there must be those, like the Editor, who very soon perceived that elements of her personality were reflected in some of Powys's fictional characters, such as Christie of *Wolf Solent*.

Three long-time friends of Phyllis Playter (and John Cowper Powys) have been asked to write briefly about her in preface to this *Review*, and those who, with the Editor, remember Phyllis Playter with affection, delight and enormous respect, will recognise some of their experience of her through their tributes. Further to these, we are pleased to add a literary note in tribute from Professor Wilson Knight who met Phyllis Playter several times but here writes in a public rôle.

FREDERICK DAVIES

The only child of Franklyn Playter, and grand-daughter of pioneers who opened up the Middle West by building the first railroad from Pittsburgh to Kansas City, Phyllis Playter was both a very remarkable woman and a very great lady. Educated in Boston and Paris, she possessed outstanding intellect, wide culture, and intuition of extraordinary and piercing acuteness.

In 1921, at the age of twenty-seven, she became the 'femme de confiance' of John Cowper Powys and from then until his death in 1963 she nurtured and gave direction to his chaotic, wayward genius.

For over forty years the relationship between Phyllis Playter and John Cowper Powys was stronger, more enduring, and more happy, than that between most legally married couples. Both were indifferent to public opinion. Neither felt the need, after his wife's death, to legalise their companionship.

But both valued highly their seclusion. Both guarded their privacy—to such an extent that in letters to comparative strangers Powys would sometimes refer to her as his 'house-keeper'.

Yet, in their first letters to me, members of the Powys family would pointedly refer to her as "our dear sister-in-law Phyllis". And Philippa Powys once said to me, "if our mother had searched the world over she would never have found a better girl for Jack than Phyllis". John Cowper Powys himself, in conversations with me, always referred to Margaret Lyon as "my son's mother"—never as his wife, which legally she had been. The unspoken implication was obvious.

Phyllis Playter's two oldest and closest friends, Alyse Gregory and Gamel Woolsey, both made it very clear to me that their regard for Phyllis was based on respect and admiration as much as on the affection of life-long friendship.

John Cowper Powys's Diaries, as yet unpublished, began with—and were a continuation of—the letters he wrote each day and posted each week to Phyllis while he was in England in 1922. After his death parts of the Diaries were frequently read to me by Phyllis Playter. Their publication will enable exegeses to be made of *Wolf Solent*, *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Maiden Castle* which will reveal the extent to which Phyllis Playter influenced the writing of those books. It will then be a matter for surmise whether, but for Phyllis Playter, the great novels from *Wolf Solent* to *Porius* would ever have been written.

When John Cowper Powys died, Phyllis Playter gave me something he had written expressing what she had meant to him. It was given on the understanding it would not be revealed until after she herself was dead. I shall allow the Editor of *The Powys Review* to make use of it as and when it may be thought fit and appropriate.

I mourn the loss of a friend whose company always enhanced 'The pleasure which there is in life itself'.

GILBERT TURNER

Phyllis Playter, who died on the 10th March at the age of 87, was for very many years the devoted companion of John Cowper Powys. As a young woman she had attended his lectures in the United States, became a close friend and soon became indispensable to him. John Cowper was the least practical of men and it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of Phyllis in the ordering of his daily life throughout his most creative period—as housekeeper, the typist of his manuscripts and, above all, as the person with whom he could discuss everything connected with his writing—“my antennae” as he used to say. There is no doubt that Phyllis provided the calm atmosphere and the encouragement for the writing of the *great* novels, beginning with *Wolf Solent* and ending with *Porius*. Although Phyllis may have given the impression of being a somewhat shy and retiring person, she was in fact a woman of very considerable intellect and in discussion and conversation by no means overshadowed by John Cowper.

The position of companion to John Cowper was nevertheless an exacting one and placed many restrictions upon Phyllis. To give but one example—her keen appreciation of classical music was not shared by John Cowper and the record player had to be played at very low volume and in another room! Following their return to England in 1934 and their settling in Wales in the following year, Phyllis and John Cowper were never apart and Phyllis was the charming and considerate hostess to many visitors, both family and otherwise, first at Corwen and then at Blaenau Ffestiniog. During the latter part of John Cowper’s life caring for him became a more and more onerous task but the devotion and the care continued to the end. When John Cowper died in 1963, Phyllis, at 69 years of age, found herself free to lead a more varied life. I well recall the delight with which she set out on a three months’ voyage to South America on a cargo boat. I had for many years been a frequent visitor to Corwen and Blaenau Ffestiniog but the sessions

listening to John Cowper were now replaced by exploration of the beauty spots of North Wales, with Phyllis, at 75, making high work of the somewhat arduous expedition of climbing the Roman steps in Ardudwy. Her interest in all aspects of the arts was satisfied by visits to London, devoted to art galleries, concerts, films and the theatre. When over 80 years of age Phyllis still delighted in day trips to London to see a particular exhibition, whilst she seldom missed a Welsh Arts Council sponsored film, drama or concert in North Wales.

Fortunately Phyllis retained all her faculties to the very end and, in her little cottage in Blaenau Ffestiniog, was invariably to be found surrounded by literary reviews, newspapers, both national and local, and new books which were read with a very critical eye. Since my retirement to North Wales I had been able to visit her frequently and I only wish I could convey adequately the delight with which one was invariably received, the animated discussions on every conceivable subject and the sincere regret when it was time to go.

GLEN CAVALIERO

Her stillness is what comes immediately to my mind. This benign yet distant serenity was in no way belied by her animated talk, for her animation was not, as with so many people, called out by her partner in conversation. There was nothing aggressive about it, nothing self-glorifying; rather it sprang from the object of her thought. Those thoughts of hers were fully attuned to the contemporary world, and her eager interest in what was going on recalled that of Marian Powys Grey, just as her stillness was shared by Alyse Gregory, if in a more intent, less relaxed form. But Phyllis Playter was entirely her own woman. She could contradict you with a smiling, definitive finality.

Her appreciation of Wales was informative and quite free from whimsy or nostalgia: when you were with her you were always aware of the world outside. I have a recollection of sitting with her above Harlech Castle,

looking across the shining blue expanse of Tremadoc Bay, and sensing in her silence a contentment that itself seemed an element in the shimmering haze around us. She always enhanced your capacity to experience what you shared with her.

Unobtrusive, her presence was very positively felt. That she always dressed in black did not mean that she dressed drably: there was an indefinable air of *chic* about her. An American friend of mine observed that she was possibly the last of the old-style Greenwich Village intellectuals—for intellectual she was, keeping abreast of the arts: and if not bohemian in the popular sense, she was deeply unconventional. After John Cowper Powys's death she considered moving to the City of London, attracted by the thought of its emptiness and silence at weekends: the picture of that slight, bird-like figure among the tower blocks is only startling if you forget New York. She refused to allow herself to be pigeon-holed, and certainly never regarded herself as an appendage to the Powys world. In her last years she reverted more and more to the distant past, but always with reference to the present. It was the middle years about which she seemed the least concerned.

Her enigmatic quality is well captured in a poem by Paris Leary, who visited her in the early nineteen-seventies.

Her eyes, ancient as a wise young girl's
and hooded, seem half-dozing into sleep—
but that is the top edge of her smile.

And he goes on to single out a capacity peculiarly hers:

She listens to what a young man says.

Phyllis Playter not only listened; she observed, and reflected on what she saw.

I myself last saw her in January 1981 when the snow was crackly on the ground. Her welcome was as radiant and as warm as ever, and with characteristic generosity she presented me with her complete set of the novels of Phyllis Paul, that haunting and shamefully neglected novelist whose work she had long admired. (Her literary loyalties were staunch—she never ceased to champion

an early favourite, Ethel Sidgwick.) As the evening advanced her conversation grew more lively; and when at midnight I protested that I must either leave or be locked out of my hotel, she exclaimed, "Oh, don't go yet! I only reach my peak at two!" The image of a solitary inner light shining in the small hours from that austere yet cosy room distills my memories of Phyllis Playter, whom it was such a happiness and blessing to have known.

G. WILSON KNIGHT

As President of the Powys Society I feel it right, on the death of Phyllis Playter, that I should here repeat my dedication in *The Saturnian Quest*: "For Phyllis Playter, to whom the gratitude of all who honour the works of John Cowper Powys must remain unbounded". She gave me permission to use as my frontispiece her photograph of Powys among the Welsh hills, atmospherically the best and most characterising picture we have.

I would also draw attention to Powys's own tribute, as written into his late story *Up and Out*. The narrative is in the first person and the hero, Gor Goginog, finds himself cut adrift on a "fragment" of the earth, after the rest has been destroyed by an atomic explosion. With him is the girl, Rhitha, and also an anomalous monster, Org, who has been created by a vivisectional experiment, and Org's attractive mate, Asm, who has also suffered under the cruelty of relatives, these two suggesting derivative aspects, grave and gay, of the sadistic; both are presented as collaborative and friendly beings.

To read an autobiographical reference in the first two persons is almost forced. Both come from Wales, Gor Goginog having been born in Blaenau Ffestiniog; both are horrified by experiences of vivisection in New York. True, Phyllis Playter did not, so far as I know, have a Welsh origin, as did Rhitha. Both Rhitha and also Asm's parents were of Llanderfel, near Blaenau. The autobiography hinted, if such it is, is a near-distance and recent autobiography. It is, I think, quite

natural to feel this autobiographical element, or suggestion, in the fantasy.

After a succession of philosophic arguments by a variety of sages, including the Devil and God himself, just before the final self-immolation, we have Gor Goginog's words: "Rhitha was the one person I wanted to live with. I could live without Org and Asm! I could live without God. But I couldn't live without Rhitha." These words may be regarded as a final tribute.



Three photographs of Phyllis Playter (by courtesy of Mr. E. E. Bissell)

J. Lawrence Mitchell

Ray Garnett as Illustrator

For many years, David Garnett (DG), T. F. Powys (TFP) and Sylvia Townsend Warner (STW) shared a publisher, Chatto and Windus, and also read and commented on one another's work. Not atypical is a letter from TFP (February 3, 1927) to Charles Prentice (CP) of Chatto and Windus, in which TFP expresses pleasure at receiving a signed copy of DG's new book [*Go She Must*], and continues: "We are enjoying Sylvia Warner's visit immensely. She is reading *Go She Must* aloud in the evenings. I am charmed by it and I think the writing is very beautiful . . ."

The closeness of their relationship is also revealed in more public ways. STW dedicated a poem in her first collection, *The Espalier* (1925), to TFP, and in her second novel *Mr. Fortune's Maggot* (1927)—significantly dedicated "To Theo,"—she has the hero, one Timothy Fortune, announce to his only convert: "I have given you a new name, Lueli. I have called you Theodore, which means 'the gift of God'" (p. 19).

TFP, for his part, dedicated *The Left Leg* (1923) to DG, STW, and Stephen Tomlin in recognition of the part each had played in getting him published. Some twelve years later, DG seems to have been instrumental in obtaining a civil list pension of £60 a year for the needy TFP. TFP writes (letter at Hilton Hall, dated March 7, 1935) to express his gratitude, saying—"You David can move mountains" and calling him "most excellent giver of good gifts."

Not surprisingly, the shared sympathies of these three writers find expression in their work too. DG, for example, took the title for his novel, *The Sailor's Return* (1925) from an East Chaldon pub which later appeared in TFP's *Captain Patch* (1935) as "The Soldiers Return". H. E. Bates was, I believe, the

first to recognize the way in which the three of them "shaped the short story into a new form, that of realistic allegory" (*The Modern Short Story*, 1941, p. 206).

Yet there remains one aspect of their work which has never been explored: they had in common an illustrator, Ray Garnett, who was in fact the wife of DG.

Ray Garnett (Rachel Alice Marshall) was born May 22, 1891 at 28 Bedford Square, daughter of William Cecil Marshall and Margaret A. Marshall (née Lloyd). Mr. Marshall was an architect, who practised from his town home, and retired occasionally with his family to his country home, "Tweenways", near Hindhead. He took a strong interest in the Arts and Crafts movement, and for a time apparently even helped support an Arts and Crafts Studio.¹ Mrs. Marshall ("Mam" to her family) is described by David Garnett as "a dark, very brown-skinned Irish woman whose mother had come from Galway and whose father had been a missionary among the Maori in New Zealand" (*The Flowers of the Forest*, p. 232). To this description one might add that she had musical talent and was a long-time women's suffragist. There were six children in the family—and Ray was the middle child, between Horace and Judy who were older and Tom, Eleanor and Frances.

Perhaps because of her inherited artistic ability, Ray was by all accounts, her father's favourite. But though he was, in Frances Partridge's words "really very appreciative of her talent," he could rarely get her to talk about art as her sister, Frances, on occasion could. The barrier was her immense shyness. Nonetheless, the ambience of the Marshall home was conducive to artistic development. In her autobiographical work, *Memories* (1981), Frances Partridge recalls

that “Art, as he introduced it into our lives was typified by his books from the Kelmscott Press, the Morris wallpapers and his own architectural drawings which hung on the walls” (p. 16). Thus Ray and Judy drew and painted from childhood, and Frances confesses to “an uninspired facility which later won praise from school art-masters” (p. 16).

The details of Ray’s formal education are not altogether clear: she had a series of governesses, and may also have attended Queens College, Harley Street. But she was twenty-one before she went to the L.C.C. Central School of Arts and Crafts in 1912. There she became one of the earliest members of Noel Rooke’s Book Illustration class—along with her good friend Vivien Gribble (some of whose work is among Ray’s papers at Hilton Hall) and Robert Gibbings, later to play so important a role in the Golden Cockerel Press. Rooke himself is now recognized as a key figure in the history of wood-engraving. In *The Illustration of Books* (1952), Bland claims that Rooke “through his rediscovery of the white line was responsible more than anyone else for the revival of wood-engraving that dates from about 1920” (p. 85). And Garrett (1978) mentions Rooke’s 1914 experiments in the use of colour in wood-engraving—a period when Rachel Marshall (as she then was) was still a student at the Central School. There is no record of when or if she graduated. Frances Partridge remembers her being in a Zeppelin raid while at the school around 1915; yet samples of her work are included in a 1920 *Studio* article devoted to Central School students.²

Ray’s first known appearance in print, however, pre-dates her art-school training. She produced at least two political cartoons (June 16, 1910 and November 17, 1910) for *The Common Cause* which labelled itself “The Organ of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage”. The mother’s political sentiments were obviously shared by the daughter—and we get to note how well her artistic skills had already developed. But the first fruits of her art-school were not in evidence until

1913, the date of both *The Vulgar Little Lady* (*The VLL*) and *The Happy Testament*.

There were three versions of *The Vulgar Little Lady*. The first was the original student production, and took the form of an eight page booklet (25.5 cm x 38.2 cm), printed on pages 1, 3-6, with 2 and 7-8 blank. The cover-cum-title-page is printed in green, and is decorated with a wood-engraving (young girl in hat). Three hand-coloured line drawings (the colour varies from copy to copy in the Hilton Hall and Central School copies) appear on pages 3, 4, 5, and illustrate the text by Anne and Jane Taylor (best known for “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”), a didactic poem on the nature of true gentility. The colophon (p. 6) provides valuable information: “Printed at the L.C.C. Central School of Arts and Crafts/by the Day Technical School of Book Production:/Teacher, J. H. Mason. Drawings by Rachel Marshall, /Teacher Noel Rooke. Blocks by the Bolt Court (L.C.C.)/School of Process Engraving. 1912/. However, the title-page shows MCMXIII as the year of publication—a discrepancy no doubt due to the time-lag between the production of the illustrations and the printing of the text.³ *The VLL* is illuminatingly described in one of the current Central School copies as “another experiment to adapt text to quality of line.”

The second version of *The VLL* was published without explanation as a supplement to the April 17, 1913 issue of the new and short-lived monthly *The Imprint*, (only nine issues appeared, January-September, 1913). But the path by which the piece got into *The Imprint* is not hard to trace: J. H. Mason, whose attention it could hardly have escaped as teacher of book-production, was one of the four editors of *The Imprint*, and had but two months earlier published an article in the journal on “The Printing of Children’s Books”. Moreover, from the first the editorial policy had been boldly announced: “We will diligently search out ‘things of beauty’ that can be printed and hope to give ‘joy for ever’ therein.⁴ This second version of *The VLL* eschewed the earlier title page wood-engraving for an uncoloured version

of the little girl in the third of the original drawings. The title-page is, then, printed entirely in black; but the drawings themselves have been beautifully engraved and printed in colour by Edmund Evans Ltd.⁵

The VLL made its final appearance in a "broadside" format: as "no. 7" in what seems to have been a separate children's series of the "rhyme sheets" issued by Harold Monro at the Poetry Bookshop. Frank Sidgwick's "A Christmas Legend" was no. 7 in the first series of rhyme sheets, and Michael Drayton's "The Parting" (with illustrations by C. Lovat Fraser) was no. 7 in the second series. Thus it is difficult to date this appearance of *The VLL* with any confidence; the Houghton catalogue's "ca. 1920" may be some years too late. *The VLL* is, for example, the same size (ca. 23 x 8 inches) as the twelve issues in the first series whereas issues of the second series, which appeared after the war, were all much smaller (ca. 14 x 7 inches). On the other hand, the only rhyme sheet actually labelled as part of a children's series in the Houghton collection (No. 2; Poems by Jane and Anne Taylor, Walter De la Mare and William Blake;) is almost certainly no. 2 in the first series, since Poetry Bookshop advertisements list the second issue simply as "Children's".

Perhaps Monro saw *The VLL* in *The Imprint* (it appeared only three months after he opened the Poetry Bookshop), or perhaps Rachel Marshall had encountered Monro in the shop itself, which was "fairly well situated for students at University College, King's College, the Central School of Arts and Crafts and other art schools" (Grant, p. 61). In any case, the two seem to have met (Frances Partridge recalls Monro's name being mentioned by her sister), and thus the work of Rachel Marshall⁶ can now be found alongside that of Claude Lovat Fraser, Thomas Sturge Moore, John and Paul Nash, and other distinguished graphic artists of the period.

The Happy Testament also grew from a project that began in art-school, for "The Annual Report of the Principal" (F.V. Burridge), October 6, 1913, includes this

revealing statement: "The students have done successful work for Messrs. Chatto and Windus, for whom not only were the illustrations made but specimen pages set up and the general arrangement of the book discussed."⁷

The contact with Chatto and Windus is likely to have been Noel Rooke, who had commissions from the publishers as early as 1908 (24 illustrations for R. L. Stevenson's *An Inland Voyage*). Moreover he took a special interest in Rachel Marshall's work; indeed, he was more than once a guest in the Marshall country home, and Frances Partridge suspects that his interest was "more than merely a teacher's" (letter, November 28, 1980). However, Rachel Marshall conducted her own negotiations with Chatto, on the evidence of the correspondence in the Chatto archives.⁸

In January 1913, Geoffrey Whitworth wrote to her that: "there seems to be no reasonable let or hindrance to our issuing the 'Happy Testament'. If you still think you would like to illustrate it, would you therefore come and talk the matter over with Mr. [Percy] Spalding?" She apparently came to a tentative agreement with Spalding, and sent in specimen drawings for approval. For the copyright of eighteen illustrations, she was paid the princely sum of £18.18. Some questions raised about the mode of colouring the pictures were resolved by a letter of February 5, 1913 from Whitworth "I have conversed with our block-maker, and find that, as we thought, the most convenient method as regards colouring the pictures will be for you to send us the plain black and white drawings and then paint them on the proofs afterwards. All the colours must be flat, i.e., without gradations of light and shade."

By March 10, 1913, the drawings were completed, and Whitworth expressed himself pleased: "They seem to be very charming." The result was a small, slim volume in a yellow-green dustwrapper—the major virtue of which was the attractively laid-out illustrations.

There were three full-page, eight half-page, and seven quarter-page black-line

drawings in two and three colour combinations (brown: green; turquoise: yellow; green: turquoise: yellow). Those showing children at play are especially felicitous, and reach imaginatively far beyond anything suggested by the text itself. Where, for example, we read "And I devise to children the banks of the brooks, and the golden sand beneath the waters thereof," the accompanying illustration shows a little girl crouched over the bank of the brook, gazing intently at a frog crawling from a lily pad.



The text, ostensibly the last will and testament of one Charles Loundsberry (a pseudonym for Williston Fish, 1858-1939) is given a fillip by the publishers in an introductory note:

This little book seeks to give general currency to a piece of literature hitherto unknown except through the pages of various magazines, and never, till now, published separately or in a manner at all worthy of its unique and peculiar charm.

But the piece is altogether too sentimental for modern sensibilities, and it is little wonder that David Garnett admitted frankly that "the text has always made me heave" (letter, February 8, 1980).

Strictly a student production, *Archibald* (1915) was a twenty-four page booklet in large folio boards. For the first time both the text (some 432 words) and the illustrations (twenty line-drawings; blue wood-engravings on title page and after colophon) are by Rachel Marshall. The "Archibald" of the

title is a tiny humpty-dumpty figure who is separated from his friend Herbert, a blue bird; he endures various adventures before the two are reconciled. Some of the drawings are deliberately spare and schematic;—there is one, for example, that shows nothing but a foot and a leg disappearing from the picture while poor Archibald lies unnoticed in the road. But the strongest, as in *The Happy Testament*, are those of the outdoors—especially an Archibald-eye view of a country road down which is hopping an enormous rabbit. Archibald himself is barely visible behind some blades of grass.

According to David Garnett (letter, February 8, 1980) not more than a dozen copies of *Archibald* were ever printed. In the Central School Library four copies are to be found: one is unbound, one is bound in leather, two in paper boards with buckram spines.⁹ There are four more at Hilton Hall—and again, one is unbound, two are in paper boards; and one in leather, lettered in gold on the spine and upper cover. Some of the line-drawings have been partially hand-coloured by the artist. Thus, this work can hardly be said to constitute an edition at all. It was offered to and rejected by Chatto and Windus. However they reconsidered in 1918, when E. P. Dutton who had just agreed to do an American edition of *A Ride on a Rocking Horse*, also proposed a black and white edition of *Archibald* for America. This time the artist-author rejected the proposal on the grounds that it was "essentially a book for small children which would lose its value if not coloured" (letter from William C. Marshall to Geoffrey Whitworth, April 2, 1918).

The most ambitious and manifestly the most successful of Rachel Marshall's early works was *A Ride on a Rocking Horse*. As with *Archibald*, she was responsible both for the text and for the illustrations. Originally published by Chatto and Windus in 1917 (n.d., but her father's copy is inscribed: "published October 25, 1917",) the book was reissued twice (September 1926 and October 1937) both in England and the U.S.A. By February 18, 1918, Geoffrey Whitworth was able to report in a letter to William C.

Marshall, who seems to have taken a firm hand on behalf of his daughter in the business negotiations with Chatto, that:

Very roughly we have sold some thousand copies. The only criticism I have heard on the book is that it is too thin for the price. But the people who said this forget that the book contained some 24 coloured pictures. There is no doubt that some of the booksellers who make a speciality of children's books do not understand that bulk is not the only consideration.

The sixty-three page text is indeed profusely and beautifully illustrated; in addition to the four colour illustrations, there are ten line-drawings as well as woodcuts on the cover and title-page, and end-papers decorated with a white-on-pink floral pattern. Once again the work was engraved and printed by Edmund Evans Ltd., in an unusual grey type-face.

The coloured illustrations are much darker and heavier than any used before (dark green, dark blue, brown), and the treatment more fantastic—as befits the dream-world in which Ned and his rocking-horse Dapple find themselves. The story begins with Ned's discovery that on Midsummer Day, "Dapple can trot and gallop too like any other horse." Leaving the real world quickly behind, the two enter a strange world where flowers turn into fairies, and learn of the Island of Gonde upon which the dream-fairy plants her magical yellow flowers. Too heavy to fly, in spite of fairy help, Ned steps onto a cloud which takes him over Gonde, but not before he is witness to the war of the cloudmen. As soon as he plucks the magical flower, however, he finds himself back in the nursery, and Dapple back on his rocker.

Two incidents deserve special comment. First, there is the intrusion, topical but unhappy, of the world of war into the world of fancy. During the battle between rival clouds, Ned showed himself oddly partisan and "shouted louder than any to see great pieces torn off the enemy country" (p. 38). But the author attempts to minimize the seriousness of the affray: "The courtiers . . . laughed and joked merrily as they discussed



(A Ride on a Rocking Horse, The Cottage)

the battle; just as though it had been a game" (p. 41). For the modern reader at least, the attempt fails; the entire episode, including the line-drawings of artillery pieces firing at one another is strangely out of keeping with the tone of the rest of the book.

Ned's encounter with the two witches who have stolen Dapple is noteworthy for a very different reason. The dialogue between them is vaguely reminiscent of *Alice in Wonderland*:

'Please, have you seen my rocking horse?'

'Rocking-horse! what nonsense! horses don't rock' croaked a witch.

'Mine did once, but . . .'

'Then it wasn't a horse, perhaps it was a chair; chairs rock sometimes; you may be sure it was a chair.'

But Humpty-Dumpty, who appears in the narrative only long enough to tell Ned of Dapple's powers on Midsummer Day, is, in fact, Archibald in different guise. The author was clearly unwilling to abandon Archibald entirely, and found him a minor role in her new story.

Rather less successful than *A Ride on a Rocking Horse* in a number of ways was *The Imp of Mischief* (1920) by Olive Chandler, another product of Chatto and Windus for the children's market. It is a book of light verse in which each piece deals in some way with Fairyland and the inhabitants thereof—

imps, goblins, fairies and witches. The text does not seem to have inspired Rachel Marshall to her best work and the eight full-page illustrations in muted colours, for all their purely visual appeal, seem static and lack the imaginative involvement her own story evinced.

By 1920 Rachel Marshall had achieved a modest professional success. Her work in *The Imprint* and for the Poetry Bookshop may not have been financially rewarding, but it did put her in distinguished professional company. More importantly, she appeared to have established herself with Chatto and Windus, already recognized as a publisher of discrimination, and had three books to her credit. Book illustration was, however, as her meagre earnings well show, no way to make a living. So early in 1921, she took a job as assistant to Robert Tatlock, the new editor of *The Burlington Magazine of Fine Art*. Soon afterwards, on March 30, 1921, she married David Garnett, whom she had met at 19 Taverton Street, the communal house in which they both lived, and from which he conducted his business as a bookseller. The marriage was to prove a fruitful one for both of them, professionally as well as personally, notwithstanding the serious reservations expressed by friends.

David Garnett had not at this time established himself as a writer, though he had published one pot-boiler, *Dope Darling* (1919) under the pseudonym "Leda Burke", as well as a curious little piece, *The Kitchen Garden and Its Management* (1919), abridged and adapted from a French work by Professor Gressent. He was, in fact, struggling to make something of his bookselling business, Birrell and Garnett.

His first work of fiction issued under his own name was *Lady Into Fox* (1922). It proved a phenomenal success both in Britain and the U.S.A., and eventually sold some 500,000 copies. Moreover, it won both the James Tait Black and the Hawthornden prizes for 1923, a rare distinction. Chatto and Windus had initially hesitated over publication, because of the shortness of the book (some 22,000 words), and had indeed suggested waiting until Garnett had more stories

available: "Perhaps two more would be sufficient with Mrs. Garnett's very charming illustrations" (letter to DG from C & W June 29, 1922). Garnett seems to have made an effort to oblige, but on July 13, 1922 wrote again to Prentice: "I am very sorry I have not written anything on my holiday. In fact, though I had an idea, [I] could do nothing with it at all and have now no hopes. I want my *Lady Into Fox* to come out early in the autumn if possible, so will you let me know if you definitely turn it down as it is? I don't see why you should not charge four shillings for it in view of the illustrations, if you do publish it." Fortunately, the publishers decided that the book's "literary excellence" would outweigh the "purely commercial defect" of its shortness, and chose to go ahead (letter from C & W to DG, July 19, 1922).

Ray Garnett had by this time, as we have already seen, more or less established herself as a children's author and illustrator. So it is little wonder that, approaching Chatto with his novella in 1922, David Garnett should want to draw upon his wife's reputation, yet was anxious that his work not be misclassified. Thus his very first letter (June 28, 1922) to the publishers said in part:

Dear Sirs, I am enclosing the typescript of a story for your consideration. It is designed to be illustrated with twelve wood-engravings by my wife, whose *Ride On A Rocking Horse* you published . . . I must say that it is not a book for children but for grown-up people. This in case you sent it to the wrong readers.

Though he makes no mention of any preliminary sketches, there must have been *some* evidence appended to his letter. For in their reply, dated June 29, 1922—just *one* day after Garnett's initial letter—the publishers refer specifically to "the illustrations" in terms that suggest they have seen some. His anxiety about the possible misinterpretation of his book was hardly unwarranted. The illustrations alone are enough to mislead the unwary; they include, for example, a woodcut of a child showing her doll to the fox, another of the fox in a dress chasing a rabbit, and a third of three fox-cubs.

However, David Garnett's book, which he has characterized as "a *reductio ad absurdum* of the problem of fidelity in love" (*The Familiar Faces*, 1962, p. 27), is even to the most casual reader anything but a children's text. Ray herself is, of course, the model for the "lady" who turns into a fox and eventually produces a family for another denizen of the wild. Everyone knew that Ray was the fox, according to Frances Partridge. Like Silvia Tebrick in the story, she was "reserved almost to shyness but perfectly self-possessed" (p.4). David wrote (*The Flowers of the Forest*, 1956): "I felt more like a bird-watcher coaxing a rare moorland bird to accept his presence than a young man trying to win a girl's heart" (p. 231), and "Ray was a woodland creature. She wanted the protection and shelter that woods gave, and among the beeches and the pines *I saw her as I could never see her in London* (my italics)" (p. 234).

The genesis of *Lady Into Fox* is, not surprisingly then, to be found in an incident that occurred while David and Ray were visiting *The Cearne*, the home of Edward and Constance Garnett, David's parents. Out in the woods, in hopes of spotting some fox cubs, the pair eventually give up. As David recalls it, he said "There's no hope of seeing a fox—unless you were suddenly to turn into one. You might. I should not really be much surprised if you did." But it was Ray who urged "You must write that as a story" (p. 244) and it was Ray too who reminded her husband of his recent purchase of a sixteenth-century copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* with woodcuts by Geoffrey Tory. Perhaps it was also the edition of Ovid that gave Ray the inspiration to illustrate *Lady Into Fox* with woodcuts. In any case, she began work on the illustrations before the story was finished even as she offered "encouragement and approbation" to the author.

Given the importance of her role in the development of *Lady Into Fox* it was only fitting that Ray should receive more than customary acknowledgement. And indeed the publishers drew particular attention on the dustjacket of the book to the identity of the artist: "A rare and sympathetic interpretat-



ion is provided by twelve woodcuts, the work of Mrs. Garnett, formerly Miss Rachel Marshall, and well known as the illustrator of *A Ride on A Rocking Horse*." On the inner flap of the dustjacket, they also listed her published works. In short, they were exploiting the earlier success of Ray Garnett to help sell the work of her husband.

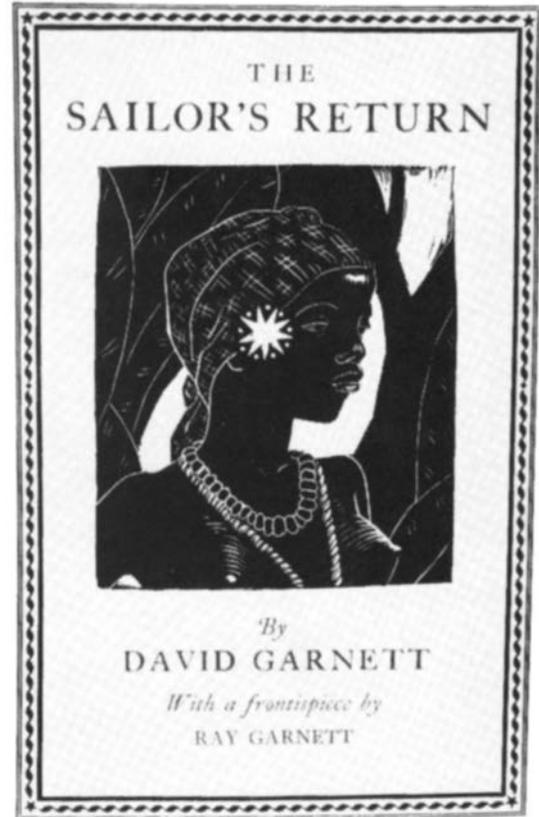
Lady Into Fox was, by any measure, spectacularly successful. It was soon translated into many languages (eg. French, Russian, Swedish, Polish)¹⁰ and even spawned a number of parodies and imitations. Perhaps the best of these was Christopher Ward's *Gentleman Into Goose* (1924), "Being the Exact and True Account of the Timothy Teapot, Gent . . . that was changed to a great Grey Gander at the Wish of his Wife."¹¹ That a work of fiction so immensely popular should have been illustrated with wood-engravings certainly contributed as much to the revival of wood-engravings in book illustration as the efforts of the private presses. Bland (1952) sees the publication of Shaw's *Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God* (Cape, 1932), illustrated by John Farleigh, as a milestone in the commercial use of

wood-engraving. Yet *Lady Into Fox* predates it by ten years, and was moderately priced at five shillings. The response of the Garnett friends and acquaintances to Ray's illustrations is for the most part unrecorded. But Dora Carrington, in a letter (October 26, 1922) written just two days after publication of the book, expressed her appreciation to David Garnett: "Will you tell Rachel how much I liked some of her woodcuts. The very small one on the front page of the *Reluctant Mrs. Fox* behind the bush with her husband I think I liked the best."¹² Carrington is referring here to the title-page vignette, which shows Mr. and Mrs. Tebrick hand-in-hand. Mr. Tebrick is about to open a wooden gate into a field, while his wife draws back and turns her head away as though in fear.

A different kind of tribute, a silent one, was that of Max Beerbohm, who lovingly and beautifully hand-coloured some of the illustrations in his copy. (The copy was sent to DG as a gift by Beerbohm's widow in 1958.)

David Garnett's next book was *Man in the Zoo*, a work which explores in a somewhat different way from *Lady Into Fox* the relationship between the human and the animal world. Here we find a young man, who, spurned by his fiancée, has himself exhibited in the Ape House of the London Zoo, between the chimpanzee and the orang-outang. Obviously, none of the parties involved in *Lady Into Fox* wished to turn their backs on a successful formula; so Charles Prentice was delighted to hear that "there is a prospect of its including several woodcuts by Mrs. Garnett" (letter to DG, August 23, 1923). In fact, six illustrations appeared in the book: and again there was a title-page vignette, showing the man in the zoo surrounded by other species of animals, and a dust-jacket illustration.

For *The Sailor's Return* (1925), Ray Garnett did only a frontispiece, which was reproduced on the dustjacket. The absence of more illustrations may be explained by the fact that DG was also working on a book for which he then had high hopes—a version of *Puss In Boots*. Thus in a letter to CP



(March 28, 1925), he says: "Puss will have to be illustrated to some extent at the expense of Targett [the provisional title of *The Sailor's Return*]. DG seems to have been peculiarly negative about this work: "I took up Targett, and went through the points you raised, but the story bores me to such an extent that I doubt I can improve it much" (letter to CP, April 5, 1925). Yet he takes some delight in the likely reaction of Alfred Knopf (his American publisher) to a picture of a bare-breasted black woman: "a rude shock awaits him when he is introduced to her Royal Highness Gundemey" (letter to CP, May 27, 1925). Certainly the illustration was a bold one, but Knopf used it apparently without problem, just as Chatto & Windus did. More than fifty years later, Otto Plaschkes, producer of the 1978 film version of *The Sailor's Return* (which shared the Martin Luther King Prize for 1980) became enamoured of Ray Garnett's wood-engraving, and sought a print of it for himself, as well as permission to use it as the film logo.

Ray Garnett's work, from the time of her marriage in 1921 until 1933 (the date of her last-known illustrations) was distributed almost equally between her husband's books and those of other writers. In all, during this period, she produced some thirty-two illustrations, mostly woodcuts, for her husband, and thirty-six for other people. And, of David's nine books published after their marriage but before her death (1940), Ray did *some* artistic work for all but two. *Go She Must* (1927) was not illustrated at all, in spite of Ray's offer to do "something for the wrapper" (letter to CP, October 3, 1926). The offer was not taken up because David was trying to find another artist. By October 7, 1926, he proposed the name of John Banting (later to work for the Hogarth Press and for John Lehmann) who must have been asked to paint a watercolour for the dust-jacket. However, it pleased neither Prentice nor Garnett, who refers to it as "a sad memento which I will hang up before me" (letter to CP, November 12, 1926). *Beany-eye* (1935) is also noteworthy, in being the only illustrated work of Garnett's from this period without any illustrations by his wife. The dustjacket in soft green and brown pastels is by Trekkie Ritchie, later to become the wife of Ian Parsons.¹³ Of course, Ray was not primarily a "jacket" artist at all, and, in any case, enthusiasm for wood-engraving was waning. One symbol of the passing of the old era was the retirement of Charles Prentice, Ray's longtime admirer, in 1934.

There had been earlier occasions on which artists other than Ray Garnett had been considered to illustrate David's work. For *A Rabbit in the Air* (1932) (subtitled "Notes from a Diary Kept While Learning to Handle an Aeroplane") Thomas Poulton had been suggested. He was not contacted, in fact, because, says DG, writing from France, "Ray seems to think she could do a business-like drawing up of a cockpit." And, with the aid of photographs, she produced accurate representations of the cockpit of a Bluebird, Mark III, and of a De Haviland Gypsy Moth. In preparing *No Love* (1929), David seems to have approached his friend Duncan Grant for help with an idea for a

title-page and dust-jacket. When Grant couldn't do what he wanted (letter to CP, March 13, 1929), he turned once again to his wife. She did the design of swords and cocked hats to his satisfaction, though he seems more taken with the cleverness of his idea: "the rough sketch for the cover is in



my opinion magnificent but I am perhaps too easily pleased by my own ideas" (letter to CP, March 18, 1929). It is certainly true that David was far more involved in the design of this book than was usually the case. He made brackets for the page numbers, using the ornaments from the chapter-headings, and introduced *fournier le jeune* type for the initial letters of each chapter. Whether he also suggested that Ray do a design of "gold wavy lines" for the title on the spine is not clear. He mentions the possibility (letter to CP, March 18, 1929), and she cleverly transformed the wavy lines into sea-horses and fish. On the other hand, he more or less vetoed Ray's own contribution to the title-page design, observing "I'm rather against the hands and true lover's

knot which Ray has lightly sketched. The one with the anchor is her title page," (letter to CP, n.d., 1929).

— Apart from *Lady Into Fox* and *Man In The Zoo*, *The Grasshoppers Come* (1931) was the only book of David's for which Ray made a whole series of woodcuts rather than merely a title-page vignette, a frontispiece and/or a dust-jacket design. Like the later *A Rabbit In the Air*,

THE
GRASSHOPPERS
COME

BY
DAVID
GARNETT



LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
1931

The Grasshoppers Come is a flying book —the story of three adventurers who attempt to break the long-distance flying record but crash somewhere in Asia. Illustrating such a work must have presented a considerable challenge to Ray, and she appears to have procrastinated in a most uncharacteristic way. David delivered the first version of this manuscript before Christmas, 1930 (letter to CP, December 19, 1930), and he is soon complaining to Prentice, "The trouble so far is Ray is hanging over illustrations, but I think a week or so into the New Year will see her started" (letter to CP December 26, 1930).

Early in February "after an immense apathetic lack of interest she is suddenly going and the pictures will be full of rocks and mountains" (letter to CP, n.d. but received February 12, 1931). Next we hear that "Ray is going strong with the woodcuts and I am pleased about them so far" (letter to CP, February 20, 1931). The results, four full-page illustrations, a title-page ornament, a tailpiece and a striking dust-jacket design of grass-hoppers, include what is probably some of Ray Garnett's best work. Particularly well drawn are the stark, barren regions of Asia (see p. 45 "The Peshan" and p. 71 "The Bird") into which the airplane crashes. And the black is far more effectively used than in *Lady Into Fox*, where it sometimes lends a heaviness to the picture unjustified by the subject.



("The Peshan")

The only recorded comments by David about Ray's less tangible contributions to his work—her "influence" on him, if you will—has already been discussed. It is the story of the genesis and writing of *Lady Into Fox*. But

others have expressed their indebtedness to her too—and in the case of T. H. White, author of *The Once and Future King*, in quite explicit terms. He admired what he called her “eagle eye” and says “None of my hawks have ever seen as well as Ray does” (letter to DG, April 10, 1939). Perhaps his greatest tribute, however, has more to do with her attributes as a critic than as an artist. Writing to David from Ireland, after her death, he says of his work in progress (to be the Arthurian tetralogy), “If it turns out to be a good book, as I suspect it may, it will be due to Ray. Some things she said at Sheskin made me think in an improved way, and particularly to settle down to read the Russians. It will be through them, but particularly through Ray, that Guenevere has turned out to be a living being. Ray was impatient with me for not attending to my women: I have attended to Guenevere with something more than respect, with fear almost (letter to DG, June 14, 1940).¹⁴

The last piece of work done by Ray Garnett for her husband—and indeed the last for anyone else—was the unsigned map of Chesapeake Bay in *Pocahontas* (1933). In the southwest corner of the map, there is a line-drawing of an Indian with peace-pipe. The large, coloured dust-jacket illustration (the reunion of Pocahontas with Captain John Smith?) intended as a pastiche of the work of the French illustrator, Edy Legrand, was not, however, the work of Ray Garnett.

The Puss-In-Boots project, for all DG’s high hopes of it, was left unfinished at this time. An excerpt from it (probably the very piece Alfred Knopf read and thought sellable; letter to CP of May 27, 1925) appeared in *A Chatto And Windus Almanack* (1926) and later in *Purl And Plain* (1973). As early as 1925 (letter to CP, March 28, 1925), DG was waxing optimistic: “With any luck, I ought to get Puss done in a couple of months. The question of illustrations is more difficult . . . Ray suggests one or two coloured ones and as many black and white as she has time to do—woodcuts I suppose . . .” And, indeed, in 1928, the book was advertised as “In preparation” and “illustrated by R. A. Garnett” (*Chatto and Windus Miscellany*, 1928). In fact,

Ray actually did some preliminary sketches for *Puss-In-Boots*. In one of her note-books at Hilton Hall, there are a number of pencil drawings: Puss approaching two workers in the field to tell them of his Master, and Puss watching the ogre magician turn himself into an elephant. Yet not until 1974 did the book appear—now entitled *The Master Cat*, with illustrations by David Garnett’s daughter, Nerissa.¹⁵

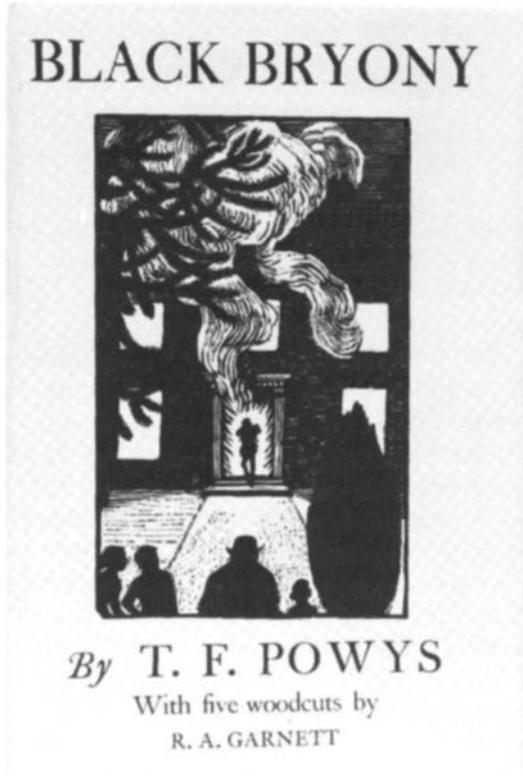
Sometime in the Spring of 1923, DG took Ray and their baby son, Richard, down to East Chaldon, Dorset to meet his new friend, TFP. TFP was a very private person and not easy to get to know, but the meeting went very well, DG recalls in his autobiography. “Though Theo may have had some reservations about me, he completely accepted Ray, and she on her part, loved him deeply and was always happy when she was at Chaldon. Violet and Ray got on very well and liked each other” (*The Familiar Faces*, 1962, p. 6).

That this was an accurate perception of the relationship is confirmed by a warm letter from TFP to Ray, still at Hilton Hall, and dated December 3, 1925. He says, in part: “I seem to know you and David as well as if I had been born in the same house—a step-brother or bastard son, something like that . . .” He goes on to admire the photographs he had been sent of the children (“William looks ravishing, and Richard has grown”), mentions a review of *The Sailor’s Return*, and ends with a typically Powysian admonition to be careful of the lake!

With such a background of easy intimacy, it would not be unnatural to assume that either TFP or Ray broached the idea of illustrating his next book. In truth, the proposal came from Charles Prentice and Geoffrey Whitworth who had become enthusiastic promoters of Ray’s work. Of course their motives were not altogether unsullied by an interest in the sale of books as a long letter from Prentice to TFP (June 28, 1923) demonstrates. He begins with bad news about the sales, or lack thereof, of *The Left Leg*—only 345 copies of the first month (publication date was May 22, 1923)—and is anxious to reassure TFP that “we have not spared pains in doing our best for the poor

'Leg'". He then outlines a proposal: "In spite of *The Left Leg*, the firm is keen to continue and suggests that another method of publication should be tried. The idea is to issue this autumn at five or six shillings net, *Black Bryony*, the less sombre tale, attractively dressed, and with woodcut illustrations in black and white to dazzle the jaded eye".

TFP evidently agreed to the plan in principle, and Ray Garnett was offered the commission. She wrote back to Whitworth (letter, August 2, 1923): "I should very much like to do five woodcuts for Mr. Powys' story, but I do not think I could promise to have them done before the end of September . . . I like *Black Bryony* better than any I have read of his and can see that there would be plenty to illustrate." She worked quickly, so that by September 18, Prentice was able to report to TFP that "The two she has already delivered appear to me very good. There is an interesting one of the fire." And true to her word, the last block was delivered by October 1, 1923.



TFP himself did not see the illustrations until the book appeared (November 15, 1923), but his reaction was very favourable, on the evidence of Prentice's letter to TFP (November 16, 1923), telling him that 384 copies of the new book had already been ordered: "It is very nice of you writing so kindly about *Black Bryony*. I am very glad indeed that you like Mrs. Garnett's woodcuts and the appearance of the book also." In spite of Prentice's optimism about the sales appeal of the new "attractively dressed" book, the performance of *Black Bryony* was not particularly good. It is true that, in a letter to Louis Wilkinson, sometime in July 1926 (cited in *Welsh Ambassadors*, 1936), TFP writes: "The Royalties for 'Mark Only', as far as I can remember, in a whole year were only seven shillings. Of the back ones 'Black Bryony' sells the most." But the first and only English edition, a mere 2,500 copies, was still in print nearly two decades later.

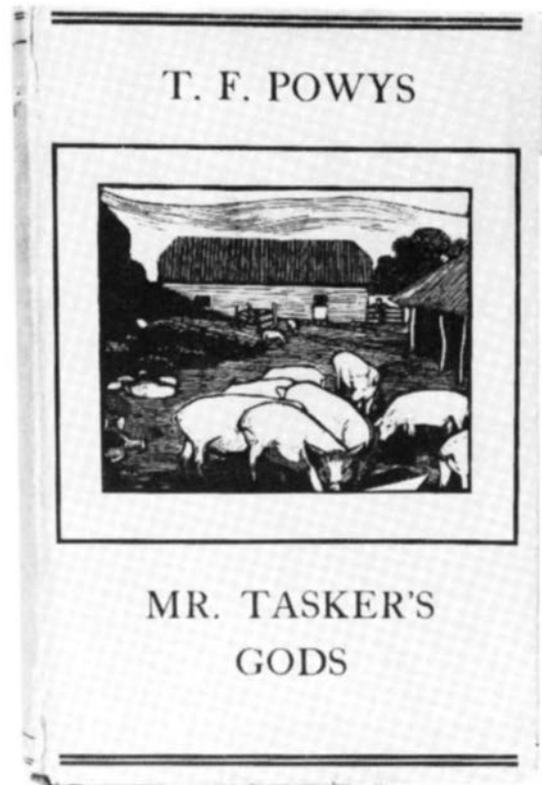
The illustrations themselves, all full-page, are well-chosen and visually appealing. Two of them convey an impression of rural tranquility and innocence that suits Powys's style perfectly: the Norbury boys in a country lane are not admiring but stoning the sheep in the field (opposite page 54), and Mary Crowle may be preaching on the village green, but she is a thief and a fornicator (frontispiece). The other three illustrations capture a more melodramatic side of Powys, and are therefore appropriately darker and heavier: Mary Crowle holds a sprig of black bryony up to the moon (opposite page 18), the Crossleys find a baby on the Rectory doorstep at midnight (opposite page 104), and Mr. Crossley emerges from his burning house with the baby (opposite page 166). This last illustration, representing the climactic scene of the novel, was the one for which Prentice had expressed his admiration—perhaps the reason it was reproduced on the dustjacket too. It also curiously anticipates, in the silhouetted figure of Mr. Crossley engulfed in flames, another fire scene in *The Grasshoppers Come*, wherein the pilot, in silhouette, watches flames consume his plane. No doubt one can trace in these and other engravings the benevolent influence of Noel Rooke (see



(*The Grasshoppers Come*)

for comparison Rooke's "Limestone Cliffs," *The Imprint*, April 17, 1913, p. 249).

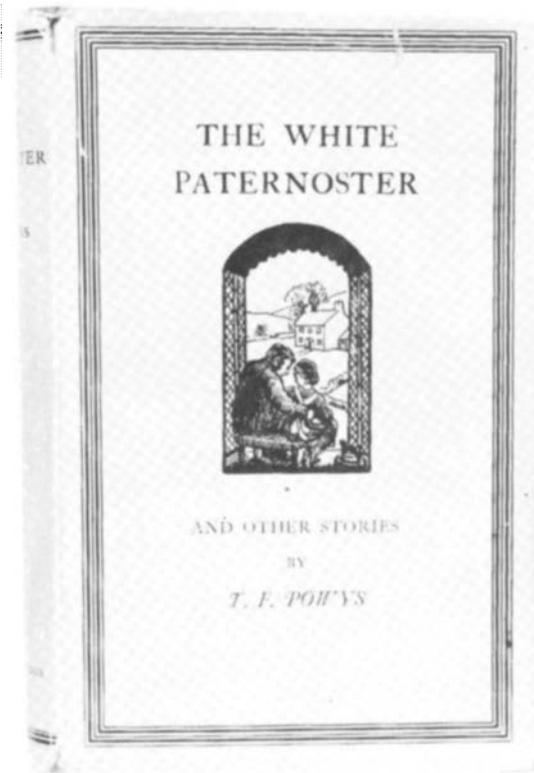
Not until *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* (1927) was another of TFP's books so generously illustrated and that book, it must be remembered, was first issued in a limited edition of 660 copies. From the point of view of the publishers, then, the experiment had failed: illustrated editions would henceforth either have to be severely limited (as with *Mr. Weston* and the later *Fables*) or remain the province of the private presses.¹⁶ However, Chatto and Windus did invite Ray Garnett to do two more modest projects for books by TFP. She provided a woodcut (printed in brown) of pigs in a farmyard for *Mr. Tasker's Gods*. The illustration was unsigned, so Riley (1967) cautiously labelled it "in the style of R. A. Garnett". Correspondence in the Chatto archives confirms that it is indeed her work: the first letter (November 17, 1924) to Geoffrey Whitworth expresses her willingness to undertake the project, and the last (January 3, 1925) reports the work done. Her last Powys illustration for Chatto and Windus was the title-page vignette (reproduced on the dust-jacket) for *The White Paternoster* (1930). It



is not clear whether Prentice asked her to illustrate a specific story or gave her *carte blanche*. In any case, she wrote (June 26, 1930): "Would either of these designs do? I'm not sure they are suitable, that the subjects are recognizable, or that what is supposed to be a porch looks like one. But I think that is the better one. If either of these would do, may I try to do a pen and ink drawing from it, and not a woodcut?"

The drawing itself represents a scene in the hilarious story, "Old Men"; it shows old Mr. Mowlem nestling up to the minister's servant, Susanna, on the porch. The home of the Reverend Mr. Gasser, with its porch, can be seen in the distance. The proximity of the two homes lends special meaning to the faith the old men share in Bishop Berkeley's assertion that "what each of us sees is not a real thing at all, because we neither of us see the same thing" (*The White Paternoster*, pp. 34-35). All this the artist captures in a drawing that is, once again, more than it seems.

In the same year that she did the work for *The White Paternoster*, Ray Garnett illustrated



a Powys book for another publisher, William Jackson (Books) Ltd. Alan Steele, junior partner in the publishing imprint, Joiner and Steele, seems to have been the moving spirit behind the Furnival Books, of which *The Key of the Field* was the first issue. This book set the pattern for the rest—a signed, limited edition, with frontispiece by a distinguished artist, and foreword by another writer (in this case, Sylvia Townsend Warner). The frontispiece depicts Uncle Tiddy gazing wistfully into Squire Jar’s locked field, while pigs root out in front. In the middle of the field can be seen the “fine oak-tree that gave a welcome shelter to the cows during the hot summer weather” (p. 12). The pigs, not specifically mentioned in the story, may well represent the suggestively named Trott family, whose members make life so difficult for Uncle Tiddy. The artist may also have been remembering the significance of pigs in *Mr. Tasker’s Gods*.

Sylvia Townsend Warner met DG, and subsequently his wife Ray, through Stephen Tomlin (see her own account in *The Powys*



Review, 5, pp. 13-23). Since she became, in DG’s words, “an intimate friend of Ray’s” (*The Familiar Faces*, p. 8), one is not surprised to find one of her books, *The True Heart* (1929) illustrated by Ray. What is surprising is to discover, yet again, that the initiative for this collaboration came neither from the author nor the artist but from Charles Prentice. Ray’s letter (n.d., but received December 8, 1928) to Prentice makes it clear that he has already asked her for a specific title-page design:

I shall be very glad to do a teapot and cups for the title page of *The True Heart*. If I do a woodcut, it must be a very fine one to go with the printing. Shall I draw several and show them to Sylvia to see if they are the right kind?

The question she raises about “the right kind” [of tea-pot] suggests that STW had already decided what would be an appropriate illustration for her novel. But the choice of a tea-pot or tea-kettle (a synonym in some dialects) is puzzling at first; it does not seem particularly apt for what is a modern retelling of the legend of Eros and Psyche. However, the heroine is an orphan, Sukey Bond, whose first name is both a dialect term for a general servant or “slavey” (which she becomes) and

THE
TRUE HEART

by
SYLVIA TOWNSEND
WARNER



LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
1929

for a tea-kettle! (See Partridge's *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 1937; Webster's II.)¹⁷ This explanation for the illustration might appear over-contrived were it not for the independent evidence of word-play in the names of other characters in *The True Heart*. Thus Mrs. Seaborn, the rector's wife, is a disguised Venus; and the names of the lovers are transparent—'Eric' is Eros and 'Sukey' is also Psyche! STW in fact revealed the game she had played some ten years after the novel appeared: "I supposed that most readers would recognize the story but few did, though I had reproduced it closely, and named my characters to recall either by sense or sound, their originals" (*The Countryman*, 1939, Vol. XIX, no. 2, p. 477).

Whether Ray ever did consult STW is nowhere recorded. But there are a number of trial drawings among her notes at Hilton

Hall; the most intriguing of these is a pencil sketch of the design actually used, with the background of leaves in the shape of a heart. When she had finished the block for the woodcut, she sent it to Prentice with some incidental comments about the work itself: "I enjoyed reading the book immensely. I think I like it best of the three" (letter to CP, December 18, 1928). The design was reproduced on the dust-jacket as well, in accord with the usual practice of Chatto and Windus. In return for her work, she received three guineas and two copies of the novel.

STW's two earlier novels would seem to have lent themselves admirably to the attention of an illustrator (the first American dust-jacket for *Lolly Willowes* bears the silhouette of a witch on a broomstick!), but the opportunity was never taken. Curiously enough, DG saw the merits of *Lolly Willowes* from the first, and urged special treatment, especially advertising it "perhaps rather vulgarly" (letter to CP, n.d., but received February 6, 1926).

The majority of Ray Garnett's work was, as has been seen, commissioned by Chatto and Windus. There were, nonetheless, occasions on which she did work for other major publishers, specifically Jonathan Cape, Faber and Gwyer (the immediate predecessor of Faber and Faber), and The Nonesuch Press. The earliest of her projects was for The Nonesuch Press, who proclaimed themselves in Francis Meynell's words, "architects of books rather than builders" (*The Nonesuch Century*, 1936). Since DG was one of the original partners, it was no doubt at his suggestion that Ray illustrated *The Book of The Bear* (1926), a group of twenty-one bear stories, translated from Russian by Jane Harrison and Hope Mirrlees. There could hardly have been a more appropriate illustrator than Ray Garnett. Not only did she especially like drawing animals (of which her other work provides ample testimony), but she also had a particular fondness for Russia and things Russian. One of the bonds between her and her husband must certainly have been that they both visited Russia while quite young. But DG had gone with his mother, Constance; Ray made the journey in

THE BOOK OF THE BEAR



THE BEAR-PRINCE

the summer of 1914 with a Russian art-school friend, named Kunsevitch. She kept a diary (still at Hilton Hall) and returned with illustrated Russian books, gramophone records, and, most important of all, her own sketches of scenes from Russian life: farmers, peasants, a fat militia man, families with



children. Comparison of Ray's "Russian file" at Hilton Hall with the eight coloured drawings in *The Book of The Bear* shows how much she drew upon these sketches in preparing the material for The Nonesuch Press. The peasant costumes, we can be sure, are authentic. And her style in these illustrations is somehow different, as though transformed as she remembered "days and weeks peopled by Georgian princes, a dancing bear, riders galloping over the mountains on elaborate saddles" (Frances Partridge, *Memories*, p.21).

Ray Garnett's invitation to illustrate Pax, *The Adventurous Horse* for Faber and Gwyer must surely have been related to her own *A Ride on a Rocking Horse* (reissued in 1926). Edward Garnett, Ray's father-in-law, wrote a preface to the book, and may even have suggested that Ray illustrate it. Pax was the work of an eleven year old girl, Muriel Hodder, from whose fertile imagination sprang this story of an English horse stolen by two brothers and taken off to Germany. Ray Garnett drew a full-page frontispiece, which depicts Valerie, the rightful owner, and Pax in court, while "The people with loving eyes watched her" (p. 103). And for each of the twenty-three chapters, she provided a suitable line-drawing (seventeen different illustrations, and six repeated). The dust-jacket design is hers too: Pax surrounded by scenes and characters from the story. It has a crude naive quality that is peculiarly, and no doubt consciously, in keeping with the narrative. The drawing of Pax that heads Chapter II has also been reproduced as a device in gold on the front cover of the book.

Although there was a family connection with Jonathan Cape Ltd.—Edward Garnett was the principal literary adviser or "reader" in the firm—Ray did but one illustration for Cape. She designed a title-page vignette, also used on the dustjacket, for H. E. Bates's third novel *Charlotte's Row* (1931). In the second volume of his autobiography, *The Blossoming World* (1971), Bates gave an amusing account of his first invitation to Hilton Hall (pp. 47-52), and offered his own impression of Ray Garnett. He recognised her as a "charming, talented and intelligent woman" (p. 50), but was most struck by her shyness.

However, nowhere does he mention the work, albeit modest, that she later did for him. Yet it was Bates himself, and not his publisher, who seems to have approached Ray about illustrating his book. Two letters in the Humanities Research Centre, The University of Texas at Austin, from Ray Garnett to H. E. Bates are evidently responses to such a proposal.¹⁸ The first letter (Hilton Hall, November 24, no year) shows her diffident but eager to do something for Bates:

I don't think I ought to say that I would do a dust cover. I should probably do it very badly—I have done so little of that sort of thing—and do nothing now. A title page I should find easier. I can't resist the temptation to do your book. So I hope you will send the proofs.

The second letter (Hilton, no date) says much the same thing in the first part, stressing that “It is wrong for me to say I will as I let myself get completely out of practice.” But in the second part, we get useful clues as to the date as well as some interesting observations about TFP's work:

I have just got ‘Kindness in a Corner’, it seems a very gentle Theo at present. Some of Fables were so wonderful, perhaps it's a good thing this is so different—I was so pleased to be sent a copy of ‘A Key of the Field’, must acknowledge it.

Now *Kindness In A Corner* was issued March 6, 1930 and *The Key of the Field* in February of the same year. These two letters probably date, then, from early 1930. Moreover, the first four Furnival Books (of which *The Key of the Field* was no. 1 and Bates's *The Hessian Prisoner* no. 2) all appeared in the same year. It is not unlikely, then, that Bates was prompted to write to Ray Garnett by seeing her frontispiece to *The Key of the Field* at the time his own work was in preparation (the frontispiece for which was done by John Austen; the foreword by Edward Garnett).

The outcome of the correspondence between Bates and Ray Garnett was a single pen-and-ink drawing, illustrating an early incident in the novel. It shows the shoemaker,

H. E. BATES
CHARLOTTE'S ROW

BY THE SAME AUTHOR
 THE TWO SISTERS
 CATHERINE FOSTER



JONATHAN CAPE
 THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE LONDON

Quintus Harper, “wearing a long black apron; a very dirty shirt was rolled up to his elbows” (pp. 15-16). Before him, with boots slung across his back, stands a boy of nine or ten, his hair “almost hidden beneath a black cap with a very wide peak.” A railway-arch in the background reveals only factory chimneys. Every detail of the picture draws from some specific of the text. Somehow the artist conveys the sense of a bond between the man and the boy—is it the hand on the shoulder?—and that too has its source in the text. When we recall how much Bates depended upon autobiographical material in his early writing, it is hard not to see in this illustration an epitome of the relationship between Bates and his own maternal Grandfather with whom he was “bonded in a great warm mutual affection” (*The Vanished World*, 1969, p. 8). No doubt he approved heartily of the artist's work.

Ray Garnett's total output of published illustrations was perhaps modest by modern-

day standards; she illustrated no more than twenty books, and did fewer than two hundred illustrations (line-drawings, pen-and-ink, and wood-engravings) in all.¹⁹ But her own early children's books, her long association with Chatto and Windus, and above all the consistently high quality of her work suggest that her work merits serious attention by scholars, not least by those interested in modern book-illustration and children's literature.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF RACHEL MARSHALL/RAY GARNETT

I *Early work as Rachel A. Marshall*

(i) Political cartoons, *The Common Cause* Vol. II, No. 62, June 16, 1910 and Vol. II, No. 84, November 17, 1910.

(ii) Anne and Jane Taylor. *The Vulgar Little Lady*, London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts, MCMXIII. 8 page booklet. Woodcut on title page in green. Line-drawings on pp. 3, 4, 5; signed R.A.M. Later versions with line-drawings in colour were published by *The Imprint*, April 17, 1913 and by the Poetry Bookshop as *THE RHYME SHEET* [no. 7], probably in 1919.

(iii) Charles Loundsberry. *The Happy Testament*, Illustrated By Rachel Marshall, London: Chatto and Windus, 1913. 18 coloured line-drawings.

(iv) Rachel Marshall. *Archibald*, London County Council Central School Of Arts And Crafts, MCMXV. 24 page booklet. 2 woodcuts (title-page and end-piece in blue), 20 line-drawings.

(iv) Rachel A. Marshall. *A Ride on a Rocking-Horse*, London: Chatto and Windus [1917]. 3-colour woodcut on cover; 1-colour woodcuts on title-page and endpapers; 24 4-colour woodcuts in text; 10 line-drawings. American edition, E. P. Dutton 1918; reissued 1926 as by Ray Garnett, and again in 1937.

(vi) Olive Chandler. *The Imp of Mischief And Other Verses for Children*. Illustrated by Rachel Marshall. London: Chatto and Windus [1920]. 8 coloured line-drawings.

II *Work for David Garnett*

(i) *Lady Into Fox*, Illustrated with [12] Wood Engravings by R. A. Garnett [1 reproduced on dustjacket], London: Chatto and Windus, 1922. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923.

(ii) *A Man in the Zoo*, Illustrated with [6] wood-engravings by R. A. Garnett [1 reproduced on dustjacket], London: Chatto and Windus, 1924. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924. Different woodcut used on American dustjacket.

(iii) *The Sailor's Return*, With a frontispiece by Ray Garnett [reproduced on dustjacket], London: Chatto and Windus, 1925. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925.

(iv) *No Love*, London: Chatto and Windus 1929. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925 [Jacket-design and title-page device by Ray Garnett]. Information only on American dustjacket.

(v) *The Grasshoppers Come*, [Dustjacket and 6] Wood Engravings by R. A. Garnett London: Chatto and Windus, 1931. New York: Brewer, Warren and Putnam, 1931 Dustjacket not illustrated.

(vi) *A Rabbit In The Air*, [2] Drawings by R. A. Garnett from photographs, London: Chatto and Windus, 1932. New York: Brewer Warren and Putnam, 1932. Later (?), Harcourt Brace edition, also 1932.

(vii) *Pocahontas*, [Unsigned fold-out map of Chesapeake Bay area with drawing of an Indian], London: Chatto and Windus, 1933 New York: Harcourt Brace [1933].

III *Work for T. F. Powys*

(i) *Black Bryony*, With five Woodcuts by R. A. Garnett [1 reproduced on dustjacket] London: Chatto and Windus, 1923. (American dustjacket not seen).

(ii) *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, [unsigned dustjacket by R. A. Garnett], London: Chatto and Windus 1925. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925 (American dustjacket not seen).

(iii) *The White Paternoster*, The Design on the Title Page is by Ray Garnett, [and reproduced on dustjacket], London: Chatto and Windus, 1930. New York: The Viking Press

1931. No title-page design. (American dust-jacket not seen).

(iv) *The Key of the Field*, with a [frontispiece] woodcut by R. A. Garnett and a foreword by Sylvia Townsend Warner, London: William Jackson (Books) Ltd., 1930.

IV Other Work

(i) Jane Harrison and Hope Mirrlees. *The Book of the Bear*, The [8 coloured] pictures by Ray Garnett, London: The Nonesuch Press, 1926.

(ii) Muriel Hodder. *Pax, The Adventurous Horse*, Illustrations by Ray Garnett,

London: Faber and Gwyer, MCMXXVIII. Dustjacket illustration, frontispiece, and 17 line-drawings used as chapter headings (6 repeats).

(iii) Sylvia Townsend Warner. *The True Heart*, [unsigned title-page device; reproduced on dustjacket], London: Chatto and Windus, 1929.

(iv) H. E. Bates. *Charlotte's Row*, [unsigned title-page device, reproduced on dustjacket] London: Jonathan Cape, 1931. New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith [1931], (American dustjacket not seen).

NOTES

¹I am deeply indebted to Richard Garnett for many items of information about his mother that are nowhere else recorded, for allowing me access to his mother's notebooks and his father's books in Hilton Hall, Huntingdon, and for permission to publish extracts therefrom. I am also most grateful to Frances Partridge for details about her sister's early life and education, and for permission to quote from *Memories*.

²From time to time *Studio* would provide a retrospectus of student art work. The article in *Studio*, vol. 71 1920, pp. 51-58, is, in effect, a capsule history of the Central School of Arts and Crafts; so it is likely that the illustrations of student work accompanying the text span a number of years. The two woodcuts by Rachel Marshall here included (mother goat and baby) were commissioned or merely purchased by Messrs Heal and Son, the well-known furniture store in Tottenham Court Road. The goat motif also appears on a single piece of pottery by Rachel Marshall—part of a group “designed and executed by students”. At Hilton Hall are four other unpublished goat illustrations (two full page, in colour) which seem to have been intended for a story by Daudet—“La Chevre de M. Seguin”. Perhaps it is also worth noting that the Marshall family actually kept a pet goat at Tweenways, which was harnessed for picnics!

³The student version of the text shows evidence of production problems: “sleeves” is made to rhyme with “believe” in the first stanza. The two later versions correctly print “sleeve”.

⁴Notes from January (i.e. first) issue of *The Imprint*; cited in *J. H. Mason: Scholar-Printer*, 1976, p. 95.

⁵Edmund Evans himself, long associated with Randolph Caldecott and Kate Greenaway, died in 1905. The business was at this point run by his sons, Wilfred and Herbert, and had moved from Racquet Court to 16 Swan Street, Southwark.

⁶Each drawing was discreetly signed R.A.M. in the bottom left—or right-hand corner.

⁷It is entirely possible that Vivien Gribble was also “introduced” to Chatto and Windus at this time. She had produced woodcuts for *Three Psalms* under the supervision of Mason and Rooke in September, 1912, and later did a striking woodcut dustjacket for R. H. Mottram's *The Spanish Farm*, 1924.

⁸Access to the Chatto archives and permission to publish

therefrom was made possible through the kind indulgence of Norah Smallwood and with the particular help of Jane Turner.

⁹Without the special interest and efforts shown by Maxwell Proctor, Librarian at the Central School, I would never have seen the extant Central School copies of *Archibald* and other works by Rachel Marshall.

¹⁰A number of the foreign-language editions chose to retain at least the woodcut on the dustjacket. But the Russian edition (1924) depicts a sinister looking slant-eyed woman with a fox wrapped around her neck.

¹¹Also of interest are an advertising piece by the Natural Fur Co. Ltd., *Lady Into Mink*, 1935, and an intriguing ‘reverse’ story by Vercors, *Sylvia*, 1961, in which “une renarde poursuivie par la chasse et qui se transforme en une jeune fille”.

¹²The letter is reproduced in *Carrington*, ed. David Garnett, 1970, p. 233. Carrington also expressed her admiration (and reported that of Lytton Strachey) for the novel itself.

¹³Trekkie Ritchie, a South-African by birth, studied at the Slade, and later did a number of dustjackets for the Hogarth Press, as well as illustrations for a children's book *The Three Kings*, 1944, by Barbara Baker.

¹⁴The letters from T. H. White are reproduced in *The White/Garnett Letters*, ed. David Garnett, 1968, pp. 42-43 and p. 69. The volume also contains a moving account of the death of Ray Garnett in 1940.

¹⁵In a “Note to the Reader” (pp. 136-137), DG makes light of the delay saying “It has taken me forty-seven years to collect the material now published here—forty-seven years since the first brutalised version was told me by Tabs”.

¹⁶TFP fared very well at the hands of illustrators. Gilbert Spencer illustrated *Fables*, 1929 and *Kindness In a Corner*, 1930; and George Charlton did *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*. For the Golden Cockerel Press, John Nash (*When Thou Wast Naked*, 1931) and Gwenda Morgan (*Goat Green*, 1937) also produced fine and evocative drawings.

¹⁷The association between “Sukey” and “tea-kettle” will be recalled by many readers from the nursery rhyme “Polly put the kettle on . . . Sukey take it off again/We'll all have tea.”

¹⁸I would like to acknowledge the courtesy of the Humani-

ties Research Centre in granting access and permission to reproduce extracts from these letters. I am indebted to my former colleague Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, for copying the letters for me at short notice.

¹⁹I have counted 160 published illustrations, and thirteen unpublished. Among the latter, I include DG's bookplate (for

an anecdote about which, see Frances Partridge's *Memories*, Victor Gollancz, 1931, pp. 143-149) and the notecards from his French home (le Verger de Charry) with an appropriate apple tree woodcut. Incidentally, a later bookplate, designed by Reynolds Stone, adorns most of DG's books.

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John Williams

Theodore Powys:

“all good books tell the same tale.”¹*

Readers of Theodore Powys's fiction will be familiar with the impression that, no matter how many of his novels and short stories one reads, they all give the impression of being, in the end, “the same tale”. This is not, of course, an experience confined to a reading of Powys, but with him it seems particularly, and indeed wilfully, to be the case. It should not surprise us, therefore, to encounter in *Soliloquies of a Hermit* the statement I have chosen as a title for this essay. I hope to illustrate that a quality of sameness in Powys's fiction comes about as a consequence of what he understood to be the primary function of his imaginative writing. I would begin this discussion by pointing out that the source of the above quotation is a philosophical work, and this suggests that any student of T. F. Powys as a writer of fiction must take very careful note of the relationship between the philosophy and the fiction. An integral part of my discussion of the fiction, therefore, will be to trace the philosophical arguments of the *Soliloquies*.

Given the sameness of Powys's work, I have been able to select from it just three incidents which adequately serve to identify problems which regularly occur for readers of the fiction. They are problems in the sense that the reader feels he is being invited to associate with, or condone, attitudes which are fundamentally disturbing. In such cases Powys has the ability to make one fear that to understand may be to believe, and very often in the face of what it seems he wants us to understand, we feel it prudent to opt for incomprehension. Reading the philosophy and fiction as one, and pursuing an understanding of their relationship, is the only way this impasse may be overcome.

In chapter XIV of *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, the outcast, dying priest, Henry Neville, is visited by a drover who has beaten and starved his wife to death. “He had come there”, we are told, “to confess.”² It is a long, laboured, grim speech by a man who has rarely found the need to string more than two or three words together by way of communication; but now he is frightened and confused, believing that the woman will haunt him. Yet this macabre confession has at the same time an inescapably comic element, which grows through the passage by the drover's repetition of the word “thud”. Used once to describe the way his wife's coffin came to rest in the bottom of the grave, the word would be suitably depressing; but the unfortunate woman persists in going “thud” at regular intervals throughout the monologue. Our growing awareness of the comedy in this passage may well simultaneously lead us to question its appropriateness. What, after all, *is* the joke? It is not enough, I believe, to ascribe a passage of such black comedy as this to what appears to have been Theodore Powys's normally pessimistic attitude of mind. We need to know more.

In the short story, *John Pardy and the Waves*, John is cruelly rejected by his relatives, and eventually, in the best Theodorian tradition, walks calmly into the sea. It sounds like a depressing act of negative despair, made all the more bitter perhaps by the fact that the waves invite John to share their “great joy”³:

The waves had so much entertained John Pardy by their replies to his questions that he laughed loudly, rolling his body backwards and forwards and showing himself to be very merry.⁴

We might reasonably be tempted to conclude that “joy” and merriment here arise solely

*A paper read to the Powys Society, 1979, with minor revisions

from a rejection of life; which is to say that they are qualities to which Powys attaches a profoundly cynical meaning. As with the comedy in the passage from *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, I believe we need to know more before we can form an opinion on this.

The Bucket and the Rope tells us the story of Mr. Dendy, who makes use of those articles to hang himself. The bucket and the rope debate his strange behaviour and the events leading up to it. Mr. Dendy loved his wife, and the bucket remembers him picking a nosegay from the flowers by the path for her. They also witnessed Mrs. Dendy's unfaithfulness, and appreciate that her husband was aware of it too:

'It is difficult,' said the rope, after a few minutes' silence, as the body swung to and fro, 'for us to decide what could have troubled this good man. No one had robbed him. No one had beaten or hurt him, and never once since they had been married had Betty refused his embraces.'

'It must have been that nosegay', exclaimed the bucket.⁵

The bucket's inability to comprehend human behaviour might seem to give rise to a sick joke, and no more.

What I hope to show is that each of the three examples I have quoted express facets of a deeply considered philosophy of death; a philosophy which was anything but cynical, defeatist or bitter. Having noted that Theodore Powys's philosophy "has a somewhat inverted quality"⁶, Richard Heron Ward concluded sadly that, "It has produced the worship of death where the worship of life should be."⁷ Ward could recognise, but not accept—even for a moment—Powys's fundamental inversion of orthodox thinking on life and death. Henry Neville's sister, Molly, is described in *Mr. Tasker's Gods* as "feeling, touching, and loving the mystery of death."⁸ It is in a sentence such as this, that we are made to face up to the major challenge that runs throughout Theodore Powys's fiction, and many readers—like Ward—are inclined to shy away from it because it sounds frankly unhealthy. I intend to show that we cannot begin to judge in this matter until we have

clearly understood what Powys means when he uses words like 'life' and 'death'. Once we have made the attempt to do that, we may return to these three passages, and consider them once more.

* * *

Death then, is the over-riding, persistent theme of Theodore Powys's fiction, and without an understanding of his philosophy of death we cannot reasonably begin to assess his achievement as a writer. There are three other major features of Powys's fiction that should be noted, however. The first is unity of setting. Powys's obsessive identification of a limited landscape is a crucial part of the philosophical statement he wishes to make. Secondly, coming as an obvious consequence of the first, we have the persistence of characters throughout the books, and the continuity he maintains in this respect is of great precision. Thirdly, we have what David Holbrook has called Powys's "metaphorical vitality"⁹ of style. At times he can be literal and direct, at times mystical and exotic, and not infrequently both at once. It is more than just allegory, and Holbrook's phrase "spiritual autobiography"¹⁰ brings us as close as we are likely to get.

These three features of Powys's fiction do not exist apart from each other, they are synthesised through his mode of perception, and the key to his mode of perception is his philosophy of death. Powys in fact challenges orthodox assumptions relating to perception, where one implies a necessary distinction between the one who perceives and the object he is perceiving. He refuses to distance natural objects in the usual way, a tendency which received its most notable fictional expression in 1929 with the publication of *Fables*. Quite simply, in Blakean terminology, "everything that lives is holy."¹¹ By 1916, and the first edition of *Soliloquies of a Hermit* (then called *The Soliloquy of a Hermit*), Powys has worked out a unifying, equalitarian view of all creation, encompassing inanimate objects from chairs and spades through all orders of creation: sea-weed, fleas, sheep, cows, idiot boys, Deans resplendent in their gaiters, kings and princes:

When a Prime Minister succeeds in negotiating a secret Treaty of Alliance somewhere or other, for the good of the war-outfit trade of his country, and the other names and seals are duly set to it, the exalted feelings of this good Prime Minister are exactly the same as those of our chimney-sweep—dead now, honest man—when he has brought down from our parlour chimney with one good jerk a large quantity of soot. (96)

"All our actions," he writes, "are made of exactly the same stuff, like the stars." (96) In his fiction, stars are used consistently as a symbol of the variety of creation concentrated into a unified point of light; they represent an "at-onement", as we shall see later with reference to *Mr. Tasker's Gods*. Given this leveling doctrine, where all are equal in the sight of what he calls "The feelings or the moods of God" (97), there can be nothing to gain in moving beyond the vicinity of Dodder, Madder, Shelton and Maidenbridge; or, indeed, Mockery Gap:

No one even in London can control his own destiny, and no one in Mockery Gap ever tried to.¹²

Powys's mode of perception, with its limited geographical scope, its recurring characters and its distinctive style, followed naturally from a philosophy of death fully worked out and stated by 1916. The subsequent fiction adds nothing to that philosophy, its function is to explore a philosophical landscape already created. His reasons for choosing a rural setting as best suited to the purpose he had in mind for his fiction, may be assumed to coincide with the judgement of Wordsworth, a poet he admired: "Low and rustic life was generally chosen because . . . in that situation the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature."¹³ Wordsworth's lengthy justification of those *Lyrical Ballads* which had received adverse criticism contains a number of observations, especially in respect of the significance for the poet of inanimate objects, which appear to be in close sympathy with Powys's philosophy. Wordsworth's revolt against poetry as a purely decorative and

ornamental art form, and his concern to pioneer a way of writing capable of identifying "the passions of men", reminds us of Powys's concern with what he knew as "the moods of God". The linking of this theme in Wordsworth with "the beautiful and permanent forms of nature" produced in the so-called 'Lucy poems' (and elsewhere) an imaginative landscape which relates closely to the Theodorian concept of death. One of the shorter of these Wordsworth poems, the most enigmatic and complex perhaps, if we ignore its simplest reading (the discovery that the poet's beloved *is* mortal), could be taken as expressing Powys's view:

A slumber did my spirit seal,
I had no human fears:
She seem'd a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force
She neither hears nor sees
Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks and stones and trees!¹⁴

In *The Hat and the Post*, the worldly, gossipy Mr. Bonnet is assured by a tree that his philosophy of life is mistaken: "You will express yourself just as well by being nothing" he is told.¹⁵ The secret of not being, of escaping "the touch of earthly years", while wishing still to affirm some quality of existence is what challenges us in Wordsworth's poem; and the imaginative effort required of us in that instance will be seen as ultimately the same challenge that *Soliloquies of a Hermit* offers its readers. In relation to my earlier suggestion that Powys's fiction appears to require belief as a condition of understanding, it is interesting also to consider the first line of the poem, where the poet is required to enter into and share the proposed state of death with the subject in order that he might give it expression.

* * *

Soliloquies of a Hermit is much more than just a statement of Theodore Powys's philosophy, it is also a self-conscious account of the way a

literary formulation for that philosophy became possible. The story of *Soliloquies* is essentially one of Powys's being forced to settle for a literary identification of the philosophical terrain, meaning that the subsequent exploration of it would—for a while at least—remain 'literary'. The author has trapped himself within the necessary evil of fiction. His distrust of 'art' is apparent from the outset of *Soliloquies*, where "writing books" is listed as part of the acquisitive man's behaviour, to be ranked along side "buying stocks and shares", and "getting on in the world". (3) As the *Soliloquies* proceed, Powys comes to an uneasy mental and stylistic truce with 'art', and eventually enters into a wary partnership with the business of fiction. It follows that I believe Peter Riley is wrong to suggest that "Powys's (literary) retirement is an inevitable result of what he wrote."¹⁶ The emphasis here is placed on what he *wrote*, not, as I believe it should be, on what he *thought*. Invaluable as Riley's article is, it is based on the profoundly un-Theodorian conviction that the work of art is the focal point from which criticism evolves. Consequently we are led to the inevitable conclusion that Powys—no matter how interesting he may have been along the way—ultimately 'fails'. Riley's discussion leads to a distorted account of the relationship of Powys's philosophy to his creative work because he understands him primarily as an author, thus the cessation of writing becomes "retirement".

Powys's "retirement" comes as an inevitable result of what he thought—and had been thinking for some time before he began to write. By 1933 the literary exploration of the philosophical terrain could cease. The philosophy came before the fiction and remained after it. We may see from the *Soliloquies* that the writing of fiction was a consequence of the philosophy, and I intend to illustrate this by looking closely at *Soliloquies* and the "somewhat inverted quality" of its philosophy of death.

If Powys is secure in his own knowledge of what he believes at the beginning of *Soliloquies*, he is clearly very uncertain of how to express those beliefs:

Though not of the Church, I am of the Church.
 Though not of the faith, I am of the faith.
 Though not of the fold, I am of the fold . . . (1)

The danger continually encumbant upon the use of this mode of paradoxical argument, is that until we can be sure of the distinction the *writer* is assuming (in this case between Church and Church, faith and faith, and fold and fold), we are left in a position of either being forced to assume for ourselves what the distinctions might be, or simply acknowledging a profundity which must for the time being remain vague and mysterious. Powys knows precisely what the distinctions are, but as yet he is not sufficiently clear how to present them.

More constructively, the opening sections of the book should be seen as an experiment in communication, an experiment which before the first paragraph is over, has exposed the tension between the literal and often brutal reality of the world, and the mystical comprehension of spiritual qualities; a tension which informs Powys's entire output of fiction. After those indistinct opening propositions he attempts to anchor himself for a moment: "Near beside me is a flock of real sheep." (1) The use of the word "real" is the clue, it indicates clearly that the purpose of the sentence is more than just descriptive. The sheep are offered to us as a version of reality which is at once counter-balanced by the following phrase: "above me a cloud of misty white embraces the noonday light of the Altar."

In his fiction, Madder Hill was to become probably the most haunting medium for expressing the tension between spiritual and temporal comprehension. In *Unclay* we have also Joe Bridle's pond, described as an old woman's eye, performing this function: "Even the fox-hunting squire—Lord Bullman—cannot escape her . . . Her spirit is everywhere."¹⁷ Mrs. Pattimore in *Mockery Gap* cannot walk to the sea, where the fisherman is to be found, resembling "some high spirit from above",¹⁸ without first seeing Mrs. Pottle brutally beating her cat's unwanted kittens to death on the doorstep.¹⁹

The opening chapters of *Soliloquies* are important more because they introduce the key words and phrases Powys wishes to investigate, than for the explanations that are offered. We note that crucial phrase, "the moods of God", and words like "Priest", "mortal", "immortal", "love", "hate" and "heaven"; and we wait for the philosopher to discover a satisfactory means of communication, striving to keep our minds as free as possible from our own preconceived notions of what they mean. We soon meet Powys's tendency to invert normal meaning: the worn chair and the broken roller offer themselves as images of perfection and completeness. Of the "moods", the best we can say at this point is that they appear to emphasise mutability in a world where permanence and consistency are so highly valued:

Just now I wear a badge of an order of Socialism, and when one day I broke my spade in trying to lift up a dead cherry-tree in the garden, I looked at my badge and wondered what it meant by having an arrow, the sun and the world upon it. (6)

There is a genuine permanence represented within Powys's fictional structure, but it is severely differentiated from this level of political consciousness. The badge represents a pretence of consistency and no more, and it is a badge worn in the novels by characters Powys clearly has no time for. "The Rev. Edward Lester", in *Mr Tasker's Gods*, "was a modern":

'Our religion is up to date,' he said. 'Worship, and playing the game, that's what our Church teaches. It's a splendid body, and we are all gentlemen . . . You should see our men's club; we are all socialists there—real red ones. We must bring down the very rich, Turnbull, we must make them give. I told our mayor so, and Miss Rudge, at dinner. Our mayor's a rare old sport. Can give away a thousand; he can write the largest cheque in the country, and not miss it. Look here, Turnbull, Kitty Rudge will have every penny when he dies—this is between ourselves—a jolly nice girl too!'

The Rev. Edward Lester sidled into the dining-room of the vicarage at Shelton, and his face beamed with smiles and his eyes glistened when he saw the family porter-jug.²⁰

We are to understand Lester as having greedily and selfishly captured a "mood". This makes him wholly acceptable in the eyes of society, but totally unsympathetic in the book. "You can always trust the people to do the right thing," Lester assures his friends, referring to the stoning of Henry Neville, the idealised priest-figure of the story. In *Soliloquies* we read:

I thought of the people . . . the people that slave and toil and tear at each other with the claws of the beast, and the beast has sharp claws. I know their ways and how they steal the moods of God; they will not allow the moods of God to pass freely through them and go. (6)

What the Edward Lesters of this world understand as life, and living, is in fundamental opposition to what Powys has come to understand as constituting existence. The opposite to Lester's notion of 'life' is certainly not a doctrine of total negation, though society would brand it as such:

These are the people who think that to work is to worship, and who talk about nothing else than what they can do, and what you cannot do. (13)

Powys is beginning here to enquire into what the inhabitants of Edward Lester's world know as death, and in doing so he strikes a Blakean note:

All human laws are made to trap and snare God's movements; men are always trying to get at ease with themselves and away from his terrible ways . . . We cannot overrate too much mere existence. (9-10)

Blake wrote:

He who binds to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise.²¹

The criticism is one of man's acquisitive and selfish nature, and already we have seen how the fiction helps him to explore this situation, disentangling that which is genuinely permanent from that which is changing, and repeat-

edly his quest for the permanent leads him towards what the 'world' would classify as a state of not being, or death.

But for the time being, in the opening pages of the *Soliloquies*, Powys's search remains primarily a matter of finding a satisfactory means of expressing his ideas, rather than discovering what those ideas might be. This is not to rule out the very real possibility that the development of a style to serve as a means of communication may well in turn have moulded and to some extent reshaped those ideas.

After the first chapter, with its dominant theme of withdrawal, from the world, Powys turns abruptly on his heel and introduces Wesley and Bunyan, writing about them and their books, quoting from them, and generally giving himself over to a lively narrative technique. What Bunyan and Wesley had in common, and what draws Powys to a consideration of them, was a belief in God so strong it might be described as a knowledge of him: "The thing was life and death to him" (20) he writes of Bunyan, while Wesley "knew the little hidden ways of his Lord." (21) Powys had attempted a definition of God towards the end of Chapter One; it remained indecisive, an inefficient communication of what he knew. This new chapter is a fresh attempt to write his way into a more successful literary formulation of what he already knows in his heart. God, it would seem, exists at the point where men run out of things to do, when there are no more fortunes to be made and no more political meetings to go to, a time when all the Deans have used up all the gaiters. Work, when yoked to a "getting and spending" mentality, the business of "getting on in the world" he so detests, is consistently attacked as that which gets in the way of "the mystic fear" which is "God":

. . . even I, sitting thus in the desert, feel the devil tugging at my coat and shouting in my ear that I ought to be doing something in order to help the nail-makers to iron over the whole world. (15 & 27)

Implicit in this and yet to receive full expression is the idea of God as that which is totally 'other', a state which is in every respect the

complete opposite of our established order of life. If this seems too much to take at an undiluted philosophical level, consider the fictional device of writing a story where time—upon which we base and understand all human activity—stops. "The summer sun", Powys reminds us in *Innocent Birds*, "does not only stand still in the Book of Joshua. It likes to rest in these days for a little while over Madder."²² If we believe utterly in the manner in which we see the world functioning, the world of Edward Lester, Miss Pettifer and Lord Bullman, the complete opposite must indeed represent utter negation; but Powys insists on challenging that belief, and in doing so he challenges the world's understanding of death. Death in the eyes of the world constitutes an attempt "to sneak into another life" (24), and it would have us believe that this is what Christianity offers. Powys's heartfelt wish is to sneak out of it:

And let us bless religion, for it can, like a pleasant timely illness, take men away from their cursed everlasting toil. (28)

Just as Powys has become an object of suspicion to his neighbours because he does not work for profit, so the parishioners in *Innocent Birds* complain of Susy, the church cleaner. It is only too obvious from the state of the church that she is a sinfully idle person:

Kneeling before the altar railings, a great mass of faded black clothes was spread out. Behind this kneeling heap, that was Susy, there was a new brush and pan dropped in the aisle.

Mr. Tucker [the priest] went out of church and leaned, in order to prevent himself from falling, against Mr. Soper's tombstone.

'Susy goes to church to pray,' he whispered excitedly to Solly.²³

People are forever trying to shield themselves from God with work, even going so far as to construct an alternative God from their work. Powys's task in *Soliloquies* is to give us some idea of what it is like for his God to find you out, and increasingly he experiments with fictional form, eventually trying out the 'story' of Mr. Thomas. In his mature fiction there

are many examples of stories which serve to express what it is like for God to break into our lives, and *The Windmill* from *The House With The Echo* (1928) is one of these.

The first paragraph quite literally puts a stop to 'work' for Mike Spink; his employer has no further use for him. This is swiftly followed by the destruction of his few worldly possessions, notably his bed: "Mike's property consisted now of little pieces of worm-eaten wood and a torn mattress."²⁴ We are reminded of the gradual material dispossession of Mark Only. "'Tisn't for you to take no interest in furniture,"²⁵ his sister tells him. Without work or material belongings, Mike is pushed off the edge of the known world, and sets off on a search for his brother that quickly becomes an allegorical journey. His brother has told him that he is to be found "where a windmill be". Mike has never seen a windmill, and gathers from an inept description that it is something with "arms stretched out". The story ends with the exhausted and delirious Mike dying at the foot of a windmill which is real enough to us; while for Mike it is the fulfilment of his visionary quest, with very obvious parallels to the apparent failure of Christ's ministry and his final degradation on the cross with "arms stretched out". Like Mark Only, Mike's loss of worldly vision signifies the attainment of a richer spiritual perception.

We cannot fully appreciate a story like *The Windmill*, short and simple as it may appear, if we have not first studied Powys's thoughts on God, on death, and on immortality, as they appear in *Soliloquies*. It is in Chapter Six of *Soliloquies* that Powys undertakes a crucial redefinition of what man has made of the idea of immortality—and in doing so he stands the word on its head. "Immortality", he argues, is a concept hopelessly ensnared in the toils of worldly usage. When we talk of immortality, we do so paradoxically in terms of time; no matter how hard we try, we use time to understand immortality: we think of it as permanent time, time without end. But God belongs to that which is totally 'other', and in that state time is not. Through a philosophical and literary technique of inversion, Powys wants us to see the 'immortals' as the worldly

ones, those who wish to go on living—and what could be more worldly than that?

There is something very ugly about the immortal part of a man,—his greed, his getting on, his self-sacrifice . . . I long for man to repent and to be saved from his immortality. (44)

The opposite of immortality is death. Death challenges our acquisitive, worldly instincts with that which is totally 'other', and only therefore in worldly, unrepentant terms, is it to be viewed as a prospect of negative despair.

Fixing the world in an economic, social, and political structure is an expression of man's greedy quest for immortality, and Powys's greedy, acquisitive characters bear witness to his scorn for this tendency, few more strikingly than the Nebuchadnezzar-like figure of James Dawe in *Unclay*. The description of the twisted morality that justifies the conditions in which the Turnbulls' servants live at the beginning of *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, and the account of Miss Pettifer's vicious treatment of her girls in *Innocent Birds*, illustrate attempts being made by those people to order and fix society (and indeed the world) in a way that is clearly very much to their benefit. They wish to imprison "the moods of God". John Gidden in *In Good Earth* (1932) is at first as greedy and acquisitive as any of Powys's characters; it is fitting that he should live near the village of Adam's Folly. It is the failure of all his worldly "immortal" plans that transforms him from a brute to a man who "walked home gladly":

. . . the delight of a splendid hope, soon to be realised, made his heart joyful. The folly of his mistakes had opened the path to his real desire.

No such contentment could ever have come to him in the rich fields of the Church Farm . . . he would have ploughed and sowed, reaped and harvested, only as a moving figure taking the fruits of the earth, and continuing in perpetuity the everlasting labour of the husbandman.²⁶

The alternative for John, the "good earth" of the grave, is offered in this passage as a

defiance of "immortality" (of "perpetuity" and "everlasting labour"), of the attempt to "sneak into another life" via the richness of Church Farm. John's gladness, his "delight of a splendid hope" comes with a genuine sense of impending fulfilment; but it can only be known when the last vestige of his worldly form has been sloughed off. To a James Dawe, a Miss Pettifer, even to a Richard Heron Ward, this can only be contemplated with dismay; not so John Pardy and John Gidden. As for Powys himself, he admits at the end of the eighth chapter of *Soliloquies*, "I still feel that I am in part immortal . . . And feeling as I do the very movements of God, I do not like to be treated as a poor man who cannot afford a day labourer to dig his garden." (48)

The "movements of God" are the "moods of God", and these Powys can now describe as a consciousness of the fragility of worldly things. They constitute God asserting himself—as he does in *The Windmill*—the consequence of which is that "immortality" in its inverted, acquisitive sense, becomes a worldly obsession. Under this obsession men seek desperately to imprison and control the moods within a social order. Powys's fascination with inanimate objects stems from their passive, non-acquisitive qualities: they allow the moods to pass unhindered through them. With this in mind, we may appreciate that Miss Hester Gibbs, in *The Seaweed and the Cuckoo Clock*, could hardly be more of an immortal:

In all the world there lived no one who thought more of weddings . . . She lived in a little cottage at Madder, and kept it so clean and tidy that not a thing was ever out of place, nor a spot of ugly dust seen anywhere.²⁷

Hester is determined that everything in her cottage should be married, but having paired all the items off, the clock is left without a mate. Eventually she finds a piece of seaweed on the beach, lamenting the fact that it has been left a widow by the sea—the tide having gone out. A marriage is arranged. But Hester's encouragement of the seaweed to leave the sea shore, and her teaching the clock to be dis-

satisfied with just ticking and calling 'cuckoo', ends in disaster. The seaweed entices the clock to the beach where she is swept happily out to sea by her returning husband, who, "with a fierce roar of triumph dashed the poor clock against a stone, so that he was broken to pieces". The sea, like the stars, is an image for Powys of the unknowable fulfilment towards which John Gidden finally gladly strides. In forsaking her true bride, the seaweed has embraced the immortality of Miss Gibbs; in the person of the cuckoo clock she quite literally embraces time.

"I feel the emptiness, the unutterable emptiness of all the thoughts in the world," Powys writes in *Soliloquies*, "and I hearken to the remote sounds of the sea." (53) If we regret the fate of the clock, the death of Gidden, of Joe Bridle and Susie Dawe in *Unclay*, even the perverse refusal of Susy the church cleaner in *Innocent Birds* to use her dust-pan and brush for the benefit of the young ladies who don't wish to soil their Sunday dresses, then we are still sadly immortal, and we belong in the dubious company of such as Lord Bullman, who has a very marked obsession with that institutionalised concept of time known to us as 'history'.

By Chapter Ten of *Soliloquies*, Powys is arguing that death is a gain, not a loss. It is man disentangling himself from time and history; from a false sense of perpetuity. He recognises that his own worship of time was misplaced:

The days pass me like hurrying girls on light feet. Years ago I longed to hold them and find out what secrets they had under their cloud and sunshine; and now I know that it is the days that long to find out my secret. They cannot find it out; they are bound to the wheel, they must dance on and on and make the young men follow them. (58)

It is the story of Powys's determination to free himself from the 'wheel' of immortality that is told in part in the "spiritual autobiography" of his fiction. The unity of setting we find there is an inevitable fictional consequence of a philosophy which believes that "the

smallest handle will do to hold any part of life, and a million bodies like mine can be formed of one thought. All my little experiences can be easily acted in any part of the earth." (60)

To see a world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.^{2 8}

Powys could have written a story set on a grain of sand, for eventually, all the moods of God would pass through it.

Powys's obvious delight in the novels of Jane Austen appears in an interesting light in the context of these remarks. Austen is a persistent presence in *Unclay*, and it is hard to imagine that the Sotherton garden scenes of *Mansfield Park* did not have their part to play in the chapters of *Unclay* describing the consequences of Lord Bullman's decision to open his gardens to the public. Chapter XLVIII of *Unclay*, originally entitled "Jane is Punished" and only later changed to "Winnie Sees the Policeman",²⁹ has John Death, Francis Hayhoe and Winnie Huddy hurriedly leaving the garden by an unofficial route reminiscent of the Sotherton situation, "a secluded path that grew more and more wild and less garden-like as they went on".³⁰ It closes with Hayhoe sadly informing Winnie that "*Pride and Prejudice* is finished".³¹ Jane Austen is more than a convenient point of literary reference for Powys; her novels bear witness to the fact that all human experience may be contained within the limited social sphere inhabited by Austen's characters. For her, as for Powys, "the smallest handle will do to hold any part of life".

Chapter Thirteen of *Soliloquies* is of course taken up with the story of Theodore's visitor. The advantage of the narrative technique he experiments with here—which involves withdrawing himself from the stage, albeit unconvincingly—is that he has suspended the demand to be true to himself which the otherwise confessional style of the book inescapably requires. He explains that he wants "to get at the other side" of himself, the side "I could not very well touch in the first part of

my confessions." (66) The fictional quality of this chapter provides the basis of the technique he needed for novels that would enable him to explore the philosophical terrain he expounds brilliantly in Chapter Fourteen of *Soliloquies*.

* * *

That the most complete statement of Powys's philosophy should follow immediately on his imaginative attempt "to get at the other side of myself" is hardly coincidental. "I am quite willing to make my meaning more clear" (88) he tells us. He has written himself into a greater willingness than had been the case in Chapter One, I suspect. When he writes in this fourteenth chapter of "feelings", of pride, sorrow, lust, joy and love, he is thinking of what originally he was calling "the moods of God":

I believe that the more dead anything is, the more it lasts . . . I may as well say that it is from my own feelings that I get my thoughts upon immortality. (88-89)³²

We must always remember that Powys is standing conventional values on their head, and asking us to accept as the perfect, totally fulfilled state of man that which is entirely 'other'; it is everything our world is not—a reasonable assertion to make at the time of the Great War. Death is in truth therefore the key to a great joy. True eternity will be forever in the eyes of the world ignoble, "despised and rejected of men". That which, from the vantage point of Powys's philosophy, is now revealed as being truly based in humanity, is that which is for ever seeking to drag man away from death towards immortality. The "feelings", the "moods of God", he explains, fill him with this false lust for immortality, and those feelings come from God who created all things and who is himself in part ensnared in his own creativity. Perfection is the state of pre-creation, when God only was. To shed, or pare away the "moods" is to move towards that perfect state. This is what Powys wants to convey when he writes about "the charm of *really*

dying" (97, my italics). As before, we can find this apparently contradictory sentiment precisely expressed by Blake, this time in *Jerusalem*, where he describes the "lineaments of man" awakening to life "In forgiveness of sins which is self-annihilation."³³ All the sympathetically portrayed characters in Powys's fiction are travelling on this road. Luke Bird begins his journey in *Abraham Men* (1923) when he gives up his job at Milverton "in order to preach the Word".³⁴ "He informed the manager of the brewery of his altered position in heavenly and earthly affairs."³⁵ In Theodorian terms his arrival in Little Dodder scarcely augurs well: "When he turned another bend of the road, Luke Bird saw a man working."³⁶

The road on which Luke, Francis Hayhoe, John Gidden and many others travel leads to death, and the key to death, to "really dying" is the conquest of time. Jesus, Powys explains in *Soliloquies*, understood this:

The most wonderful idea that has ever come to man came to Jesus. It came to Him silent, subtle, and like lightning. The idea that came to Him was this: He wished to create for a moment a state of vision with no earthly everlasting deadness about it—to create a new heaven and a new earth. The longer anything lasts, the worst it always becomes, but the divine idea came to Jesus without beginning and without end; and in a moment it became himself. (89)

To be timeless is not to cease to exist, it is rather to transcend any known terrestrial concept of existence: it has "no *earthly* everlasting deadness about it." If that "state of vision" exists but for "a moment", it has triumphed over our notions of perpetuity forever, governed as they must be by time. Powys finds the 'literary' metaphor to express this idea in lightning:

We cannot conceive the lightning rapidity in which the vision of true life enters in and passes out of our minds. (89)

In the fiction the presence or threat of lightning "breaking in upon us" consistently signifies Powys's vision of what "really dying" means:

'Tinker Jar is coming now,' cried Priscilla, 'he is already in the church path. Oh!'—she stepped back into the church—"what a blinding flash! Surely the heavens opened, and he must be killed."³⁷

That passage from *The Only Penitent* shows evidence of having been worked and reworked in draft, Powys obviously wanting to capture as accurately as possible in prose the full effect of the flash of lightning at this crucial point in the story. In *Unclay* Joe Bridle considers the danger he is in from John Death:

A sudden flash of lightning could do that simple work. In a moment God can call up a storm to work His purpose.³⁹

The best known example is probably Tamar's death in *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, and it is worth noting that originally the incident was included in the last chapter. On reflection, Powys presumably felt that it merited the greater emphasis afforded by a separate chapter:

There was a low mutter in the heavens above the tree that became in a moment a dreadful roar of thunder. At the same instant the whole sky flared up, as if all the heavens were ablaze, and a forked flash of fire descended upon the oak tree. The huge tree was riven to the roots and crashed upon the green . . . Though the great tree had fallen, split in two halves by the lightning, the bed of moss still remained unspoilt. In this bridal bed lay Tamar alone. Upon her forehead there was a blue mark showing where the lightning had struck her. Mr. Grunter looked at her.

As he looked, Michael stepped upon the green. Michael raised Tamar in his arms as though she were a babe. The stars shone again in the heavens. Two shining stars moved as winged beings to Michael and, taking Tamar from his arms, rose with her into the skies.

Mr. Grunter nodded approvingly.³⁹

The triumph of death is incomprehensible, but for Powys it is unmistakably a triumph. Time is outwitted, as it is in a book he has already told us in *Soliloquies* he enjoys reading, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. (35) Throughout his fiction Powys seeks to outwit

time: there is Hayhoe's first meeting with John Death, the death of Mere's dog (both in *Unclay*); there is the stationary sun in *Innocent Birds*, and of course *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* from Chapter Nineteen onwards. These are obvious fictional devices, but there is also room for more subtle literary techniques to be employed to this end:

When the summer sun shines Madder looks the kind of place that one would like to pat and stroke . . . Human life in Madder, as regards some folk, appears to stand still.

Mr. Billy never moved beyond sixty, whereas his nieces, who served in the shop, remained always at twenty.⁴⁰

* * *

The unity of setting, the continuity of characters, and the scrupulously worked out style of Powys's fiction are the carefully chosen servants of his philosophy. Blake saw creation and the fall of man as acts of division, of separating out. Redemption is the process of bringing together, of reuniting. Powys, who was familiar with Blake and his sources, believed in the ultimate unifying timelessness of all matter, of a world contained within a grain of sand. All his fiction—a technical 'literary' unity expressing a philosophy of timeless wholeness—tells us the same tale, up to the triumphant point where at the end of *Unclay* we read, "Death vanished".⁴¹

It is not surprising, then, that in the scene we began with from *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, Powys can be seen as apparently mocking the drover's fear that his wife will haunt him. His fear of the grave was that of an "immortal". By the end of the novel he has come to know better, and his own death signifies his redemption. The passage originally quoted is to be understood only when set alongside his final appearance as he goes in search of Neville's grave:

He turned wearily into the churchyard and found his way to the corner . . . He felt with his hands for the mound. He could feel only nettles. He remembered the wooden cross that he had set there. And now he was lying just where he had put it. He could not see anything but

stars. He looked longingly at the sky. Perhaps his cross was up there. Yes, there, sure enough, it was, the cross of stars above him.

'She' was not crying now. 'She' was singing. The cross was falling out of the sky. It came down quite low. Each star burned with a wonderful light. He tried to move away so that the stars might fall and shine on the grave.⁴²

Here, as I suggested earlier, we may see how stars have come to symbolise a central philosophical theme in Powys's work.

The *Soliloquies* established stars as a symbol comparable to the sea, signifying that unknowable state beyond human existence which Powys wishes us to contemplate without fear. It is the state which we have also seen Wordsworth striving to understand as beyond "the touch of earthly years". Stars, if they are reckoned to be worlds similar to ours, are powerful reminders of the way in which infinite variety may be concentrated into one unified expression of light, and Powys's characters are never to be found looking at the stars without some suggestion of their redemptive effect being incorporated into the experience. The drover allows the stars to descend to the grave, a situation which offers an obvious comparison in terms of its implications with the angelic depiction of stars in the passage quoted above from *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*.

The humour of the passage where the drover first visits Neville near the beginning of the book is not, in the light of these final moments, ultimately to be taken as a sign of ironic despair. The humour prevents the situation, terrible as it is, from closing over the drover's head and rendering his case irredeemable.

Humour in T. F. Powys is a subject requiring far fuller treatment than may be allowed for here. Humour is to be found everywhere in his work, yet it remains stubbornly illusive when one seeks to tie it down critically. The literary technique employed in the scene between the drover and Neville has much in common with the scene in *Great Expectations* (chapter XXVII) where Joe Gargery visits Pip in London. Joe's odd manner of speech and the problem he has with the disposal of his hat, is reminiscent of the drover's poverty

of expression and his use of his hat and stick. In both cases the humour is operating on a superficial visual level, while at the same time it offers a more poignant moral insight. There is much humour to be had at the expense of Mr. Solly's reliance on Mackenzie's *A History of America* in *Innocent Birds*. He uses it as a day to day guide for his life in Madder. Once the book is read, Solly, at a loss to know what to do, buries it in the garden. The aptness of this solution is matched by its comic eccentricity; the two are an inseparable part of the philosophical statement. The logic of Powys's philosophy ultimately strips man of all his worldly ties, including, of course, books, and deposits him (along with *A History of America*) "in good earth". While an "immortal" may view this with disbelief and horror, Powys depicts the situation in a whimsically comic light, as in that other bookish example already referred to in *Unclay*, where the Jane Austen runs out for Parson Hayhoe. The humour of the narration effectively keeps despair at bay. It is impossible to leave this aspect of Powys's work without recalling that one of the most impressive fictional expressions of Powys's philosophy of death occurs in his most light-hearted novel, *Kindness in a Corner*.⁴³

I have already had cause to refer to *John Pardy and the Waves* in the main body of this essay; I would only now affirm that the laughter of John Pardy is not the laughter of despair, it is the laughter of a death which banishes death, a "great joy" known to the waves as "that sublime relationship with God".⁴⁴

Finally, recalling the third example with

which I began this essay, why should the bucket and rope arrive at that bitterly ironic wrong conclusion over the death of Mr. Dendy? Surely we may now appreciate how, for Powys, Dendy has become a prey to the "moods of God": rage, jealousy and despair. He has captured them and refused to let them pass on, thus they have grown and festered within him. Self-destruction is his only means of escape—a decision that may still seem to us as outrageous as the decision of a gifted writer to write no more! But the bucket and the rope are inanimate objects, so the "moods" pass unhindered through them. They know nothing of man's acquisitive nature, how he seeks to possess all moods and feelings. They represent in this story all that which is totally 'other' from the human condition. All they can do is to make a wild guess at what might have made the man hang himself; their mistake only confirms how far man has yet to go to attain "the way of Jesus":

. . . the way of Jesus is not so easy. He made a way that opposed everything that we have seen or heard of, and most of all, it undermined our immortality. His way ends our old lives in a moment; because if you take away our anger, our greed, our hatred, our getting on, our eating the black man, our biting the white woman, our sermon-preaching, our amusements with young ladies, our walking to church, our throat-cutting, our afternoon tea-parties, and all the tools we have made for killing other people, and the medicine for killing ourselves,—if you take away all our good deeds, we know what they are,—if you take all these arts and fancies away from a man, if you take them away you will leave no man at all, you will leave nothing. (93-94)

NOTES

Powys Manuscripts

I am indebted to Mr. Francis Feather for so willingly making his extensive collection of Powys manuscripts and editions available to me. While space has not permitted me to refer directly to as many of the revisions and corrections Theodore Powys made as I would have liked, the evidence contained in those manuscripts has proved invaluable.

¹Theodore Powys, *Soliloquies of a Hermit* (1916), p. 26. Subsequent numerals in parentheses in my text refer to pages in this edition.

²Theodore Powys, *Mr. Tasker's Gods* (1925) Beckenham, 1977, p. 117.

³Theodore Powys, *Fables*, p. 90.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 147.

- ⁶Richard Heron Ward, *The Powys Brothers*, 1935, p. 104.
- ⁷*Ibid.*, p. 132.
- ⁸*Mr. Tasker's Gods*, p. 150.
- ⁹David Holbrook, "Two Welsh Writers: T. F. Powys and Dylan Thomas", *The Pelican Guide to English Literature: Vol. 7*, ed. Boris Ford, p. 416.
- ¹⁰Holbrook, *op. cit.*, p. 420.
- ¹¹William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. (The Poems of William Blake)*, ed. W. H. Stevenson, 1971, p. 124. All Blake references are to this edition.)
- ¹²Theodore Powys, *Mockery Gap*, 1925, p. 7.
- ¹³William Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads. (The Prose Works of William Wordsworth)*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Symser, Oxford, 1974, Vol. I, p. 124.)
- ¹⁴Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones, 1965, p. 133.
- ¹⁵*Fables*, p. 133.
- ¹⁶Peter Riley, "T. F. Powys at Mappowder", *The Powys Review*, 3 (1978), p. 20.
- ¹⁷Theodore Powys, *Unclay*, 1931, p. 48.
- ¹⁸*Mockery Gap*, p. 234.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.
- ²⁰*Mr. Tasker's Gods*, pp. 113 & 114.
- ²¹William Blake, *Eternity*, "Poems from the Notebook, c. 1791-2" (p. 162).
- ²²Theodore Powys, *Innocent Birds*, 1926, p. 29.
- ²³*Innocent Birds*, p. 176.
- ²⁴Theodore Powys, *The House with the Echo*, 1928, pp. 107-115.
- ²⁵Theodore Powys, *Mark Only*, 1924, p. 38.
- ²⁶Theodore Powys, *The Two Thieves*, 1932, p. 94. (This volume contains *The Two Thieves*, *God*, and *In Good Earth*.)
- ²⁷*Fables*, pp. 43-59.
- ²⁸William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*, 11. 1-4 (p. 585).
- ²⁹Manuscript in the possession of Mr. Francis Feather. There is an additional complexity in that the manuscript shows Sarah Bridle to have been originally named Jane. It is in this same chapter that Jane/Sarah agrees to marry Balliboy. In the one chapter, therefore, "Jane" succumbs to the marriage market (she regards herself as an animal, and this suits Balliboy), and of course it was that market about which her namesake wrote with such irony, while at the same time we learn from Hayhoe that the novels have run out. Punishment indeed!
- ³⁰*Unclay*, p. 306.
- ³¹*Unclay*, p. 309.
- ³²*Soliloquies*, See also p. 97.
- ³³William Blake, *Jerusalem*, "Fourth Chapter", Plate 96, 11. 18-23 (pp. 838-839). One of the most influential sources Powys and Blake had in common was the work of Jacob Böhme (1575-1624), whose name Blake recast as Behmen. A clear and helpful account of his ideas is to be found in S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, pp. 39-41.
- Of additional interest on the subject of literary and philosophical influences on Theodore is a letter by John Cowper Powys, now in the possession of Mr. Francis Feather. The letter is undated, and simply headed "Foreward": "I was very pleased to find that Mr. Ruder [?] has placed two MSS of my brother T. F. Powys in his Catalogue . . . In our own family we have long known him as the formidable and most original among us . . . Bunyan, the Bible, William Blake, the old Protestant Mystics, and something too that recalls the tone of the ancient Mystery Plays may be perhaps detected as over-tone and under-tone influences in his attitude to life."
- ³⁴Theodore Powys, *The Left Leg*, 1923, p. 234. This volume contains *The Left Leg*, *Hester Dominy*, and *Abraham Men*. Luke Bird's history is an excellent example of Powys's concern for continuity, and after reading *Abraham Men* it is worth turning directly to *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, Chapter XXII, where we find the somewhat inconclusive ending of the former story rounded off, and grafted onto *Mr. Weston*. This is one of many instances illustrating the truth for Powys of his belief that "all good books tell the same tale." The first chapter of *Innocent Birds* may be read with this in mind also.
- ³⁵*The Left Leg*, p. 237.
- ³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 238.
- ³⁷Theodore Powys, *The Only Penitent*, 1931, p. 55.
- ³⁸*Unclay*, p. 91.
- ³⁹*Mr. Weston's Good Wine* (1927), 1975, pp. 308 & 310.
- ⁴⁰*Innocent Birds*, p. 121.
- ⁴¹*Unclay*, p. 343.
- ⁴²*Mr. Tasker's Gods*, p. 300.
- ⁴³*Kindness in a Corner*, 1930, pp. 227-236 (Ch. 36). See also H. Coombes, *T. F. Powys*, 1960, pp. 41-45;
- ⁴⁴*Fables*, p. 90.
- (*The Seaweed and the Cuckoo Clock*, *John Parady and the Waves*, *The Bucket and the Rope*, and *The Only Penitent*, appear also in *God's Eyes A-Twinkle* (1947) Bath, 1974.)

Theodora Scutt

Theodore Powys, 1934-1953: a continuation

The first part of these recollections is published in *The Powys Review*, 9.

Daddy never talked, as I believe all parents are supposed to talk, about religion. He would discuss it readily enough, and with great enjoyment, with his friends, but not with me. If I felt like discussing it with him, then I might; and he would answer me with careful disinterestedness, complete neutrality. I don't think he ever intentionally said anything that might guide me in any direction at all. I imagine that he had suffered so from overdirection in his own youth, that he dared not take upon himself the responsibility of directing another. He did direct me, but never deliberately, only by unconscious example and, indeed, by lack of direction.

Once after I had been trying for some time to get his opinion on Roman Catholicism versus Anglicanism, he said with a sadness in his tone that puzzled me, "Well, my dear, the Church of England was my father's church. I would never leave it myself." I realised later that the discussion must have reminded him of similar religious discussions with his own father, the Vicar of Montacute, when Theodore was himself a child; and his meaning very simply was that he believed himself to have given his father so much pain during his life, that even if he, Theodore, had come to believe that the Church of England stood for the Devil himself (in whom Daddy did not believe) he had rather stay by it than give that dead father more pain. Daddy has told me how bitterly he regretted and reproached himself that he had not done more for his father—that he had said this, and not that; that he had not done one thing but had done another—oh! he literally had terrible, terrifying nightmares about it. It's a thing I don't understand, but that was how he felt. I think he particularly reproached himself that he had not taken Holy Orders, and certainly that must have been a severe blow to old Mr.

Powys, especially as outwardly Daddy must have seemed perfect for the Church; but however disappointed and angry he was at the time, I can't but feel that he must have admired and had great pride in the son who refused to countenance the comfortable living that would have made an hypocrite of him, although the alternative was comparative poverty—for, however affluent old Mr. Powys was, he hadn't enough to keep every one of his ten (living) children in the style in which they were reared. Oh no, I think that was a mistake on Daddy's part; I am quite sure that his father was very far from being ashamed of him; whatever gods he claimed, they were not Mammon.

As a matter of fact Daddy claimed to believe in four Deities. God the Father, the Creator; God the Son, the Saviour; God the Holy Ghost, the Spirit; and God the Goblin,



Theodore Powys with his adopted daughter (and his son Francis), Beth Car, East Chaldon.

(© John Powys)

the Laughter of Man: the explanations are mine. "God the Goblin", said Daddy, "will make it rain and you'll start out with a heavy mackintosh and an umbrella. When you are too far from home to turn back, the rain will stop, the sun will come out very hot, and you will arrive at So and So's fine garden party looking and feeling a perfect fool." God the Goblin could be a bit of a slapstick clown; he would push the last bit of snow off the gutter to fall on your neck; but he had a fine whimsical humour too; when a beautiful newly-married bride, in a walking party of which Daddy was one, was showing him in particular with great vivacity the steps of some wild new dance, God the Goblin for the special delectation of his embarrassed disciple caused a round flat thistle to lie upon the velvet grass, just where the dancer's bare feet were descending. I was not born at that time; but I might as well have been there in person, so clearly do I see the suppressed twinkle in Theodore's eyes, the hand stroking the smile from the mouth; and hear his "Umph! oh! My dear Nancy, I do hope you have not hurt yourself?"

Pan is dead, great Pan is dead, and yet when I was a child I found a tiny log cabin—oh, smaller than a matchbox—in Cockrow Copse. A little woodbine had been trained across it. It was perfect. I called Daddy, and he knelt carefully to look. "Ryle and Jane Fisher," I said, "look what they've made, Daddy." He had excellent sight; he brooded on the little cabin for a long time and finally got up. "Come away, my dear. The Fisher children didn't make that; they wouldn't have the patience."

The little house wasn't cute any longer and the copse wasn't friendly; it was a strange place with the power of being in many worlds at once. Our pet poltergeist at Beth Car, Goldilocks, I had partly understood; but the idea of ordinary children like myself, who yet were invisible, was too much for me. I scuttled beside and behind Daddy, pestering, "But it was made, Daddy. Who made it? Somebody made it. Who made it, Daddy?"

"Only a fairy child could have made that house," Daddy finally answered me.

We didn't go back to Cockrow for some

days; probably it rained—we walked in the rain, but only on the road. Meanwhile I made myself familiar with the idea of the Middle Kingdom, and once back in the wood ran to see if the strange children had made any additions to their little house. "Don't go too near it," Daddy warned me, "they don't like humans watching them. They'll desert if you do." They *had* deserted, like wild birds. But, how did Daddy know how they would behave? Had he met them when he was himself a child, on Ham Hill or little Montacute Knoll? Did he really believe in the death of Pan? Or expect me to? How can I tell? He would never tell me.

He had such a great love for the bright moon that I grew up naturally believing in Artemis. Oh yes, he loved the sun too, but "It hurts my head. It's all very well for people like Lulu, who have a great roistering love of lust and life," he would say, putting dock leaves inside his straw hat and his handkerchief, like a veil, over his head under the hat. "I prefer things a little cooler and more quiet." He did love the sun, but His direct rays caused him much pain, and the Lady Diana was always cool, quiet and soothing.

We had no radio till I was in my late 'teens. As we took a daily paper and had quite a good gramophone, I can't see that we were any the worse off for it; and in the winter evenings Daddy would read aloud to us. He was the finest reader aloud that I have ever heard, with a slow, deep, clear voice and perfect diction. I don't like at all to have books read aloud to me but I used to pester him to read, just to hear his voice. I used always to pinch the book and read it properly behind his back, and he always found out and occasionally got quite cross and said it was a waste of time to read to me; and I'd lie like a carpet and say I'd been looking at the illustrations or reading the Introduction—I've always had a weakness for Introductions, as he knew—and finally he would agree to continue, although I doubt if he believed me. He couldn't make it out. Of course it was a waste of his time, in one sense—I didn't understand a word he read, which was why, apart from my impatience, I used to read it to myself—I didn't hear him in words, only in music. Oddly

enough I could hear words right enough and very clearly when he read or recited poetry; there were a good many occasions to bring quotations to his mind.

“Queen and Huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun has gone to sleep,
Seated in Thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep.
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright!”

He always went early to bed, but on the nights of the full clear summer moon I’ve known him get up again and go for a walk, or put off going to bed for an hour or more.

At the other solstice,

“In the bleak midwinter,
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth was hard as iron,
Water like a stone . . .”

“Oh, shut up, Daddy!” from the harassed Violet trying to thaw out frozen taps, and Daddy, who loathed the cold, would at least get some amusement out of it by continuing,

“Snow was falling, snow on snow . . .”

knowing that his exasperated wife would say, “Well, go and get the sticks in, then, before it does!”

Unfortunately listening to Daddy has made me terribly intolerant of other people’s reading. I’ve never yet risen and left a house because someone was reading aloud, nor have I turned off someone else’s radio; but I’ve come within a hair’s breadth of it. Daddy and I read Shakespeare together; read the New Testament; classic children’s books like *The Chaplet of Pearls*, and *Kidnapped*; Scott; Fenimore Cooper; the *Oxford Book of English Verse* from cover to cover, and the *Oxford Book of Scottish Ballads* also. Chaucer—he would read Chaucer with no attempt at the pronunciation of Chaucer’s day, reasoning that Chaucer would be just as puzzled by our modern English and that anyway one could only do one’s best. It was of course intelligible and it sounded wonderful. He would read “The Ballad of Chevy Chase” or “Otterborne” and make sense as well as music of the

Lowland Scots tongue, which isn’t exactly English. He’d read Barnes’s poems in the Dorset dialect without the slightest difficulty in the pronunciation, but this was to be expected, as he was a West Country man himself (for all he was born at Shirley in Derbyshire); and, even if Barnes’s poems aren’t of the same stature as Milton or Chaucer, he made them sound so happy and full of deep, peaceful meaning, that I still read them with delight.

Books seemed to have their seasons. Certainly poetry did. In summer, sitting in his deckchair under the young ash tree in the garden, he would pretty certainly have Barnes with him as well as whatever prose he was reading; in winter, before the big basket-grate in the one living-room of our four-roomed Lodge (and didn’t that fire get through fuel, too) he might have Christina Rossetti handy, or Shakespeare’s songs; mind you Shakespeare was always in season, only not out-of-doors during winter. In the warm weather, when he went out walking Daddy would carry his square of mackintosh sheet in one pocket and his little leather-bound edition of the Sonnets in another, and when he reached one of his favourite spots he would take out the sheet, spread it carefully, sit down on it and either read the Sonnets until he went into a brown study or meditate until his thoughts concluded and then read.

We usually read through two or three of Scott’s novels in a winter. We hadn’t very many ourselves, and having read these would have come to a standstill but for our landlord, the Rev. Samuel Francis Jackson. He had a great admiration for Daddy, certainly in part due to Daddy’s successful authorship, but just as much due to other reasons. Daddy hadn’t been to University, but for all that he was an educated man, a native Westcountryman and a gentleman. Dr. Jackson, had been, I believe, at Manchester University while studying for Holy Orders, and was Lancashire born, I think. Having been sent to Mappowder—Mappowder was combined with Plush parish in those days and an active man could take a service in both every Sunday, even if, like Dr. Jackson, he tended to walk from church to church instead of saving time

by being driven by his wife in her car—he found out pretty soon that in the first place men of education were not very thick on the ground (they're not getting any thicker nowadays, either) and in the second, we Southerners don't much care for those Northern beggars. And to make matters worse, he was a townsman. He neither farmed, hunted nor shot. He couldn't even ride, which was a bit awkward down here where a good many people still travelled by horse, and really he had very little in common with his neighbours and parishioners. I think he must have been pretty lonely; anyhow he visited us occasionally and walked with Daddy quite a lot. He had kept up his membership of the Manchester Library, and it used to send him books by post; whatever he asked for. Dorchester Library wasn't up to much at that time, and we couldn't get to it if it had been; it was easier for Daddy to ask "old Frank" to send for any book that we wanted, and so by those means we read through most of Scott; as a matter of fact Dr. Jackson often brought other books as well—anything that he thought might interest Daddy; and he'd usually bring the *Times Literary Supplement* as well, when he'd read it himself. Daddy liked this paper very much. So did I. It was enormously interesting.

There were two books that we owned but did not read, which now seems to me a little peculiar. Not the Bible—Daddy didn't read that himself, and he had far too much sense to expect me or Violet to be able to concentrate on anything so complicated—but the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Both our huge and handsome copies were in very small print, which could have been something to do with it; electricity cuts or failures were not uncommon and quite often we would find ourselves reading or playing cards by candlelight of a winter's evening. But Shakespeare was in smallish print too, and so was Milton. We managed to read them well enough. It could also be that Daddy might think that to read Bunyan with a child might risk giving direction to the child's religious instincts—and that he would never do if he could help it—and that he did not like *Robinson Crusoe*. He never would read aloud a book he

didn't like himself; why should he? I can think of few more boring things to do. I suppose that in fact all these reasons had something to do with it.

* * *

I'm afraid it's true that Daddy's morning greeting to the world, at least for all his married life, was "Go out, you cats!" flinging wide the windows. Violet couldn't bear to turn them out at nights, but as a house-trainer of kittens she was hopeless, and the scullery always smelled like a cattery. Cat-wise, Daddy really had something to contend with, because his wife was lunatical about cats. She would have filled the house to overflowing if he hadn't kept a vigorous check on them. I think five was the most we ever had while he was alive. Luckily only one was a she. Her name was Janie (my present black Jane is named after her) and she was a darling, soft and plump and loving. Like all she-cats, she had at least two litters of kittens every year; and, little as I had in common with my adoptive mother, except a love of animals, I was really sorry for and sympathized with her over those kittens. Daddy was exceptionally sensitive, certainly, but he was also extremely sensible; nor had he much patience with sensibility, which Violet had in full measure. He'd been against having a she-kitten in the first place, and he only agreed to it on one condition. Violet must drown all the kittens—herself. To which Violet agreed, not very willingly, but she had fallen in love with little furry tabby Janie and future horrors seemed slight before present joys; she fetched Janie from the farm and six months later the kittens started. Violet stuck to her cat and she stuck to her bargain, but she wept as she drowned the kittens and for some nights afterwards, apologising to the also weeping Janie every time she climbed into her lap, which, always pretty frequent, was even more so after one of these bereavements. I think that in that instance Daddy was a bit too hard. I didn't realise until quite recently that he had a contempt for women, it certainly wasn't noticeable, but it makes his attitude towards Janie's kittens more understandable. I

presume he considered Violet to be too soft—too womanly—to stick to an uncomfortable bargain, or that her affection for her cat wasn't genuine: in the event they both proved him wrong. Exasperated by the continual wails, Daddy finally insisted that Janie be returned whence she came; and Violet took her back to the farm, about two miles away as the crow flies and on the other side of a fairly deep brook. Three nights later, in a night of autumn storm and after a day as bad, Janie returned. It certainly wasn't because she'd received ill treatment at the farm; and Daddy was so struck by her courage that he not only allowed her to remain but became quite fond of her himself. Although he still expected his wife to drown the kittens. Now I do think he should have allowed her to delegate that task; there were people who would have done it for her. Hysterecotomy for cats and bitches wasn't invented then, and if one's she-cat had kittens they simply had to be killed or one's household would be overrun with cats, but I don't see why, with plenty of men and tough old village women about, the woman who loved the cat should have had to drown the kittens.

Eventually someone ran over Janie with their car and killed her, and Daddy, nearly as upset as Violet, was adamant that there should be no more cats. "No. You have Janie's two kittens, and that must be sufficient for you." It wasn't—poor Violet longed for every kitten she saw—but practically speaking Daddy was right; a farm or stableyard can keep, say, eight cats occupied, but in a house I rather think that three is at least one too many. And in a few months three we had. Violet went out for a drive with the Rector's wife and returned with a queer, long-legged, big-eyed blue kitten who purported to be a pure-bred Abyssinian, whatever that may be. As he was a present—I forget who from, I think not Nancy Jackson—Daddy, looking rather grim, made no audible objection; and that cat was such a character that Daddy at first found him amusing and finally they were almost inseparable. But three cats were certainly enough to make the place in a mess. And now and then Violet would smuggle in a stray. She hid one under the sofa cushions for days; it should have been quite safe as Daddy

always sat at the other end, and I knew that it was there, but it gave itself away by its loud grateful purr and was banished to a hay-box in the scullery. Violet tended to overfeed them, too, so it was no wonder Daddy said they were expensive. They had other disadvantages. Blue Tom (my present black Tom is named after him) once brought a live rat into the house and there released it; there was pandemonium and I never did find out what happened to that rat, nor did anybody else; Tom didn't even try to catch it again. And the day that Gripus brought in a snake there was worse than pandemonium, for Violet was perfectly terrified of snakes. But for all that, some time during most days, Violet would wail that Daddy wouldn't even let her keep a cat; and once or twice during the week Daddy would remark that she preferred her cats to him. "I would sooner be Violet's cats than her husband," he would say with a faintly malicious grin, if the subject came up in front of company.

And every morning, without fail, there would be the click of the lattice opened wide and Daddy's voice, raised sufficiently for the offenders to hear, but quite dispassionate except for an occasional note of amusement if he had seen any particular skulduggery on the part of Violet's pets: "Go out, you cats!"

* * *

Daddy liked, and preferred to stick to a routine. He got up every morning at seven o'clock, half past six in the summer, and cleaned out and relit the open fire and the kitchen boiler. Then he'd get himself a cup of tea and something to eat, and go back to bed, where he would doze a bit and read a bit and wait until his wife, rising at least an hour later, got him a bigger breakfast. After big breakfast, which Violet always carried in to him on a tray, came my lessons. I'm sure he hated them as much as I did, but he was patience itself. After my lessons, he'd attend to any correspondence that was on hand, and after that—and in a dreadfully damp, inadequately heated bedroom, winter and summer, well or ill—he would have a tepid bath, that is, a scrub-down, literally from head to

toes, in tepid water in a large bowl. This was because not only was our bath in the kitchen, covered by a "tabletop" so very well-used as to render the bath beneath it useless, but he was very afraid that the exertion of getting in and/or getting out would cause him to become giddy, perhaps to faint, and to be a "nuisance". His greatest dread was to be a "nuisance". So he washed, as he had done all his life, in a bowl in his bedroom. (He earnestly advised me to try this tepid bath, saying that it was extremely pleasurable and in the proper bath would be even nicer. So I did, once; *one* tepid bath in my life is quite sufficient, and that on a very hot day. Daddy absolutely laughed aloud, thereby causing one of his frequent headaches, at the rapidity with which I made my exit from the water!) And until his very death, his body was like that of a really young man. He moved like an invalid, not like an ancient; if one went to meet him from a walk he'd take off his hat and wave it, and smile, and one's impression would be, "Sickness has taken this man's strength," not, "This is an old man." As a child of course I didn't analyse my thoughts and feelings like this, but I have only the most fleeting recollection of Daddy as an old man, although he was just short of seventy seven when he died and I was twenty one that year; an invalid, yes, but not an old man, and thinking over my recollections, that is why.

Anyhow, after his wash, he'd dress. He was the most un-speakably untidy dresser that I have ever seen, and it never ceased to surprise me, because he was so neat in all his other ways, even finicking. Tidiness in his dress would have suited him, too, being in an elusive and Merlin-like way the handsomest of six handsome brothers, and, unlike most people, growing better looking as he aged; but he couldn't have cared less about his looks, they meant nothing to him.

"Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Or the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages.
Golden lads and girls all must,
Like chimney-sweepers, come to dust,"
he would quote only too frequently; another one with the same connotation was,

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

Having dressed, putting all the buttons in the wrong holes, choosing two pullovers of disagreeing colours and large undarned rents, forgetting to lace his shoes (but this, for a tall man whose head hurt every time he stooped even slightly, really was understandable) and brushing his newly-washed, wavy silver hair until it gleamed, he would come out slowly into the living-room, say "Goodmorning, my dear", to Violet, although it was by now about one o'clock, sit down and take up the paper, a book or his knitting, and wait for his lunch. He had learned to knit as therapy after his stroke, and he liked to knit himself scarves and shawls to wear while sitting up in bed. Once he knitted a counterpane in different coloured squares. Theoretically we had lunch at one, which means that we had it at about quarter past two. I never could decide whether this annoyed Daddy or not: he had an excellent sense of time and was one of those lucky people who can wake up at what time they please.

After lunch he would read for a short while



Theodore and Violet Powys with their adopted daughter, East Chaldon churchyard.
(© John Powys)

and get up, take his coat, hat and walking-stick, and go out for his walk. I was supposed to go with him, but if I wasn't ready he wouldn't wait. Violet was rather fussy and pettified about getting me ready, like most mothers, I suppose ("There you are, darling, now you're ready"—kisses the child who wipes its face—"Go on now; no wait a minute") and of course sometimes I'd be reading and wouldn't even know he'd gone out; but as soon as I grew out of being got ready, I usually *was* ready. I liked to go out with Daddy; this was when he'd tell me the Georgie Wormie stories and stories of his own younger days which were even better, because true.

He liked to go to a positive objective, and he had a ritual. In Evil Wood Lane there still stands, close to the road a young oak. Daddy loved oaks and he loved this oak, and he could reach it. Having got so far, just under three quarters of a mile, he would stop, and tap the oak three times with his hazel walking stick. He'd look up at it for a second or two, he couldn't raise his head for long, but he'd give it a quick friendly up-and-down glance, and then he'd turn away and walk slowly home. Once I asked him why he tapped the tree.

"To let it know I was there, my dear. It's friendly towards me and I like to greet it."

There were one or two other trees which he greeted in the same manner, all oaks, standing within reach. The beech half-way up Town Knapp, which was the terminus of his shortest walk, was out of reach, but he would touch his hat to her. Likewise when we walked down to the tiny little tributary of the Lydden which (in memory of the even tinier tributary of the Frome at Chaldon) we called the Oxus, he would throw a pebble into the deepest pool at hand.

"Why, Daddy?"

"Well, my dear, it's best to let Them know that we were here."

It's not very easy to judge exact distance when crossing country, and as he never wore a watch and I never looked at mine, on the days when we went to the Oxus (to the south-west) or towards—we only once reached it—Melcombe Park (to the south-east) we walked much further than usual and once or twice weren't back till half past six. Mealwise it didn't matter, as tea was never ready till then; but Violet worried like blazes and if we weren't back within the hour she would be in an awful tear. I think it used to upset Daddy a lot, but outwardly he seemed to take it very calmly, just saying, "Well, my dear, I expect you've got one of your excellent teas for us," and hanging up his hat. Daddy was absolutely uncritical about food. I've sometimes thought that probably Violet had come to believe that he really didn't care, and so became discouraged and couldn't be bothered. After the "excellent tea" in the winter he would read or he and Violet would play cards or dominoes or he'd read aloud. He'd never read aloud for longer than an hour, and considered half an hour better; so on most winter nights all three things happened. On moonlit nights, winter or summer, we'd go for another walk, and in the summer he was very particular about not missing Compline. Sometimes a visitor would arrive, which might make his bedtime a little late, but he would go to Compline no matter what, and most visitors were only too pleased to go with him. As a rule, at ten o'clock, after a glass of Horlicks or some such, he'd rake out the kitchen boiler, fill his hotwaterbottle, and be in bed by half past.

Stephen Powys Marks

A. R. Powys: A sketch of his life and work*

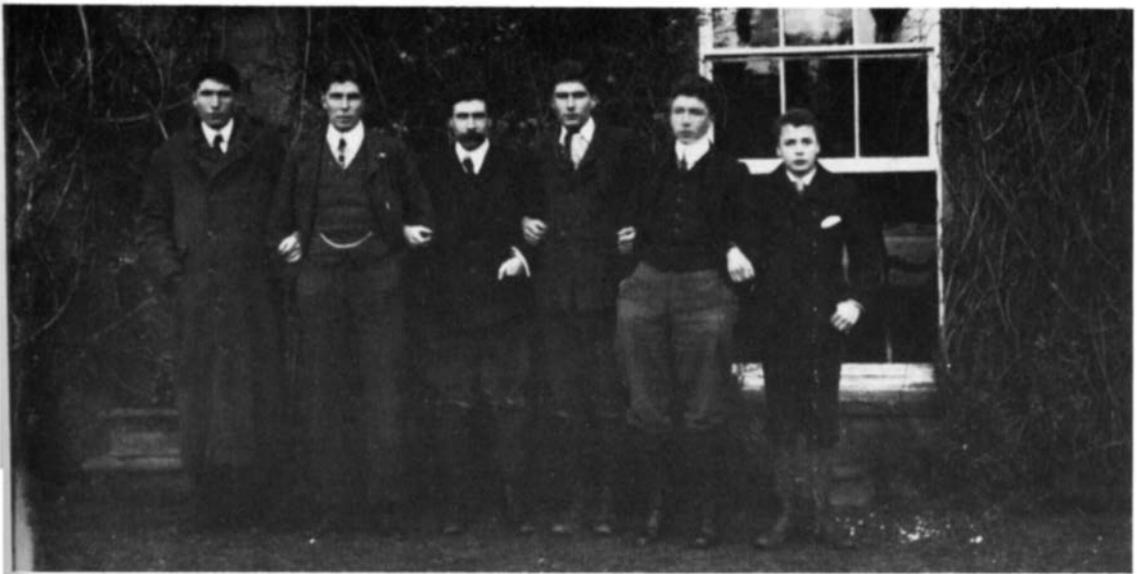
This year is the centenary of the birth of Albert Reginald Powys. He was born on 16 July 1881 in Dorchester, by age and by order exactly in the middle of that large and remarkable family of eleven children of the Revd. C. F. Powys.

Montacute, of which C. F. Powys was vicar from 1886 till 1918, was the most significant focus of the childhood and early adult life of these eleven brothers and sisters. It was, and still is, a small village dominated by its church and by Montacute House, which had been built by the Phelps family in Elizabethan times and was little changed when they left it early this century. I should imagine that there would have been very little to fill the social gap between the Phelps, the principal family of Montacute, and the rest of the village other than the

vicar and his family. I am sure that this would have had a considerable effect on the family of C. F. Powys, which was, in Earl Ferrers's neat phrase, "big enough to be largely independent of outside society and to have a public opinion of its own".¹ That independence must have been encouraged by its relative isolation; Louis Wilkinson refers to "the old immunity from what you would have thought were inevitable contacts".²

ARP³ has written no account of his own early life, but we can find vivid recollections in Llewelyn's biographical essays, of Christmas at Montacute, of walking and birds-nesting with ARP, skating excursions, the Mabelulu, and we know, as I shall show, that Llewelyn, three years his junior, was of all his brothers and sisters the closest. Mabelulu Castle, or more usually The Mabelulu, was a corner of the Montacute garden where Marian (May), Bertie and

*A paper read to the Powys Society, September 1981, with minor revision.



The brothers at Montacute, c. 1901. *Left to right:* John Cowper, Littleton, Theodore, Albert, Llewelyn, William

Lulu (Llewelyn) spent much time and effort constructing their own house and garden. ARP was, Llewelyn says, the practical one, spending all his own money on The Mabelulu while Llewelyn would squander his; Marian was the *châtelaine*. They would buy materials for it, select the timber to be delivered, and be up before crack-of-dawn to fix the roof, ARP deftly, Llewelyn at some pain to his fingers; they welcomed visitors, says Littleton, "with rites and customs peculiarly their own. Before their guests were free to leave they had to fulfil two duties; they had to sing the Mabelulu National Anthem, no easy task I can assure you; and they had to write their names in the Visitors' book, and also a poem. This was a stumbling-block to many, and even Thomas Hardy got no further than inscribing himself 'A Wayfarer'." ⁴ The earliest signature was in the summer of 1895, the last in 1911/12. ⁴

At an early age ARP had a leaning to practical affairs, as the Mabelulu shows. It shows too in a three-legged chess-table ⁵ which he made at school when he was thirteen or fourteen: most people don't get much beyond a simple box at this stage, if they touch wood-



A. R. Powys as a boy

work at all. I have another very interesting reminder of his childhood, a bird book, compiled by ARP and Llewelyn, dated July 1896 when they were fifteen and twelve respectively. In it six years later, Llewelyn wrote "In here are many old relics of my happy and merry birds-nesting walks with my most beloved and dearest brother Bertie". ⁶ This alphabetically divided book did not get very far, but it includes coloured drawings by Gertrude, Littleton, ARP, and both their parents. ARP's is a pencil sketch, and is perhaps the most architectural among them, with an emphasis on form.

A clear picture emerges of a full, interesting, and happy childhood, confirmed by ARP himself in a letter to Llewelyn on the latter's fiftieth birthday: ⁷

Lulu, my very loved brother, I would ask you to give, as I would, some ten years of life if we could have again two weeks at the ages of 16 to 19 or perhaps better at 9 to 12 in the summer holidays. No! I would not ask you to share in the gift of years but would add two or four more of my own did the Gods accept them for that exchange. How, how awake I should be for the tang of every minute! I knew those days valuable, but had I known they were as full of all beauty & happiness as they were I should have stored their good more consciously in my mind . . . As I think of you now & as you have been . . . I do little but praise those days & what you have given my life.

Like most of his brothers ARP went to Sherborne School, but unlike them he did not go to Cambridge. Instead he decided to become an architect, as Llewelyn recollects, when they were sitting sketching in Stoke Churchyard and surrounded by grey tombstones. He was articled to C. B. Benson, an architect in Yeovil, for three years from August 1899, at that time the normal course of training for the profession. The bare facts recorded on his application to be admitted an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects show that he worked alternately under William Weir and Walter Cave from September 1902 till December 1904. His work for William Weir, a well-known Scottish architect and expert in the repair of

churches in the William Morris tradition, points to the sphere in which ARP was to make his mark; for the first two months he “watched Tower at Sutton-on-Trent being repaired by W Weir Esq”, then from September 1903 to February 1904 he was “clerk of works under W. Weir during repairs to Onisbury Church”, and from August till December 1904 he was “clerk of works for W Weir during repairs of Church Tower at Denton, Lincs”. He studied at the London County Council Art Schools in Regent Street, and he took his final examinations in November 1904. He was elected an Associate in March 1905.

It will help, I think, to provide fairly rapidly a chronological framework of the rest of his life before dealing with his professional work, his publications, philosophy and character.

On 20 May 1905, at the age of nearly 24, he married Dorothy Mary Powys and lived in a flat in Hamlet Gardens, Hammersmith, near Dr Bernie O'Neill, a close friend of the family. Dorothy was a seventh cousin, both being descended from the Sir Thomas Powys who died in 1719 and who bought Lilford Hall in Northamptonshire; thus my mother, who was born at that flat, was sometimes called the “double-dyed Powys”.⁸ From about 1907 till 1911 they lived in Battersea and then on Strand-on-the-Green till March 1916, by which time ARP had enlisted and had a commission in Princess Alexandra's Own Yorkshire Regiment, or simply the Yorkshire Regiment. After moving from camp to camp he went to the front line in late 1916 or early 1917, and was taken prisoner in March 1918. For a time he was posted as missing, causing great anxiety to his family.

In 1911 he had been appointed Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which post he kept till he died, although during his absence on service his work was done by his predecessor, Thackeray Turner. The Society's reports still went out in his name and he continued to receive pay from the Society. In January 1920 he rented 13 Hammersmith Terrace, a large tall early-Georgian terraced house with its garden running down to the river wall, where he was the

neighbour of A. P. Herbert. He lived there till he moved in 1929 to St Peter's Square with his second wife, Faith Oliver, whom he had met in 1928, and then in 1930 to a house in Ravenscourt Gardens before his twin son and second daughter, Oliver and Eleanor, were born in 1931. In 1935 he bought a house in Richmond but, before work could be finished on it, he died, tragically early, on 9 March, 1936.

I shall now return to his professional career. He qualified and could call himself an architect in 1905, at the age of 23. He worked again with William Weir; for example, my mother remembers staying in lodgings for the whole autumn of 1910 at Walpole St Peter in Norfolk working in connection with Weir.⁹ In 1903 the S.P.A.B. had published a book of *Notes on the Repair of Ancient Buildings*, extolling the personal direction of works on the spot by younger architects;¹⁰ I presume that ARP was working under exactly this arrangement, as he states he was earlier in his training. He also worked with Thackeray Turner, of whom more below, on repairing ancient domestic buildings, and with Professor W. R. Lethaby, for whom he had such a high regard that Dorothy referred to him as “pet Lethaby”.

John in the *Autobiography* refers to ARP entering the “remarkable architectural office . . . in High Street Kensington” of his brother-in-law, Harry Lyon;¹¹ it is this address which ARP gives in the S.P.A.B. membership list in 1909.

His earliest work seems to be a fountain and drinking trough at Montacute, where it still stands but in much reduced form. It is dated 1902. Its design is right within the Arts and Crafts movement of the time. One wonders whether his father thought to help him by commissioning it.

He clearly impressed those with whom and for whom he worked. Having been a member of S.P.A.B. and on its committee since 1909, and interested in the Society's work before that, he was appointed Secretary in 1911 on the recommendation of Thackeray Turner. Turner, who was a partner in the firm Balfour and Turner and whose offices were those of S.P.A.B. had been Secretary of the Society since 1885; he took ARP into partner-

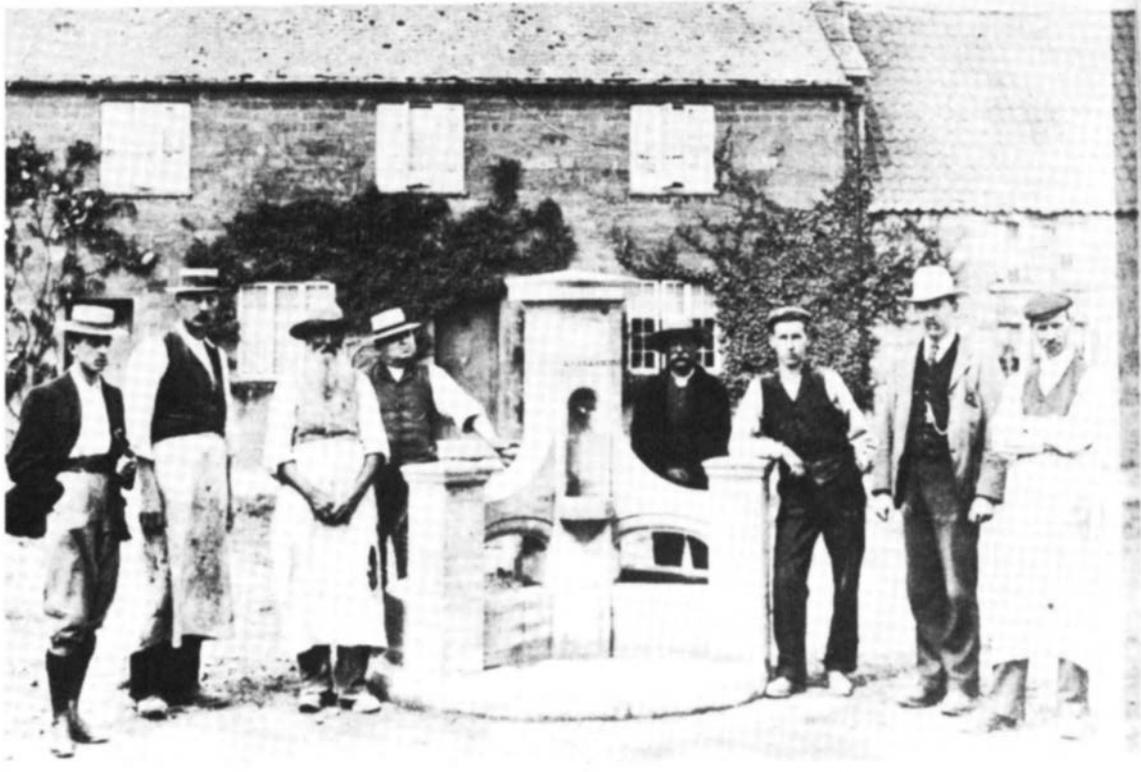


A. R. Powys in 1902
Portrait drawing by Gertrude Powys

ship at about the same time as he handed over to ARP.

As the work of the S.P.A.B. now became my subject's principal occupation I must say something about this Society. It was formed in 1877 by William Morris in protest at the proposed 'restoration' of Tewkesbury Abbey, and is much the earliest of the societies concerned with the protection of buildings. At that time not only was there in full swing much repair of churches and cathedrals which had indeed been long neglected, but there was also a combined liturgical-aesthetic drive to restore them to the 'best' period of Gothic, the Early English; many restorations followed the strongly held convictions of their architects and patrons, and often resulted in drastic destruction of work of great interest of all periods and in the replacement of much early stonework simply for the sake of a neat appearance.

All this was vigorously attacked by Morris who expounded the principle that we are only trustees for the heritage we have, and that we have a duty to pass it on, repaired, but as little



Fountain and drinking trough in the Borough,
Montacute, designed by A. R. Powys, 1902

altered as possible. The Society's manifesto, as written by Morris, is still, over a hundred years later, unaltered, and it had no other rules or constitution until very recently the Society was obliged by the Charity Commissioners or the Inland Revenue to set them down. That manifesto can be read in any of the Society's reports. The Society was soon dubbed "anti-Scrape", and, in the days when public intervention in the treatment of private property was non-existent and would be anathema, it had many difficult and acrimonious battles and was felt to be interfering and intolerant.

It was Thackeray Turner's view that ARP, when he took office, had a kinder time than himself, who at the end of his twenty-nine years found that the violent opposition of 1883 had largely disappeared. Kinder or not, the Secretaryship of the Society, which was supposed to be a part-time job, certainly absorbed most of ARP's energies, and then later ARP set up his own practice in partnership with John MacGregor, some nine years his junior, there were, I believe, occasions when MacGregor felt that ARP was giving too much to the S.P.A.B. and not enough to the practice. The private practice was, however, maintained till his death, but there is relatively little executed work which can be attributed to him, and he tended, in his modest way, to recommend potential clients to give their commissions to other architects whom he himself could trust. I will return to his own work later.

Thackeray Turner's salary as Secretary, also part-time, was £120 a year; this was maintained at first for ARP, but by 1920 it had risen to £300, and by 1935 to £500, perhaps reasonable for the time he was supposed to give but a very modest return for what he in fact did. In 1925 it was stated that he undertook to give three days a week to the Society's business, that is half a working week of the time, but Thackeray Turner in 1920 said "we have got a Secretary who goes hunting round for work, and gets a great deal more than he can do and even a great deal more than he is paid for".¹²

The largest element of his work was connected with cases coming to the Society. The

annual reports for any year will show how extensive was the coverage. Cases are divided into those where the Society has been approached by owners, guardians or those in charge of repairs or alterations, those to which attention was drawn by members or others, or through notices in the press, and those for which technical reports were drawn up. These, not only numerous, were distributed throughout England, Wales and Scotland. Much of the fieldwork was done voluntarily or for small payments by local architects and local members, but all the assessment and reporting to the committee was the responsibility of the Secretary, and it was he who had to write to and meet owners, architects, surveyors, deans and all, some of whom were willing to be advised, but many not so, whom he had to cajole and persuade. In some cases this work went well beyond mere advice. Some cases would drag on for many years.

There were major campaigns which involved other bodies, such as the attempt to retain Rennie's Waterloo Bridge, at first successful but ultimately lost, to preserve the Adelphi, also unsuccessful, and to prevent the erection of a sacristy in an unsuitable position at Westminster Abbey, which was successful. Around 1920 the Society strove to prevent the widespread clearance of old cottages in the country which were being condemned by health authorities as unfit to live in without considering the possibility of repair; here the Society as a practical example persuaded a member to fund the repair of a pair of cottages at Drinkstone in Suffolk, and published in 1921 an account of the result in book form. That campaign was featured in a review by ARP, in *The Times* in 1920, of a previous booklet on the same subject.

The Society sponsored books on bridges and on windmills, and the interest and concern for the latter was so great that a separate Windmill Committee, which still flourishes today, was founded in 1931, and ARP became chairman of that. He had a special interest in church bells. He travelled constantly, and lectured up and down the country; the 1920 report, for example, refers to lectures in Norwich, Cambridge, Ipswich, Leicester, London, Taunton, and more to be

given in the autumn and winter of 1920/21.

The Society felt that a particularly important part of its work was to offer and publish technical advice. I have mentioned the *Notes on Repair* of 1903; there were from time to time mentions of reprinting or bringing these up to date. In 1922 a series of leaflets was announced; "The Society", wrote ARP, "in giving advice is guided solely by the desire to see buildings preserved in their authenticity—wisely and reverently—and free from any whimsical embellishment or other alteration on renovation that shall detract from the value of the buildings themselves, and surely, therefore, from our own credit in the eyes of our descendants."¹³ In 1928 ARP published a series of articles in the *Builder* on "Repair of Ancient Buildings"; these were published in book form in 1929, and will be referred to later. Technical articles, some of which were incorporated in his *Repair of Ancient Buildings*, were also prepared for the annual report, such as those on death-watch beetle, the care of churches and fireproofing thatch.

The Society was involved in legislation such as the Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act 1913 and the Ancient Monuments Bill in 1931. An Ancient Buildings Trust was formed in 1931 to deal in old houses in a business-like way, in the hope of paying the Society some interest. The story of this is best told by F. W. Troup in his obituary of ARP:¹⁴

Powys's innate sincerity won him friends from unexpected quarters. He shocked his Committee one day into silent amazement by calmly handing the chairman a cheque for £20,000 and announcing that it had been given him by an anonymous donor specifically to acquire and preserve ancient buildings which we might judge to be worthy of preservation. But the Secretary had done more than merely accept the gift, he had told the donor at once and got his approval to the money being used as capital to purchase buildings which could be put in repair and either let or sold (under restrictions) so that the capital would remain and continue to be used over and over again. That at any rate was the aim, and a company called the "Ancient Buildings Trust" was

formed to carry on this branch of the work on behalf of the Society.



A. R. Powys in the mid-'20s



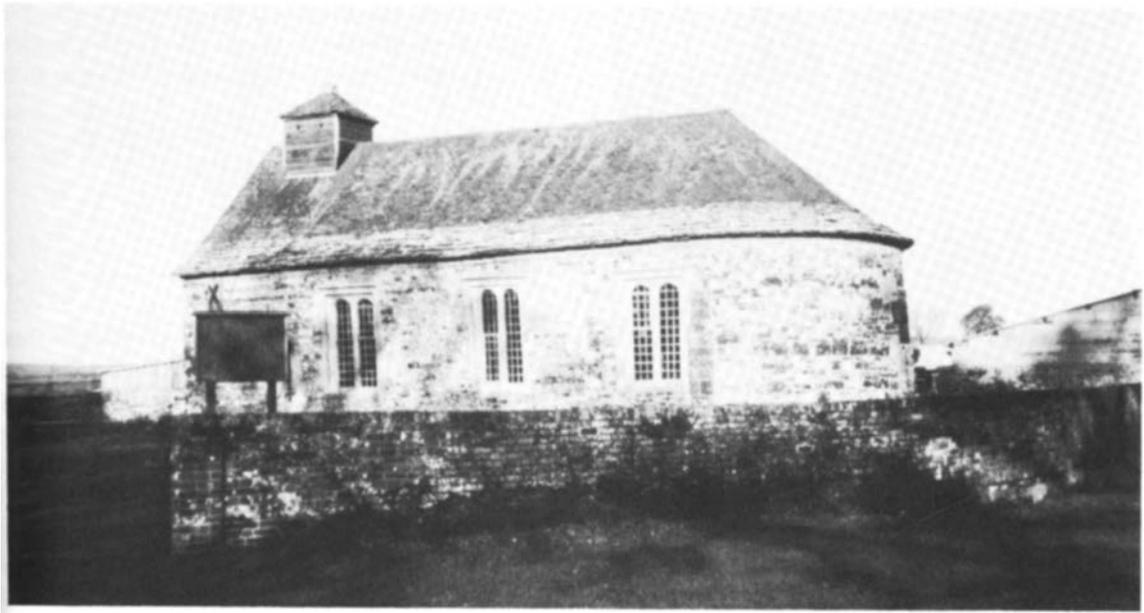
A. R. Powys and Llewelyn, late 1920s

I can add a bit to this. Faith told me that ARP had done a lot of work in Bath for Ernest Cook, who was the benefactor but something of a recluse, difficult to approach. Cook, after purchasing the Assembly Rooms for the S.P.A.B., next told ARP "now I want you to buy for the nation the most beautiful building in England". The most beautiful according to ARP was Brympton d'Evercy, which is a truly superb house very near Yeovil, but it was not for sale, but the second most beautiful was Montacute House, available for £30,000. At the next meeting the S.P.A.B. Committee was presented with the cheque, but it was given on the condition that ARP looked after the house for the National Trust. Of course, he knew the house well: it must have been deeply embedded in his early memories and have made a great impression on him. We cannot doubt that Montacute House, which had been empty for some years, would have been reduced to rubble for its salvage value or shipped to America if ARP had not impressed Cook and recommended the house, which is now one of the National Trust's finest possessions. The fiftieth anniversary of its transfer to the National Trust was celebrated early in 1981 with a garden party attended by the Duke of Gloucester.

A splendidly hard-hitting report on St Donat's Castle being restored and improved for William Randolph Hearst appears in the annual report for 1930; this was one of the most scandalous cases and involved stripping other ancient buildings to restore the castle. A poster was prepared with the help of Frank Pick and displayed on the Underground. The Society was threatened with legal proceedings by Mr Hearst.

One further case should be mentioned; Winterborne Tomson Church. In 1928 the decision was taken to sell certain papers of Thomas Hardy's, including the draft in his own handwriting of his paper to the Society in 1906. They were sold so that the proceeds could be devoted to the maintenance of some ancient buildings in Dorset as a memorial to Hardy. Two years later it was decided that the little church at Winterborne Tomson should be repaired; this work, funded partly by the Hardy Fund and partly through a generous donor, was completed in 1931,¹⁵ and it was here that ARP was buried only five years later, and where more recently a commemorative slate tablet, engraved by Reynolds Stone, has been set on the wall.

The work of ARP was recognised not only in the high opinions which are reflected in many letters from people he dealt with but



Winterborne Tomson church.

also in two honours bestowed on him. On 5 March 1931 he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries; the certificate of candidature for election gives his qualification as "wide personal knowledge of ancient buildings; Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings". The present secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, to whom I applied for details of the election, suggested that his supporters were a cross-section of the "great and the good" of the day. They included Earl Ferrers, ARP's cousin and himself an architect on the S.P.A.B. committee, Emery Walker, a distinguished printer, C. R. Peers, retired Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Lord Crawford & Balcarres, E. Guy Dawber, the founder of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, F. W. Troup, an S.P.A.B. architect and writer of an obituary notice for the S.P.A.B., and Professor E. W. Tristram, expert on wall paintings.

His second honour was his appointment as C.B.E., Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire on 4 June 1934. Once again he was recorded as the Secretary



A. R. Powys, C.B.E., 1934

of the S.P.A.B. Llewelyn wrote to ARP: "I wish Father and Mother were alive to hear of it. Surely it would have made the old man rub his hands."¹⁶

I have no doubt that some of his private practice came via the Society, though he was in the habit of passing commissions on to others. Such work would by its nature be repair work, and, by the nature of his and the Society's principles, it would tend to be modest. There seems to be little record of his work as the drawings and papers of the partnership with John MacGregor were lost by an unfortunate accident.

There are several new buildings of his. I have already mentioned the fountain at Montacute, which must be his first complete structure. I know of four houses, one a major conversion, the others new. The first is a house built in 1924 for his brother Littleton, who had been headmaster of Sherborne Preparatory School but was obliged to retire the year before for medical reasons. Littleton writes:¹⁷

We had asked my brother A.R. to design the house; we had given him some idea of what we wanted, a house of simple design without gables and odd excrescences, which in those days seemed so prevalent, a house built of stone in a late Georgian style, with sash windows and large eaves and a good sloping roof; the sort of house connected in our mind with old country vicarages, the most comfortable of all houses to live in.

He saw at once what we had in mind and soon produced his plans; these remained unaltered except for the addition of a walled terrace in front of the house. For eleven years we lived in it and not once did we have occasion to find fault with any of the arrangements he had made for us . . .

All through the autumn of 1924 we had watched the Quarry House, as we named it, being built, and superintended the laying out of the garden. In the original contract the stone to be used for the building was to be quarried from the field in which the house was to be built, but after quarrying for some time it was found that the stone was not good enough nor in sufficient quantity for the purpose. So a new contract was made and stone from Stalbridge was used for the main buildings, and here and



Quarry House, Sherborne (The excrescence on the near corner is not part of the original design.)

there stone from Ham Mill was used too. This gave me sentimental pleasure, for the stone from Stalbridge came from the home of my grandfather, and the stone from Ham Mill from our old home at Montacute. The rubble quarried in the search for stone was used in levelling a tennis-court; and the quarry provided an exceptionally suitable site for a rock garden and lily pond.

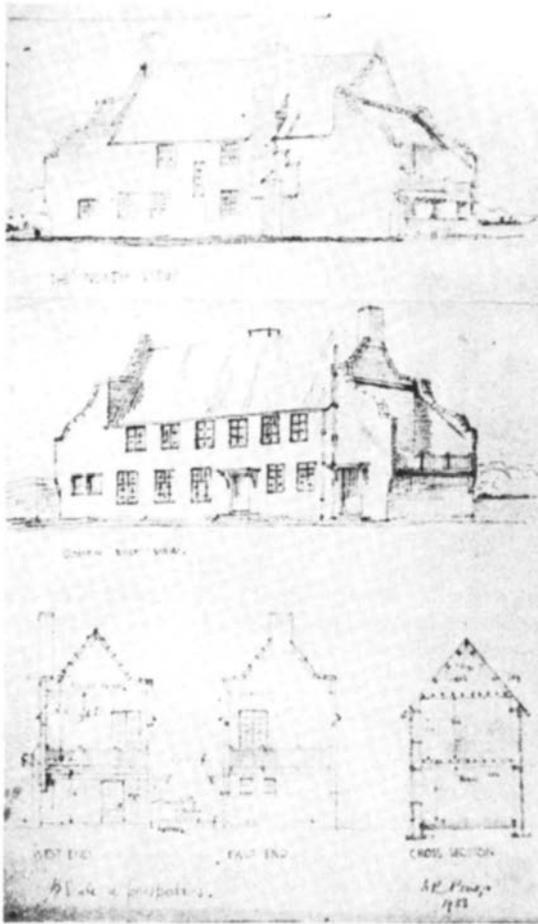
Quarry House was Littleton's home till 1936 when he let it and moved to a smaller house. He moved back for a while at the end of the war, when I remember visiting him and having impressed on me that the staircase had been made especially easy-going for Littleton.

Quarry House, which is the only one I have seen, may well have been ARP's first large commission and it may have been given to help him. He did not apparently like it much but he had to give Littleton what he wanted—ever the way with clients! Apart from the most unfortunate extension on the garden front it looks much as it did originally, I think, and is a small masterpiece of simplicity. The idea of using stone from its own grounds certainly appealed to ARP, and he did it again in a later commission.

Other works are a conversion of a cottage at Green Tye, a house called Shepherd's Down on the Thames for Mr and Mrs Bell-owes, and a house in Scotland for Mr and Mrs Lewis. The owner of Shepherd's Down wanted to buy a disused brickfield and build the house from its own bricks; the house in Scotland was also built of stone from its own ground and it has a stream running under it and out by its steps, because it would be unlucky to divert it. That commission he got because the Lewises were so impressed by the manner in which ARP persuaded them that they were dealing with some bells in the wrong way.

One of ARP's greatest pleasures was to build a fire, and the construction of the fireplace was of great importance.

I suspect that the most telling witness of ARP's architectural truthfulness is a design which he prepared for the ideal house for himself. His sketch plans are dated 1933: it was intended to use current factory-made products, the cheapest bricks, but to bring the continuing tradition of ordinary building methods to them. It was to cost £600 to build, but no site could be found near London at a possible price. It was to be called Snook



Design for 'Snook House', 1933
(repr. courtesy Mrs. Faith Powys)

House: Faith says ARP spoke often when he was designing it, of his joy in casting a 'snook' at the Architects who would not concern themselves with ordinary cheap houses. This is a point that he makes with some force in *The English House*.

Snook House is a simple structure with windows placed where they are needed, yet with a strong sense of propriety and order. It provides modest accommodation, concentrating all services on the ground floor at one end. It is very much an elongated cottage plant, a building type which had so exercised him and the S.P.A.B. fifteen years earlier. One would also call it a plain house if it were not for two unusual features, the open balconies at each end with their Dutch semi-gables and the organic but slightly self-

conscious chimney stack on the rear which reverts once more to the Arts and Crafts movement which pervaded his fountain. The same influence is seen in the indications of hand-wrought iron strap-hinges on both outside doors. The balconies, with retracting blinds, were to provide outdoor sleeping spaces, a facility which was very important to ARP and which he did provide in an extension to the last house he owned, in Spring Terrace, Richmond.

The only other design of which I am aware is an unsuccessful competition scheme by ARP and MacGregor, some time around 1930, for Guildford Cathedral. It was a largely Romanesque scheme and proposed in the modern manner a building embodying all the functions of the diocese under one roof.

I would like to turn now to his published work. This is almost entirely of a technical or professional nature; much of it is concerned with the problems of repair and preservation. As Secretary of the S.P.A.B. he was responsible for the annual report and some other documents, and he clearly wrote substantial parts of these. He wrote three books, *Repair of Ancient Buildings*, *The English House*, both already mentioned, and *The English Parish Church*.

Repair of Ancient Buildings, published by J. M. Dent & Co. in 1929, brought together articles appearing in the *Builder* the previous year. It represented the collected wisdom of the S.P.A.B. following the principles of William Morris. In the words of the 1928 report, once again presumably by ARP,¹⁸

an attempt has been made . . . to set down advice as to the treatment of the commoner problems which confront the guardians of ancient buildings. The book has been drawn up to amplify and bring up to date one entitled *Notes on Repair* which the Society published in 1903 . . . In writing the book the Secretary of the Society has attempted to state in plain language the methods employed by men who were known to be expert in the art of preserving ancient work, rather than to lay down any rules as to what should or should not be done. The practice and recommendations of the Society form a considerable part of the book.

This book, long out of print, of course, is still regarded as the bible of the Society, and in these circles "Powys" means *Repair of Ancient Buildings* and is much sought after. On a number of occasions the Society has contemplated reprinting it but did not get down to it till I put forward a proposal. The reprint, for which I have acted as production manager, has some twenty pages of close-set new notes and appendices but the original text has not been altered at all, so highly is it still regarded.

In the same year, 1929, ARP produced *The English House* in Benn's Sixpenny Library, a slim brown paperback of 80 pages with but two pages of diagrams at the end. The first two-thirds is a clear and concise but non-controversial account of English domestic architecture up to the nineteenth century, but with the last two chapters, on the nineteenth century and especially on the modern house, we begin to see some of those points in his philosophical system of architecture which are embodied in, for example, the design of Snook House.

I should perhaps beware of referring to a system or philosophy, for ARP is most scathing of theory and theorising architects, believing that all our architectural ills have steamed from too much thought and too little application to the practice of architecture where it really mattered. Preceding the remarks on the nineteenth century he says:¹⁹

Architecture as distinct from the provision of houses has been stultified by talk of styles, of texture, of local materials, of handicrafts, and of old examples. Good building is not to be held in check by such aesthetic or pseudo-aesthetic discussion, but, tempered by the leaven of skill-based art, will eventually cover the land. When at last thinking men accept modern methods and modern materials, become proud of their new differences, and attempt to give them as good a finish and as well ordered a design as was done in olden times it may be too late to make good the mistakes that are being made.

He is vigorously uncomplimentary about Victorian architecture; he found reasons in the "separation of real progress from forcibly imposed change". When the direct tradition

of the English Renaissance came to an end with Nash, he says, there was a reaction to imported forms from Italy and an attempt to "continue the great Gothic tradition of house building from the point where it had been checked by marriage to a foreign bride". This "make-believe atmosphere of Gothic art" had two origins, the romantic novel associated with Scott and the revival of the Church of England which "sought renewed life by imitating the forms and ceremonies so richly developed through the Middle Ages". The lack of religious association with classic architecture led to new churches being built in ancient form.

Thus, while "bricks were made cheaply, sheet and plate glass was produced and proudly—and, I think, rightly—admired", and machine-made materials were available, "yet the Gothic revival went on". Here then is the nub of ARP's argument: "Instead of fusing the new forces to make clean and slick the new forms they were best able to produce, their power was directed to produce forms which originated in the instinctive response of hand to mind. A pointed arch, a steep-pitched roof, encaustic tiled floors, stood for Gothic art." The first architect to realise the folly of all this was, says ARP, Philip Webb, himself an S.P.A.B. man, but even Webb and Morris got it wrong because they "preached the excellence of handiwork and that the product of machines was base"—for the most part this was so because machines produced imitations of handiwork, but these two "failed to recognise that it was the control and not the power of the machine which was at fault." In the nineteenth century, "that century of progress and invention . . . the architect consciously avoided looking for help to the new methods that in all other walks of life were exerting great influence . . . It was the age of essays in styles that did not belong to their day . . . the adjective Victorian conveys a slur that is nearly enough to keep a house empty for many a year." Elsewhere, he refers to the "phase of insanity".

Many of you will, I am sure, remember the reaction to Victorian architecture even twenty years ago: the older among you may still feel that way; at least we can all

remember our parents thinking thus. So it is interesting to find that ARP, who could say in his address to the S.P.A.B. in 1933 "Your Committee consciously endeavours to avoid taking into consideration the matter of aesthetics in dealing with ancient buildings", is in effect giving expression to a violent dislike of Victorian architecture: was he, too, a victim of his generation's taste, who sought to rationalise his dislike? I think he hints at a realization of this when he says the houses of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, that is in the new tradition of Shaw and Webb, were "near enough . . . to be old-fashioned and not old enough to have acquired the quality of romance".

Now, he says, the pupils of the architects who followed the lead of Shaw and Webb, that is the pupils of Ernest Newton, Lethaby, Schultz Weir, Lutyens *et al*, are consciously looking round for something *modern*: they are condemned for making the same mistake as their Victorian predecessors, but in reverse! We must turn, therefore, to present materials—concrete is eminently adapted for use for standardized parts—and see what is actually built: the semi-temporary bungalows with asbestos slates and walls of pressed asbestos-cement sheets. These must in truth be called modern architecture, and it is time that architects turned their hands to the design of ordinary houses instead of scorning them.

I find in these views a remarkably logical and analytical approach driven to its conclusion; to a large extent he has been vindicated because in the last thirty-five years the design of ordinary houses has come progressively within the architect's province, and it has been shown possible to use machine-made materials for what they are without offence. There is no doubt that the striving for modernity has been its own downfall. Yet I think most of us would find his arguments difficult to accept without knowing where to attack them. In quite a different context he says:²⁰

It is almost useless to seek to be abreast of the time; we are there without knowing. It is also useless to try to hinder these changes, they are of life. The attempt is like that of turning the

tide. To say this is the way, or that is the way may equally be blasphemy. There is nothing left for each of us to do but fearlessly to follow where our minds lead us, where our instincts lead us, tempering these leaders with our reason if we can.

I have dealt at length with this little book because it shows so much of his way of thinking and direction of thought. *The English Parish Church*, published in Longmans English Heritage Series in 1930, is an equally perceptive book and once more brings a logic and clarity to the subject which is difficult to find elsewhere on the subject. What further distinguishes this book from its fellows or rivals is the completeness of the context in which he sets the church and its sheer breadth of historical background. The priest and the officers of the church, the furniture and fittings, unusual uses, are all as important as the fabric and the plan itself to his story of the parish church.

In addition to his three books he was a frequent contributor of articles and reviews to journals and magazines. These include *The London Mercury*, to which J. C. Squire introduced him in 1924 or 25, *Church Assembly News*, *Architectural Design and Construction*, *The Architects' Journal* and *Time and Tide*. A selection of these articles was published in *From the Ground Up* in 1937 by J. M. Dent. Sir John Squire was supposed to write an introduction, but he failed to do so and the book, much delayed, was accompanied by an introduction by his brother, John Cowper Powys. The delay, Faith says, resulted in disappointing sales, and the book was eventually remaindered.

Many of the points already made are repeated in these articles, but I would like to examine two which seem especially interesting, one entitled "Tradition and Modernity", the other "Origins of Bad Architecture". In the former, ARP is at pains to expose the misuse of the word 'tradition'. Traditionalists, he says, assume that tradition and conformity to tradition are good, but they make one serious mistake because the kind of buildings they admire and desire are *not traditional* but represent an academic *revival*, a conscious reproduction of

ancient forms reshuffled into new arrangements; those who say that no new architecture deserves consideration unless it can be called 'modern' are also at fault. We come then to the first approach to tradition: "where tradition is a force it is an inevitable force, and one that is weakened in proportion as it is theoretically considered or discussed." ARP gives as an example the form of altar used before the Reformation which is claimed by some as "the *traditional* English altar": it was traditional in those days but since it has not been seen or used between the reign of Elizabeth and the nineteenth century its present use is a *revival*. This is the misuse of the word *tradition*.

Nowadays, he says, tradition resides in builders' yards, in machine shops, under the eyes of foremen, also in the procedures adopted in architects' offices: "It is the unquestioned means to an end, learned by example and by custom from a preceding generation." He concludes that "Tradition and Modernity in architecture are natural allies. They are the evidence of a current experience which has its origin in past use. . . It is of them that great architecture comes." He draws an interesting analogy with the work of Hardy, a modernist in his day writing in accordance with tradition.

The most interesting item in the selection is "Origins of Bad Architecture", originally published in 1931.²¹ It is the only place in all the published work I have mentioned where there is anything abstruse. In a half-philosophical, half-geometric approach to the study of architecture, ARP has constructed an image comparable in kind with Plato's individual who knows no other world than the shadows thrown up on the far wall of a cavern. The following extracts will illustrate his image and its application to architecture:²²

The search for virtue in the human race and in the individual has been likened to the search for light by one imprisoned in a dungeon, where the darkness is broken only by one ray so small that its passage appears limited by the size of the hole made by a pinprick.

In the infancy of the race and in the youth of a man there is an impulse to approach this

distant light, yet with every step towards it it is found that though the light becomes brighter it also recedes to farther infinite distances. It is ever more and more inaccessible while yet it is ever more and more attractively brilliant and of greater volume. The seeker's impulse is increased by conscious desire, and he is driven forward by both the spur of his mind and the diffuse veiled forces of his multi-spaced environment . . .

Such a ray piercing the gloom of a dungeon appears as a cone of light bounded by darkness. The base of the cone is distant and the observer looking towards it feels himself standing near the apex. The man, or the people, moves from the apex towards an ever-receding and ever more remote cone-base of light that grows infinitely in circumference as it seems to become more firmly present . . .

In the symbolic three-dimensional picture I have imagined here, the even reception of the full circle of life is perfection in each plane of the light-cone where the circle lies. In the early development of a man, or of a race, this plane-circle lies near the apex from which he starts on his way. In the later stages the light-circle is of greater extent as it is farther from the inverted apex. But imagine these light-planes divided into measured areas named with the name of some word-virtue, and imagine the pursuit of one or other of these areas to the exclusion or neglect of others and the balanced evenness of the plane is broken and marred; it is no longer *perfect* in its place . . .

The building that is held admirable by all is that which most wholly spreads its being across its proper light-plane in the cone of architectural virtue. And it is in degree bad and imperfect when it reverts in part or whole to planes already passed. To each belongs a fitness that is as naturally beautiful as the movement of a panther stooping in quietness to lap water, or in passion springing upon its prey. The Parthenon, the Church of Santa Sophia at Constantinople, the Nave of Durham Cathedral, King's College Chapel at Cambridge, the Portico of St Paul's, Covent Garden, in London, are all perfect in this way; and none of them would be perfect had man, using his reason and his brain, applied them to any other plane-circle of this imagined cone than the one upon which they inevitably appeared. Their perfection lies in their true and balanced evenness in their positions in the cone. In none of them is one virtue stressed beyond others;

and in those buildings that are most the outcome of digested experience, tempered by reason born of their immediate *present*, is most excellence found . . . In buildings that fail to be wholly admirable some word-presented virtue is stressed to the neglect of the single unity. Such buildings sprang from a reasoning dragged from outside the age-thought of their proper plane.

The principle conclusion of this article is that “dependence on reasoned theories is a main cause of the unhappy state of architecture”. Having realised this, “it will be well to forget what has been found out . . . and again rely on more primitive impulses nearly unsupported by reasoning. For the root of our failures rests with theory-mongers”.

Digested experience is the key phrase to ARP’s explanation of good architecture. It is the “subconscious result of experience . . . the certain feeling and assured knowledge which are in a man without resort to conscious reason or thought.” He cites the mason in the fifteenth century who knew at once what was wanted when he was told to hew stone for a three-light window. Again, “Digested experience is akin to instinct.”

Having set up the imagery of the cone of light, ARP tells us that among the equipresent, even planes there are Proportional Economy, which dictates the proper measure of expense in relation to purpose, Traditional Experience, on which he says much the same as in the previous article noted here, and Cultural Experience.

In the later nineteenth century another quality, *moral honesty*, was emphasised out of all proportion, exemplified by stripping medieval walls to reveal ‘honest’ masonry: the excessive honesty produces, in a most disagreeable form, the opposite attribute. ARP thinks that too much emphasis is placed on the theory that good architecture depends on the use of local materials: our own age is the only one to put forward such a theory. He points out that materials were brought great distances if they were thought better, such as French stone for English cathedrals, English bricks transported to America. How ARP would deplore every one of our present-day planning guides on design in conservation

area! I suspect that the very idea of the conservation area would have given him a nasty turn.

Finally he looks at the quality included in the aesthetic approach. Perhaps, above all others, theories about beauty have been the chief cause of bad architecture. Lethaby maintained that architectural beauty grows from fitness of a building for its purpose and from its structural significance, and not from things done for looks, but the beauty which these have is not the result of reasoned theory but of much deeper forces. We seem to be back to digested experience. He concludes that bad architecture is the result of a too conscious search for the reverse—good architecture; it has its origins in a virtuous attempt to give a building perfection, an attempt that is supported by word-theories; inevitably some essential factor is omitted or overstressed. He concludes the article in the terms of his image: “bad architecture does not evenly fill its proper plane in the light-cone of developing human virtue.”

A profile of ARP, complete with cartoon, appeared shortly after 1931, written by M. I. Batten who worked for him for three years; in it, when asked for his theories on architecture, he said he was a “vernacularist”, if there was such a thing. He felt “that architecture to-day was in very much the same stage as literature at the time of the Renaissance, when people were giving up writing books in Latin and taking to their mother tongue. So now architects must build to suit the needs of the man in the street and in a way that he can understand.”²³

I come, finally, back to the man. In youth he displayed his practical side as I have shown, both in *The Mabelulu* and in his chess table; Llewelyn gives an engaging picture of his brother who was “never one to care about dress . . . I can see him now standing by a chess table he was making, his waistcoat covered with sawdust, his trousers baggy at the knee, gravely concentrating with brown, long-fingered, sensitive hands upon his work”.²⁴ That sensitivity and concentration, surely, emerge from the beautiful portrait of him as schoolboy.

That concentration always went with him

through life, whether it was at the dinner table when he held on to the salad bowl while he spoke of what had his interest for the moment, or in his many dealings for the S.P.A.B. Llewelyn refers to his fine Roman head sensitively solicitous, suggesting form and character but at the same time extreme vulnerability. John, who treated ARP to a visit to Rome, likewise remarked how like an ancient Roman he looked. Louis Wilkinson says that ARP more closely resembled his father in appearance than did any other member of the family.

With a manner direct, downright and positive, a fine emphatic talker, but meticulous not to overstate, unable to show off, and always on guard against pretension, he earned himself the name "Brother Positive" within the family. He had an obstinate sincerity, never to be budged, which gave so much weight on his judgments as Secretary of the S.P.A.B.

The closeness of Llewelyn and ARP comes out time and again in the former's letters. To ARP in 1902 he says "it's a help writing to you dear brother, but let this be private and kept to yourself", and "of course as you know I would always tell you anything, everything".²⁵ I have already quoted from ARP's birthday letter to Llewelyn and Llewelyn's comment in the childhood bird book. "Our affections were bound together by unbreakable bonds"; to Gerald Brenan after ARP's death Llewelyn wrote "He *was* my early life."²⁶

Llewelyn found ARP's professional writing altogether too prosaic. John and Littleton greatly admired his clear and definite style; the latter says "he knows what he wants to

say and says it with as few and as well-chosen words as possible; and no-one who reads these books is not aware that the eternal spirit of true architecture is alive in the author."²⁷ He also had the very highest praise for a letter he received from ARP in 1932 which shows his philosophy of life.²⁰ Llewelyn, who saw it when Littleton printed it in *The Joy of It* in 1937, was, he says, "greatly moved by Bertie's letter. What an impression of strong thought it gives—so simple and firm and deep. Not one of us could have written such a letter. It is a wonderful letter to possess and I am glad you published it. It would be impressive in any collection. Matthew Arnold himself could not, I think, have written anything more wise and more weighty".²⁸ The letter is indeed remarkable.

ARP was the most robust member of the family and yet he was the first adult to die. He had been ill in 1933, seriously enough to keep him away from his office for some months, ill again at Christmas 1935 but refusing to let up in spite of advice to do so. Earlier he had occasional serious indigestion and his work and meals were irregular. Finally he died from duodenal ulcers on 9 March 1936. Llewelyn, whose moving recollections were published first in *The London Mercury*²⁸ and then in *Somerset Essays*, wrote to Gerald Brenan, "I think Bertie threw away his life by an over-confidence in his animal health and own obstinacy. He could not believe that he was ill, and even at the nursing home wrote to John that it was strange for anyone *like him* to be sick."³⁰ Thus ended a most valuable life to which generous and sincere tributes were paid in many quarters.

46 Ravenscourt Gardens,
Hammersmith.

June 14, 1932.

My dear Tom,

Let me send you my love. I was really glad that you let me see more of your mind and feelings the other night. I think of you with such warm affection, and with better understanding I really do believe. I sit down in a mood to write rather a long letter but I am sure not a tiresome one; at worst it will be no more than boring; and I send that article I spoke of which I would have you return most carefully. Very little thought will show how it can be applied to other things of life besides architecture. To me it seems to fit almost all conditions, test it as I may. But I know the subject is so difficult to express that the meaning may not be clear. But enough of that; you will see for yourself if you have patience to read.

And now for this other matter of which I should have liked to have talked with you further. This matter of life, and how to live and our relationship to the universe. And don't think I am trying to teach you. That I hope I will never do to anyone. To let another know what is in my mind is no effort to teach.

Well, well; the first thing that is in my mind is man's background of eternity; then of the relative age of the solar system—an age that is a day in God's mind; that is in the way of the universe. Then remember the shorter time still of man's philosophic life, of his religious life, and consider its origin in taboos, in witchcraft and wizardry, and the development through only about 8,000 years from that to our present religions, religions in which perforce there lingers very very much of those old taboos and magics, things once held assuredly as final, god-given and unchangeable, founded on tradition and convention.

In these years these old beliefs and certainties, as they were, have slowly been tempered by reason, until much has been set on one side. At the end of each religious period man has tried many new roads, failing here, succeeding there, but generally widening the base of his thought and discarding the old taboos and the old certainties.

What is happening now is that certain men and women are exploring new regions again and new ways, and those who have firm convictions in the thought of their days and their father's days feel wrenched and hurt, bewildered and sad: some of them feel outraged.

But while this goes on God, the Universe itself, Life itself, compels a steady and not a hurried growth; so steady a growth indeed that a man in any year may point back two and three thousand years and say, that man's ancestors have tried this before and failed. Never forget the forceful, inevitable, tremendous power of life in the universe of killing those who flout that power; bringing empires and men to an end when they don't obey. Again remember that that power is not static but dynamic. Itself is change and life. No man can reach it, no man can comprehend it, and therefore no man of his intellectual power can forestall it, nor for long lag behind. It is almost useless to seek to be abreast of the time; we are there without knowing. It is also useless to try to hinder these changes, they are of life. The attempt is like that of turning the tide. To say this is the way, or that is the way may equally be blasphemy. There is nothing left for each of us to do but fearlessly to follow where our minds lead us, where our instinct lead us, tempering these leaders with our reason if we can.

Something of this is now happening, a very small something, when seen against the life of mankind on this pin's-head planet. If it is against man's development it will be checked by Life, by God, by the Universe; we can be assured of that; man cannot live contrary to Life.

You seem to cling to the immediate past philosophy of life, morality of life, and to much of the religion of life of that immediate past as though it might be the final right. It was no more certainly right than the right of Abraham which is not right now; or which rather is not held to be right now.

So be not troubled, whatever God is at is as right as is the age-long movement of space. We cannot fight it, we can note affectation and excuses; we can see people following cerebral reasoning without resting back on instinct which is the drive of life, and when they do it, or two generations or more even do it they court disaster. The secret of life is to seek to live in accordance with Nature, and not with theory whether the theory of convention or the theory of traditional religion or of any other thing. The merit of tradition and long convention is that it could not be long if it were contrary to the forces that drive us, that drive the sun on its ordered course among the stars. That is why tradition and convention are good. But man sometimes chooses to emphasize some aspect of tradition or of convention that is not wholly of it, that has grown from some reasoned theory and not from Nature. Anyhow whatever we do, Nature will correct us. I believe that the present quickened whirl of youthful rebellion is a natural adjustment to God, to Nature if you will, and that it is wrong, if it is wrong, in that it is in part a response to reasoning from which some of the factors of life are left out. That's the danger. Man's bones and blood know more than his brain. If he depend on his brain he is very apt to go wrong, because he does not comprehend all the units which go to make the sum and omits many of them. Oxen, trees, birds and trout live by their bones and their impulses and are good. Man so slightly removed from these in the sight of God is best when he too relies on these earth impulses and tempers them with his reason, but does not order them from his brain. But to-day it is hard in our state of consciousness to find why we think this or do that, it is hard to know whether it is that we act from theoretic reason, or from the force of life. But anyhow we may rest back with complete ease, for as far as mankind is concerned he cannot go much astray. It is when we come to individual conduct and conduct of a generation that we may doubt. And it is here that we must take comfort from Nature and see her wasteful process on the earth's surface—though in space the stars may spin with such nice mechanism that there appears to be no waste. In this confusion who can tell who is right and who is wrong? There is nothing for it but that each of us shall do as the Quakers advise and act in the way the Spirit moves us, using what reason we have in the conduct of that motion, avoiding the condemnation of other folks' activity, leaving it to Nature, to the Universe, to God to show in the end his will. Thus to apply this—What of the teaching of almost all your brothers against the work of your life? You can do no other than you have done, nor can they. Do not be sad that they do so. They equally with you are under the impulsion of the spirit. God works against himself in the collision of stars, and in the clash of minds he does the same. Equally with you their efforts serve the purpose of God.

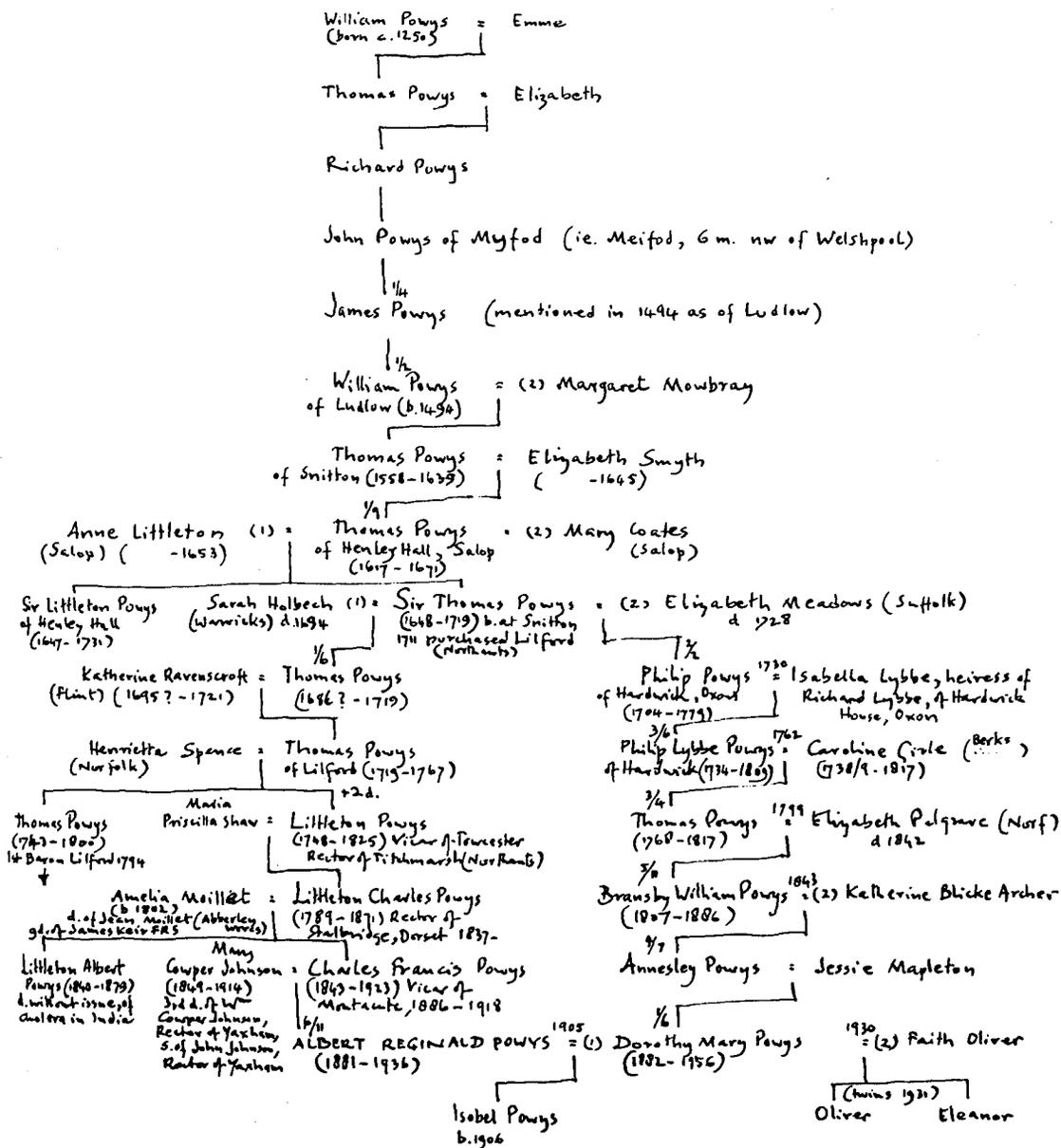
I think alone we need be sad at the ills that befall our friends, and as far as our power goes remove those ills; so little as possible condemning the cause that we believe bring these ills. For in Nature we note that the good are starved as often as the bad, and that suffering is no proof of ill-doing. Thus if our friend suffer and his actions seem futile, it may be not that he has done ill, but that by some impulsion that we cannot understand he answers obediently to the force that drives us.

May be I have wasted my time and yours; but may be you recognize what is at the back of my mind, and may be by a side step to architecture which is but one expression of life—by the reading of my article—you may come at the knowledge of—not necessarily at all an agreement with—the thing I am driving at. But anyhow, my dear Tom, I send you my love. I have written this without pause and without correction so that the grammar, spelling, sequence and much else will need correction if it deserves any attention at all.

Yours,

A. R. Powys.

My love to you, my dear Tom, and much of it.



NOTES

I would like to express my thanks to Mrs Faith Powys, to my mother, ARP's daughter, and to Mrs Monica Dance, who was more recently Secretary of the S.P.A.B., for their help without which I could not have prepared this brief account. Much still remains to be discovered, especially about his own architectural work, and I hope to investigate this aspect further, as well as preparing a bibliography of his writings.

¹ S.P.A.B. Annual Report, 1936, p. 9.

² Louis Wilkinson, *Welsh Ambassadors*, 1936, p. 15.

³ My grandfather was generally called Bertie (occasionally spelled with a 'y') or just by his initials, by which he often signed himself, even to his own family. Sanctioned by his own practice, I feel this is the best way to refer to him here.

⁴ Littleton Powys, *The Joy of It*, 1937, pp. 41-42. The visitor's book belongs to Peter Powys Grey, son of Marian.

⁵ Table in possession of Isobel Powys Marks.

⁶ Bird book in my possession.

⁷ Malcolm Elwin, *Life of Llewelyn Powys*, 1946, pp. 21-22.

⁸ See family tree prepared for lecture, p. 65 above.

⁹ I have photographs taken by ARP of the repair work at Walpole St Peter and the plate camera used by him.

¹⁰ *Notes on the Repair of Ancient Buildings*, S.P.A.B., 1903, p. 21.

¹¹ John Cowper Powys, *Autobiography*, 1934, p. 270.

¹² S.P.A.B. Annual Report, 1920, p. 41.

¹³ S.P.A.B. Annual Report, 1922, p. 16.

¹⁴ S.P.A.B. Annual Report, 1936, p. 11.

¹⁵ Photo as completed in S.P.A.B. Annual Report, 1932, p. 91.

¹⁶ *Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, ed. Louis Wilkinson, 1943, p. 184.

¹⁷ Littleton Powys, *The Joy of It*, pp. 210-11 & 213.

¹⁸ S.P.A.B. Annual Report, 1928, p. 13.

¹⁹ A. R. Powys, *The English House*, 1929, p. 54.

²⁰ Littleton Powys, *The Joy of It*, pp. 277 ff.

²¹ *Architectural Design and Construction*, Vol. 1, No. 11 (September 1931) and No. 12 (October 1931).

²² A. R. Powys, *From the Ground Up*, 1937, pp. 90-94 *passim*.

²³ M. I. Batten, "Personalities VIII: A. R. Powys, A.R.I.B.A.," *Architectural Design and Construction* Vol. 2, No. 3 (January 1932).

²⁴ Llewelyn Powys, *Somerset & Dorset Essays*, 1957, p. 51.

²⁵ *Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, pp. 46, 47.

²⁶ Llewelyn Powys, *So Wild a Thing*, Brushford, 1973, p. 71.

²⁷ Littleton Powys, *The Joy of It*, p. 275.

²⁸ *Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, p. 241.

²⁹ Entitled 'Threnody', *London Mercury*, June 1936, pp. 141-146; includes portrait drawing of ARP in 1902 by Gertrude M. Powys.

³⁰ Llewelyn Powys, *So Wild a Thing*, p. 70.



Cartoon of A. R. Powys, 1932

John Thomas

The Shock of the New: A. R. Powys and Building Repair

A. R. Powys, *Repair of Ancient Buildings* (1929), Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, 1981.

Introduction (1981) by David Pearce; Notes and appendices (1981) prepared by Adela Wright. £6.00

Why has this book been reprinted? In his Introduction, David Pearce, Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, suggests various reasons. One is that it is to be regarded as a monument to its author, A. R. Powys. Also, with its added notes (qualifications to the text) and other new material, it is intended as a technical manual, and as such, has long been out of print, and keenly sought. But Pearce's first suggestion is that the book can be read as a model statement of the S.P.A.B.'s principles and methods. Let us look at these three.

Firstly, Powys. A. R. Powys (1882-1936), the fourth brother, was an architect who devoted his life to what we would now call architectural conservation. A member of the R.I.B.A, he commenced practice in 1908, and worked with Walter Cave and William Weir. From 1911 to 1936 he was Secretary of the S.P.A.B., and David Pearce suggests that his comparatively early death, at the age of 54, may have been due to his over-work in this cause. Not only did he concern himself with repair of ancient buildings, but entered into public campaigns, such as the ill-fated attempt to save John Rennie's Waterloo Bridge (1817). His writings are few. *From the Ground Up* (1937) is a posthumously-published collection of architectural miscellany. Mostly brief, these articles reveal very catholic interests. He emerges from the book, and the testimonies of others, as a passionate but humble man, "committed", but deferential and quite devoid of bigotry.

The Introduction, by John Cowper Powys, gives us another clue: he hated, says J.C.P., the "artistic". He shows in the essays that, like many of his generation, he reacted against things Victorian; in particular, it would seem, against the "Aesthetic" generation, that immediately prior to his own. His dislike of artistic theorising (pp. 85, 87) may reflect this reaction. His rejection of "archaeological architecture" (pp. 35-42), that is, stylism, copying of past forms, probably reveals that his generation were too close to the nineteenth century to see that crude revivalism was a thing of the past some while before its close. He may have had reservations about modern gothic work, but he considered Bentley's Westminster Cathedral (Italian Byzantine, 1895-1903) to be equal to the best architecture of any age (p. 2).

The English Parish Church (1930) is a very interesting survey of its subject. It is one of the few histories of English churches which attempt to set the buildings in their historical, social, and functional contexts. Further, it is one of the very few which supply information about what we must now call the secular use of churches. In this way, Powys was the successor of S. O. Addy, whose *Church and Manor* (1913) is the only major collection of information on the many non-liturgical events, for which, through the centuries, the parish church was the natural setting.¹ The successor of Addy and Powys was J. G. Davies, who, in *The Secular Use of Church Buildings* (1968) argued from this historical phenomenon for the legitimising of secular uses in churches. The contemporary multi-purpose non-sacralist church centre essentially resulted from Davies's work, and his book frequently cites Powys. Perhaps eventually someone will take up Kenneth Hopkins's suggestion, and reprint the 1930

book, with *The English House* (1929) as an appendix.² Thorough estimate of Powys's stature, as administrator, writer and preserver of buildings, must be made elsewhere, but, in the history of the S.P.A.B., he seems to be the second most important figure after William Morris. The S.P.A.B. is concerned with buildings, not personalities, yet its Secretary sees this republication as a fitting way of marking its former Secretary's centenary.

Powys's centenary certainly required a fitting gesture: but did it warrant a reprint of *this* book? If we enquire into the availability of technical information on building repair, we find that there is almost a glut: Symons (1968), Charles (1970), Martin (1970), Harvey (1972), Eldridge (1976), Davey, Etc. (1978), Bowyer (1980), and a mass of technical papers produced by the Building Research Establishment and others.³ But we also discover that a book first issued for the S.P.A.B. in 1958,⁴ was republished in a considerably enlarged form, only nine years prior to this Powys reprint. This 1972 book is Donald Insall's *The Care of Old Buildings Today. A Practical Guide* (Architectural Press). It is a modern manual, and is based on a considerable amount of practical experience. Its technology (it refers, for example, to the use of photogrammetry (p. 85) and fibreglass (p. 114)) is that of our own day, and its case-studies are very varied in terms of building type, problem type, and scale of operation. Why has *this* not been reprinted? Insall's book would be far more expensive a proposition than Powys's; but Powys's book must surely be less adequate in the present situation than Insall's, with its more radical technological approach. It is as though the S.P.A.B. were intentionally taking a step back. The notes and additional material, prepared by the Society's technical adviser, (pp. 209-227) attempt to make good the deficiencies of 1920s building science. Some of the information is supplied by John Ashurst, who wrote the S.P.A.B.'s Technical Pamphlet 4.⁵ These extra pages are cleverly set in similar type-face to that of the earlier matter. Skilfully contrived to simulate the

book-design of yesteryear, the new structure has been carefully keyed-in to the old, with all the sympathy of a "conservative repair".

This brings us to our third consideration: the S.P.A.B.'s philosophy and methods. The story of how and why the Society came into existence has been told many times, for example by Piper (1947/48), Briggs (1952), Harvey (1972) Pevsner and Fawcett (1976), etc.⁶ William Morris (1834-1896) reacted vigorously against the so-called 'restorers' of his day, particularly Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878) who attempted recreations of Mediaeval effect when re-facing and rebuilding cathedrals.⁷ Morris adopted an extreme response, by claiming, in effect, that genuine Mediaeval work was sacrosanct and should never be touched, and certainly not replaced, whatever condition it was in.⁸ We can see now that his attitude was idealist and romantic. His Mediaevalist nostalgia denied the existence of churches as living centres of worship,⁹ and his historicism destroyed their essential nature as architectural art. I use historicism here in the sense defined in David Watkin's *Morality and Architecture* (1977), (particularly pp. 5-8). Morris saw the gothic as the natural product of a particular society, of a golden age even, and authentic and real only if produced by that age.¹⁰ Contemporary gothic architecture he saw as by nature false, a sham, and of necessity inferior. Hence, a crumbled, blackened, corrupted remnant of a Mediaeval stone was preferable to any cleanly-cut, sharp-arrised production of a nineteenth century mason. A distorted mass of such stones, however architecturally unrecognisable, was better than a re-facing by Scott, however carefully he recovered and reproduced the original forms of design and detailing. This, of course, is nonsense when looked at against the intentions and values of the Mediaeval architects. Their concern, like that of any architect, was with the physical expression of a specifically architectural conception. Stone or wood was only the medium, the visual, spatial effect was what mattered. If we, or Morris, could see Mediaeval buildings as they first stood, hard, sharp, modern, and not a little brash

in their brightly-coloured decoration, our romantic view of mould'ring piles would shatter instantly. Any suitable painting in a Book of Hours shows it to us thus, but we, as John Piper realised, are to a great extent products of the Picturesque. We appreciate not the regular, but the irregular, not the homogeneous, but the dog's dinner of styles, not the smooth hard surface, but the "pleasing decay".¹¹ To some extent, Morris's values rubbed off onto A. R. Powys and his generation. Thus, Powys derided recent re-facing at Chester (by Giles Scott?; see fig. 17, p. 82 and fig. 18, p. 87), that luckless pile of New Red Sandstone (the material with 'built-in obsolescence'), calling it "a modern study in Gothic architecture" (p. 81). In 1924 the S.P.A.B. recommended that additions to ancient buildings were permissible—so long as they were in *today's* style.¹² Mediaeval designers had no such sensitivities as these two. William of Sens persuaded the Canterbury monks to let him replace their beloved, ruined, choir with a big new one in the latest style, and Henry Yevele, when completing Westminster Abbey in 1375, used the style of the existing thirteenth century work, no doubt because harmony and consistency were requirements of his art.

Morris simply romanticised and fulminated; he was prepared to let buildings fall to the ground for want of modern work. His successors quickly turned from attack to repair, from the fervour of crusade to the practical requirements of the real world.¹³ Thus it was that A. R. Powys came to devote his life to saving old buildings. The translation of Morris's philosophy into an approach to the problems of building repair, can be seen most directly in the principle of stone repair by means of tile and rendering. Choice of this method, rather than the recutting of fresh stones, acts as a handy indication of conservation philosophy. From this and other criteria we could construct a device to relate the different approaches; our analogy, culled from politics, is crude, perhaps, but not without hermeneutic usefulness. Morris, for example, can be seen as the Far Right of the spectrum—the most

conservative; Scott as the Far Left. Powys who adapted and compromised (according to Harvey¹⁴) can be seen as not-quite-so-Right. Later, that Gang of Two, Caroe (1949) and Braun (1954)¹⁵ emerged as the New Centre Party. Caroe (referring no doubt to the principles of Morris and Powys) says "An ingenious tile-and-mortar method has been strongly advocated by one school of thought, and has certain advantages which were particularly marked in the period immediately after the First World War, when the attainment of lasting results with artificial stone was not so clearly understood as it is to-day" (p. 107). He acutely observes the essential sham nature of this method and its downright inconsistency with the Ruskin-inspired Morrisian ideas (see p. 109). Powys says that replacement with new stone is "seldom the best course to take", and his first reason given is that "less of the original work is preserved" (p. 74).¹⁶ Insall and D. G. Martin take an essentially 'either . . . /or . . . ' attitude. John Harvey emerges as the New Left, referring to "Morrisian orthodoxy" which, influenced by Ruskin, "insisted upon a good deal of nonsense in the form of tile-and-rendering rather than renewed stones" (p. 181).

Powys's commitment was to holding on to the old, but by means of carefully-fashioned repairs. One of the most sensible pieces of advice in the book is the exhortation to constant repair and attention. The "new" science of Terotechnology (planned routine maintenance, as part of determined economic life cycles; Greek: Tereo, to care for, preserve) is perhaps not so new after all. Though he had passionate regard for the Mediaeval stone, his appreciation does not extend to that other source of Picturesque charm, ivy. It "of all English plants, is most damaging, and it may best be removed in the following manner: . . ." (p. 71)—no sentiment there. His response to those who love ivy is revealing: "They should remember that theirs is a selfish pleasure", because ivy damages the stones, brings down the wall, and so denies the pleasures of architecture to future generations, for whom, Morris rightly said, we are only the

trustees. But is it not similarly selfish to deny future generations the pleasure of, say, the tracery gables on the inner-face of the cloisters at Canterbury, by refusing to re-cut stones and rebuild? This work, by Yevele and Stephen Lote, was surely beyond the scope of conservative repair, and yet the forms of the work were not beyond being established.¹⁷ The mason is an interpreter of the design. He stands, in relation to the architect or designer, as does Yehudi Menuhin to Beethoven. Exquisite as Menuhin's interpretation may be, there will be others: the *concerto* is the thing. Talk to Tom Murphy who has been building a cathedral since 1935: would he relish the sacrosanctity of his stones in the mid-twenty-fourth century, though corrupted and formless? I much doubt it, it would go against all that his life's work has been devoted to.

A similar attitude can rightly be taken, I think, to modern completion of uncompleted Mediaeval buildings. This, also in historicist vein, Pearce calls the "falsification of history" (p. v). Would he selfishly deny us the glories of Cologne Cathedral, that Mediaeval fragment, completed later to the original design, and with original methods? In fact, it was completed in the nineteenth century, but it could have been completed in the twentieth, twenty-fifth, eighteenth or seventeenth: the century is irrelevant, the complete conception is what matters. The Victorians left the west-work of Ely in its present truncated, disturbing form (what we see is the "falsification of history"), but they did resolve the nonsensical situation that was left at the west end of Canterbury Cathedral.¹⁸ Pearce's objection to relocation of buildings is also unfortunate. If accepted, we would have lost, for all time, such masterpieces as Worcester's Guesten Hall roof.¹⁹ Pearce's reservation is not based on the loss of a building's context and the *genius loci*, but rather, historicism again, the falsification of history. Historicism is a threat to our heritage. It is also the negation of art, a denial of the value of form and conception. Ignoring the merit of the thing itself, it evaluates an art-work by its date alone.

The reprinting of this book, with Powys's Preface and Pearce's Introduction, seems to be a revival of ideas that are inconsistent with the wider vision of conservation that is prevalent today.²⁰ But perhaps we should not take these writings at face-value. David Pearce, it should be noted, is a leading member of his generation's conservation movement, which has produced such radical bodies as the Victorian Society and SAVE Britain's Heritage. As a writer on a very wide range of conservation and other architectural subjects, he is read frequently in such journals as *Building Design*, one of the construction industry tabloids. We should be surprised if we found his approach in any way narrow.²¹ The S.P.A.B. is active in campaigns to save 'modern' buildings, including, ironically, those by Sir Gilbert Scott.²² Time softens enmities as well as arrisses. We must also decline from judging Powys on the basis of a few statements. All the evidence is that he was quick to compromise, always tempering policy with pragmatism. There is much praise for his work and methods.²³ A. D. R. Caroe admired the man, and, despite his clear reservations, the book.

The key to Powys's attitude to ancient buildings—at least, that portion of it that came to him from Morris—is surely that which I have suggested above. Morris, and other late-Victorian 'progressives', judged, and appreciated, Mediaeval buildings and Gothic Revival buildings by the wrong criteria. The cause of this was their misleading, and unfortunate, experience of ubiquitous, miserable decrepitude and ill-treatment. When they came face to face with *new* gothic work, with its hard lines and chunky forms and its startling boldness, they were permanently shocked. But gothic *was* such an architecture, and we can still be shocked by it today, particularly if we see new stones beside the old. If the first supporters of Morris had faults, their hearts were in the right place. They, and all the people mentioned above, were conservationists of some kind or other. This distinction should not be forgotten, for the destroyers pure and simple are with us today as they were before.

On Powys, let John Harvey's be the last words (p. 182): he was "both a great and a modest man, undogmatic and ready to learn, and because he was a man of surpass-

ing energy, the S.P.A.B. became transformed from a negative and preventative body into a positive force for good".

NOTES

¹There is also a chapter in W. Johnson *By-ways in British Archaeology*, 1912.

²Kenneth Hopkins, *The Powys Brothers. A Biographical Appreciation*, 1967, p. 85.

³These are: Vivian Symons, *Church Maintenance*; F. W. B. Charles, "Repair and Restoration of Old Timber-framed Buildings", *Estates Gazette*, 19 December 1970, pp. 1515-7; D. G. Martin, *Maintenance and Repair of Stone Buildings* (Council for the Care of Churches); John Harvey, *Conservation of Buildings* (extensively used as a source for this article); H. J. Eldridge, *Common Defects in Buildings* (Department of the Environment—P.S.A.); Andy Davey, and others, *The Care and Conservation of Georgian Houses*; J. Bowyer, *Vernacular Building Conservation*; B.R.E. Digests (2nd. ser.) 4, 27, 113, 139, 177, 200, etc. This selection is broadly representative of the literature.

⁴*The Care of Old Buildings: A Practical Guide for Architects and Owners*. This was a reprint of material originally published in the *Architect's Journal*.

⁵See also "Masonry Cleaning and Conservation", *The Architect*, September 1977, pp. 65-7, 68; J. Ashurst and F. G. Dimes, *Stone in Building, its Use and Potential Today*, 1977.

⁶These are: John Piper, "Pleasing Decay", *Buildings and Prospects*, 1948, pp. 89-116, originally *The Architectural Review*, September 1947; Martin S. Briggs, *Goths and Vandals*; John Harvey, *Conservation of Buildings*; Nikolaus Pevsner, "Scrape and anti-scrape" and Jane Fawcett, "A Restoration Tragedy", both in *The Future of the Past*, ed. Jane Fawcett.

⁷Scott and the other restorers were, it should be remembered, attempting to undo the effects of centuries of organised vandalism, botched conversion, neglect, ignorant attempts at repair, and general ruin-ation. Some, however, attempted to improve on the original designs. See Gerald Cobb, *English Cathedrals. The Forgotten Centuries*, 1980.

⁸See Harvey, op cit., note 3, p. 180.

⁹The Church has always resisted efforts to turn its buildings into archaeological sites. See the *Architect's Journal*, 6 January 1982, p. 18.

¹⁰Watkin used historicism to mean a *zeitgeist* approach to architecture: architecture as simply a product, and reflection, of the "Spirit of the Age", as seen here.

¹¹In the essay titled thus (cited note 6), Piper distinguished between this crumbled, weathered, aged state (which he found acceptable) and the unacceptable state of ruin. "Pleasing decay" is perhaps what

Pearce has in mind when referring, in his Introduction, to the "patina of age".

¹²Harvey, p. 181. This flies totally in the face of today's concern with harmony in conservation and addition, or "in keeping with keeping". Powys quotes with approval the suggestion "no work which has to be renewed should ever be put back in the form it had or in the material it was". It seems incredible that this damaging and crazy suggestion can have come from the great W. R. Lethaby. On the occasion he wrote it, his genius must have taken the day off. Pearce wisely writes "When repairs are necessary, they should be done with materials sympathetic to the existing structure" (p. v). On the question of the harmonising of repairs, I have heard Nicola Coldstream suggest that many of our 'Norman' buildings were repaired (perhaps extensively) with new, matching, stones, in the Gothic period. However, the S.P.A.B.'s *Notes on the Repair of Ancient Buildings* (February 1903) claimed that Mediaeval restorers always used their own natural styles (p. 14).

¹³A post-Morris, pre-Powys contribution in this direction is the 1903 *Notes* (see note 12). What was Powys's reaction to this book? It is laden with the "dishonest" approach to restorers, who were "really committing a forgery" (p. 13). Powys clearly believed in the "dishonesty" of Revivalism; this should not be confused with the Puginian/Ruskinian "dishonest construction", which, interestingly, Powys seems to have rejected (*From the Ground Up*, pp. 109-110). It was Powys's generation that produced a classic rejection of Ruskin's ideas: *The Architecture of Humanism* (1914), by Geoffrey Scott (1883-1929).

¹⁴Pp. 180-181. Powys sanctioned preserving and giving "renewed life" to old buildings (p. vii) (as long as this did not involve destruction of the old), and this Harvey sees as a significant change from Morris's passive approach.

¹⁵Alban D. Caroe, *Old Churches and Modern Craftsmanship*; Hugh Braun, *The Restoration of Old Houses*. It was Caroe's father, W. D. Caroe, who did much interesting work in Wales, including the restoration of the church at Hafod (then Cardiganshire), after the fire of 1932.

¹⁶However, he contemplates the use of new stones in an essay on repair published in *From the Ground Up* (p. 152). Here, his concern is with the appropriate modern finish the new stone is to receive.

¹⁷An excellent photograph, showing the recent rebuilding, original remains, and nineteenth century re-

buildings, can be found in Lois Lang-Sims, *Canterbury Cathedral. Mother Church of Holy Trinity*, 1979, pp. 144, 145. At a glance, this shows the options open to us.

¹⁸In the late eleventh century, Lanfranc commissioned two western towers, as part of his total re-building. In 1424-34, Thomas Mapilton re-built the south-western tower, in the Perpendicular style of the nave. So, in 1800, the cathedral had a west front, nave, and tower in one style, with a Romanesque tower tacked on. In 1832, George Austin completed Mapilton's work, returning harmony, symmetry and consistency. The loss of the fragment of Lanfranc's work is, of course, regrettable.

¹⁹The Guesten Hall, built c. 1320, was part of the monastery complex. When it was wantonly destroyed in 1859, the roof was removed and used for the church of Holy Trinity, Shrub Hill (1863-5). When this was demolished, the roof was re-built at Avoncroft Museum of Buildings, near Bromsgrove. F. W. B. Charles called it the most elegant piece of Mediaeval carpentry in the county: to allow the destruction of the roof is unthinkable, whatever the 'principles'.

²⁰Some modern approaches to conservation, and

their fruits, can be seen in the following, a brief selection from the ever-expanding literature: Department of the Environment, *New Life for Old Buildings*, 1971; *What is Our Heritage?*, 1975; Council of Europe, *The Architectural Heritage*, 1975; Civic Trust, *Heritage Year Awards*, 1975; SAVE Britain's Heritage, *Preservation Pays*, 1979; Planning Newspaper/SAVE, *Gambling with History*, April 1979; Sherban Cantacuzino and Susan Brandt, *Saving Old Buildings*, 1980.

²¹More of Pearce's views and suggestions on conservation can be found in *R.I.B.A. Journal*, September 1979, p. 394 and February 1982, p. 27. The latter welcomes such new techniques as concrete ring beams.

²²Morris himself supported Scott's restoration of the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey—according to Jane Fawcett, in her article cited note 6, p. 113.

²³His article "Repair of Vaulted Buildings" (*R.I.B.A. Journal*, 12 October 1935, pp. 1142-4), written with S.P.A.B. Hon. Engineer J. S. Wilson, was not reprinted in this book. Advice on this problem is not quite so easy to come by; is it technically outdated, or inadequate in any way?

Oliver Holt

Littleton Powys*

A few weeks ago, when I was casting about in my mind for a way to begin my talk on Littleton Powys, I chanced to spend an hour or so in the charming old Burgundian town of Villeneuve-sur-Yonne. There, above the front door, ill-painted and closed as if never to open again, of one of those tall, brownish-grey, heavily shuttered houses that one finds in every French town, a dusty tablet caught my eye; it stated that the house had been the home for the last thirty years of his life of Joseph Joubert, philosopher and moralist, friend of Chateaubriand and other famous literary figures of France at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The encounter at once touched and amused me, for I recalled—what I had almost forgotten—that at the time of Littleton's second marriage, in 1943, when I wanted to say something special to express my admiration for him, I had come upon a sentence in an essay on Joubert in one of Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism* which said exactly what I wanted to say; and though I confess I had never heard of Joubert then and know little about him now, I did know that Arnold was one of Littleton's two favourite poets—the other being Hardy—and the authorship was therefore appropriate. The sentence runs: "He is the most prepossessing and convincing of witnesses to the good of loving light. Because he sincerely loved light, and did not prefer to it any little private darkness of his own, he found light; his eye was single, and therefore his whole body was full of light. And because he was full of light, he was also full of happiness". I learnt this by heart and came out with it at an opportune moment.

"Good Lord, Oliver," he burst out in his great voice, "What a fellow you are! Fancy

mugging all that up and applying it to me!" I realised that I had as much disconcerted as pleased him—when he disapproved of someone, he would refer to him as 'that fellow'—since, for all his confidence in himself and in his views on Life, expressed often enough no doubt with an emphasis and a resonance that some people, a very few people, found displeasing, he was NOT an arrogant or conceited man; he was proud of what he could do and do well, but was well aware of his limitations.

Yet, as I stood the other day in front of those sere walls and peeling shutters, so antithetic to any notion of light, the words came back to me, more than a quarter of a century after his death, as a fundamentally just description of him: "And because he was full of light, he was also full of happiness"—no little private darkness anywhere in his own many-roomed mansion, no shutters closed, and all the windows open.

He was indeed a wonderfully happy man: it is a constant theme in everything he wrote, and especially in the first volume of his autobiography *The Joy of It*, where he stresses his good fortune, his 'hap', not only in being born with a sunny, optimistic temperament, but in that his lot had been cast along fortunate lines and in fair places,—though I doubt whether a man with such a temperament would have been less serene in surroundings much more stern. He was a lover of life. To have been born into the world at all—a world so full of radiant and manifold beauties—he regarded as an immeasurable privilege, and his whole life was an unbroken act of praise.

May I now take you forward in time from Joubert's Villeneuve-sur-Yonne and backward from our Weymouth of 1981 to a January evening in the last year of the First World War and ask you to picture a father and his

*A paper delivered to the Powys Society in September 1981.

two small sons getting out at a chilly railway-station, amid hissing plumes of steam and the hoarse gargle of gas-lamps, and climbing into a melancholy horse-drawn cab that smells of old leather and musty straw, and follow them as it bears them clip-a-clop through the dim streets of an old West Country town that suddenly resounds to the chime and boom of a great clock high up in the twilight sky? The cab staggers up a long, gritty drive and deposits the little shivering family in front of a big door with a big brass bell, which, when pressed, produces a remote internal clang. Hardly has a white-capped maid appeared from the darkened hall, making a little dip as she opens the door, than a pale light wavers into a glare and there, suddenly, is a big man, his face beaming with smiles, and a big voice saying: "This must be the Holt family! Good evening, Mr. Holt, I hope you have not had a tiring journey. Good evening, Peter (emphasis). Good evening, Oliver (emphasis): to be known henceforward as 'Holt major' and 'Holt minor'. Come in, come in! And welcome to Sherborne Preparatory School (emphasis on every word)". Then with a call on a rising note, "Mi-iz! The Holts have come"; and with that he leads us into the drawing-room and there is Miz, or Mabel, or 'Mrs. Powys' with her gentle smile and still gentler voice—a voice that I was later to liken to Cordelia's, and with . . . No! I suppose I cannot then have noticed her beautiful hair, but I used often to look at it afterwards, notably when recovering from some childish illness and she would sit by the bed and read to us, and I would think its ripples were like the eddies in a moorland stream or the light that water casts upward on the trunks and branches of overhanging trees. Presently, two senior boys are summoned to meet us: the head of our dormitory and the prefect who has been detailed to be what is known as our 'Uncle-an'-Aunt', that is, he has to tell us where to go and what to do and act generally as a source of information on all school topics until we get into the swim of school routine. I am *not* forgetting the agony of parting with our father—our mother could not bear to come—nor the feeling of total desolation that night, after 'lights-out', on the hard dormit-

ory bed; but somehow a sense of security had not departed. And the next day, after lunch, that sense was wonderfully re-inforced when the headmaster called the new arrivals together and said: "Come on, you new boys. It's a fine afternoon for a walk and we'll go together up into the woods". So off we went, and he beguiled the walk in a hundred different ways by pointing with his stick to this or that simple form of the nature that he loved: the rosy buds on the wych elms; the scarlet moss-cups—quite a rarity—in a hedge bank and the greenish flowers on a clump of spurge laurel set against its dark, polished leaves. In this way there began between us an acquaintance, graduating steadily into friendship, which was to last unbroken until his death thirty-seven years later. Indeed, it has lasted on since. For there have been very few days since he died that some small natural beauty, some word or phrase, has not recalled him, with never-failing pleasure, to my mind.

It will be apparent by now to my audience that they are listening to a not impartial witness to the personality of Littleton Powys; and I had better come clean, as the saying is nowadays, and confess that with the exception of my parents and my wife, I owe more to Littleton than to anyone else in the whole course of my three-score years and twelve. I therefore ask their indulgence if they find too high a colour in my portrait of him. I can only speak as I found. I am aware that he did not always strike others as he struck me. His enthusiasms, and the somewhat oracular manner in which he was wont to express them, seemed to some people overdone or inflated, too rhetorical even to be sincere; but I will say boldly that I consider such a view of him to be that of eyes that could not see beyond the ordinary, eyes too narrow to perceive the breadth and depth of his stature. I concur with the view once given to me, more or less in these words, by his brilliant second wife, Elizabeth Myers: "Littleton", she said, "never fails to tell you something interesting about Life and the World. Every conversation with him extends the horizon of your mind".

At the time of that first meeting with him, he was in his forty-third year. He always said

that his brother Bertie (A.R.) was the most handsome of his father's sons (photographs confirm this) and that Theodore had the best manners; but I think Littleton could fairly be described as the most splendid-looking. Hardly short of six feet tall, he was erect, broad-shouldered, admirably proportioned: soldiering was once considered as an alternative profession to that of schoolmaster, and he recalled that twice, on coming down from Cambridge, when he was crossing Trafalgar Square, he was approached by a recruiting sergeant. His hair, even when I first knew him, was almost uniformly white; thick, and parted in the middle, it made an exciting contrast with his highly coloured complexion and vivid blue eyes, set deeply beneath rugged brows in true Powysian fashion. The whole head was strongly sculptured. His voice was a match. Bold and resonant, if not exactly melodious, it could roll up and down like the waves of the sea: it had cavernous echoes in it. The tones, I used to fancy, were those of Moses or Elijah—and, my Goodness, didn't they roll and resound as he read the Song of Deborah and Barak and the narrative of Elijah's discomfiture of the prophets of Baal? And he always spoke the purest English: clearly articulated, no fumbled or muddled syntax, no 'ums' and 'ers', no 'You knows', and in a scholarly accent that had neither an affected aristocratic drawl nor a trace of the flat and tinny vowels that we hear so much of to-day. He admitted to being unmusical, but his vowels were always bang on the note! What is more, I *never* heard him use a coarse or unseemly word; the worst of his expletives was 'Confound'. Some howler in Latin or Greek prose would evoke the exclamation 'Confound your stupid little eyes'. As for a four-letter word, or its equivalent, I sometimes wonder whether he even knew one!

He was always, as the phrase is, well-groomed, and dressed with scrupulous care: not in the least dandified—such an affectation would have offended him—but his suits, nearly always double-breasted, were well cut and invariably neat: in a word, *gentlemanly*. And I do not think that I ever saw him without a buttonhole: a rose, a carnation, a

pink, a tiny nosegay of sweet peas. In old age, his hair was less regularly cut so that it became ever more resplendent in thickness and fleecy whiteness. I must also mention his handwriting, because it was, I think, characteristic of his personality. It was not pointed, as it were 'Gothic', like typical Victorian handwriting, nor selfconsciously controlled and uniform, like so-called script, but based clearly on Greek forms, elegant, yet sinewy and without flourish. A page of it was a joy to look at,—though in later years it began to slur and slacken, to his great disgust, through haste or physical infirmity. The only quirk he permitted himself was in the manner of inscribing his initials. He would begin with the C—his second name was Charles—and go on to the P, the loop of which he would swing upwards and backwards and then downwards to form the lower loop of the L, which would then sweep under the C and P in a bold undulation. *Thus!*



As boys, we would desperately try to imitate this device for our own initials, falling into strange contortions in the process. I always regret never asking him how he first contrived it.

In 1918 he had been headmaster of Sherborne Preparatory School since 1905; he had himself been educated there under W. H. Blake, who had started it, and gone on to the Big School, as it was familiarly called, at Sherborne, and then to the family college at Cambridge, Corpus Christi, where, as he ruefully recalls, he managed to scrape a Third in the Tripos: there was so much out of doors to interfere with indoor study. Following his chosen career as a schoolmaster, he became an assistant master and then a housemaster at King's School, Bruton; next, in 1902, house tutor at Llandovery College in mid-Wales, before succeeding Blake at Sherborne Prep.—all which appointments, as he joyously and

ingenuously records, came to him by delightful accidents on the cricket field.

The cricket field! I do hope that at least one of the Elysian Fields has been set aside for playing the game, for then Littleton's cup of bliss must be full—provided that there are plenty of others, innocent of herbicides, in which he can look for flowers and butterflies. Regrettably, I am one of the few un-English Englishmen for whom cricket has no appeal: I nearly used some part of the verb 'to bore', but just saved myself, for in Littleton's eyes to be bored by anything in a world so full of beauty and interest was a heinous sin, to be ranked almost with the two he rated as most evil, cruelty and mockery. Anyone guilty of mocking—and the 'o' and the 'ck' would be delivered with a sort of choke, accompanied by a searing flash of the eyes—had to work hard to secure his forgiveness. He merely laughed away my distaste for cricket, knowing full well my lack of prowess, and talked of other things. Oddly—in my case, at any rate—rugby football was a shared enthusiasm, indifferent though I was as a player, whereas he excelled at all games: cricket, rigger, soccer, hockey, golf, tennis—he loved and shone at them all. One of the charms of his autobiography is the constantly recurring theme of the affectionate relationship, deep and lifelong, with his brother John, so entirely different in temperament and outlook, as in accomplishment. At school, they lost no opportunity to take long walks together and a delightful passage in his autobiography recalls how, in John's last term, when he was composing the prize poem on "Corinth", he would say, as they walked along, "Don't talk, Littleton". "And so," Littleton continues, "In silence we would go along. This I did not mind, as there was plenty to interest me. Then suddenly he would stop and say, 'Make your back into a table' and I would bend down and he would write the lines he had composed. And then we would continue our walk in silent sympathy". What a revealing picture of brotherly affinity—an affinity that survived all the differences!

Here, too, is an amusing passage, contrasting their different tastes and mutual affec-

tion. "At Cambridge", Littleton writes, "John's ways were not my ways, nor his thoughts my thoughts, nor (with two or three exceptions) his friends my friends. Certainly I and my less imaginative athletic friends were not at ease with John's philosophical acquaintances, who would spend hours with him talking theosophy and metaphysics; while they, so intellectually superior, regarded us as philistines without hope. When John found me alone, he would say to me, 'You never think, Littleton: why can't you think? You must think'; but he never gave me any idea as to what I must think about". However, as the years went on, they did not fail to bring to Littleton "the philosophic mind". If his relationship with John was especially close, it was but part of a strong, all-embracing *family* feeling: there was a wonderful interchange of affection and respect between each and all of those remarkable brothers and sisters—an emotion touchingly clear to those privileged to know her in his youngest sister Lucy, who, happily, is still alive in serene old age.

I never, of course, actually saw Littleton play rigger, but I recall vividly his excitement as he bounded up and down the touch-line watching a Prep. team playing another school. If a boy got away with the ball, he would burst into a joyous shout: "Run like a hare, like a hare, like a hare!" And then, if the boy crossed the try-line, "Well run, indeed!" And bending down with face a-beam, he would rub his hands between his knees in delight as great, and as similar, as the boy's own. It seems that this rubbing of hands in delight—and it would be indulged in not only on the games field—was a trait inherited from his father, who once, when looking at some great West Country view, performed the same action, exclaiming "Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost!" How often, when beyond himself in happiness, did Littleton feel and act in the same way!

In the years at Bruton and Llandoverly he found himself as a school-master. Dismissing what he calls the "persistent little annoyances, those petty quarrels, the monotony, the narrow outlook of a schoolmaster's life" as matters of trivial concern when set beside the

worthwhile labours, aims and achievements of his high calling, he concentrates his gaze—perhaps, a critic would say, through lenses a shade too rosy-tinted—on its *rewards*: the shared interests, wholeheartedly pursued, the often affectionate loyalty of the boys, the opening of their minds upon new paths of being and learning, the general, largely carefree, fun. It was in those apprentice years at Bruton that he came to two important conclusions about teaching: first, that he must not hold himself aloof from his pupils nor ever give them the impression that he did not try to understand or sympathise with what was passing in their minds, but all the time to make every possible effort to win their hearts without losing, if he could help it, his authority over them. And, secondly, of no less importance, he learnt that work as valuable, if not more valuable, was done outside the classroom as inside it, and that he must never despair of the backward boy, but outside the classroom find some interest held by the two of them in common. I think he could fairly claim to have lived up to these lessons.

And what busy days he had and how little he spared himself! A maxim of the most distinguished nineteenth century Headmaster of Sherborne, Harper, was: “Give me a man with ‘Go’”, and, as a young man, Littleton certainly *went!* In his first year at Llandovery, he wrote as often as he could find time to Mabel, to whom he was then engaged, telling her of his day-to-day occupations. In one letter, dated 14 May 1902, he writes:

I will just go through a day to show you how difficult it is for me to find time to write. Take last Monday: Up at 6.15 to prepare my day’s work till 7.15; school till 8; breakfast; 8.30 cricket ground to see professional and make arrangements for day’s cricket; 9.15 Prayers; work till 12.15; cricket ground, rolling net wickets; 1, Lunch; 2.15—4, afternoon school; 4, boys’ tea; 4.20 my own tea, then nets from 4.30 to 6.30, Dinner; 7, Preparation, or private pupil till 8.30; 8.30, School supper; 9, private pupils and dormitories till 10.15.

Then, a few weeks later, he shows how, at the back of it all, his spirit was fortified by the

greatest love of his life, Nature, as he persistently defines her, holding in her wide embrace the ever renewing life of the country with all its sights and sounds and scents.

Yesterday (he writes) I was very disappointed when I heard my Form had done badly in Latin grammar. So directly after Church, I had biscuits and started off for the mountains, and only got back in time for Evening Service. It is quite beyond my powers to describe all I saw. Perhaps (but I don’t know) the ferns pleased me most, surpassingly fine lady ferns with their delicate lace-like sprays, such a fresh green, and such a cool fern smell. Then the honeysuckle, which grows more luxuriantly here than anywhere I know, and its scent (I have found a new game, such a good one; you go out for a walk in the evening when quite dark into the lanes, and find honeysuckle by its scent). The elder trees with their great white plates of flowers were magnificent, and the whole air was laden with the scent of new mown hay. When I had satisfied my sense of smell, and when my eyes had had their fill of the beauty of orchises and dog roses, I set to work to gratify my sense of taste with wild strawberries and worts. Then I climbed a mountain called Ben Lifau and slept at the top for three-quarters of an hour, with my head in a butterfly net to keep off the flies, lying in a bed of wortleberry plants and heather.

Doubtless his narratives—and one must certainly hope so—were interspersed with endearments, but to print them he would, at the time of writing *The Joy of It*, have considered bad form. Some measure of that reticence would, I have felt, been wise later when he came to write of his second wife and the correspondence between them.

He and Mabel were married at Bruton in August 1904 and they spent his last months at Llandovery together. In April 1905, they took over Sherborne Preparatory School: I say ‘they’, because it was a working partnership, she quietly modifying his impetuosities.

What was he like as a Headmaster? I could wish that what I have told you so far has enabled you to guess. He could certainly be, or seem, fierce: the majesty of his presence naturally inspired awe in his young pupils. But if it was not difficult to provoke him to

wrath, or apparent wrath, he was much more easily and more often moved to delight; his natural geniality prevailed and 'cheerfulness kept breaking in'. Disobedience, rudeness, slackness incurred his keenest displeasure; failures, so long as effort was made, were regarded with unflinching indulgence. He did occasionally chastise, but very occasionally. "Come into my study", he would say in a voice of thunder, as Moses might have done, "and I'll give you a couple o'cuts with the cane". I am convinced he hated the job, but genuinely felt it was for the culprit's good. It was so on the one occasion when, for a deliberate act of disobedience, he beat me. It was certainly for *my* good; I hated myself for having displeased him; and I was careful not to disobey him again. He taught Latin and, in the higher Forms, Greek, and to all the senior forms Scripture. This last, especially the splendid tales of the Old Testament, was made unforgettably vivid; the sacrifice of Isaac, the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, the delicate walking of Agag, Naaman's rivers of Abana and Pharpar, the quivering guilt of Ahab's "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?", the thrill of Samuel's accusing finger at King David, "Thou art the man!" and the pathos of David's lament over Absalom, were narrated in tones which have rung in my mind ever since. Just as his triumphant recitation of the great doxology, in a sort of sing-song lilt, compels me to imitate it whenever I am called upon to repeat it now: "Heaven and Earth are full of Thy Glory, Glory be to Thee, O Lord most high". He especially loved the Psalms; he would read one, or part of one, every evening at Prayers. His favourite was, I think, Psalm 104: you may imagine what he made of "There go the ships, and there is that Leviathan whom thou hast made to take his pastime therein"; and much of it he made us learn by heart. He loved, too, the Collects: and many of these also we had to learn by heart in what was called "Pie-Jaw", a short period of religious instruction held every Sunday morning after Chapel: each link in the long chain after Trinity still chimes, so to speak, in my memory in his tones.

What *were* his religious beliefs? I hesitate to

answer. He certainly did not reject the great Christian truths and was punctilious in setting them before us; but it was the idea of God manifested in Nature to which his deepest convictions responded. What I might call—I trust without irreverence—the 'trappings' of organised religion meant nothing to him, even in his last years and despite Elizabeth's devout Catholicism. His cry was ever "O Lord—whoever and wherever Thou mayest be—how manifold are Thy works: in wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches". To be aware of those riches, to rejoice in them, to be grateful for them, to praise, and praise ever, their Maker: I feel that that was the be-all and end-all for him. I am sure he did not *disbelieve* in the life of the world to come, in which he might hope for reunion with Mabel and Elizabeth and those he most loved. Perhaps, like Thomas Hardy and the kneeling oxen on Christmas Eve, he went on "hoping it might be so". He simply did not know—and his nescience did not chafe him. The gift of life *now* was what mattered, was most precious and most to be rejoiced at.

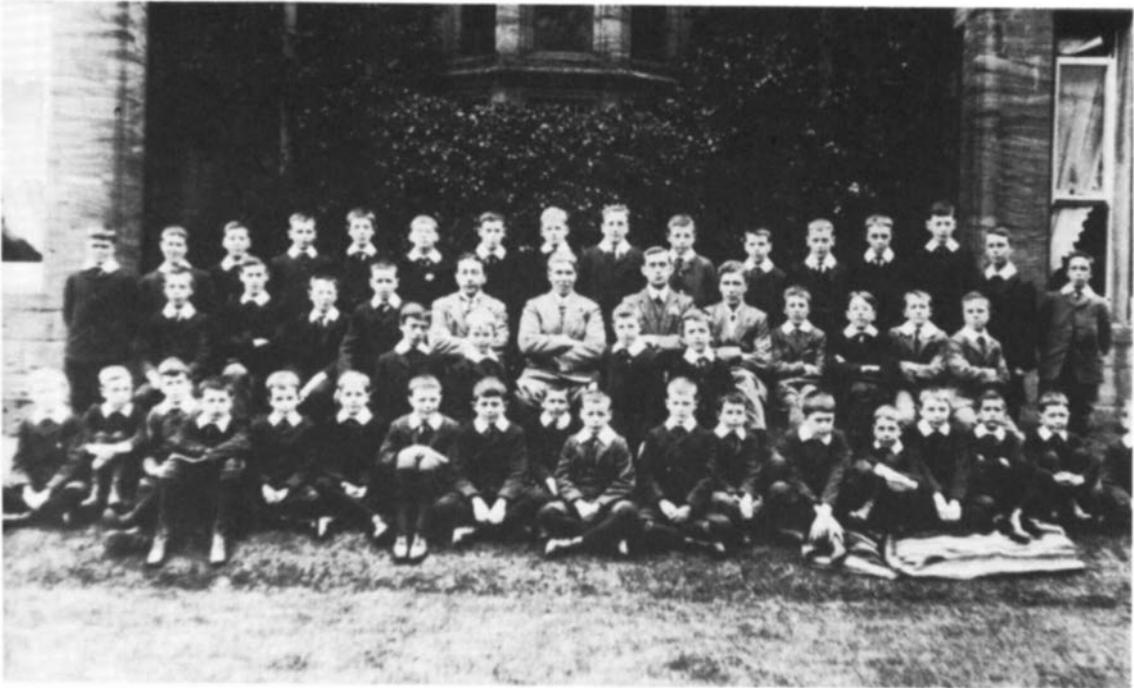
Literature of a less exalted kind he would put before us in regular readings to the boarders after tea on winter evenings: the adventure stories of Buchan and Rider Haggard, the historical romances of Stanley Weyman, Scott's *Talisman*, *Ivanhoe* and *Guy Mannering*, I particularly recall. The characters, as he interpreted them, stride across my memory: Richard Hannay and Sir Henry Curtis, Umslopogaas and Gagool, Sir Reginald Front-de-Boeuf and the Knight of the Leopard, Dirk Hatteraick, Meg Merilees and Dominie Sampson, whose repeated ejaculation of "Pro-dig-i-ous!" always evoked shouts of delighted laughter from his audience. Poetry, too: not on those occasions, as a rule—yet it must have been at some such time that I heard, and shall never forget, him reading such diverse pieces as "Morte d'Arthur", "The Lady of the Lake", "The Jackdaw of Reims", "Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind'", Kingsley's "Welcome Wild North Easter", Hardy's "The Lost Pyx", Lamb's "Old Familiar Faces" and, with the gentlest pathos, Cowper's "Poplar Field" and Arnold's "Forsaken Merman". But

readings from another poet, at a very different moment, stand out in memory. On the very last day of term and the first of the holidays, the boys of the Big School would leave Sherborne by a train at something after eight, so that we Preppers had to wait for one that didn't leave until something before *eleven*. How would you, my listeners, have beguiled that perilous interval for a crowd of small boys raring to go? How did he? He gathered us together in the dining-room after breakfast and read aloud to us the poems of . . . William BARNES! However little authentic his Dorset accent may have been, we were enthralled by the transmutation of our headmaster into a rustic seer: "Blackmore Meādens", "Sweet Be'mister", "the naisy-builden rooks", the "Iwonesome woodlands, zunny woodlands"; "the elem trees", "the eltrot's bloom" and "the graegle's bell"; "the geāte a-vallen to", and "Dorset dear!"—O unforgettable, unforgotten!

Yet even these indoor pursuits are not so well remembered as are walks with him in the lovely, unhurried Sherborne countryside of sixty years ago, where Nature in all her gentler manifestations was to be sought and worshipped: *Vera incessu patuit dea*. Now and

again, towards the end of the Spring term, he would divide us into two parties, he in charge of one, and the head of the school leading the other, and we would set off from the School together, each party taking a different route, the two crossing each other a mile or so from the town. When the parties met, he would compare notes on what they had found, and the excitement would lie at the end in noting the discoveries made by one party on the return journey that had *not* been made by the other on the outward one! In the Summer term, when we would be allowed off alone on Sunday afternoons, we would bring back to him little hot bunches of wild flowers and on examining them carefully he would tell us, as if by magic, by what paths and lanes, fields and copses our walks had taken us. He could justly exclaim with Arnold, "I know these slopes: who knows them if not I?"

But it was the walks alone with him in later years that I look back on with particular pleasure. May I recall one characteristic incident? One July he had seen, in a wood near Sherborne familiar to us both, some white admiral butterflies which neither of us had found there or in the neighbourhood before, and I happened to be free to obey his



Littleton Powys (and Llewelyn Powys), Sherborne Preparatory School, 1909

summons to go down from London the following week-end so that we could enjoy them together. It was by luck a sunny afternoon for our walk, but when we reached the favoured spot, as so often happens, there was not a white admiral to be seen. After quite a little wait, "Come now, Oliver", he said, "We must say a prayer". But before I had time to think of a form of words, he produced a sort of Tennysonian pentameter: "Come down, O fair one, from those leafy boughs". There was an immediate response. A white admiral came sailing down through the chequer-work of sunlight and shadow which its dark brown wings, inlaid with patines of bright silver, so much resemble, and after describing one or two aerial arcs, it settled on a spray of honeysuckle within a couple of feet of us. Littleton's face beamed, and for once he was at a loss for words! But leaning forward with the utmost caution and pushing out his lips he managed to kiss the folded wings. Except to respond with a deliciously flirtatious wink of its wings, the butterfly stayed still. After a few moments it took to the air again and circling above our heads, as if to show what grace and skill it possessed, it made a sudden downward glide and settled on his sleeve, where it opened and closed its wings for us both to admire. Then it sped off and away, not to return.

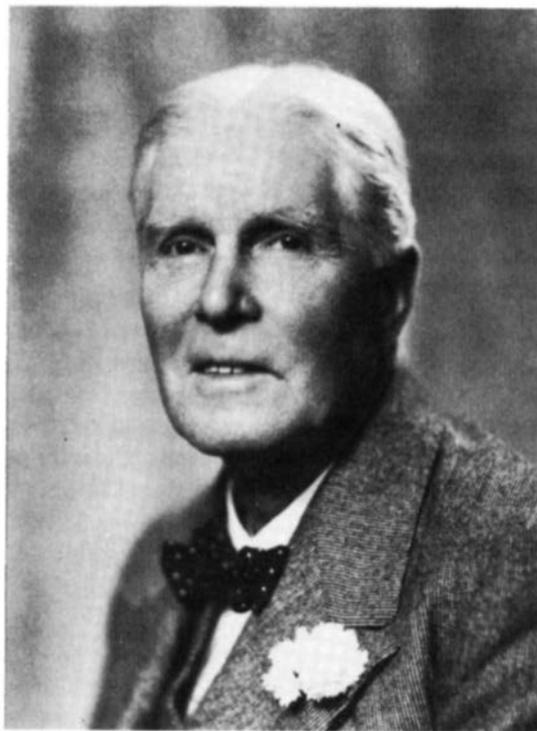
Have I your indulgence to tell of one more incident? One New Year's Eve, Mabel, Littleton and I were sitting quietly after supper in the first floor room of one of those charming Georgian houses in Brunswick Terrace at the eastern end of the sea-front here in Weymouth. Suddenly he got up and went to the window where there was a slight gap in the curtains. "Good God!" he gasped. Alarm seized me, and even Mabel's soft voice rose: "Whatever's the matter, Littleton?" "Come here, both of you," he commanded, and as we both joined him at the window we wondered what scene of blood and horror we were to witness outside. He drew the curtains wide apart and there was the full untrammelled moon and its path of reflected glory stretching across the winter sea straight towards our front door. We could not but laugh, while sharing his awe and wonder.

I must not forget his love of fishing, and of fish, a love which was born in the idyllic surroundings of the home of his maternal grandfather and aunts at Northwold in Norfolk. I recall an afternoon in early summer when he took me with him to the little chalk stream south of Cerne Abbas and I watched him cast his fly with marvellous dexterity beneath and between the overhanging plants and branches. I never quite ventured to rag him about his ethical inconsistency over fishing, in particular when his ire rose at any case of cruelty to animals that came to his notice. Eventually, I observed that old age and reflection brought some twinges of conscience at the toll of life his delightful pastime exacted. But he could not be blamed if they were merely twinges: his joy in the beauty of the life in and around running water and his aesthetic response to it—not to speak of his delight in the skill he had so patiently acquired—always seemed to me sufficient justification. I wonder what John's verdict would have been—John who would not pick a flower, but when he found one in North Wales whose name he did not know, would send his brother pages of description. As Littleton ploughed those tumultuous epistolary seas, he would put the letter down on his Bentham and Hooker and sigh: "If only my old brother would compromise with his principles and *pick* the flower and send it to me!"

In his last years, after what has always struck me as a premature retirement, he endured much physical and mental pain with the greatest fortitude. The deaths first of Mabel, from cancer, and then of Elizabeth, from tuberculosis, caused him profound grief, if in quite different ways: the loss of the dear, constant and faithful companion of nearly forty years he could face with stoic calm, whereas the agony of his parting with Elizabeth, whose brilliant, original even mysterious personality had burst upon him in old age and aroused in him a most touching infatuation, nearly overwhelmed his stalwart faith in the joy of living. Age fettered him with arthritis; financial stringency restricted his activities, even before Mabel's death, when they were compelled to leave the delightful house in Sherborne that his brother Bertie

had designed for their retirement. "My old investments", he would say with a shrug, "have not been behaving themselves well lately." He managed to make a lovely garden, but in the end the labour in it proved too much for him: he wrote an entertaining article for *The Times*, in which he described how the charming little wild flowers that gave him so much pleasure in the country became in his garden hostile weeds which all unwilling he had to war against. He remained for many years a Governor of the excellent Foster's and Lord Digby's schools in Sherborne, playing a crucial part in securing for the latter its present splendid home. He was tireless in his work for the local branch of the R.S.P.C.A.; and Sunday by Sunday he would read the lessons in the Abbey, where even to the end he had no difficulty in making himself heard in the farthest corner.

At last, when he was confined for the most part to a single room in a Somerset village, it seemed that his zest for life must be blunted. Yet not so! If he could not go out into the world, the world should be brought to him, and by his reading and by his correspondence with a host of friends, known and unknown, who had found comfort and inspiration from Elizabeth's writings, he seemed to increase the range and intensity of his interests so that verily he made his "little room an everywhere". When his eyesight failed and an operation for cataract was ordered, he was warned that he would have to spend some days in complete darkness; and so that he might have something good and useful to think of he learnt by heart ten poems by his favourite poets, five by Arnold and five by Hardy. But when, he told me, the operation was over and he expected darkness, he had no need of the poems, for he found himself confronted by what appeared to be a screen or wall and across it moved at a slow and steady pace vision after vision of the landscapes that he had seen and delighted in throughout his life, so clear and definite that he wondered which was reality, his bed and himself or the scenes presenting themselves to his view.



LITTLETON POWYS, 1957

His love of Nature, as I have said, was the core of his philosophy and of his teaching, since a teacher he remained. On the question of education he wrote in one of his last letters to me: "I know that Natural History is the most important subject. The older I become the more I feel the truth of it. There is something always at your doorstep to which you may go for moral help and strength". A small flower grew in the last summer of his life by his very doorstep and in calling my attention to it as he said goodbye, he quoted a line from Emily Dickinson: "You see, Oliver, God's residence is next to mine". He never wearied in urging all whom he met to open their eyes and ears to the splendours of the Earth around them. In Matthew Arnold's words when writing of Wordsworth:

. . . he was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,
Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad.

Littleton Powys

Llandovery 50 years ago

(Reprinted from *Llandovery School Journal*, 1955)

On the 27th of June I received a letter from T. P. Williams in which he suggested I should write my reminiscences of Llandovery of my time, for it was exactly 50 years ago that I left Llandovery, to become headmaster of Sherborne Preparatory School in which I had started my school career at the age of nine.

I was an assistant master at King's School, Bruton, when in October, 1901 I received a letter from the Warden, W. Poole Hughes, asking me to go to Llandovery for an interview as he wanted a House Tutor and a Fourth Form Master. Off I went, very pleased, because I had just become engaged to be married and I wanted work in a larger sphere.

Well do I remember the journey along the South Wales coast, and changing at Landor, with its smouldering slag heaps. Of course, I knew Poole Hughes well, as he had been a master at Sherborne from the time that I was a boy there. I remember his talking about his old school, Llandovery, and being very pleased when the great G. B. Nicholl, captain of the Cambridge rucker side, came to stay with him.

He gave me a warm welcome and told me what my duties would be and took me round the buildings and class rooms and introduced me to some senior boys; C. A. Lidbury, Grif. and Perry Owen, and Mostyn Davies come to my mind. Then he took me into a room where the music master, an old fellow called Winter, was having a choir practice of the younger boys; they were singing an Ancient and Modern hymn "*Far Down the Ages Now*", I did not know it and was delighted with the vigour with which the little fellows sang, and felt straight away I should be very happy with boys like that. In the evening I was taken round the dormitories, the chief of which was called "Gwent", and had a talk with the little

chaps in their nightshirts, when they are always most confidential. And I went to bed feeling very happy.

When I told my father that there was a possibility of my going to Llandovery, he was very excited. He counted himself of Welsh descent, and much liked the idea of his second son working in Wales. He produced his map and together we examined Llandovery and its surrounding country. When he saw the mountains and rivers everywhere, he rubbed his hands together and said "Littleton, my boy, I wish I were going with you, you will have to explore all those hills and you will come across most interesting birds and flowers." And so, when I came down next morning, I was all for seeing something of the countryside. In the course of the morning the Warden took me for a walk round the grounds and then along the river bank to Dolau Hirion Bridge. It was then there occurred what I counted a good omen. I saw a butterfly with brilliant Trifiliary colouring, and when it settled and I saw its ragged wings, I knew it to be a Comma, a butterfly I had never seen before alive. Now they are common enough in Dorset. That incident gave me great pleasure. We went on to Dolau Hirion Bridge with that glorious salmon pool and the school bathing pool too. I looked up-stream to Monk's Head and Forest Hill, to Cilycwm and the high hills above it, and I was well satisfied: and I hoped that Poole Hughes was too. In the afternoon he wanted me to play football; I had no clothes nor boots; but they were forthcoming, the boots belonging to a Mr. Roberts whom I was to succeed, so I was literally stepping into his shoes. I greatly enjoyed the game and was impressed by the boys' play, especially in the open. I believe a burly forward called A. W. Davies was the Captain.

At tea, after the game, the offer was made to me and accepted at once, and during the rest of the day I was introduced to my future colleagues, who were very kind to me. On the next day I returned to Bruton. It was in January, 1902 that I found myself a member of the staff of Llandovery College.

No one could have been kinder to me than the Warden, and often staying with him was his mother, the most picturesque old Welsh lady imaginable, and so very good and kind. The second master was the Revd. E. J. McClellan. He had been at Llandovery for a very long time and was the senior classical master. I was much impressed by the obvious ability of the senior members of the staff, who seemed quite content to remain at Llandovery all their teaching years. There was a very able scientist T. J. Richards, H. H. Knight who had been 7th wrangler at Cambridge, H. Gregory a gifted and very popular history master, R. B. Calcott a somewhat aristocratic teacher of French, afterwards at Harrow, G. F. Exton a first class Classic and a first class teacher, afterwards at Cheltenham, H. F. Newton of Oxford a mathematician and a fine footballer, old Winter the music master, succeeded by a man named Barnes, a good musician, Ifor Jones who took one of the lower forms, a very enthusiastic Llandoveryian; he was ordained and subsequently given a parish near Brecon, becoming a member of the staff of our rivals, Christ College, Brecon; N. L. James just down from Oxford, a vigorous, happy fellow, afterwards ordained and finding his life's work in Swansea. We were very happy together. The senior men had never had much to do with the boys out of school; but the younger generation, headed by Exton, were as active in the boys' welfare out of school as in it.

My fourth form, which contained as fourth forms usually do some of the most promising boys of the school, gave me much interesting work. With my inward eye I can see many of those boys, none more clearly than A. G. Prys Jones, who was all ears and eyes as during the last few minutes of some period I read some poetry to them. They enjoyed this little recreation, and I can see their eager attentive faces now. Then I used to take a

number of able boys who had discarded the Classics for other subjects, and found they needed them again to pass Smalls at Oxford and the Little Go at Cambridge. We used to read together as best we could, not a few of the works of Latin and Greek authors, and together we struggled with grammar and a weekly Latin prose. Grif. Owen was one of these, and also Stanley Evans who afterwards distinguished himself in the law. They were usually successful in their exams.

Such was my actual work in school. But I also had supervision duties, being responsible for the boys' tea and supper. I also had a number of private pupils. Out of school the cricket was in my hands; and in the winter term Newton asked me to train the forwards, an employment after my own heart. In 1903 we introduced hockey in the Lent term and although the change was not very popular, the game had quite a good following. I always felt that the less robust boys, who were somewhat frail for Rugby football, otherwise good with bat and ball, should have the chance of full enjoyment of one of the winter terms, and we had quite successful seasons.

Managing the cricket was no light task. The boys did not take to it naturally as boys do in England, and there was not the same keenness as with football. I always fancied it was because most of the boys came from homes among the hills, where there were few grounds suitable for the game. But we had many good games, and in 1904 defeated Brecon, thanks to some very fine bowling by Allan Davies. I worked very hard to try and improve things; not only did we use the nets for the eleven, but also as special nets as we called them, for the more promising of my boys. Their nets were taken between school and lunch.

I loved the cricket ground, so flat and firm, giving us excellent wickets, and so beautifully situated, with the glorious river Towy flowing on one side and beyond it the trees down beside its waters. I used to understand too the rods that leant against the pavilion, with which those who had made no runs might possibly find some compensation.

The Football was of altogether a higher standard than the cricket, and our XV was

usually good. How well I remember my satisfaction when at Cardiff we defeated my old school Sherborne; I sat in the pavilion, watching it with my old friend, G. M. Carey, and felt so proud of my side and of its captain, the out half, Hughie Morris. The rugger sevens of the present day show how good the School Rugger still is.

I used to have my own cricket too, playing for the Town; we had quite a good side, captained by that giant amongst athletes C. P. Lewis, and there were the good cricketers Milne Jones of Velindre and Douglas Jones, a lawyer, who lived down the river. We were strong enough to hold our own against most sides, and I remember once defeating Swansea, in which match I got 100 and N. L. James 89 not out; but their best bowler, Criber, was not playing.

But when I look back at those 3½ years, it was nature that gave me personally the greatest pleasure. I loved the hills and the rivers, I loved the flowers, many of which I was not familiar with. To enjoy it to the full was made easy for me by the Warden himself, who, after I had been there for a month called me into his study, and said, "I think, Powys, you are doing more work than most of us; in future I shall excuse you from all Sunday work and you can get away to your hills." How thankful I felt to him, and soon I found out that H. H. Knight had similar tastes. He used to ask me to have breakfast with him, providing sometimes a pheasant or a woodcock: and then off we would go, taking our lunch with us, for tramps amongst the hills.

It was a wonderful experience for me, for I could not have had a better and kinder tutor

in botany. He introduced me to many flowers I did not know, and ferns and mosses. He wanted to make me keen on microscopic work, but that was beyond me. Together we went to the tops of the Vans quite a number of times, together we explored the Sawdde valley, we went upstream to Craig y Rhayader and the great moorland above it; more than once did we go to Twm Shon Catti's cave, and Rhandirmwyn; I rejoiced in his companionship.

I have always felt that Field Natural History was one of the most important of school subjects. And to help in making boys interested I have started Field Societies wherever I have been, at Bruton and then again at Llandovery. At my own school at Sherborne there was a Natural History Society.

The opening of the new buildings in November, 1903, was a great affair. It was carried out admirably by the Headmaster of Sherborne, Canon F. B. Westcott, much to my joy.

In August, 1904, my wedding took place, and for two terms my wife and I lived in the last house but one of the New Road, from which we could step out onto the hills. She loved the mountains as I did, and so did our visitors.

I had been invited to go back to Sherborne and take over the Preparatory School. No offer could have pleased me more. So in April, 1905, we said 'Goodbye' to Llandovery, my heart full of thankfulness, for all the place had meant to me, and for the kindness I had received from one and all, masters and boys alike.

John Baker

John Cowper Powys in Corwen: Some Memories

After retirement I have had time and opportunity to go through some boxes of old manuscripts and letters and papers. It was during one of these operations, the other day, that I came across three letters which I had received from J. C. Powys shortly after my wife and I had moved from Corwen to South Wales. Reading these letters brought back a sequence of pleasant memories of our acquaintance with J. C. Powys and his American companion, Phyllis Playter.

I settled in Corwen in 1933 as minister of three small Welsh Congregational churches in the surrounding district. At first I lived in rooms about a mile outside the town, then in 1936, after our marriage, my wife and I took a house in Corwen itself.

It was my wife who first had contact with Phyllis Playter. She had gone to a sale which was being held in rather an unusual place, namely in the graveyard of the parish church. It was a sunny day, and she sat on a gravestone. On a neighbouring stone sat Miss Playter, and they soon got into conversation. That was the first of a number of meetings between them, at sales and in the local library. Later, my wife invited them both to tea, and we were delighted when they accepted the invitation.

J. C. Powys and his companion had taken two council houses in the upper part of the town, and these became their home for many years. He had very little to do with local life, which was in any case mostly Welsh-speaking, and he was fully occupied with his writing and lecturing, but he could sometimes be seen taking a walk up on the mountain side, a lean, gaunt figure, his magnificent head bare to the winds.

When they visited us he rather disappointed my wife, who had made ample preparations for such an important occasion. He

would take none of those, since his diet consisted almost solely of oranges and milk. Fortunately we had both, and the conversation compensated for all else. Miss Playter was gentle-voiced and charming, brought up as a New England Quaker and fascinated by the contrast between her background and her present Welsh environment. J. C. Powys, the son of an Anglican clergyman, was interested in our non-conformist background—and in my theological standpoint!

He was learning Welsh, not only because the area was so Welsh, but also because he was at that time writing a novel based on the life of Owain Glyndwr. We discussed this, and when they left that afternoon he took with him three of my books which he wished to borrow. Two of these were Welsh, the first volume of the life of Sir O. M. Edwards, and a volume of the memoirs of Professor W. J. Gruffydd of Cardiff. The other volume was a favourite of mine, Jane Harrison's *Art and Ritual*.

In the autumn of 1938 we moved to South Wales, and this was the reason for the letters. The first, dated 16 February, 1939, was written to apologise for not having returned my books sooner, though I had said that there was no need to hurry. He writes:

Please forgive me for having delayed so long with these books but I tell you I really made a leap forward in my Welsh by being so attracted to this life of O. M. Edwards, both to Edwards himself and to his biographer. If ever I *do* learn properly to *read* Welsh—and I believe I *shall*; (tho' never speak it) I shall always think that my *grand start* in it was the spell by which this book led me on! I had intended to show you and your dear lady how I'm progressing by writing you both a letter in Welsh but I am too hard-worked for this now and I can't in sheer shame keep you waiting any longer for your books.

He then makes some personal references, and continues:

I gave a lecture down there at Bridgend Glam. and went to Will Ifan's church there and met *the great Huw Menai* and made what I believe will be a lasting and life-long friendship with him. I am indeed trying to get one of the Ministers here to arrange a lecture here for him to give but depends on them down there if it comes to anything or not. Apparently having no teeth doesn't affect my lecturing.

(That comment was typical of J.C.P.'s almost childlike openness). He ends that letter with more personal remarks, and then adds, "I am sending you as a present my own latest work". The gift was his book *The Pleasures of Literature*, which he signed, "To the Rev. J. Baker, with grateful remembrances from his old Corwen friend, J. C. Powys, Feb. 16th, 1939". This was a typically gracious gesture—and a very generous assessment of our rather brief acquaintance!

I wrote to thank him for his book, and gave a description of our life in our new home, and of some of the interesting characters we had come to know. He replied on 23 February 1939, a brief letter containing some personal observations and ending with the comment, "Well, I *must* get to work at my Owen which has now reached in my sprawling hand page 1220, a little more than *halfway thro'*."

That year, between Munich and the outbreak of war, was a time of intense activity and anxiety. I was then minister of a church

in Glanamau, with many young people, whose families were most concerned at the prospect of war. Life became increasingly busy, and there was little time for keeping up distant acquaintanceships. However, when we saw in the paper a notice of Llewelyn Powys's death, my wife and I wrote a message of sympathy to J. C. Powys, and with his usual courtesy he replied (19 January 1940):

How very kind and thoughtful of you and your wife to send us this lovely little message of sympathy about my brother's death. I *am* so glad that you haven't forgotten us in your new sphere of work, and I sincerely hope that one day we shall meet again.

I've at last really finished my huge historical novel about Owen Glyn Dŵr; but whether in this war time there'll be paper enough to print such a long book on—heaven knows!

However, it's done at last; and I've already posted the first half to London and I hope to send off the other half tomorrow!

Llewelyn's wife is back again in England, and now devotedly working at his yet unfinished papers. We often think of you two as we pass the 'H. R. Jones Houses'.

That was our last personal contact with J. C. Powys. After the war we moved to Yorkshire, and stayed in England for the next thirty years, without at any time returning to the Corwen area. It was only the chance finding of those three letters that brought back the pleasant memories of our acquaintanceship with two very charming people.



Three photographs of John Cowper Powys taken shortly after he went to live in Corwen in 1935. These were supplied by the novelist James Hanley who can be seen in two of them, he being on Powys's left in the top photograph.

Reviews

Celtic Folklore Welsh and Manx,
JOHN RHYS.

Wildwood House Ltd., 1980; 2 volumes: £5.50,
£4.95.

This work presents hazards for the reviewer. At the outset one is confronted with the dilemma of having to determine how it should be regarded—as a source-book, as a work of scholarship, or as literature, oral literature committed to writing. What we find is a bewildering blend and mixture, in many ways indicative of the state of Welsh scholarship towards the end of the last century. On every page there is evidence of a genuine understanding of what ought to be attempted by the scholar, of respect for accuracy, of a passion for knowledge. What is lacking is a concept or plan for a collection and discussion of all the available information. Methods and techniques of investigation which were later developed are not in evidence here, and we look in vain for what may be described as exact scholarship.

That John Rhys was a pioneer in many and varied fields is well known. He was clearly influenced by the techniques, and more importantly by the spirit of scholarship in Britain and on the continent in his day, and produced work on which his pupils and others were later to build. He was one of a number of distinguished scholars working in the domain of Celtic scholarship at the time, and a mere glance at the variety of his interests and activities leaves us with the impression of a scholar anxious to involve himself with many fields which he saw needed harvesting, and into which he unhesitatingly ventured, often without adequate equipment. In many ways, these must have been satisfying and exciting times when the true scholar really enjoyed his scholarship, without restriction to a specific area. Here one is reminded of Rhys's incursions into fields such as the Arthurian legend, the Celtic inscriptions, Welsh philology, Welsh history, and of course Celtic folklore.

He hailed from Ponterwyd near Aberystwyth, where he was born in 1840, and was appointed the first Professor of Celtic at Jesus College, Oxford. He became Principal of that College, and for the best part of fifty years, that is, until his death in 1916, he was untiringly active in the cultural and educational life of both Oxford and Wales. Towards the end of the century there was much

renewed interest in folklore, an interest which inevitably affected Rhys. Much of his information he obtained from books, but not all of it. He was "enticed" into the rural communities, more especially in the north and west of Wales, from where he garnered much information about fairies, nymphs and their activities, the engaging and often terrifying phenomenon of the changeling, and stories and beliefs connected with caves, lakes, and wells. He learned a great deal about the Llyn y Fan legend and its different versions. He compared different versions of other legends, and occasionally attempted to examine aspects of psychology, history and race which lay behind some of these stories. Such investigations are on the whole rudimentary and inexact, and are indicative more of the scholar's interest than of his expertise.

Some of Rhys's concepts are no longer tenable, and not a few of his explanations must be described as fanciful. No longer can we regard the Goidels of western areas of Wales in the fifth and sixth centuries as natives whose ancestors had never emigrated to Ireland. Neither can we accept the suggestion that Goidelic was the original language of Culhwch and Olwen, or that the Llyr family (Bendigeidfran, Manawydan, etc.) were Goidelic "before they put on a Brythonic garb" (p. 548). There is much of interest in what he observed and described. The first person met on New Year's Day (in Manx *qualtagh*) should be a dark-haired man, or boy. This view still lingers on, and Rhys takes it back "to a time when the dark-haired race reckoned the Aryan of fair complexion as his natural enemy" (p. 339). We are reminded of the practice in Welsh of using the feminine form of the personal pronoun 3 singular, the form *hi*, in statements relating to weather or circumstances, when one cannot be sure who is (immediately or ultimately) responsible. English resorts to the impersonal *it*, but Welsh uses *hi*—"she": mae *hi*'n oer—"it is cold", mae *hi*'n galed arno—"it is hard on him". This is an intriguing phenomenon, as indeed is Rhys's explanation of it. According to him, we have to look to the students of myth and allied subjects to enable us to identify the great "she". He can think of only two feminine names: *tynged*—"fate or fortune", and *Dôn*, the Celtic goddess, "mother of some of the most nebulous personages in Celtic literature" (p. 644).

I have sought to present Rhys in his excellence and in his defects, which are of course the defects of his time. Both stand out clearly in the two volumes which he published in 1901, where he sought to do for Welsh lore what John Gregorson Campbell had done for Scottish. Certainly we have here a work of scholarship. It lists (geographically) the author's authorities and sources, and presents page after page of copious biographical references. But more significantly, every page in it glows with the warmth, ardour and light of a scholar who had at his feet a new and challenging world of learning. We could well do with a touch of this ardour today, and one cannot but applaud the reissue of these two volumes by Wildwood House, London.

D. SIMON EVANS

The Long Conversation: A Memoir of David Jones,
WILLIAM BLISSETT.

Oxford University Press, 1981, £9.75.

This is really rather an unusual and delightful book, uncategorizable in much the same way as David Jones's own works. William Blissett, Professor of English at the University of Toronto, is one of the most felicitous exponents of David Jones's writings, having published several elegant, perceptive essays and reviews on various aspects of the poet's work. He first made personal contact with David Jones through the latter's response to a query sent to a number of contemporary poets as to whether they still read Spenser with pleasure and admiration (David Jones confessed that Spenser was "a poet I've never much read"). This was in 1954. In 1959 Blissett made his first visit to David Jones, who was then living at Northwick Lodge in Harrow-on-the-Hill, and from that time until David Jones's death in 1974 he continued to visit him and exchange letters. The present book is a splendid record of the growth of their friendship. Blissett made careful notes after each visit, writing them up more fully later in a style that is a marvellous blend of the precise and the informal. Not only do we learn the topics over which the conversation moved, but we sense the mood of the moment, the interplay of the two men's interests, the unexpressed thoughts that go on in the visitor's mind.

David Jones was incredibly generous of his time and energy to academic visitors, and in William

Blissett's account I recognize an experience very much akin to my own. I first met David Jones when I was about 30 and he was about 70, and I was rather apprehensive, feeling myself very much a novice as regards understanding his work. But from the start he treated me as an equal, without any condescension, even when I asked questions about things I might have been expected to know for myself (Shakespearean allusions, for example). I think that everyone who became acquainted with David Jones like this felt an enormous sense of privilege to be drawn into what often developed into real friendship. David Jones did not open up quickly in conversation. You always needed plenty of time if you were going to visit: the odd hour was quite inadequate. Indeed, having been there three hours or so, you would suppose it appropriate to take your leave and find that only at this point would he begin to engage you on the thing he really wanted to discuss. For me, and clearly for William Blissett, a visit to David Jones was always a moving experience, because like all truly great men and women he was totally without pretentiousness, totally humble. A young nun at the Calvary Nursing Home, where David Jones spent his last invalid years, was startled to be told by Blissett that he was a famous writer and artist; David Jones himself had not mentioned the fact to anyone.

There is perhaps a tendency towards hagiography in what is now being written about David Jones as a person. Every detail that can be remembered is registered for posterity with affectionate care. (In philosophical circles the same is very much the case with Wittgenstein.) Every letter or card that David Jones ever wrote is transcribed and printed. The number of sets of correspondence that have now been published is quite considerable, but they contain a fair amount of repetition since David Jones was such a prolific letter-writer and tireless in expounding his work and apologizing for his delays and carelessness.

I must admit that in my first reading of William Blissett's book my sense of having read many similar things before was quite acute. Now, at a second reading, I think I was hypercritical and wrong in my judgement. The actual letters printed, both David Jones's and Blissett's, do bring out new facets of David Jones's character and interests. They show how any one set of letters reveals only certain sides and not the whole of the man. As John Matthias points out in his review of *Dai Greatcoat* in *PN Review*, that (auto-)biography through selected letters to four close male friends is skewed in its omission of letters to the various

women who played an important part in David Jones's life. So although David Jones is recognizably the same person that we encounter elsewhere, William Blissett's own personality and enthusiasms elicit different responses from David Jones. His memoir will, therefore, provide significant material for any future biographer.

The Long Conversation rambles far and wide. It paints a picture of David Jones's many friends and acquaintances, records many of his literary and artistic likes and dislikes, his lack of interest in music, his growing frailty of body. The nature of his relationships with other contemporary artists and poets is of special interest. His remarks on Auden, for example, are pretty pointed. He is quite firm that Auden derived a lot from him and that Auden's praise of him in *A Certain World* was no more than just. On a later occasion he speaks of meeting Auden twice, along with Spender, and that Auden talked incessantly. It is hard to imagine that the two would ever get on well together, so different were their personalities, yet both emotionally vulnerable. In complete contrast we have the gorgeous vignette of David Jones and René Hague enjoying rumbustious humour and mimicry, a side of David Jones that has been surprisingly little touched upon in writings about him.

Further valuable information is given about his mother and father, Canon John Gray, Fr. John O'Connor, Prudence Pelham, T. S. Eliot, Ben Nicholson, Stanley Spencer, Evelyn Waugh and many others. (A helpful index makes locating these passages easy after a first reading.) I warmed to David Jones's annoyance at Robert Graves's *The White Goddess*, a work of egregious scholarship that is "almost useless because of its lack of documentation". It was curiously comforting too to hear that Philip Larkin got "bushels of protesting letters" at having omitted David Jones from the *Oxford Book of Twentieth Century Verse*. Such titbits could be multiplied *ad lib*. Being an admirer of things Canadian myself, I was delighted to read that David Jones reacted warmly to hearing about the Canadian painter David Milne, with whom, so it seems to me, his own painting has so much in common. But working on a small scale and poverty-stricken through much of his life, like David Jones, David Milne is little known outside his own country.

William Blissett's own catholic interests help to place David Jones within a wider context than has often hitherto been the case. I note a few uncertainties in the handling of the Welsh material (though it is not prominent in this book) and

confine myself to pointing out that Strata Florida (photo opposite page 84) is in Dyfed (formerly Cardiganshire) and not in Pembrokeshire. It is much to be welcomed that with this volume David Jones has for the first time been taken up by a major British publisher other than Faber. My only regret is that William Blissett's beautiful essays on several aspects of David Jones's writing have not yet been presented in book form. They deserve a wider circulation than that given by the academic journals in which, for the most part, they have appeared.

DAVID BLAMIRE

Henry Miller: Letters to Anais Nin,
Edited by GUNTHER STUHLMANN.

Sheldon Press, 1979, £4.95 (paperback).

This is the third time I have read this collection: twice in its American hardback and paperback editions, and in the Sheldon Press edition here—I managed to avoid reading the first British edition published in 1965 by Peter Owen Ltd. I think now, as I thought first time round, that there is no reason to inflict this deplorable exercise upon the reading public except for the extraordinary writer to whom it is addressed; also, in *this* journal, because of the letters to Henry Miller written by John Cowper Powys. Nothing written by one of the great novelists of the language may be ignored; that he should have been conned into treating Miller as some sort of intellectual equal or colleague is due neither to his gullibility nor naivety (though JCP was one of the most superb and transcendent *naifs*), but to his openness and generosity.

These letters are written to Anais Nin between 1931 and 1946, and there are only two threads uniting them: the correspondent's begging for money and a whining complaint about the problem of being Henry Miller. Nothing in these fifteen years, evidenced in the correspondence, that is, suggests any kind of self-realization, growth or fulfilment, not even satiety—a state of mind and body remote from the incessant record of intense and liberating sexuality which informs, is, the substance of most of his autobiographical fiction.

There is little in these 300-odd pages to interest the reader in their writer. There are many dates and references which will be valuable to authors of

other artists' biographies—if they prove accurate. In themselves the letters do not interest—in prose style elegant or *fauve*—the intellectual matter is negligible or silly. He mentions JCP only once. Having heard him lecture on Dostoevsky, he writes:

I . . . later read his books. There is one—a criticism of modern authors—I forget its title. Look it up; you will find it absorbing. (p. 52)

The book is divided into two parts by the editor (whose own language the publishers ought to have had better translated): Europe 1931-1940, and America 1940-1946. The first section we know, as it were, from the novels and other writings, the second from *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* (published in this country in 1947 by Secker and Warburg) and other late works. The European experience is filled with the sort of self-explorations expatriate Americans were accustomed to make in the 20s and 30s, though most of them grew out of writing, as Miller does to Anais Nin in February 1932:

In your letter there are two or three paragraphs which torture me . . . 'this world, etc. you are not meant to enter.' True, but I will never cease to bang my head upon the doors. If I don't get a glimpse of that world I shall go mad. No, I do not want it symbolically. You are making it too difficult. It is already obscure enough and now you want to tack on a long vestibule through which I must grope painfully. Already in these lines you mystify me. You are talking a language that is beyond me. And the elusiveness of it enrages me. What good is my intellect? What new organs must I grow? A sentence, for instance, like 'It is a matter of language'—baffles me. It *must* be a matter of language, else why wouldn't I understand it, seize it? I mean this in many ways. I mean, for example, that it is so paralytically baffling to know that when a woman says one thing she means another, many things, yes and no at once . . . (p. 55)

P.S. Do you like 'Bubu'? How did you like syphilis standing at the door—kind of swell, don't you think? (p. 73)

You spoke a lot of *neurosis*. I don't believe in the interpretation that has been given that word—not any more. Anybody who was not 'neurotic' during this period must be abnormal. (p. 177)

By an unflinching regard for one's self one gradually becomes so in harmony with the world that he no longer has to think about his duty toward others. (p. 184)

The second passage, like the first, is during his first encounter with Europe, the second two during his final years before returning to America. He left as the Nazis occupied France, but, interestingly, via Greece in which he notes in his final European letter (12 January 1940):

Two weeks at sea, and it seems as though a curtain had fallen over the recent past. Greece has fallen back into the well of experience. Something has happened to me there, but what it was I can't formulate. (p. 219)

There is scarcely a letter from the middle 30s to this last in which he has any understanding of what was happening in Spain, Italy, and Germany socially or politically; even granted that these are personal letters to one person it seems curious. Anais Nin was a highly sensitive and aware woman. On the eve of the cataclysm he is concerned with not much but Henry Miller.

The American section is disappointing. There is hardly any sense of keen social observation. After fifteen years of absence you would suppose he would have noticed more. As he moves from the East Coast to the West, down into the Deep South, through the dustbowl of the Mid-West his disconnections are dismaying. He makes ritual remarks about Indians and blacks being so much more vibrantly in touch with "life" than the whites around them:

The Indian Reservation at Cherokee, N.C. (smaller than I thought) was a wonderful contrast to the white lands. Simply idyllic—and utterly silent and peaceful . . . (p. 245)

This in 1940, when the ragged vestiges of the Cherokees, driven into Oklahoma along the infamous "Trail of Tears", lived squalid and degenerate lives huddled in what was left of their ancestral lands, dressing up in pathetic war-bonnets, selling fake arrow-heads to tourists (the Cherokees wore turbans and used blow-guns), drunken, dirty and desperate. The above is one of the most dishonest passages in American literature—if these letters be such. Similar sentiments may be found by flipping the pages randomly. He drives through the Deep South:

Haven't time really to explore Memphis. It doesn't seem worth it anyway . . . I begin to think I like best the people in the so-called 'backward' states or regions . . . (p. 270)

W. C. Handy's Memphis didn't seem worth it! Again:

I had some tyre trouble . . . in the middle of a dismal swamp in Louisiana. Waited several hours on the road for a garageman to come and change tyres. (p. 271)

He is travelling at the end of the 1930s in country still in the stupor of the Depression, country chronicled only a few years before by James Agee in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, the classic Depression study still heart-breaking and powerful in its affirmation of human dignity in the presence of poverty and economic oppression. There is not, in the American section, a single sentence which suggests any understanding of, or sympathy for that sad land—though wherever Miller goes he always likes the “people here [in Arkansas] poor and honest, extremely kind” (p. 272). And in the country Steinbeck wrote about in *The Grapes of Wrath*, only recently published, he seems not to see what the other novelist saw. (Incidentally, he manages to spend several days in Ashville, North Carolina, without mentioning Thomas Wolfe and misspells the town as “Asheville”.)

After he goes west in 1941 the letters to Anais Nin are in-talk about Hollywood and his eventual settling in Big Sur: the rest is, in cliché, history. He had made his reputation, enviably, amongst people who had not read his books. A hero to several sub-cultures because of the censorship he had been subject to in America, his name was linked with those of Robeson and Chaplin, victims of the philistinism, racism, and hysterical anti-Communist fears of an ignorant judiciary, and he found a ready-made audience, young people to whom he became a *guru*, and a generation following, whose rapturous discoveries of his subsequently printed sex novels ended with the dirty needles and hepatitis of Haight Ashbury. Chaplin was a genius, and Robeson, if not a singer of the first order, was a fine artist and man of extraordinary dignity and courage.

That Anais Nin should be known, *e silentio* from these letters and her pathetic pornographic stories in *Playgirl*, is appalling. Virago Press are to be commended for the re-publication of many of her books (though one would wish her presented with

somewhat better credentials). Her writing is so remote from both American and British literature that it is not yet possible to “place” her, though, when enough time has passed for us to know what to make of her, I think that place will be very high.

Finally, and with a certain irony, it is Henry Miller himself who gives us a genuine, sincerely felt response to her work—not in the pages of this wretched and contemptible book—but in *The Cosmological Eye* (Editions Poetry London, 1945), in which he drafts a film-scenario from her “phantasy” *The House of Incest*.

It is a lyrical, compressed, and beautifully written piece (though never filmed). It is a pity that Henry Miller never became a Hollywood hack—it might have made him into a fine writer.

PARIS LEARY

Reverie,
ADELAIDE ROSS.

Robert Hale, 1981, £6.95.

Towards the end of our visit we set out in fine mist for Widecombe and on the way found a sheep stuck up to its neck in the Wallabrook, its hooves wedged. We pushed and pulled and at last freed it and shoved it to a gap in the bank, where Nicholas hauled it out. (p. 220)

Readers of John Cowper Powys's *After My Fashion* will recognize the situation: it is the same inescapable sense of obligation, bound up imaginatively-speaking with the same sheep, which leads the Powys-hero to his collapse at the end of that novel. In a work of fiction, it seemed a little unconvincing. Yet slight as it is, the scene perhaps provides a clue to the endearing, quixotic fellowship between Powys and Nicholas Ross, which is one of the relationships dealt with in this autobiography. Adelaide Ross's *Reverie* has much else to offer, and develops certain “themes-with-variations” present in her life, “as in many other people's”: Love, Nature and Art. These are not self-centred musings. Her book also shows throughout the working of an active social conscience. Indeed Adelaide Ross is a writer of some eloquence, and the life she describes was spent among people to whom the inner world was always of vital concern. Born in 1896, she is the daughter of Eden Phillpotts, and is therefore connected with a literary circle which includes

Arnold Bennett, George Bernard Shaw and Thomas Hardy. Her early life is an interesting one, regarded quite simply as a kind of social history. She herself is fully capable of reflecting on the precise interest of the environment in which she grew up:

In the outer world suffragettes were becoming more exigent, shouting 'Votes for Women!' and growing violent. Father called himself a feminist, but no one in our family except Grannie Adelaide, shocked by these 'dreadful creatures', took much interest in the Cause. Even at the height of hostilities, when a suffragette threw herself under a racing horse and was killed, I was too bemused by poetry and evanescent loves to care about female enfranchisement. Our beautiful garden was my land of all delight . . . I built a house in a tree and wrote a 'novel' there, copying my father, as many another child has done before and since. (p. 42)

To help Florence Hardy through the difficult months after her husband's death, James Barrie had invited her to spend some weeks in the Adelphi, and while there she invited me to have tea with her and the Bernard Shaws, and also to lunch with James Barrie and the playwright Arthur Pinero, at a restaurant called the Boulestin. I arrived early and was watching arrivals and departures when I saw Florence approaching, a pathetic little woman, escorted by those ageing men. Barrie seemed unknowable, but Pinero's genial phiz inspired liking and gaiety. Unlike Barrie but like Shaw he had been influenced by Ibsen, whose work had not only improved his conception of play-writing, but opened his eyes to the follies, injustices and inequalities of Society, its ridiculous values and sickening class prejudice. Between the two men Florence looked woebegone, as if always on the verge of tears. Like her, Barrie was shawled in melancholy, but Pinero, stone deaf, kept laughing and asking questions, though he could hear nothing we said. Florence tried to blend us into a harmonious quartet, but Barrie sank into silence, and though Pinero babbled away no one could penetrate his deafness. I cannot recall what we ate or drank, only that in my nervousness I choked, and a waiter came running with a glass of water while Pinero thumped me on the back, Florence cried 'O dear, O dear!', and Barrie stared at his plate and frowned. (pp. 113-14)

On wider issues, such as the extent of the suffering caused by the First World War, or on a subject such as prison reform, she writes with more than ordinary perceptiveness and strength of feeling. The book wins its reader at an early stage by its wit and by its strong sense of compassion. In a controlled and gracious way, the writer often criticizes herself and the values of the family and social class to which she belongs. Underlying *Reverie*, from its portrayal of childhood onwards, is a mood that also brings out the wonder of being alive. This kind of consciousness is one to which readers of the Powys *Autobiography* will be able to respond keenly and sympathetically. It is interesting too to compare the social context and the family background portrayed here with those of the Powys family: the strange emotional pressure which such a family can develop within itself; the inevitable class-consciousness of the period to be fought against by persons of this degree of sensitivity.

John Cowper Powys enters the book as the friend of Nicholas Ross. A selection of Powys's letters to Ross was published in 1971. The present account brings forward those things in her husband's range of intellectual activities which would have been attractive to Powys. Their discussions covered the Roman Catholic faith, Greek and Roman civilization, medieval history, modern literature and politics. They compared notes on Mary Queen of Scots, and quarrelled over the Spanish Civil War—Powys raging against "Bloody Franco". Powys himself emerges as a man of generous sympathies, yet without really becoming central to the story. There is little material to make one revise previous impressions of JCP. Those who do not feel that the letters to Nicholas Ross represent Powys at his best will probably not change their view of the relationship between Powys and Ross after reading this. In the letters, Powys lets himself go rather too easily with the younger man. This is not to deny that Powys himself invested a great deal in their correspondence, or even that he kept his sense of fun. But there is something about the letters as a selection—an odd sort of tension, or perhaps rather the lack of any significant tension—that makes their shared world seem private and inaccessible. I quote from Powys himself to convey the spirit of the exchange:

How this wonderful letter of yours does so please me, fairly sets me off on an ignorant and confused second-soul's second-childhood scramble along the tight-rope between Athens and Jerusalem. This rigmorole is the rhodom-

ontadic litany of John Lost-hole, the expropriated Mole of Wole. (23 March 1954)

One misses the crafty, guarded Powys who presents himself so much more dramatically in the letters to Louis Wilkinson.

Reverie presents a moving view of life as a spiritual adventure or pilgrimage: it deals thoughtfully with the development of personal relationships, with the experience of travel, and with the many changes seen in the world over a long lifetime. The author's strength and tact are apparent from her closing sentences:

As one looking for a last time at a well-known landscape, a familiar view never to be seen again, I have taken too long a look at my bygone journey, about which I have told 'Nothing but the truth', yet not nearly 'the whole truth', which no one tells. Death stills the loudest and the softest voices, and silence is more precious than sound. (Perhaps I should have remained silent.) Out of my silence and solitude came to me in my reveries these voices from the past.

PETER EASINGWOOD

Six Modern Authors and Problems of Belief,
PATRICK GRANT.

Macmillan, 1979, £10.

That this book's price, in North America at least, will probably confine its sale to the university-library market is a pity, for it offers a badly-needed counterweight to the excessive specialization of modern literary scholarship. Patrick Grant treats not the Enlightenment but the seventeenth-century scientific revolution as the precipitant of a yet-continuing "crisis for the literary imagination". It is this crisis that gives his exploration of Aldous Huxley, Robert Graves, David Jones, J. R. R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield and Michael Polanyi—plus others brought in by way of contrast—sufficient unity to make this a book rather than a set of essays. In a lengthy introduction Professor Grant specifies three features of this crisis. Science has discredited literary imagination as mediator between nature and God, the transcendent source of truth. By dethroning their monarchs, western societies have implicitly or

explicitly ceased to acknowledge the heavenly hierarchy and human dependence on God. Finally, having ceased to signify fallen man's redemption by divine suffering, the Cross has left the literary mainstream for the backwater of evangelical hymnody, and thereby deprived twentieth-century man of any meaning in, or solace for, his collective suffering.

The crisis gives a coherence weakened rather than strengthened by the scheme. The chapter-heading "Belief in Mysticism" clearly denotes Huxley's faith in converse with God rather than in the lessons of history. "Belief in Anarchy", however, seems to refer to Graves's unhappy conviction that "mechanarchy" has run riot since our myths broke down. "Belief in Fantasy" must refer to Tolkien's conviction of its value, since he shared Jones's "Belief in Religion". Finally, "Belief in Thinking" denotes not so much "attainment of truth by intellectual reflection" (a conviction of Barfield's) but his idealism and Polanyi's empiricism.

Three difficulties spring to mind about Grant's account of the crisis. The first, that English regicides did not reject Christianity, he tacitly concedes by citing Graves on the Puritan "thunder-god". By citing also Camus's claim that since the French revolution western man has tried to live without transcendence, he raises a question he never fully considers, the mutual relevance of religion and revolution. The Americans, after all, no more rejected Christianity than the Iranians have rejected Islam, but they introduced the religious pluralism of a democratic rather than hierarchical society.

The second difficulty arises when Grant concludes his contrast between poems of Fortunatus and George Herbert by remarking that the future of the Cross as a literary symbol lay thereafter in the hymns of Watts, Wesley and the Victorians, "where it stood more than ever in contrast to the iniquities of a secular, unbelieving society". Those hymns surely brought the Cross before far more eyes than even "The Ancient Mariner" (wherein Coleridge substitutes a symbolic bird). But folk-poems lie outside the author's field of enquiry. While its subsidiary figures wrote children's tales and a popular novel, its major ones reflect a philosophical, even slightly recondite taste, not for Eliot but for David Jones, not for popular books by Huxley and Graves but those of mystical or anthropological interest, not for Carl Sagan or C. S. Lewis but Polanyi and Barfield. The great exception is Tolkien, whom (as in a brilliant article) Grant considers in Jungian

terms. Eliminate folk-poems and drama, confine novels to incidental discussion, and you restrict "literary imagination" to the box rather than the gallery or even the stalls. This bears on the discussion of post-revolutionary religion, for there remained far more sense of transcendence among the populace at large, and the churches still have far more vitality than discourse on the Left Bank would lead us to believe.

The third difficulty is that eventually Grant drags in the Cross-symbol where it will not fit. Notably, he suggests that it would be especially useful to Barfield, in view of the latter's concern with polarity and incarnation. The shadow of a previous book on renaissance images and ideas hangs over the present one.

A closer look at the sections on Barfield and David Jones illustrates both the limitation and the very real distinction of Grant's critical exposition. Barfield questions the assumption of empiricists from Bacon to T. H. Huxley (and beyond) that a word has but an arbitrary connection with the thing it denotes. Admittedly, to confuse words with things can lead to witch-hunts and superstition, but to divorce them can bring about what Barfield calls the "idolatry" of concepts assumed without examination and fixed meanings unresponsive to change either in the world or in ourselves. Again, Barfield treats Christ as bearer of meaning and freewill to a fallen race, imprisoned in its idolatries. As Aldous Huxley points out, St Paul presents him as fore-ordained victim. Among Grant's quotations from Huxley, Graves and Empson are several alleging that cruciolatry has bedevilled the Christian religion by turning God into a torturer. A religion focused entirely on Calvary treats this life as inherently meaningless, a "wilderness of this world". It has been Barfield's mission to restore lost meaning by exposing the fallacy of treating words merely referentially, without regard to the light they shed on the changing human psyche that so largely shapes what materialists call "the real world".

By leaving Barfield till last and treating his central ideas somewhat curtly, Grant misses an opportunity to give the book greater coherence. Time after time, in reading earlier chapters, one exclaims "Barfield said that!". Before Graves, Barfield regarded poetry as originally a preserver of wisdom, myth as a means of participation in the cosmos, and the scientific revolution as the transition from poetic to prosaic representation of life. Barfield coined the phrase "collective representation" so evidently applicable to the objective view of Christ in ancient hymns. Again it is his

tracing of psychic evolution in etymology that makes the link between Graves's preoccupation with ritual and Tolkien's with language. Finally, he points out our need to combine self-awareness and self-determination, made easier by science, with that sympathetic apprehension poets have always had of the natural environment. This underlies the insight of Kipling's Mowgli stories that Grant so ably expounds before turning to Tolkien. One need not subscribe to Barfield's beliefs to see the value of treating philology as evidence of social and psychic evolution.

Nor need either the orthodox or the sceptical dismiss out-of-hand his argument for a three-phase evolution of consciousness. As M. H. Abrams has shown, philosophical realists from Augustine to Marx, and poets without number, have envisaged a primal sympathy of man, nature and the gods, a medial detachment or alienation and a final, more conscious, relationship. "Final participation" is best seen as an attitude, more common than it was but likely for ages to come to be scorned by idolaters of technology who treat the natural world as a means of production and acknowledge no inner world. This being but one aspect of "participation", Grant can justifiably point to a certain fuzziness in its theological aspect, apparently a self-conscious collaboration with a divinely-guided evolutionary process, inner and social as well as natural.

The Cross belongs supremely in Grant's exposition of *In Parenthesis* and *Anathemata*, by David Jones. This impresses not only by the quiet absorption of exegetical detail from commentaries by Hague and Summerfield but by its intuitive sympathy with Jones's sacramental vision. If Eliot draws inspiration from the Cross, Jones confronts it at every turn of a Flanders trench and every juncture in British history because of his power to relieve the "matter of Britain" in all ages. In the *Anathemata*, he out-wanders Tess Durbeyfield past stone crosses into the ages of their erection. Only Hopkins rivals him in experiencing Christ in all things, but unlike Hopkins, Jones (perhaps because of his Welsh "chapel" heritage), narrows this experience down to that of the Cross. The intuitive grasp that enables Grant to expound the poem as if untroubled by its toughness derives largely, one suspects, from his familiarity with Catholic and Celtic culture, as well as with the theological background.

What Grant remarks of Barfield appears true in his own case, that the critic surpasses the philosopher. He expounds Marvell's Horatian Ode on King Charles with marvellous balance and

delicacy. In a dozen places he shows equal tact in handling briefer poems, yet interprets the immense works of Jones and Tolkien with unassuming coherence. Compared with earlier critics, he is a model of discerning charity when discussing Huxley's final novel. Above all, he ignores our chronological snobbery to show seventeenth-century mystics as influencing our habits of thought and feeling no less than those demigods of existentialism Nietzsche and Camus. The crowning achievement of *Six Modern Authors* is to fuse four distinct periods of "Eng. Lit.". Even its limitation, the choice of authors likely to remain "caviare to the general", may be a matter of avoiding hackneyed authors as much as of temperament.

One final reflection is that Professor Grant might have allowed himself more time for reflection. If his vignette of *The Power and the Glory* makes a minor but useful contribution to his account of signs, his potted history of children's literature in the chapter on Tolkien is surely out of scale. Haste results in minor inaccuracies too: in Note 25 to Chapter One the article referred to makes a preceding as well as a following point, and the book mentioned is by David Martin (not Morton). Nowadays, an odd misprint or solecism (as on page 106) can evade the closest scrutiny, but names and ascriptions should not. Neither minor irritations nor my more serious disagreements should deter any prospective reader of this learned, concise yet always lucid and urbane exposition, for argument with a critic is the best of tributes.

LIONEL ADEY

Edith Sitwell: A Unicorn Among Lions,
VICTORIA GLENDINNING.

Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981, £9.95.

This biography gives us a suffering Edith Sitwell. Her unhappy childhood is seen as the origin of a loveless adult life strewn with ruined friendships. There is a direct connection between "the hell of my childhood" and the old woman weeping because she has never known physical love. Her heartless mother, Lady Ida, forced her into the life of the imagination and eventually into poetry. It was there that she lived most fully; but, as her brother Sacheverell wrote: "Your poetry is your

nunnery". She was six feet tall, stooping and weak-ankled. This, combined with her intense commitment to poetry, drew her away from ordinary experience and away from love.

This unhappiness underlies a more easily-known Edith, the public figure, the writer and performer of *Façade*, with a multitude of literary friendships and enmities, whose most frequent word of dismissal was "impertinent". The word neatly implies that while Edith (behaving with appropriate grandeur) knows exactly who *she* is, the person addressed is no more than a school-child. The trouble was that Edith did not possess the firmly centred personality that she pretended to have. Her earliest experiences had undermined her. She was "not a strong person", she lacked confidence and personal self-esteem, and as a result could not deal equably with adverse criticism. Out of this insecurity came the literary controversies. The public Edith Sitwell was created out of private suffering.

Yet the unhappy childhood had a double side. Edith's parents locked her into a steel orthopaedic contraption intended to straighten her spine; from this she suffered physical pain and personal humiliation. But Sir George Sitwell was well off, and Renishaw Hall had nurses and governesses who gave her some of the emotional security of which her parents were incapable. Renishaw and its surroundings also provided a garden and a landscape into which Edith could escape and be happy. This was later transformed into what her biographer calls "the vision of an idealized childhood", which is the theme of her best poetry, written in the 1920s.

Before this was written, Edith Sitwell was a success in London literary society. She arrived in Bayswater in 1914, and "her rapid rise was phenomenal", Ms Glendinning remarks, though one senses her irritation at Edith's methods. Aldous Huxley spoke of sitting "naively drinking in the flattery of the ridiculous Sitwell", but like many others he succumbed to the social advantages of these literary gatherings. Though Edith had few intellectual interests and relied on spontaneity and a largely unexamined romanticism as the impulse for her poetry, she did have wide personal sympathies. This made her literary life a success, while she collected a string of people who were emotionally and financially dependent on her. For them, she always did her best. The long-drawn-out death from cancer of her companion Helen Rootham shows Edith agonised, unhappy, but always responsive.

Such matters were not public knowledge, how-

ever. The appearance on the London scene of three literary aristocrats posing as rebels, naturally provoked a number of satirical attacks. Of these, Noel Coward's sketch "The Swiss Family Whittlebot" seems to have offended Edith most; while Wyndham Lewis's satirical novel of 1930, *The Apes of God*, was the most substantial attack. In *Façades*, his biography of all three Sitwells, John Pearson says that it was Lewis who first criticized them for their cult of youthfulness, as part of his critique of the "child-mind". "The Finnian Shaw [Sitwell] family group I should describe as a sort of middle-aged *youth-movement*", Lewis wrote. There is much evidence in Victoria Glendinning's biography to show that childishness was an essential part of Edith's identity. With the artist Pavel (Pavlik) Tchelitchew, for instance: "At their best and happiest Edith and Pavlik were magically clever children", cavorting in the Luxembourg or in the garden at Renishaw—at this at the age of forty. To Pavel's sister, Edith "wrote like a schoolgirl" about her periods. When her brother Osbert was abandoned by his lover David Horner, her reaction showed that childishness reached into the depths of her emotions: "The withdrawal of love was for Edith as for a small child the most dreadful, unforgiveable, unforgettable, crime". The poetry also exposes this immaturity. If the early poems created an idealized childhood, the later ones showed "a child's hope and a child's faith". Even though she describes Lewis's satire on the Sitwells as "virulent", Victoria Glendinning's commentary consistently confirms Lewis's diagnosis. Perhaps it is not surprising that when *The Apes of God* was published, the Sitwells kept very quiet indeed.

Edith Sitwell's wide sympathies naturally drew her towards social subjects with political implications. She admired Engels, suffered for others during the Second World War, and was deeply shocked by Hiroshima. Unfortunately the discussion of politics in this biography is confused. On page 171 we are told that "Edith's only politics were personal politics", meaning art-politics; but on page 265 we read that "'Gold Coast Customs' is among other things a political poem". It was Jack Lindsay, a member of the Communist Party, who made the case for the revolutionary nature of Edith's poetry: he argued that she revived the radical and integrative English Romantic tradition which had died out in the 1830s. Lindsay also predicted the survival of her poetry, but even her post-Hiroshima poem "The Shadow of Cain", in these days of renewed concern about nuclear weapons, has little to say to us. The protest expires in a welter of imagery.

The child-centredness of Edith's mind is bound to affect our view of her poetry. She had two successful periods as a poet. The first was in the 1920s, until she was pushed aside by the Auden group, the second in the 1940s and 1950s, until she was eased out by the Movement poets. There has been no recovery since. It can be said that she brought the influence of the French Symbolists into English poetry, though that influence never became established. Edith also became associated, in some minds, with Dadaism, but as Alan Young shows in his recent *Dada and After*, this is to misunderstand her. The Sitwells were never anti-art; on the contrary they believed in it altogether too seriously. Edith herself rejected the Dadaist label: "My poems especially, were singled out as Dadaist, and this was, I imagine, because I was writing exceedingly difficult technical exercises". This question of technique is at the heart of the problem of Edith Sitwell's poetry. She applied to her own work a remark by Cocteau: "the poetry of childhood taken over by a technician", and the childhood world so predominates that even in her poems about the war, poverty or the Bomb, everything is internalized; Ms Glendinning unwillingly admits that "she did not fully see the real world". Poetry, under the pressure of her unhappy childhood, was so much her life that it excluded the opportunity for the kind of experience that most of us naturally have. "Gold Coast Customs" is a social poem and a satire, but nowhere in it do we see a single human gesture or recognize a tone of voice that we know. Even the lines based on someone in a hunger march are lifeless:

Once I saw it come
Through the canvas slum
Rattle and beat what seemed a drum,
Rattle and beat it with a bone.
O Christ, that bone was dead, alone.

Edith experienced suffering, and she responded to it in others, but in her poetry she could only convert it into abstractions, diminish it from feeling to rhetoric, and destroy its human reality.

She lacked a dimension, that of any adult experience intense enough to inform her best poetry. She might have been a great poet of loss; but she was never that because she chose to love homosexuals and egotists to avoid the risk of disturbance to her fragile psychic equilibrium. She never knew reciprocated love, and so never knew the loss of it. She might have been the poet of friendship, but that would have seemed too small a theme to her. In any case the friendships too often turned to enmity.

Her social life remained remarkable. After the Second World War she got on well, in different ways, with Ian Fleming, Marilyn Monroe, Allen Ginsberg, George Cukor, Dylan Thomas, Jack Lindsay and Carson McCullers. Edith Sitwell's achievement was to have built a successful public life out of childhood unhappiness and a limited talent for verse. This biography, attractively written and professionally researched, shows how the trick was done.

ALAN MUNTON

Rabelais,

M. A. SCREECH.

Duckworth, 1979, £35.

Readers of this review will be aware of John Cowper Powys's contribution to English Rabelais studies in 1948. His *Rabelais* (reprinted 1974), incidentally, still has some readership among English students of the French Renaissance despite an undoubted "belles-lettres" approach to his subject which is rather frowned upon by academics working in this field.

This massive study by Professor M. A. Screech, a renowned *rabelaisant* of more than thirty years' standing, clearly falls within the same honourable tradition to which Powys's book belongs, that tradition which seeks to worry from the texts (to use a Rabelaisian metaphor) that "quintessential marrow" which Rabelais, albeit ambiguously, urges us to extract. In the pursuit and the description of this "marrow", the method adopted is unashamedly historical: it consists

in trying to place a work of art back into its fullest intellectual, historical and aesthetic context. The goal is authenticity, however tempting passing fads and fancies may be. (pp. xv-xvi)

This method permits the author to by-pass with scarcely a mention that growing volume of critical work which looks at the Rabelaisian novel in an aesthetic light (at its fictional texture) rather than in a philosophical/intellectual light (at the ideas behind the fiction). But this is, after all, a very personal study, which deliberately leaves aside scholarly controversy (the author indulges in this elsewhere) to present to a wider audience a Rabelais essentially as taught by the author for

many years at London University. The work, perhaps not unlike Powys's, is aimed not so much at the specialist (though even the most specialized will find much of interest here) as at the "Gentle Reader", and the often bewildered undergraduate.

The nature of the intended audience explains the unacademic appearance of the book. French and Latin texts quoted generally appear in the author's own translations without the original (though full references are given, in the case of the Rabelais text itself, to the *Textes littéraires français* editions and the incomplete *Edition critique* of Lefranc *et al.*). Footnotes are few and far between. More surprisingly, there is no proper bibliography, just a few pages of suggestions for further reading; it is, however, true that the bibliography of Rabelais is vast, and even to have listed only those works with which the author is familiar would have added many pages to an already long book. I find the lack of conclusion, however explained, a serious defect—Professor Screech is not afraid to state his case unequivocally, and the book needs rounding off with some clear statement of Rabelais's significance. As it is, it peters out.

There is a certain contradiction between the kind of readership envisaged by the author and the inordinate price of this volume, more or less limiting its purchase to academic libraries or the most ardent specialists. But that is not the author's fault.

Despite his mildly vulgarizing aim, Professor Screech brings to his study a breadth and a depth of knowledge which are all his own. The historical method adopted dictates both the organization of the study and its manner.

The author points out the usually chaotic presentation of Rabelais's works in the collected editions, and notes the confusion this can engender in our understanding of his writings. He himself adopts a straight chronological approach. We start with the 1532 *Pantagruel*, pass to the "astrological" texts of 1533, the *Gargantua* of 1534 (?), the *Almanach pour l'an 1535*, the *Tiers Livre* of 1546, the first *Quart Livre* of 1548, the *Sciomachie* of 1549, and finally to the definitive *Quart Livre* of 1552. All the works, major and minor, of the canon are, then, looked at in their appropriate place. This has the advantage of bringing together for study interdependent works like those of 1532-1533, and the very minor disadvantage of disobeying the fictional chronology (which places the *Gargantua* before the *Pantagruel*). The posthumous, and probably largely apocryphal

(though this is still a matter for learned debate) *Cinquiesme Livre* of 1562-1564 is entirely omitted.

Each of the works studied, and each major aspect of each work, are firmly set into their historical perspective:

The aim is to understand the *Tiers Livre*, say, as a book published in 1546 by a legally trained, medical and Evangelical humanist (steeped in the assumptions and stimulated by the aspirations of his day), and seeking a learned public. (p. xvi)

And this is as it must be: the author of this book, like any teacher of Renaissance and earlier literature, is aware that

so much of Rabelais which was no doubt fairly clear a hundred years ago has now become remote from a public which shares less and less of his assumptions and which has less and less contact with the erudition, the commonplace knowledge and accepted wisdom which he could take for granted. (p. xi)

There is a common belief amongst English students of French literature that they make their task easier by reading Rabelais in English translation or modern French transposition (without notes!). The real difficulty with Rabelais, of course (and to a lesser extent with other Renaissance writers), is not his language, however difficult that might at first *appear* to be, but the framework of reference within which he worked and within which he has to be understood. Rabelais addresses an elite, and the fullest appreciation of him comes from joining that elite. Most of us, however, get only (at best) halfway there, and even then with heavy reliance upon such works as the present one. For the non-*rabelaisant*, Professor Screech's book both simplifies his task and makes it more awesome. It simplifies it in the obvious way, through the illumination of so many of those obscure passages which give Rabelais his reputation for being almost unreadable. It makes it more awesome in that it reveals to the "Gentle Reader", the undergraduate and the non-specialist, just how far he has to go before he can consider himself truly on a par with the text. Of course, the reader may not always agree with the interpretation placed upon the text, and, it must be said, Professor Screech's explanations on more than one occasion so far remove us from the text as presented (for example, those pages devoted to the Thaumaste episode of the *Pantagruel*) as to leave us slightly more perplexed than when we first embarked on

our reading. But enlightenment is the aim and usually the result.

The necessity of such elucidation poses a particular problem with a profoundly comic writer like Rabelais: for all his vast learning (legal, medical, astrological, magical, theological), Rabelais does not write treatises but comic works, and it is in the comedy of the *Pantagruel* series that Professor Screech rightly sees the ultimate "quintessential marrow". It is not, of course, slapstick (or rarely)—it is frequently esoteric (for example, the legal laughter of the Baisecul and Humevesne episode of the *Pantagruel*), usually just plain learned, and unapproachable without erudite illumination (though Janotus de Bragmardo still strikes an immediate chord with even novice readers). Because our learned doctor prides himself on the connivance of his audience, his comedy seems doomed to ultimate inaccessibility—I wonder how many readers can still laugh "spontaneously" at the Panurge of the *Tiers Livre* after grappling with learned explanations of *why* he is funny? How can the epithet "popular" ever have been attached to Rabelais's name?

And yet it is only through some feel for Rabelaisian humour that we can understand the writer's profound purpose. Humanist comedy (to which Chapter One fills in the background) in the first half of the sixteenth century is desperately serious and frequently dangerous to its creator:

There is a sense in which *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* show us the humanist at play. But the stakes Rabelais played for included truth herself, and hope of eternal life. The risks he took in this desperate game included poverty, exile and precipitous flight—and might have included, had he not been lucky, torture and prolonged, painful death. (p. 6)

The picture of Rabelais which emerges from these pages is one with which any reader of the *Pantagruel* novels is familiar through Professor Screech's earlier, more specific work (and, be it noted, for being more learnedly documented, it is not all that different from John Cowper Powys's). Although recognizing the popular sources of Rabelais's text (*Pathelin*, Folengo . . .), Professor Screech depicts an evangelical humanist whose philosophical outlook and attitudes (represented in the novels by Pantagruel principally) are firmly based on the gospel, the ancient sages (and comic writers like Lucian), and contemporary Christians such as Erasmus. And here should be mentioned a Screechian *bête noire*, a criticism

frequently (perhaps too frequently?) levelled at fellow critics concerning their lack of theological knowledge which leads to a fundamental distortion in Rabelais's thought. The criticism is probably valid; but given the astonishing complexity of Rabelais's fictional world, one is left wondering if distortion is not endemic in any criticism of it . . . including this . . . ?

TREVOR PEACH

The Saga of Sinclair,
REX HUNTER.

Warren House Press, 1981, £7.50.

First published in America in 1927, one wonders why *The Saga of Sinclair* should receive its first English publication in 1981. After all, who was Rex Hunter, and why reprint his works?

The glib answer to the second part of that question might be that, because Hunter belongs to the fringe of the Powys network—friend of John Cowper Powys, husband of Gamel Woolsey—perhaps study of his work will bring new facts, a fresh insight to the world of the Powyses. But that is the glib answer, insufficient fully to justify reprinting his works.

Of course it is true that this may be one reason for reading Hunter. During the *Saga* I wondered if he and Gerald Brenan had ever met. It was an idle thought, an irrelevant thought, but one prompted by the similarities between *The Saga of Sinclair* and Brenan's *The Magnetic Moment*, another Warren House Press publication. Both are autobiographical poems, comparable in style and quality, poems by men who may have wished to be poets but whose usual medium was prose.

However, idle though the thought was, it was also interesting, for in life the two men were linked through Gamel Woolsey, Hunter as her legal, Brenan as her common-law husband. Married in 1923, separated by 1925, Hunter and Woolsey lived together but a short time. She is not named in the *Saga*, there are no active participants other than Sinclair (Hunter); he is very much a man alone. Nevertheless, written in the aftermath of the separation, the poem surely bears witness to Hunter's suffering:

And he had known the tenderness
Of love, the illusion that would make
Forever out of transiency.

Hunter is a man without illusions, a man who knows the realities of life, of love. And so he delivers a poem that is a statement of the world as he perceives it. This perception forms two recurring patterns. As narrator he presents himself passively sitting in a room looking back over his life, sifting, examining. Despite asserting that it will be of no use he begins playing through his life from childhood on. Patterns evolve.

One pattern is the history of the world, shown in a series of contrasts between present reality and imagined past. London, for instance:

Where ancient Britons roamed the forest or
painted themselves with woad
Beery old women in mantles and bonnets
wander Whitechapel Road.

It is a history of decay. The world has lost its former glory, the people their former nobility.

This background is the screen upon which the second pattern, the pattern of his life, flickers. It is a see-sawing motion, an up-and-down movement. Continually "the moth of delight brushed his face with its dust-grey wings", but only for a moment:

And sudden a gate clanged sad as a note on a
gong
And he was outside, and shivering in the cold.

This is the pattern of his life. This is the pattern that Gamel Woolsey's departure from his life no doubt reinforced, for how could he believe in the attainability of delight when every time it eluded him?

Despair, however, is not part of the poem. One feels he will continue trying to hold "the moth of delight" for more than a fleeting moment.

Why will he keep on? Perhaps the answer lies in the answer to an earlier question: who was Rex Hunter? He was a New Zealander. This is important, for New Zealand is a small society, a society gazing outward at the rest of the world. Many of the people feel a need to get away, to go where the opportunities and the stimuli seem greater. This feeling has created a particular local literary genre, found at its finest in Robin Hyde's novel *The Godwits Fly*, and Hunter's *Saga* is another contribution to this genre. Like his contemporary Katherine Mansfield and many another less known, Hunter left New Zealand: it was escape from that restrictive colonial society,

but also a search for something that society could not offer.

Thus the *Saga* has a quest element. Hunter has a need to get away, "witching wanderlust drove him on", and his travels form the narrative structure of the poem. But he finds travel and superficial pleasures do not satisfy, do not fill the need:

And all this is no more than a lute playing
When the lute player ends.

But he has to go on, move on, keep on travelling. He is not just escaping from the land of his birth, he is also searching.

Beauty's face forever
Shines like the burning sun;
We who follow beauty,
Our journey is never done.

Even with the knowledge he possesses of his life's pattern and the world's pattern, he is committed by his nature to this quest.

The reader of the 1927 edition of the *Saga* would have left Hunter in a still buoyant mood, admitting he has no answers but still buoyant. Thanks to the publisher, however, the 1981 reader is given a postscript, an appendix in the form of a later poem, artistically effective. This poem, "Disillusion", is written about the end of a relationship—is it about Gamel Woolsey?—when all illusion, all romance has been stripped away. There are glimpses of the woman, of the change that has taken place:

see how the smiling mouth
Becomes a sullen line when you oppose
Some casual whim.

The change of course is in his perception of the woman. Love's self-imposed blindness has been removed and the unattractive is as evident as the attractive. Once again "the moth of delight" has flown away. This time, however, the end is not so positive:

And there's a world of sorrow in the change,
The darkening of the image, Sinclair thought,
Slowly turning the key within his door.

We see Hunter a disillusioned man, defeated perhaps by his knowledge of the world and its treatment of him. "Disillusion" is a strong comment on the *Saga*.

And so, finally, why has Hunter's autobiographical poem been reprinted? Is it because it lets us briefly enter the world where "passionate dreamers gathered", the world of Patchin Place and Greenwich Village, or is it because the *Saga* speaks to every person's inner self?

JOHN S. MACALISTER

Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars,
PAUL FUSSELL.

Oxford University Press, 1981, £8.95.

There can be few readers of *The Great War and Modern Memory* who have not hungered for Professor Fussell's next production. In the event, however, that widespread anticipation may not work to the advantage of *Abroad*, for it proves difficult to manoeuvre the new book out of the shadow of the previous one in some attempt to assess it on its own very different terms. With some courage Professor Fussell has resisted the temptation to travel sideways and treat some further dimension or local aspect of the experience of the Great War (though the conflict is never far from his thoughts), and has instead travelled forward from Armageddon to holiday. The transition, indeed, is not merely one of period and subject-matter, but of style and approach: having gone through the intensities of the Great War (at least mentally and on paper), it is as if Professor Fussell, in this latest stage of his writing, is as much on holiday as the young men of the twenties and thirties about whom he writes. One senses that he also sees his audience rather differently, perusing his book in deck-chairs perhaps.

In principle this study is certainly welcome. There has long been a gap for a book on travel-writing between the wars: too many of the better writers of the period turned their hands to it, and many other travel-writers enjoyed a popularity too evidently symptomatic for the topic to lie dormant much longer. Travel after all, as Professor Fussell reminds us, was along with art and literature the third member of the trinity dominating the minds of the twenties Oxford set. There is, admittedly, something of a secondary, pragmatic quality that invests much of this travel-writing, indicated perhaps by Waugh's

free berth on the *Stella Polaris* in return for a travel-book (*Labels*) guaranteed to puff the shipping-line along its way. It is also difficult to shake off the impression that thirties publishers regarded the travel-book as occupying the place in a novelist's career that the mandatory collection of short stories seems to do today, a breathing-space offering opportunities for craftsmanship if seldom major artistry. At the same time, D. H. Lawrence's travel-writings are of the essence of his oeuvre, and as Fussell demonstrates, we would understand Lawrence, his personal development and his relation to England, less well without them. Waugh's counterpoint of travel followed by travel-book and novel is also of the essence of his development through the thirties, while Greene self-consciously wove his central preoccupations into his travel-writings as much as into his fiction: to open *The Lawless Roads*, for example, is not immediately to encounter Mexico, but uneasy images of childhood in Berkhamstead and young manhood in a fallen Nottingham—the essential Greene, however far he wanders. These things being so, Professor Fussell does find candidates for greatness, though less among the more familiar names than in Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana*. (The fact is duly noted, but the influence of *Abroad* has already outpaced the plodding reviewer: advance orders for the Picador reprint of Byron's volume were high—and is it just coincidence that the publishers have recently disinterred and rechristened Barbara Greene's account of her expedition to Liberia with her young cousin Graham? *Abroad* has already set its trends.)

The problem of the quality of the writing—even Greene and certainly Waugh are uneven in the travel-genre, and Fussell has little to say in praise of Huxley—is, however, managed through the fact that the author is writing cultural history as much as literary criticism, that he is almost as interested in travel as in travel-writing, and that he is concerned to recover something of the place of travel in the structure of feeling, in the patterns of consciousness, in the myths, images and desires of an era—and largely, a class—distanced from us by social and technological change. In consequence, the average as well as the good travel-book is his subject, and also the urge to travel, the shape and manner of travel, the iconography of travel—the thousand ways the idea of travel surfaces in interwar culture. He has used travel as a thread to pull together a postcard home, a book-title

here, a fictional experience there, a piece of legislation in this country, a political environment in that. If there is an inherent danger in the method it is that of an apparent superficiality and of an inadvertent baring of the index-card—a kind of cultural train-spotting. In the blur of colourful examples the reader may tend to suspend his willingness to dispute the individual assertion (say the endorsement of Susan Sontag's view that a taste for quotations is a Surrealist taste: it may have been in the generation of which Fussell writes, but not in that of their fathers, the "victims of hallowed proverbs" from whom they inherited the taste if not the particular applications). Professor Fussell's engaging style sweeps one on, for whatever else it is, *Abroad* is a splendidly entertaining book. It is written with a wit which the author is not shy of turning on himself—and even with jollity and roguishness. It is often pleasingly anecdotal and intimate with the reader. There is laughter for all tastes: the man who wrote in apparent indignation to *The Times* in 1915 complaining an official had altered the passport-description of his facial characteristics from "intelligent" to "oval"; the account of the author's personal elevation from the rank of "tourist" to that of "traveller" consequent upon his retrieval of a dropped passport from the inner recesses of a Turkish toilet, while such gems as Robert Benchley's telegram from Venice ("STREETS FULL OF WATER. ADVISE.") certainly bear repetition. If one has reservations about some of the connections, some of the juxtapositions Professor Fussell engineers, and the bright energy that carries him on rather than allowing him to dwell for a moment, that hardly alters the fact that the book is vastly enjoyable (and one feels the more po-faced for having such reservations).

One reservation, however, concerns a certain residue of uncritical nostalgia and value in the book. Professor Fussell celebrates a lost world, a world of such adventurous travellers as Byron in Persia, Waugh in search of Boa Vista, Greene enduring Liberia—and a world of comfort and sophistication aboard ocean-going liners and the Blue Train. If he sets off the idyll of interwar travel against the preceding trauma of war, he also sets it off against a vision of the present age as a world of "jet tourism among the ruins", of the package-holiday (in which the tourist rather than the holiday is the "packaged"), of anonymous airports internationally and impersonally styled, of undignified transport and de-romanticized journeys. "Travel is hardly possible any

more", he claims: we are all tourists nowadays. To be fair, the author includes himself among the tourists, and is quick to criticize any overt despising of tourism he encounters. He berates Aldous Huxley for a few lines in his essay "In a Tunisian Oasis" patronizing "the professional tourist" (an essay, incidentally, containing far more reprehensible patronage of the Arabs): yet Professor Fussell's own working distinction between "traveller" and "tourist", except when used in fun, is hardly immune to the same charge—especially when it so much resembles Huxley's discriminations among tourists in an essay Fussell does not mention, "Why Not Stay at Home" (in *Along the Road*). One recalls Beverley Nichols, in *The Unforgiving Minute*, musing on the days of the Mauretania and the Ile de France: "To 'take ship' is to travel like a gentleman, and to enrich one's life, even if one is travelling steerage . . . To fly is to be shuttled about like a robot, to be cut off from life, to be anaesthetized from all the pleasures of the passing hour". Flying, one agrees, is just like that, but if "to travel like a gentleman" is in fact what has been lost, then what has been gained is the possibility of travel for a greater proportion of the British population: for most Britons and their forbears the alternative to Luton Airport has never been "to travel like a gentleman", but (except in wartime) to stay put at home. Of course the spell of the idyll is hard to resist, but Claud Cockburn had it right when he warned that "Walter Mittyism tends to elevate"; "those who take pleasure in imagining themselves existing in some earlier period of history almost invariably assume that this retrograde reincarnation will find them occupying some position relatively high on the social and financial ladder". The package-holiday is not about catering for the insensitive, but about—profits aside—transferring traditionally exclusive aspirations, knowledge, and habits to a new class of traveller. More may have meant worse, but at least it has meant more. And in some ways it may not have meant worse in any real sense; Professor Fussell doesn't quote George Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier*:

The nomad who walks or rides, with his baggage stowed on a camel or an ox-cart, may suffer every kind of discomfort, but at least he is living while he is travelling; whereas for the passenger in an express train or a luxury liner his journey is an interregnum, a kind of temporary death.

Of course discriminations are possible, but one needs to be wary of the mind's hankering for a Golden Age of travel just over one's shoulder. In consequence I find room for dissent when Professor Fussell sees "passports and queues and guided tours and social security numbers and customs regulations and currency controls" as restrictions of freedom, as "shades of the modern prison-house". I will wait until it is withheld before I see my passport reminding me that I am "merely the state's creature, one of [my] realm's replaceable parts"—and I have yet to find my tax-number or driving-licence number threatening me as instruments of "identification and coercion". One man's loss of freedom is another man's erosion of privilege. In part such dissent serves to locate Professor Fussell in his ethos and myself in my own—by class as well as nationality—but it is important to annotate his book with a reminder that the brave new world of travel he implies is capable of other interpretation, and that in a fit of modernist gloom he overstates the eradication of cultural difference in the modern world.

In similar vein it is sad to find A. J. P. Taylor, whatever his sins, branded as "wet" and "dim-witted" for wryly (not naively) questioning why so many writers of the interwar period went abroad when social provision in Britain had, in relative terms, improved so much: to juxtapose photographs of Salford slums and the French Riviera (as *Abroad* does) lends itself to more than one way of seeing. One of Professor Fussell's most acute insights is to see the interwar travel-book as a version of pastoral, "an implicit rejection of industrialism and everything implied by the concept 'modern northern European'"—but it is not quite enough to stop there as if the rights and wrongs of this rejection were self-explanatory and the manner of reaction self-justifying. When Cyril Connolly wrote in 1929 "it is better to be *depaysé* in someone else's country than in one's own", he was saying far more than that travel made a change from war and slums. It is disappointing that in the end *Abroad* should offer conclusions about the travel-book principally in psychic and aesthetic terms, and present a scenario in which the genre is invaded and destroyed by a less stylish, politicized form of writing. While this is not to begrudge Professor Fussell's celebration of the energy, courage, wit and style which was the travellers' and is the travel-book's (for part of even the sternest Puritan wants to believe that style is its own justification), it is to regret that a

stronger social and historical location of the phenomena of travel and the travel-book doesn't crystallize within the context of England as a whole between the wars. It is difficult to divorce the book's defect from its charm, but the author

does remain a little too bewitched by the enchantment he has disclosed.

PETER MILES

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OLIVER HOLT who began his education at Sherborne School, was for many years Private Secretary to Sir Fabian Ware, Vice-Chairman of the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission. He has been an occasional contributor to *Country Life* and other periodicals. In 1975 he was appointed a Member of the Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers.

PARIS LEARY lectures in American Studies at Leicester University. He is author and editor of a number of collections of poetry including *Views of the*

Oxford Colleges (1960), *The Innocent Curate* (1963), and (with R. Kelly) *A Controversy of Poets* (1964). His most recent book, *The Snake at Saffron Walden* (Carcenet, 1973) includes a poem about John Cowper Powys.

JOHN S. MACALISTER hails from New Zealand where he ran the Balinakill Press.

STEPHEN POWYS MARKS is the grandson of A. R. Powys and is himself also an architect and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. He is the editor of the *Transactions of the Association for Studies in the Conservation of Historic Buildings*, author of *The Map of Mid-Sixteenth Century London* (1964), and Honorary Secretary of the London Topographical Society, and has recently seen through the press the new edition of A. R. Powys's *Repair of Ancient Buildings* on behalf of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

PETER MILES lectures in English at Saint David's University College, Lampeter, and is reviews editor of *The Powys Review*. He has published articles on eighteenth and twentieth-century fiction and has recently co-edited Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (Pan, 1982).

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GILBERT TURNER was the Borough Librarian of Richmond upon Thames until 1973 and now lives in the Llyn Peninsula. His memories of John Cowper Powys during his last twenty years in Wales are described in *Recollections of the Powys Brothers* ed. B. Humfrey (Peter Owen, 1980)

A CORRECTION

Kenneth Hopkins apologises for an error in his presentation of the Gamel Woolsey letters in *The Powys Review*, 8. Gamel Woolsey's death is recorded there as in 1964, whereas the correct date is 1968 (18 January).

JOHN WILLIAMS is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Humanities, Thames Polytechnic.

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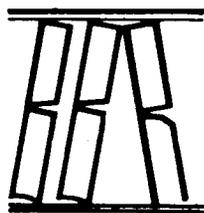


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