

The Powys Review

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The Powys Review

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Editorial

Now that so many of the works of the Powyses, especially John Cowper and Llewelyn, are available and in paperback, thanks especially to the large-scale work of the Village Press and Pan Picador, and with new publishers of old Powys works having emerged in 1982, on all sides there are requests for the publication of ideal or complete texts. The dominant requests concern the novels of John Cowper Powys. Chief notice has been given to *Porius* and the complete novel has long been awaited from Colgate University, especially by those British scholars who, in the interim, have done jigsaw work using E. E. Bissell's manuscript or have journeyed to America. It has recently come to the Editor's ear that the uncut Colgate *Porius* is not unique: another copy remains in its homeland, so that we could perhaps see a British complete edition. In *Review 11*, Margaret Moran showed the way to an ideal text of *Weymouth Sands*. In this *Review*, Ian Hughes shows his work towards an authoritative version of *Maiden Castle*.

Scholarly text-gathering has begun elsewhere. Bernard Jones and Kenneth Hopkins are collecting uncollected poems in order to make available the complete poems of John Cowper Powys; the result should be interesting. (A report will be given in our next number.) Laurence Pollinger Ltd, as declared in our Reports and Requests section, seek to collect and photocopy all the collections of letters from the numerous people who corresponded with J. C. Powys, with a view to the publication of a complete collection in many volumes. Scholars not eager for an excuse to travel would be hugely grateful for the collection of J. C. Powys's letters in one place. Such a gathering of letters would reduce the suffering of the eventual, heroic writer of the definitive biography of J. C. Powys, obliged as he will be to work through them all. But surely such a complete edition will never be published?

John Cowper's letters to his brothers, sisters and closest friends are full of valuable information and insights for readers concerned with biography, literary criticism, bibliography and textual editing. But, put together, they can be tedious and repetitious, and those which have not yet been published either whole or in part need informed, judicious editing, indeed they will need large-scale cutting, for publication. The arrival in 1975 of the first volume of John

Cowper's *Letters to his brother Llewelyn*, crammed with details of his experiences in America and elsewhere from 1902 to 1925 illumined a John Cowper previously little known to his readers. The second volume (1925-1939), published at last in 1982, brings rejoicing (and thanks again to its editor, the late Malcolm Elwin, and its publisher, Jeffrey Kwintner). It includes useful chartings of the writing of the major works from *Wolf Solent* to *Owen Glendower* together with John Cowper's declarations of intent and critical evaluations of his achievements. This is the best narrative of work in progress available, as John Cowper's correspondence with his other siblings and literary sympathisers was never quite so intimate, although he gave them the same basic information with occasional superficial variations. But in the late 1920s even his letters to Llewelyn show the effects of his feeling the grind of lecturing, and thereafter, Powys in retreat in upstate New York and at Corwen is a much less interesting correspondent than the itinerant lecturer of the earlier years. It is to this long period of retreat, when Powys put his creative energy into fictional and critical writings, that his prolific letter-writing belongs, and, as is to be expected, Powys turns his attention chiefly to the recipients of his letters, so revealing his great goodwill but little that is new or not much-repeated about himself, however sympathetic his recipients were. John Cowper Powys may well have complained to Llewelyn in 1939 of "the perilous drug of letter-writing", saying, "Lamb said his works were in Ledgers in the India House; John's Works are in the pockets of thousands of young men and in the treasure-boxes of hundreds [of] . . . young women", but any one who has read only a few of the many substantial hoards of his letters to intelligent, literary and delightful young men and women knows that very little of unique scholarly or literary value, except perhaps a page or two, may be sifted from a hundred of his letters, especially from the 1930s onwards. Such an extraordinarily generous and prolific letter-writer, writing for immediate communication and unmindful of a posthumous letters collection, could only be repetitious about his own experiences and, of course, though rarely unvivacious, frequently careless of style.

Several scholars, separately, have for some time been working on selected editions of letters from J. C. Powys to certain individual correspondents, for publication, and these will have value, although they will add to an already long row of books of his letters. Publication of some prepared and important collections, such as the letters to Frances Gregg, have been ridiculously delayed. There exists at least one clutch of letters, not yet seen by any Powys scholars, which may be central to an appreciation of Powys's personality and artistic achievement. However, apart from these, what is required, as Phyllis Playter often said to the Editor (and probably to others), is a book containing selections from John Cowper's letters to a variety of correspondents, a book not of mere documentary value but of literary delight.

In the meantime, in all gratitude for the virtue of Laurence Pollinger Ltd, let us also hope that the current owners of Powys letters will gather together and deposit their letters, in photocopy if not the originals, in a major British library for the use of students of Powys. The Editor would prefer the collecting place to be the underground vaults of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, or that western fortress, favoured by J. C. P. himself, the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth (which holds books from Powys's shelves at Blaenau Ffestiniog): but there is also the beginning of a Powys collection on the ordinary floors of the library of Churchill College, Cambridge.

There are still unpublished works by John Cowper Powys, such as the "Nietzschean Life of Keats" and some early short fiction. Understandably, there has been more clamour for the publication of John Cowper's diaries, with an

expectation that these will be richer than the letters of corresponding years. The diaries were Powys's gift to Phyllis Playter; since her recent death, it has been announced (to the Powys Society) that Francis Powys is editing them for publication. In relation to their potentialities for publication, the character of the diaries may resemble the letters of J. C. P. For, according to Phyllis Playter, those of the early years merit unselected publication, those of later years (from the mid-1930s) provide only "purple patches suitable for the *Review*": the very late diaries (of a routine, rural life in North Wales) would require drastic selection. In some ways the editor of John Cowper's diaries has an unenviable task, but we hope for some very full, if not complete, publication of the early diaries soon. It is to be noted that in this *Review* Peter Foss puts in a plea for the publication of the complete text of Llewelyn Powys's diaries!

* * *

The Powys's admired and senior friend, Thomas Hardy, does more than slip into our pages again. Prompted by submissions, we are currently building up material for future numbers on Owain Glyndwr, on the art of autobiographical confession (which we begin to examine in this *Review*), and on Dorothy Richardson. The Powys-links are tenuous but clear in the emergence of these subjects, but we wish strongly to remind potential contributors to *The Powys Review* that it is not only in our Reviews section that we are happy to extend our range of literary reference beyond the works of the brothers Powys and within and beyond the literary period of 1890-1960.

Michel Pouillard

Woman and Women in T. F. Powys's Novels*

"Theodore sees me through his life-long prejudice against women", Alyse Gregory wrote in her journals¹ and in her recollections of him. Theodora Scutt mentioned her adoptive father's "contempt for women".² These two remarks seem to reflect the most widely accepted view of T. F. Powys's attitude to woman, undoubtedly a rather controversial subject likely to raise a lot of argument, especially from the female readers of his books. However, I do not wish this article to be provocative, nor is my purpose here to discuss Theodore's attitude to women in everyday life, of which I know very little and of course only through secondhand information. I would rather like to be as objective as possible and concentrate on facts, that is on his portrayal of woman in the novels. So I shall first describe the various samples of womankind to be met in them and analyse their relations with each other and with their male partners. I shall then venture to propose an overall appreciation of Theodore's vision of woman as inferred from his fiction and a tentative explanation of it.³

It may be just as well to begin with the most obvious limitations of Powys's portrayal of woman. First of all, and this will surprise no one even remotely familiar with his fictional world, all his female characters are countrywomen and country girls. Two noticeable exceptions are Mrs Fancy in *Mr Tasker's Gods* and Mary Crowle in *Black Bryony*, both of which are early novels—*Mr Tasker* was first written in 1915-1916 and *Black Bryony* in the winter of 1917. Besides, Mrs Fancy is not really characterized as a

townswoman and Mrs Vosper will demonstrate that the likes of her can be found in the country as well. As for Mary Crowle, she precisely exemplifies the evil effect the town can have on a girl. We can safely assert that after her Powys was never again interested in townswomen, with the exception of a very few minor characters such as Miss Ogle in *Mockery Gap*. He very probably regarded them as too frivolous and too much influenced by the new ideas and needs then in fashion. This is confirmed by a typically Theodorian remark in a letter to Sylvia Townsend Warner written on April 13th, 1929: "How dreadful about all those wicked young women. But such matters always keep to the towns. There has never been in the oldest living person's memory a divorce at East Chaldon. No woman who is able to skin and paunch a rabbit would ask for a divorce". And it may be remembered that one of the reasons why Mr Bugby moves from Weyminster to Madder is that "They girls bain't like they used to be in this little town . . . now, 'tis only pleasure they women do think of".⁴ Besides, Powys was always convinced that Man and his fundamental instincts and feelings are to be observed and studied in a rural environment, where they have not yet been altered by so-called progress and modernism. This belief, which of course he would apply to man and woman alike, largely accounts for his decision to live in a small English village, for the setting of all his novels and stories, and for his choice of country people as his main characters.

Another striking limitation is the absence in Powys's fiction of the still young but mature woman, aged something between twenty-five and forty. Here again two exceptions must be cited, and again both of

*A revised version of a paper read to the Powys Society in 1982.

them appear in early works. Mrs Hinden, in *Black Bryony*, is one of them and this is how Powys describes her:

Mrs Hinden rose from her chair. Her pleasant female body appeared set out, made, and created for feasts and bar-parlours . . . She could see herself as a well-grown woman, mellowed by the years, and ready to become for the second time the counterpart of a kindly man.⁵

The other instance, also a widow, is Minnie Cuddy in "The Left Leg". Both are childless, will marry again, and never reappear on the Powysian stage. Though Powys often takes us to Norbury in subsequent stories, never shall we meet Mrs Hinden again and, at the beginning of *Mark Only*, he takes care to let us know that Minnie had to leave Madder and go to Norfolk with her second husband. In fact, it is no gross oversimplification to say that, on the whole, Powys's fiction offers the reader two types of women: very young girls who have just discovered or are about to discover love, and middle-aged or elderly matrons who are past it and whom Powys himself systematically calls "old women". For reasons I will suggest later on he is not interested in the intermediary stages of womanhood and deliberately ignores them.

Nor is he really interested in what we may label normal married life. Whenever he presents us with married couples, they tend to be caricatures. In *Mark Only*, Susan Peach and Kate Tolly are shrews whose henpecked husbands keep wishing they had not married; Mrs Tasker is but a shadow submitted to her husband's dominion and violence; Mrs Pattimore, in *Mockery Gap*, is bitterly frustrated because of her ridiculous husband's vow of chastity, and even the relationship between Mr and Mrs Grobe, in *Mr Weston's Good Wine*, is more laughable than anything else. This accounts for Harry Coombes's regret that Powys should never present his reader with "a marital relationship between intelligent people".⁶ However, one should not conclude that Powys did not believe in the possibility of a happy married life or denied its potentialities. The union of Luke and Jenny, in *Mr Weston*, is suggestive of them

and the writer evokes them with even more precision in this passage from *Unclay*:

In the country, married joy can still be found. Life can be merry and happy when keen winter blasts and the smoke of autumn bonfires keep the devil away. Two straws, blown into a corner, hold together; the dark night keeps them near each other.⁷

But though not blind to the existence of "married joy", Powys as a writer was not primarily interested in it. Because his aim was to illustrate the everlasting fight between good and evil, he chose to focus his attention on two antithetic, antagonistic types of women and on the birth and development of young love, with constant emphasis on the several obstacles it has and, most of the time in his books, fails to overcome.

Old women, one of the two antagonistic types, often contribute to hinder the progress and fulfilment of love, and the reader soon becomes aware that the author dislikes them as a class, just as he dislikes the class of farmers. There are degrees in their wickedness though, and several of them take no active part in the victory of evil; they are mere witnesses of events they sometimes comment upon, thus assuming something like a choric function in the narrative. Such are the gossips who meet in the village shop and discuss Luke Bird's courtship of Rose Pring in "Abraham Men", Mrs Pring and Mrs Pottle in *Mockery Gap*, or Mrs Meek and Mrs Grunter in *Mr Weston's Good Wine*. All the same, even when they remain passive and are not really individualized, old women all share the same basic feature: because they are past youth and love, they are jealous of the young girls' beauty, freshness, and potential happiness. Having informed us, in "Hester Dominy", that the summer has come to an end, Powys immediately remarks: "The pretty girls could wear white frocks no more that year. The old women were glad".⁸ This jealousy sometimes leads to what seems an unnatural behaviour on the part of mothers; after being seduced by Tom Roude, in *Mr*

Tasker's Gods, Alice Allen is thrown out by her mother and attempts suicide while, in *Innocent Birds*, Mrs Chick, Maud's mother, obviously and cynically enjoys watching the fears and misery of her mad daughter and mocks her every morning, in company with Mr Bugby whom she openly but unsuccessfully makes up to.

Three of these old women deserve special mention for Powys clearly drew them as agents of evil and gave them active parts in the destruction of young, innocent characters. They are Miss Pettifer in *Innocent Birds*, Mrs Fancy in *Mr Tasker's Gods*, and Mrs Vosper in *Mr Weston's Good Wine*. With her name that reminds the reader of the wife who tried and failed to seduce Joseph, Miss Pettifer is an often-met inhabitant of Powysland; a vindictive, frustrated old maid, she is generally laughable and scoffed at by Powys. In *Innocent Birds*, however, he took great care to associate her with evil and with Bugby, as is shown by the manuscript of the novel—a final alteration was even made just before the book went to press. Consequently both Bugby and Miss Pettifer come to Madder in order to find something the town can no longer afford them, either submissive servants or easy preys, and all the girls that have been or are “frightened”, meaning raped, by Bugby have been or are servants of Miss Pettifer. Her one aim in life seems to be to exploit her young servants and feed them as poorly as possible, but she takes a decisive step and clearly becomes an active agent of evil when, wishing to replace Maud Chick by Polly Wimple, she persuades Pim to send his son Fred away to Derby, thus separating the two lovers and offering the now defenceless Polly to Bugby's lust. Yet, Miss Pettifer is no avowed procuress; nor is Mrs Fancy. A widow living in Portstown, she lets one of her rooms to illegitimate couples; ironically described as “a good Christian woman”, she is never so happy but when she can watch the distress of some young woman:

She obtained her rent from the letting of her rooms, and she obtained her life's joy from watching the downfall of young girls . . .

Often Mrs Fancy was to be seen out of doors at night, and she knew all about the young people who went to the pictures with the sailors, and about the houses that they sometimes went to afterwards. When a victim was in trouble, Mrs Fancy rubbed her hands and was glad and talked about hell to her neighbours and about the sailors to herself.⁹

There is obvious sadism in Mrs Fancy's behaviour and in this respect she can be regarded as the prototype of Mrs Vosper. But with the creation of the panderess of Folly Down, some nine years later, Powys went even further in his portrayal of horrible, despicable old women.

For not only does Mrs Vosper enjoy “watching the downfall of young girls”, she has made it her trade to cause it directly. She lives “upon the mountain called lust” but as she can no longer be lustful herself her jealousy has turned into boundless hatred and cruelty. This is Michael's introduction of her to Mr Weston before they drive down to the village:

Mrs Vosper has the greatest dislike—an inherent dislike—of her own sex, until they grow old enough to be as vindictive as she. Her jealousy has charged her heart with a bitter cruelty, and she goes the way of her kind in having her revenge. Could she see a young girl's beauty clawed and rifled by a company of baboons she would be completely happy.¹⁰

Further on in the book, Powys steps in and gives us another portrait of her which, to make things clearer if need be, he concludes with these words: “She wished all women—and especially the young ones—to be brought to woe” (p. 83). And so Mrs Vosper's obsessive preoccupation is to purvey the Mumby brothers with village girls they will have no difficulty to seduce in the mossy bed at the foot of the old oak-tree. She has already caused the death of Ada Kiddle, whom she had chosen first because she knew her to be “a girl who could not bear to face her shame” (p. 84), thus showing perverted refinement in her sadism. Phoebe and Ann Kiddle are her, and the Mumbys', present victims and spend most of their time in Mrs Vosper's parlour the

description of which gives Powys an opportunity to compare her to a spider, an animal he always identifies with evil and cruelty:

All the year round Mrs Vosper's room was decorated as if for Christmas. There were paper flowers, and long pink streamers hung in every direction about the room. There were so many of these streamers that they looked like a spider's web, and it was right and proper that they should, for into her web when it rained Mrs Vosper had enticed one or other of the Kiddles.¹¹

Only Mr Weston's arrival in Folly Down saves Mrs Vosper's next intended victim, Jenny Bunce, and it is noticeable that the procuress is the only one in the village to be so severely punished by the wine merchant; she dies a most horrifying death, to be compared and contrasted with the peaceful, blissful passing of Nicholas Grobe. Mrs Vosper is the worst villainess in Powys's fiction and ranks among the several monsters to be met in his books. Yet, and though she carries them to an extreme and appalling degree, she epitomizes the jealousy and hatred Powys's old women all entertain towards young girls.

Young girls, or maidens to use one of his favourite words, are more numerous than old women in Powys's fictional world and, above all, they are most of the time given more central parts in the plots of the novels. Whether they are the daughters of local villagers or servants from another village, there is a family likeness between them all, both physically and psychologically. All of them are fresh-looking and pretty, shapely and desirable. Though fairly short, as all introductory portraits are in Powys's fiction, the portrait of Tamar Grobe drawn by Michael for the benefit of Mr Weston, and the reader, is typical of the many to be found in the novels and stories and seems to sum up T. F. Powys's canons of female beauty:

She is dark; she has red pouting lips; she is neither short nor tall. She has a cherub face

and pleasant breasts, well suited to such a maiden. Her ankles are very small, and her gait free though yielding.¹²

All Powys's girls more or less conform to those canons though each of them is individualized, often through a detail or two that are sometimes almost poetically evoked, as in these two lines about Polly Wimple:

Polly's hair had gold in it, and a sweetness as of Solly's pinks, and Polly's white arms were like fine summer Sundays.¹³

It is no fanciful speculation to suggest that this family likeness is due to Powys's own taste of course but also to his memory of Violet Dodds when he first met her in East Chaldon. Doubtless, he used her as a model whenever he wished to describe youthful female beauty and it may be noted, too, that all his heroines are about the same age as Violet then was, between seventeen and nineteen years old. Often compared to young, soft, warm animals, they are endowed with great vitality, which gives them even more reality although their psychology is rather simple. Unaware of evil when they first appear on the stage, they suffer from no problem or inner conflict; they are content to be merry—another favourite word of Powys which, in fact, he uses to mean "sexually appetizing"—and to long for love as nothing yet has shaken their self-confidence. This is Nellie Holland walking across the fields to the hill where Mark Only is ploughing:

She came lightly, possessing the little foot of a young creature proud of its lightness, proud of being able to touch the grass so sportively, proud to show the coy spirit of a child that can make at any moment a gay sun shine in dim January, proud of her warm flesh that was so firmly rounded, proud of the make and fashion of all her being.¹⁴

Because they are country girls they are well informed of the realities of physical life and of the importance of sexuality in their relations with men. Though all of them do not undress with as much natural simplicity as Tamar Grobe does in chapter XII of *Mr Weston's Good Wine*, they are fully

conscious of the attractive power of their bodies and never hesitate to use it. Powys's maidens are easily provocative and obviously relish arousing man's desire. Like May Billy who "toys with (Mr Moody's) wishes as a kitten would do with a piece of straw",¹⁵ they sometimes do so for the mere fun of it. Yet, even Jenny Bunce who, according to Michael, "is no wanton", knows how to play a seduction scene and toy with Luke Bird's wishes. Thinking this is a very fine compliment, Luke has just told her that she is the only girl in Folly Down who has a soul:

'But haven't I a body too?' laughed Jenny.

'Now, just you see.'

Jenny unbuttoned her coat. Underneath her coat she was wearing a thin black servant's frock, with a low neck. She smiled upon him. 'Oh, Jenny!' exclaimed Luke Bird rapturously, for he was an ardent as well as a romantic lover. 'Oh, Jenny, if only I might?'

'They doings bain't nothing,' said Jenny carelessly. "'Tis only what a young girl do like.'

Luke trembled; he dropped his axe and went near to her. She looked at him gravely, puckered her forehead, turned quickly, and was gone in an instant.¹⁶

The girls in Powys's novels can be said to be sexually aggressive and they seem to follow the piece of advice given to Tamar by Mrs Vosper: "it is always the girl's business to make the boy begin".¹⁷ To a large extent however their aggressiveness appears justified by the nearly abnormal timidity and passivity of "good" young men; aged thirty-one, Henry Turnbull, in *Mr Tasker's Gods*, has never thought of "taking the hand of a cottage girl", both Mark Only and Joseph Bridle seem sexually indifferent to their partners, and Jenny confides to Tamar that "Mr Bird's too religious to be naughty"—though, eventually, Luke proves her wrong.

In spite of the "good" young men's passivity all of Powys's heroines are or will soon be in love, the story of their love often being basic to the plots of the novels. The deepest and most sincere love between young people described by Powys is

certainly that between Polly Wimple and Fred Pim in *Innocent Birds*. It is not so overtly founded on sexual attraction as that of other Powysian couples, and having its roots in their childhood it has naturally grown with them. Polly's gift of herself to Fred is total, which accounts for her utter despair after she has been raped by Bugby, when she believes she is no longer worthy of the young man:

'I will never speak to any one else,' she had said, 'and no one has ever kissed me but you, Fred.'

No, she couldn't cry; she couldn't think any more of Fred, though, because something had happened to her; she was no longer a nice girl for Fred to touch; she was different now.¹⁸

The only solution Polly can think of is to walk into the sea, where Fred joins her, and be drowned. No doubt it is the depth of this youthful love that gives the ending of *Innocent Birds* its moving, pathetic quality. Polly's love for Fred also shows that Powys believed a girl's love could occasionally be passionate and absolute. But such love is rather exceptional in his novels and most of his young heroines are incapable of such a deep, steadfast feeling. Even before her marriage with him, Nellie Holland wishes Mark Only were different from what he is; she proves unable to help him overcome his several problems, and too easily consents to leave him and become James's mistress and servant. Nor is Susie Dawe's love for Joseph Bridle, in *Unclay*, really convincing at any moment; she appears unable to decide whether she loves him or prefers John Death, to whom she is sexually attracted, and she eventually obeys her father and accepts to marry Farmer Mere; actually she draws no happiness whatever from Joseph's loving devotion and is much more gratified by her awareness that at least three men wish to possess her. Surely, and this is a point I will return to later on, Powys could not be reassured by the fickleness of some of his flirtatious heroines.

Besides, whether deep and steady or not, love in Powys's fiction is nearly always a source of trouble, a belief which is forcefully

summed up in a chapter title from *Unclay*, "Love Never Pities". Willingly or not, Nellie, Susie, and even Polly get their lovers into trouble and more or less directly bring them to death. I must immediately add that they are not spared either, and that most of Powys's maidens eventually appear as victims. One can argue that Nellie Holland and Susie Dawe are victims to their own folly and incapacity to make a clear choice and stick to it, but admittedly most of the young heroines in Powys's books are victims of man's lust, one of the several manifestations of evil the writer kept exposing and denouncing in his fiction. One can make out a long list of such victims and I will just mention a few examples: in *Mr Tasker's Gods*, Alice Allen is seduced by Tom Roude and only owes her life to the repented drover; after being raped by Mr Bugby Maud Chick becomes mad and Polly Wimple dies; Ada Kiddle has been led to suicide and, in "The Two Thieves", Alice Roe is both physically and morally tormented by her sadistic husband. There are a few exceptions, though. Emmie Paine, in *Mark Only*, after dreadful suffering inflicted by Charlie Tulk, eventually finds peace and contentment thanks to the stubborn love of Mr Thomas. But most of the time man's love is insufficient and it takes a quasi miraculous, if not divine, intervention to save those girls. Mary Gillet, in *Mockery Gap*, is saved by the Christlike Fisherman, and Nelly, in "God", by the hat which performs miracles. The most striking instance is of course Jenny Bunce; not only is she rescued from the Mumby brothers by Mr Weston but thanks to him she is one of the very few whose love is fulfilled and who will enjoy the perfect happiness suggested by the very fine passage where Mr Weston brings her to Luke's cottage:

Instead of a pipe of red wine there was, behind the curtain of the van, Jenny Bunce, fast asleep. Luke didn't wait a moment; he raised her in his arms and carried her into the cottage, and laid her down upon his bed. As he laid her there, she partly awoke, and nestled against him most lovingly. She sat up, smiled at him, and began to undress.

Mr Weston softly closed the cottage door—he had joined their hands in the parlour.¹⁹

The maidens of T. F. Powys's novels all pass from innocence to experience and, as I have suggested, experience is dearly bought, at the cost of their lives in several instances. Simultaneously, because love is a source of trouble and since they are at the origin of it, they generally have decisive parts in the dramatic or tragic fate of their male partners who often appear as mere toys in their hands. Both their nature and their behaviour account for the overall vision of woman expressed in Powys's novels.

If Powys's love life offered some major crisis, some stormy affair or some bitter disappointment, it would be easier to construct a theory explaining his attitude to woman. But we know very little in this respect. His brothers and sisters have told us that as a child he was very close to his mother and spent long hours with her. Francis Powys remembers hearing that his father had been in love with one of Mrs Stracey's three daughters when he was in Eastbourne²⁰ and obviously this love was never fulfilled, perhaps not even required, although we have no details about the episode. Be it as it may, this seems very slight material to construct a serious, consistent theory.

What we know with more certainty are the influences which marked his thought and of these two at least had an impact on his vision of woman. There is the Bible of course, that can never be neglected whichever aspect of Powys's writings is studied, and to which Louis Marlow refers when he writes, in *Welsh Ambassadors*, that in 1907 "Theodore, partly perhaps because his mind was so Biblically tinged, held firmly by the patriarchal doctrine of the submission of women".²¹ Powys no doubt adapted the teaching of the Old Testament to his own beliefs but, because of his education and his own knowledge of the Bible, he was never free from its influence and one finds more than one echo of it in his or his characters' assertions concerning women. The vision of

woman as the source of all human evils is reflected in this remark of the Rev. Silas Dottery: "Alas! alas! I fear that women are indeed to blame for a great number of misfortunes that fall hard upon us."²² As pointed out by Marlow, the doctrine of the submission of woman also has its origin in the Bible and is forcefully asserted by the bucket and the rope; they are trying to understand why their owner has just "kicked the bucket", making use of them to hang himself, and they debate the events that led up to his death:

'He married, as you know, a woman, a creature created to ease man of the heavy burden of desire, a burden as troublesome to carry as a kicking ass.'

'And who also,' observed the rope, 'was intended to cook and prepare a man's food, to rear his children and to clean his house.'

'That should certainly be so,' said the other.²³

Even allowing for the ironic exaggeration in this dialogue, I am not sure it does not convey Powys's deepest conviction concerning married women, albeit elsewhere he seems to regret "the cruel fact of nature that man rules, and has ruled, and always will rule."²⁴ It is noticeable, and significant perhaps, that in spite of his regret Powys regards man's dominion as "a fact of nature" that nothing will ever alter. In *Kindness in a Corner* again, Mr Dottery makes another interesting remark: "Such matters do not interest our country women, who are only concerned—and wisely so—with the multiplication and preservation of the species."²⁵ To assert that woman's primary mission on earth is procreation is also in complete accord with Biblical teaching.

And this brings us to the second influence to be detected in Powys's thought, that of Nietzsche whose works he already read again and again when he was farming at Sweffling. We all know that the German philosopher affirmed that woman should be trained "for the recreation of the warrior", and of this we have already had an echo in the first part of the dialogue quoted above. But it is necessary to cite a few lines from

Thus Spoke Zarathustra because they contain three elements to be found in Powys's vision of woman and on which it actually rests:

Everything about woman is a riddle, and everything about woman has one solution: it is called pregnancy.

For the woman, the man is a means: the end is always the child. But what is the woman for the man?

The true man wants two things: danger and play. For that reason he wants woman, as the most dangerous plaything.²⁶

Woman's wish to procreate is several times underlined in Powys's fiction. It is exemplified by Mrs Pattimore who secretly makes baby's clothes, by mad Maud Chick who keeps asking all the men she meets to give her a child—Solly will buy her a doll—and also by Tamar Grobe on her way to the mossy bed: "Nothing now in earth or heaven would keep her from her mate, who must soon . . . awake a happy infant in her womb."²⁷ The word "mate" of course reflects the non-Christian view of love developed in *Mr Weston's Good Wine*, but what is more significant and interesting is that Tamar will be cheated: she does experience love in the arms of Michael but will conceive no "happy infant" since she dies on the spot and is carried to heaven by two stars. Tamar's fate and the fact that practically no girl is allowed to become a happy mother in the novels are no doubt revealing of Powys's response to woman's wish to procreate which, on the other hand, may account for the maidens' sexual aggressiveness. In *Unclay*, Powys takes up the idea stated in two of Nietzsche's lines and expands them into a whole paragraph:

In the choice of a husband, a girl is guided by a sure instinct—she chooses for the future, her choice is towards a new development. She notices some trait or other about a man that may become an heirloom for her descendants. Though she steals this from a man, she will say that it is hers. What she robs a man of, she never gives back . . . She will hunt out a man only because she believes that something can come from her womb, by the use of him, that will be hers only.²⁸

The vocabulary used by Powys ("steals, robs, never gives back, will hunt out, the use of him") makes it clear that, in his eyes, woman's longing to procreate turns her into a thief and a man-eater, and this, of course, is bound to increase his fear of her.

For fear, which plays such an essential role in Powys's approach and response to most fundamental problems, is also a basic feature of his attitude to woman, and on this particular point I can't but agree with what David Holbrook wrote in his introduction to *Mr Weston's Good Wine*.²⁹ There are several reasons for his fear, an evident one being that, since she procreates, woman is the source of life and I believe Powys was afraid of life in general. Another reason I have already more than hinted at: woman is also at the origin of love. Now love can occasionally be a unique joy:

A great cry comes from a man's heart when he compasses a woman. Such a joy shatters the dull and gloomy days of life and plants a flower in the meads. It is the only wonder, the only burning joy in life—except one other.³⁰

But more often than not in Powys's fiction love appears as an unbearable burden which can cause grievous trouble and sometimes death. In short, love is to be longed for and dreaded at the same time. It follows that man never knows what the issue of his relations with a woman will be, and no wonder then that he should be afraid when confronted with "the most dangerous plaything":

Every pious and God-loving man is secretly afraid of a girl, and would, if it were possible, avoid being left alone in a young woman's company. For what man can tell what will happen, when one is forced to be alone with a maid?³¹

This increases the mysterious character of woman. Nietzsche thinks that "everything about woman is a riddle", and so does Powys:

A young girl is a deep mystery. When she enters a room something enters with her that belongs to the earth and to the sun, to the carnal and to the holy. A warm, earthy thing,

a star of heaven. Pagan, and yet merry with God, a presence that wishes to be kind, but opens a door to sorrow.³²

Because she is just as mysterious as God, and death, and life itself, woman is just as frightening and so fear is Powys's basic feeling in front of her, which, according to Holbrook,³³ accounts for his heroines being child-women, perhaps more manageable than mature women, and for his sometimes patronizing attitude, maybe an attempt to reassure himself.

The trouble with T. F. Powys is that, frightened as he is, he feels simultaneously attracted and fascinated by woman. On the one hand he is always aware that "her wiles are inconceivable, her arts manifold, her desires everlasting"³⁴ and regards her as "the manifestation in the flesh of God's goodness to man"³⁵ on the other. Hence his uncertain, ambivalent attitude due to his incapacity to decide which of fear and fascination is stronger and must be submitted to. Consequently he evinces the same uncertainty in his treatment of sexual love which, of course, is intimately connected with his vision of woman.

I have already remarked that all his young heroines are sexually appetizing and that love in Powysland is largely founded on sexual attraction. Again and again he emphasizes the tormenting power of the sex urge as, for instance, in this passage from *Mr Weston's Good Wine*:

When a young girl feels the hot sap of love rush to her heart and turn to dance furiously in her veins, because she knows that the consummation of all her most secret thoughts and desires is at hand, she isn't likely to go quietly to her home and join her father at supper. She prefers the darkness of the night that may ease perhaps the agony of her suspense.³⁷

In so far as he acknowledges the importance of sexuality Powys can be said to be "modern" and his approval of physical love and pleasure was already pointed out in two very good studies of his writings. This is William Hunter concluding his commentary of *Mr Weston's Good Wine*: "His attitude

to physical love, pervasive throughout the book, is essentially tolerant, approving, non-Christian";³⁷ and this is Harry Coombes, some thirty years later: "the accumulative effect of his writings shows him to be 'modern' in his intelligent liberal approval . . . of physical love".³⁸ Yet, I cannot fully agree with those two statements which I feel to be slightly over-indulgent. Powys did not entirely succeed in freeing himself from his Biblical, if not puritan, prejudices; besides, he was always keenly aware of the very thin boundary between physical love and lust:

And the nearest green bank is used for bridal bed. There, a pretty pastime may be practised with sweet usage, or, perhaps, instead of loving manners, a furious frolic may come of it, cruel and hostile to love. From such doings lust may emanate, or love and gentle content.³⁹

And so, once again, Powys's attitude will prove uncertain. This is particularly well illustrated in *Mr Weston's Good Wine* where he no doubt meant to vindicate love but simultaneously ridiculed sexual love even within the bonds of marriage. At the beginning of chapter XXVI, he describes at length Mrs Grobe's behaviour to rouse her shy husband's desire, and she eventually appears as a wanton, somewhat grotesque woman whose accidental death may be seen as a punishment for her lasciviousness. It also reveals the uncertainty of Powys's position that Mr Grobe, a good and wise man, the only one to be offered the dark wine of death, should apologize every time he yields to his wife:

He would always say how sorry he was when he behaved most lovingly. 'My dear,' he would beg of her, 'you must, you must forgive me, for all men are only nasty animals'.⁴⁰

My feeling is that Powys tried hard to be "modern" but could not fully succeed because he was unable to overcome his more or less conscious prejudices and, above all, his fear of woman. Hence a constant tension thus summed up by David Holbrook: "At a deep level we may detect once more in Powys a strong sense of an inward struggle to justify sexual passion against a strong fear of women".⁴¹

This "strong sense of an inward struggle" I think we can detect, more generally speaking, in his vision of, and attitude to, woman. It results from the tension between his fear, which his old women could in no way soothe, and the fascination woman had for him. Hence his characteristically uncertain, ambivalent attitude. Surely Powys was no feminist, but he was no horrid male chauvinist either; he now worshipped woman as "the manifestation in the flesh of God's goodness to man" and now feared her so much that he endeavoured to reduce her to less frightening dimensions, just as he did with God and with death. He was unable to make a clear choice and reach a definite, final standpoint, and this is why I think his attitude to woman is characteristic of him. For when we consider his attitude to God, to death, to life, we are confronted with the same fear and fascination issuing in the same uncertainty and ambivalence so that his thought is, I believe, characterized by doubt and scepticism. It may be regretted that he never managed to conquer his fundamental fear and deliver a positive message which might have given his books more weight and, possibly, a larger audience. But on the other hand it was probably because of his fears and doubts that he felt impelled to write and thus left us several novels and stories which are works of art in their own right.

NOTES

¹ Alyse Gregory, *The Cry of a Gull*, 1973, p. 21.

² Theodora Scutt, "Theodore Powys, 1934-1953: a continuation", *The Powys Review*, 10, Spring 1982, p. 45.

³ Given the limits of this paper I will leave aside a question which was raised during the Powys Society Conference workshop on T. F. Powys held at Winchester in September 1982: was Powys's portrayal of woman influenced by the mode of writing he had chosen, i.e. allegory? My answer would be "Yes, it was", but conversely one can argue that his choice of the allegoric mode was largely due to his vision of the world, including women. No doubt this is a point of major interest but I feel that another article would be needed for a serious discussion of it.

⁴ *Innocent Birds*, 1926, p. 79.

⁵ *Black Bryony*, 1923, pp. 79-80.

⁶ Harry Coombes, *T. F. Powys*, 1960, p. 151.

⁷ *Unclay*, 1931, p. 62.

⁸ "Hester Dominy", *The Left Leg*, 1923, p. 132.

⁹ *Mr Tasker's Gods*, 1925, Chatto & Windus, 1929, pp. 95-96.

¹⁰ *Mr Weston's Good Wine* 1926, Chatto & Windus, 1960, p. 53. Page references in parentheses within my text are to this edition.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹³ *Innocent Birds*, p. 162.

¹⁴ *Mark Only*, 1924, p. 18.

¹⁵ *Innocent Birds*, p. 191.

¹⁶ *Mr Weston*, p. 195.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁸ *Innocent Birds*, p. 216, p. 218.

¹⁹ *Mr Weston*, p. 280.

²⁰ Powys met Mrs Stracey in Eastbourne when he was teaching English history and literature in two

girls' schools (1902-1903). She was the wife of a colonel and had three daughters. For years she was Theodore's only reader, writing notes and comments on the manuscripts he sent her and encouraging him to persevere. To Mrs Stracey Powys dedicated his first printed book, *An Interpretation of Genesis* ("To M.H.R.S.") and she was the godmother of his two sons, Louis Wilkinson being their godfather. The last letters from Theodore to Mrs Stracey I have seen were written in 1939.

²¹ Louis Marlow, *Welsh Ambassadors*, 1936, p. 144.

²² *Kindness in a Corner*, 1930, p. 111.

²³ "The Bucket and the Rope", *Fables* (1929) Chatto & Windus, 1930, p. 139.

²⁴ *Mr Tasker's Gods*, p. 6.

²⁵ *Kindness in a Corner*, p. 111.

²⁶ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, tr. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, 1961, p. 91.

²⁷ *Mr Weston*, p. 241.

²⁸ *Unclay*, p. 166.

²⁹ *Mr Weston's Good Wine*, introduction by David Holbrook, Heinemann, 1967.

³⁰ "In Good Earth", *The Two Thieves*, 1932, p. 95.

³¹ *Unclay*, p. 153.

³² *Kindness in a Corner*, p. 11.

³³ D. Holbrook, *loc. cit.*, p. X, p. XIII.

³⁴ *Unclay*, p. 173.

³⁵ *Mr Weston*, p. 272.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

³⁷ William Hunter, *The Novels and Stories of T. F. Powys*, 1930, p. 30.

³⁸ H. Coombes, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

³⁹ *Unclay*, p. 180.

⁴⁰ *Mr Weston*, p. 208.

⁴¹ D. Holbrook, *loc. cit.*, p. XIX.

Ian Hughes

A Poor Ragged Maiden: The Textual History of *Maiden Castle*

'... my poor "Maiden", who is ... getting sadly *ragged* from being handled by so many Publishers' Readers ...'

J. C. Powys, letter to L. C. Powys, 4.9.36.

John Cowper Powys started writing his "Dorchester romance",¹ which was eventually to be called *Maiden Castle*, in 1934. He arrived from the United States in June of that year, and with his companion Phyllis Playter took up residence at Rat's Barn, a farmhouse at East Chaldon, some eight miles east of Dorchester.² In October he moved into Dorchester itself, and took lodgings at 38 High East Street.³ In the first half of 1935 Powys's mind became increasingly set on living in Wales, and in May-June 1935, while on a month's visit to friends in Corwen, Merionethshire, he discovered an available cottage.⁴ On 2 July he and Miss Playter moved to 7 Cae Coed, Corwen,⁵ where they were to remain until 1955. *Maiden Castle* was completed in Corwen in 1936.

Just before returning to Britain from America, Powys had been contemplating living for some time in Dorset before any move to Wales. Dorset and Somerset had provided the setting of five out of the six published novels that he had written during his many years of living and working in the United States; and he was thinking of writing another Wessex novel. In May 1934 he wrote to his brother Littleton:

I have come to allow my mind to wonder whether it would be possible to take a very tiny cottage in *Shaftesbury* later? I believe I could write an Historical Novel about *Shaftesbury*. Well! we shall see! Rats Barn is the first step!⁶

The novel that was begun at Rat's Barn, however, did not turn out to be a historical novel (though its hero is a historical novelist). The historical novels were to come after the move to Wales, and were to be given Welsh settings. The new novel was set

in contemporary Dorset, and, after Powys had moved to High East Street, became centred on Dorchester, not Shaftesbury.

While at Rat's Barn, Powys made at least five separate starts to the novel, but, on moving into Dorchester, he accepted a commission from his American publishers, Simon and Schuster, to write another of his lucrative works of popular philosophy, and the new novel was set aside until he had finished *The Art of Happiness*.⁷ It was the end of January 1935 before he turned his full attention once more to his new novel. By that time, he had decided to make a fresh start, and to give the novel an entirely Dorchester setting.⁸ Some of the material from the discarded starts was reworked into a new form, but the original setting, which is recognisably the countryside round Rat's Barn, was abandoned.

How much of *Maiden Castle* was written in Dorchester is not certain. Powys had only some three months for sustained work on the novel before the reconnoitring visit to Corwen and the subsequent move there. By the end of January 1936, over six months after leaving Dorset, he was nearing completion of the holograph version. Most probably, therefore, the greater part of the writing was done in North Wales.

On 22 January 1936 Powys wrote to Littleton:

I am now finishing my book but it'll have to be revised now & the final chapter [...] typed by Mrs Meech of Dorchester.⁹

The implication is that Mrs Meech had already typed some or all of the other chapters, and that Powys would begin revising not his holograph manuscript but the typescript. It seems that when he was reasonably satisfied that a chapter had

assumed something near its final form, he despatched it to Mrs Meech, a professional typist whose services Powys continued to use for many years.¹⁰ Mrs Meech translated the holograph sheets into neat pages of typescript, with one carbon copy,¹¹ and returned the chapters, both holograph and typescript, as she finished them. Powys then corrected and revised the typescript, using the process as a further stage of composition. Finally he bound the chapters into two copies, and sent one to his American publishers, and the other to his London literary agent, Laurence Pollinger.

While Pollinger was trying to find a British publisher, Simon and Schuster offered to publish the novel in an abridged version. Powys was, not unusually, short of money, and reluctantly agreed to the abridgement. On 3 June 1936 he wrote to Littleton:

I have a very hard & disagreeable job now namely the job of cutting the cuts made by the American publisher's editor in my Maiden Castle—but I am keen to please them for they now promise they *will* print it independently of England and do it too this Autumn. [. . .] No word from London as to this book except that Lane is scared of it. I hope Chapman & Hall will take it—otherwise my agent may try “Faber & Faber” or a young new man called *Hamish Hamilton*. Lane was clearly not so overwhelmed by its value as to risk the length, the danger of libel, & the danger of the Moral Censor.¹²

A few days later he wrote to his brother Theodore:

So far three, no! *two*, publishers in London have rejected my new romance. It is now with *Faber's* to read to see what *they* say. [. . .] After that—but I must leave it all in the hands of Mr Pollinger—I wd myself be inclined to send it when Faber rejects it to a youth called *Hamish Hamilton* who wrote to Pollinger about it the moment he heard it was rejected by Lane. [. . .] I am now working at endless *cuts* made by *Schuster's editor* in this same book of mine about Dorchester (called “Maiden Castle”) he is a Snipper, not a Slasher, but there are so many of these *little cuts*—one after another—that my book will be light enough to jump into any river, when

he's finished with it! [Earlier, Powys expresses great interest in the suicide of two old men who had recently drowned themselves in the Yeo.] I reject a few—not many—for I am too thankful to get the book published at all to be a particular man about these handlings of my Maiden.¹³

A fortnight later he wrote to Louis Wilkinson:

Do you know, my dear, I'm having difficulty in getting my Dorchester Romance ‘Maiden Castle’ published in London at all. Lane has rejected it. It was sent to Ralph Straus to read and Lane never told what Straus said of it . . . Then I got Pollinger to send it to Chapman and Hall and they have rejected, tho' Mr. Pollinger has not told me if they mentioned any reason for their rejection [. . .] Now it's gone, he tells me, to Faber & Faber—but with those two refusing it (for *all* Publishers tell each other *all* & they all band together to keep authors in their place) I doubt if Faber & Faber will take it [. . .]

Thank the Lord, however, Simon & Schuster are publishing it in New York this Fall—tho' I've had to cut it or let their new editor Mr. Howe cut it a bit—but only to shorten it by I should think about two hundred pages, leaving carefully all the dangerous passages & only cutting out what seems to them Dull.¹⁴

In September he wrote to Littleton:

No Publisher *yet* in this land for my poor “Maiden”, who is, Mr Pollinger, my good agent, tells me, getting sadly *ragged* from being handled by so many Publishers' Readers—about half-a-dozen of them by now at least! But let's hope the sight of a well printed well bound & well edited American Version in October will Pique them and Prick them and stir one of them up. [. . .] But it'll be an exciting and agitating moment when I receive my 1st Copy of it from over there! & I fear even if *then* a London Publisher takes it they'll *only buy the proofs* or the printed pages from S & S direct & thus the author's advanced Royalty of £100 will be grievously lessened.¹⁵

Powys was right to fear that a London publisher, if one could be found at all, would publish only the abridged version, but his fears about financial arrangements were

soon allayed. When Cassell showed keen interest in the novel, Powys joyfully told Littleton the news:

And I myself save when I'm dressing & undressing (when I curse like a gouty lord) am constantly thanking God (or his Representative in my lucky Horoscope) that I've now really & truly *found an English Publisher*. [. . .] Well my New Publisher—a Dorset man born near Shaftesbury, & educated at Weymouth College, where he was shamefully bullied, is called Mr Newman Flower & his only son & partner is called Mr Desmond Flower & they are the sole authorities of *CASSELL's* [. . .] He'll probably use the American version & reproduce it—but he *may* print freshly. It depends how he likes the *cuts* which the Americans made . . . but he'll *pay the same* which ever way it works out! So this will just, most providentially, *save my bacon!*¹⁶

Financial pressures were clearly reconciling Powys to seeing only the abridged version in print.

Cassell duly brought out *Maiden Castle* in February 1937, setting it from the American edition, which had appeared the previous autumn. In March Pollinger returned to Powys the London copy of the typescript, somewhat the worse for wear, but intact save for one sheet, and unedited. Powys, absorbed as ever in new work, laid the typescript to one side, and made no further revisions to it. The American edition of 1936 remained the version from which all subsequent editions were derived.

Mr G. F. Sims of Reading, a dealer in literary manuscripts and rare books, visited Powys in the early 1950s to enquire whether he had anything of interest for sale.¹⁷ Sims subsequently acquired the bulk of manuscript material that had been retained by Powys, including the London typescript of *Maiden Castle*. It was a sizable collection. Its contents are listed in Sims's 'Appendix to Catalogue 25: A list of original MSS., typescripts & note-books of John Cowper Powys', which was sent out to prospective purchasers.¹⁸ Sims hoped to sell the entire collection for £1500, but at that time no individual or institution was both able and

willing to spend such a sum on Powys material. Accordingly, the items were sold off individually. Many of them found their way eventually to Powys collections in American universities, but Mr E. E. Bissell, of Ashorne, Warwick, who has been for many years a keen collector of materials to do with the Powys family, was able to purchase several items, among which was the London typescript of *Maiden Castle*.

Mr Bissell thought he was buying the printer's copy or a duplicate of it. The typescript is described in Sims's catalogue, under the sub-heading 'Published typescripts', as 'Corrected version of MAIDEN CASTLE'. Since Chapter 1 contains only three passages that were deleted in the printed version, and since the first deletion is not till page 55, Mr Bissell's misconception (probably shared by Sims) is readily understandable. That misconception was not removed until Easter 1980, when the present writer (who wishes to acknowledge a considerable debt to Mr Bissell for his generous co-operation) made the first detailed examination of the typescript since its entry into the Bissell collection.

The principal documents in the textual history of *Maiden Castle* are these: first, the discarded starts; second, the holograph manuscript; third, the revised typescript (in its American and London versions); fourth, the first printed edition; fifth, the first British edition.

The Discarded Starts are, like the London copy of the typescript, located in Mr Bissell's private collection. While they are of great interest as evidence of the novel's conceptual beginnings, they have but little textual relevance to the completed novel.

The holograph manuscript (hereafter called the Colgate MS) is located in the Powys Collection at Colgate University Library, New York State. Since it formed the basis of the typescript, it should ideally be consulted in the production of a definitive edition of the novel. At present, however, Colgate University unaccountably refuses to make the manuscript, or a sample

photocopy, available for study by scholars from Britain. Fortunately the Colgate MS is not needed for the production of an authoritative edition. It lacks the final stage of composition as represented by the extensive autograph revisions made in the typescript, and is therefore of relatively minor importance in establishing the full text of the novel.

Of the two copies of the typescript, only the London copy (hereafter called *Bissell*) appears to have survived. Whether or not the American copy (hereafter called the American TS) is still extant, there is good reason for regarding it as inferior to *Bissell*. Since very nearly all the verbal revisions that Powys made in *Bissell* appear in the first printed edition (not counting the deleted portions), the author must have intended the two copies of the typescript to be identical. A few differences between the two versions would have arisen during the process of transferring the revisions from one copy of the typescript to the other. *Bissell* consists of one chapter of top copy, and eight chapters of carbon; the American TS must therefore have had eight chapters of top copy, and one of carbon. If Powys worked on the carbon copy during the final stage of composition, and later transferred his revisions uncritically to the top copy, then *Bissell* is likely to represent the author's intentions more accurately than the American TS. We have Powys's testimony that in revising the typescript of *Wolf Solent* he worked initially on the carbon copy.¹⁹ There is nothing to suggest that he deliberately changed his method in revising the typescript of *Maiden Castle*. In any case, certain instances where the printed text does not agree with revisions that were made in *Bissell* establish the priority of *Bissell* beyond reasonable doubt.

A passage in Chapter 9 will serve to illustrate the point. The first printed edition, which was set from the edited American TS, has the following:

Too polite to sit down, but noticing that Nance from her sofa was nodding encouragement to him, [. . .] the ex-family coachman [. . .] stepped forward²⁰

The typed version, which was of course common to both copies of the typescript, is as follows:

Too polite to sit down, but noticing that Nance from her sofa was nodding encouraging to him [. . .] the ex-family-coachman [. . .] stepped forward²¹

In *Bissell*, the author made a revision to the typed version: he added 'ly' to "encouraging". With that revision, the sentence reads satisfactorily, and there was no reason for the editor of the first edition to reject the author's amendment. The editor, however, could not have had the revision in the American TS, and, recognising the need to amend "encouraging", altered the word to "encouragement". The addition of 'ly' to "encouraging" is the only revision made on page 868 of *Bissell*. Apparently, in transferring his revisions from the carbon copy to the top copy, the author failed to notice that page 868 carried any revision.

Similar instances may be found in most chapters, and collectively they provide convincing evidence that for Chapters 2 to 9 the carbon copy is more authoritative than the top copy.

Chapter 1 of *Bissell*, however, is top copy, not carbon like the rest. In revising Chapter 1, Powys seems to have departed from his usual practice and to have worked initially on the top copy. On page 13, for example, Powys made deletions in the following typed passage:

Full of thoughts of this kind, thoughts that, now he had dared to let himself go grew momentarily more monstrously sacriligious and dangerously sweet, he jumped quickly out of his bed

Perhaps because he disliked the clumsiness of "momently more monstrously", Powys deleted "monstrously", and then deleted "and dangerously sweet" into the bargain. The first printed edition, however, follows the wording of the typed version, though there was no reason to do so unless the revision did not appear on the American TS.²² Since the carbon copy was made on the same paper as the top copy, and since the print of the carbon is very nearly as distinct

as that of the top copy, the author probably began working on the top copy of Chapter 1 by mistake. Having realised his mistake before, or immediately after, completing the revision of Chapter 1, he would then have changed to the carbon copy for revision of the subsequent chapters. That procedure would also explain why the top copy of Chapter 1 was bound in with the carbon copy of the other chapters. If that reconstruction of Powys's procedure is correct, then *Bissell* is superior to the American TS in all chapters.

A final reason for regarding *Bissell* as superior is the certainty that all revisions in *Bissell* are made by the author and by no one else.

The first printed edition (hereafter called *1936*) lacks authority on several counts. It is an abridged version, making 179 separate deletions in over 350 pages of the typescript, reducing the total length of the novel by about one-fifth. While the author agreed to the abridgement, he did so under duress, and still hoped to see a full edition appear in print at a later date. Of even greater importance is the fact that the author did not make the abridgement himself, and that he was unable to make a satisfactory revision of the remaining text. In that respect, the abridgement of *Maiden Castle* differs considerably from the abridgement of Powys's earlier novels.

Powys's letters make it clear that in shortening *Wolf Solent*, *A Glastonbury Romance*, and *Weymouth Sands* he alone was responsible for the task.²³ The publishers insisted that the novels should not exceed a certain length, but, after that, Powys was able to reshape his work in his own way. While he may have heeded suggestions made by his publishers, the final versions were the result of his own carefully considered artistic decisions. The vital difference in the case of *Maiden Castle* is that Powys was not told that he must shorten the novel by a certain number of words. Instead, he was sent a list of deletions indexed to a revised typescript of which he did not have a copy. Powys complained to Littleton:

I've got to do these cuts only as I've only got my long-hand MSS to work on & the chap goes by the pages of the *typed* copy 'tis the devil of a job & a long one.²⁴

Another passage in the same letter shows that he had not suffered that kind of dictatorial interference before, and that he was contemptuous of it:

It is the new method for Publishers in America [. . .] to keep a clever young man on their staff to improve their authors writings!

The artistic implications of the deletions could not possibly have impressed themselves upon the author in the way they would have done if he had been working methodically through a neat typescript, selecting for himself passages that could be least damagingly cut out, or sections that could be recast and compressed.

Quincy Howe's abridgement is, in fact, a remarkably bad piece of editing, and certain aspects of the damage that he caused are easily illustrated. The table below provides a statistical analysis of the abridgement. Column 1 gives the number of deletions made by Howe. Column 2 gives the number of typescript lines or part-lines deleted. Column 3 gives the number of simple omissions (defined as deletions not accompanied by substantive alteration of the remaining text, or by the provision of substitute passages). Column 4 gives the number of lines or part-lines in *1936* which replace the deleted passages that are not simple omissions.

There are approximately 24,000 lines of typescript. Therefore, as will be seen from the table, between a quarter and one-fifth of the text is deleted in *1936*, and is replaced by 376 lines or part-lines of print. Since the number of words per line of typescript is approximately equal to the number of words per line of *1936*, the total in Column 4 can be related directly to the total in Column 2, showing that the number of substitute lines is approximately one-fifteenth that of the deleted lines. 130 of the 179 deletions did not seem to Howe to create the need either for substantive alteration of the remaining

text or for the introduction of new material to provide narrative continuity. It is primarily those simple omissions that lead to the structural incongruity and inconsistency of the printed version.

Chap.	1 No. of deletions	2 Lines deleted	3 Simple omissions	4 Substituted lines
1	8	32	2	17
2	5	775	1	16
3	12	683	8	100
4	20	568	17	13
5	16	878	8	144
6	22	649	19	37
7	35	667	30	5
8	34	658	23	21
9	27	729	22	23
Total	179	5639	130	376

A few examples, out of the many that could be given, must suffice to indicate the nature of the damage.

In *1936*, Chapter 2 begins: "It was quite dark when No-man and Thuella stood together outside the Circus-field." No-man and Thuella then stand there and discuss various matters. Some fifty lines later on in their discussion, Thuella sees No-man's face "by the light of a remote station lamp". In the next paragraph No-man is tapping "the edge of the platform" with his stick. Sixteen lines later, No-man and Thuella are leaving a station. Eight lines later they are entering "the market-field", and No-man is regretting that he did not look at the station clock as they came out of the station.²⁵

The confusion of locations is caused by the deletion of fourteen pages of typescript. In *Bissell*, No-man and Thuella have a longer discussion than in *1936*, and most of the discussion takes place in a station waiting-room, which they visit on their way to the circus-field.

Later in Chapter 2, No-man takes Wizzie Ravelston to Mrs Dearth's house, where he and Wizzie are to spend their first night together. In Mrs Dearth's kitchen No-man is held in conversation by Mrs Dearth's neighbour and friend, Claudius Cask, while Mrs Dearth takes Wizzie upstairs to help her prepare for the night. As Mrs Dearth goes out she enjoins No-man not to move from

the fireside for a little while longer, and No-man obeys her. *1936* reads:

No-man mechanically did as their hostess had suggested. He turned his chair towards the fire, refused the more comfortable one offered by Roger Cask, and bending over the grate lit a cigarette with a torn envelope from his pocket.²⁶

At this point *1936* omits five pages of typescript, and then continues:

"Oh, by the way, Mr. Cask," he said, "would you mind telling me where the lavatory is?"

"Certainly—certainly," responded the other and went to the door; but when he reached it he paused and turned: "I generally go out myself," he said, "for ordinary purposes, to the back of the King's Arms. There's a nice place there. Ours is next to the spare room where your"—he hesitated a second—"where your wife is, and the 'flush', for I saw to its plumbing myself, is rather—rather violent, but, of course, do just as you like!"

Dud moved past him ungraciously with the barest nod and went out into the street.

As it stands, the passage makes No-man's inquiry seem abrupt, and his behaviour seem unaccountably rude. The deleted portion covers a much longer time, perhaps half-an-hour or so, during which No-man becomes increasingly frustrated at having to wait for Mrs Dearth's return. He is subjected to a discourse on social and political philosophy by Claudius Cask, a discourse on which he cannot concentrate. No-man's exasperation grows until eventually he loses all patience. Wizzie's scent prevades the room, exciting his senses:

a penetrating perfume, that was certainly not eau-de-cologne, had diffused itself through the room immediately after Wizzie had come downstairs after "taking off her hat". But already annoyed at being exposed in his absent-minded propitiation of Mr. Cask by this abrupt opening of the window, a gesture that seemed to say, "Away with this woman's cheap scent!" he began to feel belligerent. Besides—why hadn't the "Horse-Head" come down again? Was she going to stay up there talking to Wizzie, all the night?

He rose to his feet himself. "Oh, by the way, Mr. Cask", he said, "would you mind telling me where the lavatory is?"²⁷

Thus, No-man's ungracious departure from the room is the result of his frustration by what he regards as intolerable circumstances.

On No-man's return from urinating, *1936* omits a further four pages of typescript, covering a time of "about twenty minutes".²⁸ *1936* reads:

As soon as Dud returned to the room, Mr. Cask fixed his caged-eagle's eye upon the visitor and asked him quietly if he didn't want to go to bed.²⁹

In *Bissell*, when No-man returns from the lavatory, he finds another guest in Mrs Dearth's kitchen. An extremely ugly woman named Constancia has come to call on Claudius Cask. No-man is left alone with her while Cask goes off to attend to Constancia's mentally unbalanced step-father. No-man is treated to a description of Cask's good qualities that must make him ashamed of his earlier rudeness. Cask's kindness and honesty are stressed, and No-man is made aware of the selfishness of his private concerns. He is especially struck by the woman's ugliness, which provides a startling contrast to the image of Wizzie that has filled his mind, and he is overcome with pity for the woman's misfortune. By the time Cask returns, No-man is in a state of "angry confusion".²⁸ The attribution to Cask of an eagle's eye has much greater force than in *1936*. The deleted portion ends:

On the departure of Constancia, who hurried off to see the effect, on her relative's nerves, of Mr. Cask's ministrations, that gentleman fixed his caged-eagle's eye upon the visitor and asked him quietly if he didn't want to go to bed.²⁸

If the deleted portions are important for the full dramatic effect of the scene in Mrs Dearth's kitchen, they are also important for the novel as a whole. *Maiden Castle* is on one level a philosophic romance, and as such it portrays the conflict and interplay of

various world views. One of those views is the Social Darwinism of Claudius Cask. By cutting out Cask's discourse, Howe weakened a vital dimension of the novel. Furthermore, the elimination of several of Cask's speeches and of descriptions of his behaviour, both in Chapter 2 and elsewhere, leads to a marked deterioration in the characterisation, a fault that has drawn some adverse critical comment. Glen Cavaliero, for instance, states:

indeed it is the major weakness of *Maiden Castle* that the supporting characters are so unreal, Claudius and Teucer's son Dunbar especially existing more as mouthpieces than as living people.³⁰

The characterisation is indeed a major weakness in *1936*; it is much less of a weakness in the unabridged *Maiden Castle*.

A simpler example of the bad effect of the deletions is offered in Chapter 3. *1936* allows the following paragraph to stand:

He [i.e., No-man] had just reached this point in his recondite speculations when he heard much heavier steps than Old Funky's ascending his staircase and ere long there followed a bold decisive knock at his door.³¹

No-man's recondite speculations, however, have been omitted. In *1936* there is nothing abstruse or profound in the thoughts in which No-man is interrupted, and the sentence therefore seems quite inappropriate.

One further small example will be given. In Chapter 8, No-man and Wizzie are walking along the street as the bells of St Peter's announce the imminence of morning service. *1936* reads:

The bells at this point changed their "tempo", no doubt to indicate that there was only five minutes left before the beginning of the morning service, while a couple of tall choir-boys, hurrying past them, cast the same sort of covetous look at Wizzie's perfectly modelled hips and flanks as an older church-goer might have done.³²

There is something odd and inconsequential about the sentence. Why would it be expected that an older church-goer would be

more covetous of Wizzie's body than a tall choir-boy? The oddness arises because of an earlier deletion. In *Bissell*, before the choir-boys come along, a middle-aged man gazes at Wizzie:

A faint scent of sun-warmed foliage reached them from the avenue, while a middle-aged citizen with a rose in his buttonhole and big hymn-book in his hand, cast what he evidently hoped appeared a Brotherly and a Christian glance at Wizzie's leather belt and tight boy's trousers.³³

And the later passage reads:

a couple of tall choir-boys, hurrying past them, cast the same sort of covetous look at Wizzie's perfectly modelled hips and flanks as the older church-goer had done.³⁴

The puzzling implication in *1936* is absent in *Bissell*.

Those examples show that Howe's techniques of abridgement was crude and insensitive, and that the author was unable (or unwilling) to revise the remaining text in such a manner that Howe's deletions could be happily accommodated. In one of the letters to Littleton that was quoted above, Powys says of Howe: "he is a Snipper, not a Slasher". In fact, Powys would have been better served by a slasher, for then he would have been able to proceed with his own abridgement as he had had to do with his previous novels.

The most obvious of the technical defects of Howe's abridgement might have been removed if Powys had been able to revise the printed proofs. Although by that stage his alterations would have been limited to a few words and lines, he might have had enough room for manoeuvre to avoid, for instance, having his characters in two places at once. Any improvements, however, would have been relatively unimportant for the overall structure and development of *Maiden Castle*, because the main damage was already irrevocable.

As it was, Powys did not read the proofs. He required income from the novel so urgently that he assigned all responsibility for the proofs to his American publishers. He wrote to Littleton:

I admit that between 2 & 3 hundred printed pages must have been cut out by the American Editor & I also have to admit that to get it out in Oct . . . w^h of course is of primary importance to me (since 'tis my only source of Income) I have had to waive the correction of the Proofs & let them do it over there w^h is a thing I have never allowed to happen before . . .³⁵

Powys expected Howe to take responsibility for the proof-reading. The letter continues:

But the Editor who "cut" [. . .] will no doubt keep an eye on these precious Proofs now that his personal egoism is so deeply involved in the book (as it is at present in its "cut" form) and so I believe they'll do it pretty carefully.

Whoever did have the responsibility for correcting the proofs did not execute the task carefully. Several misprints passed undetected, and errors of punctuation remained abundant. Several obvious verbal mistakes which had not been corrected in the typescript before it was sent to the printers, remained uncorrected in the proofs. The details of presentation were badly edited, and little seems to have been done at the proof stage to improve the treatment.

All in all, then, *1936* is a very unsatisfactory edition of Powys's novel, and is totally unacceptable as a copy-text for an authoritative edition.

The first British edition (hereafter called *1937*) may carry marginally more authority than *1936*, but that is unlikely. There is no evidence that Powys suggested any alterations of the *1936* edition from which *1937* was set, or that he saw the proofs of *1937*, though those possibilities cannot be ruled out. (Unfortunately, Cassell can provide no information concerning the publication of *Maiden Castle*, because their records were destroyed by the Blitz.) Some alterations were made: some obviously wrong words were replaced; some misprints were corrected (though others were introduced); and some rearrangement of the pointing was made. Collectively the changes were minor and few. *1937* is no more suitable as a copy-text than *1936*.

Of the principal documents in the textual history of *Maiden Castle*, Bissell undoubtedly provides the most suitable copy-text for an authoritative edition. And an authoritative edition is badly needed: before Powys's

"poor ragged Maiden" is ready to take her proper place in the canon, what was so rudely stripped from her must be carefully restored.

NOTES

¹ Powys did not settle on the title "Maiden Castle" until he was revising the typescript. In his letters he refers on several occasions to his "Dorchester book" or his "Dorchester romance". See, for instance, *Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson 1935-1956*, ed. Louis Wilkinson, 1958 (hereafter referred to as *JCP-LW*), 18.2.36 and 23.6.36.

² See Malcolm Elwin, "Prefatory Note", *Maiden Castle*, 1966, p. 7. Elwin's quotations are from Powys's letters to his brother Llewelyn.

³ See Elwin, op. cit., *ibid.* 38 High East Street is the address of No-man's lodgings in the unrevised typescript of *Maiden Castle*.

⁴ J. C. Powys, letter to L. C. Powys, 2.6.35, in the unpublished collection of letters by J. C. Powys to L. C. Powys in the Bissell Collection (hereafter referred to as *JCP-Lit*).

⁵ *JCP-Lit*, 3.7.35.

⁶ *JCP-Lit*, 22.5.34.

⁷ See Elwin, op. cit., *ibid.* *The Art of Happiness* was published in New York in the spring of 1935.

⁸ See Elwin, op. cit., *ibid.*

⁹ *JCP-Lit*, 22.1.36.

¹⁰ See *JCP-LW*, 28.12.50.

¹¹ *JCP-Lit*, 3.6.36, 4.9.36.

¹² *JCP-Lit*, 3.6.36.

¹³ J. C. Powys, letter to T. F. Powys, 8.6.36, in the unpublished collection of letters by J. C. Powys to T. F. Powys in the Bissell Collection (hereafter referred to as *JCP-Theo*).

¹⁴ *JCP-LW*, 23.6.36.

¹⁵ *JCP-Lit*, 4.9.36.

¹⁶ *JCP-Lit*, 9.10.36 (date conjectured).

¹⁷ Phyllis Playter's account of Sims's visit is reported by Raymond Garlick in "Powys in Gwynedd: The Last Years", in Belinda Humfrey, ed., *Essays on John Cowper Powys*, Cardiff, 1972, p. 304.

¹⁸ Sims's "Appendix to Catalogue 25" consists of two sheets of stencil-duplicated typescript, and is undated. It was issued in the mid-1950s.

¹⁹ *JCP-Lit*, 14.9.28.

²⁰ *Maiden Castle*, New York, 1936 (hereafter referred to as 1936), p. 499.

²¹ *Bissell*, p. 868.

²² 1936, p. 11.

²³ *JCP-Lit*, 30.7.28, 14.9.28, 11.9.31, 20.11.31; and *JCP-Theo*, 16.8.28, 15.11.32.

²⁴ *JCP-Lit*, 3.6.36.

²⁵ 1936, pp. 67-9.

²⁶ 1936, p. 104.

²⁷ *Bissell*, p. 171.

²⁸ *Bissell*, p. 176.

²⁹ 1936, p. 105.

³⁰ Glen Cavaliero, *John Cowper Powys: Novelist*, Oxford, 1973, p. 100.

³¹ 1936, p. 121.

³² 1936, p. 370.

³³ *Bissell*, p. 657.

³⁴ *Bissell*, p. 658.

³⁵ *JCP-Lit*, 4.9.36. Powys meant, of course, "the equivalent of between two and three hundred printed pages".

T. J. Diffey

John Cowper Powys and Thomas Hardy

I

More than half the books by John Cowper Powys contain references to Thomas Hardy. Since the subject-matter of many in which he is not mentioned is not relevant to him (such as *The War and Culture*), Hardy's presence in books of all the kinds that Powys wrote is even more remarkable.

I want here to study Powys's references to Hardy to get a picture of the relationship between the two writers including some idea of how Powys read Hardy's books. I shall be looking at the relationship mainly from the side of John Cowper, and not much at what Hardy's view of Powys was. I haven't scanned everything written by or about Hardy for references to John Cowper but what I have managed to collect is scant. This is not surprising, for Hardy unlike Powys was a secretive man who destroyed many of his private papers. Here, if anywhere, we might have hoped to find references by Hardy to Powys.

There is much more about Hardy in Powys, then, than there is about Powys in Hardy. And there is another reason why this is only to be expected. Although John Cowper was 55 years old when Hardy died in January 1928 in his eighty-eighth year, Hardy was already established as a leading man of letters when the two men first met some thirty or so years earlier. Indeed by the time of their first meeting Hardy had already written all his novels. And although by the time Hardy died John Cowper had achieved far more than most of us ever do it is worth noting that the author whom we value in John Cowper had scarcely begun to appear. Indeed in 1918, ten years before his death, Hardy remarked to John Cowper: "Your future is on the lap of the gods".¹ In terms of Powys's achievement, Hardy died

between the publication of *Ducdame* and *The Meaning of Culture*. The great Powys books were still to come. We cannot therefore expect between the two writers a relationship between equals, and should not be surprised to find instead the picture that John Cowper indeed creates: that of a disciple in worship of the master.

In this study I rely on published sources only. I also concentrate on the relationship between Hardy and John Cowper, and so largely overlook connections between Hardy and other members of the Powys family. I don't underestimate these and some I shall mention, but there is so much published reference to Hardy by John Cowper that here is more than enough material to draw on in one article.

Nobody is likely to grow up in Dorset in ignorance of Hardy, the "literary overlord"² of Wessex, indeed the recreator of our region's very name and identity. But (as I can testify) it was certainly possible (at any rate in the years after the Second World War) to grow up in Dorset in ignorance of the Powyses. When after reading Hardy I much later came upon John Cowper's books, it was at first with astonishment and then with mounting pleasure that I began to see how important to Powys Hardy evidently was. I want here to explore that importance.

The first member of the Powys family I came across in connection with Hardy was not John Cowper, however, but his brother, the architect, A. R. Powys, through a chance visit I paid to the church at Winterborne Tomson. Proceeds from the sale of manuscripts of Thomas Hardy's, found in the archives of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and dating from his time as an architect, were used to restore the church. A. R. Powys, Secretary

of the Society and instrumental in the restoration, is buried there.³ John Cowper tells the story in *The Pleasures of Literature* (615).⁴ Other members of the family with connections with Hardy include Llewelyn,⁵ Gertrude and Theodore. John wrote to Llewelyn from Chicago in November 1920: "Gertrude quite quietly says 'Thomas Hardy asked after you', just as if she said 'Shakespeare sent you his love' and leaves it at that—no more than so little".⁶

Much is no doubt to be written concerning T. F. Powys's relationship with Hardy. John Cowper told Clifford Tolchard that Theodore frightened Hardy who "quite jumped when Theo' came into the room".⁷ John also told Tolchard that Mrs (Florence) Hardy got on with Theodore splendidly (*Letters to Tolchard*, 29). Indeed John Cowper says elsewhere that Florence Hardy (Hardy's second wife) was "one of the best friends my brother Theodore and I have ever had or are likely to have" (*The Pleasures of Literature*, 605). She was evidently a good friend to Llewelyn too; her car was sent out to East Chaldon to convey him to Dorchester for the hearing of a libel case over a local girls' home.⁸

Mrs Meech may also be mentioned here. She ran a typing agency in Dorchester for many years and included among her clients Florence Hardy and John Cowper.⁹ He valued her capacity when typing his books, to read his handwriting unerringly.¹⁰

II

John Cowper Powys's admiration for Hardy was nearly but not quite lifelong: "it was not until I left Cambridge . . . that I so much as even *heard* of Walter Pater, or Henry James, or Thomas Hardy".¹¹ Ignorance of Hardy did not apparently prevent Powys from indulging in the fancy that when a schoolboy at Sherborne, he could project his spirit or "shadowy eidolon" out of his body to wander "over the Cerne Giant, over Mr. Hardy's by Fordington, till it reached, like the pitiful thoughts of poor Eustacia on Egdon Heath, the esplanade of its desire [Weymouth]" (*Autobiography*, 138).

After Cambridge, Powys lectured in girls' schools in Brighton and Hove. In Hove he acquired his first volume of Thomas Hardy—*Far From the Madding Crowd* (*Autobiography*, 224-225). Other acquisitions evidently followed; *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was purchased in Brighton¹² and it was a paper edition of this novel that Hardy presented to John Cowper at their first meeting (*Autobiography*, 228).

In Powys's writings three particular meetings with Hardy are described though evidently there were many more: John Cowper speaks of seeing Hardy "at intervals during a period of more than thirty years" (*The Pleasures of Literature*, 612) and Llewelyn tells of John paying his customary summer visit to Max Gate¹³ when, the implication is obvious, he was in England on summer leaves from his lecturing tours of the United States.

John Cowper's first book *Odes and Other Poems* (1896) included a poem "To Thomas Hardy":

O Master, thine a special meed of praise
From me whose heart is all thy sweet West's
own.

This tribute drew a postcard of thanks from Hardy and an invitation to the young poet to visit him at Max Gate, Dorchester.¹⁴ This first meeting, described in the *Autobiography*, must have been of a literary character. Powys told Hardy that he was like Wordsworth; the comparison was "accepted with approval, though it led to a characteristic animadversion upon Wordsworth's obstinate piety".¹⁵ Hardy, for his part, called Powys's attention to Edgar Allan Poe's "Ulalume" as a powerful and extraordinary poem" (*Autobiography*, 228). This remark must have made a deep impression on Powys for with differences of emphasis the story turns up several times in his writings. Hardy spoke "in impassioned praise" of "Ulalume" (*Visions and Revisions*, xxiv); showed "more passionate appreciation than I ever heard him display for *any other author*";¹⁶ and even in *Two & Two*, written not long before his death and a good sixty years after Hardy had delivered

himself of the opinion, John Cowper has Mr Wat Kums announce to the Raven, "Do you know who it was who taught me when I was a boy to repeat 'Ulalume'. None other than the great Thomas Hardy".¹⁷

The second meeting we know about is the return visit to Montacute, which Hardy paid with his first wife Emma, shortly after John Cowper's first visit to Max Gate. It is memorably described in Powys's *Autobiography*.¹⁸ John recalls the Hardys stepping off the train on their arrival: "He wore a light tweed suit, with knickerbokers to match, and he had thin black stockings on, about like those in which I had seen his friend, William Barnes [the Dorset dialect poet], walking so stately down South Walk [Dorchester]" (229). According to Llewelyn Powys, on the other hand, "Hardy, I remember, wore a pair of tight snuff-coloured trousers which oddly contrasted with the more sober colour of the upper part of his dress".¹⁹

Llewelyn adds that in the afternoon John took Hardy "over Montacute House and through the village, finally returning to the Vicarage in time for him to write in our visitors' book the words—*Thomas Hardy. A Wayfarer.*" John's version is slightly different. He reports that he showed Hardy the church and Abbey Farm but that "it was left to the son and heir of the squire himself to show these notable visitors over Montacute House" (*Autobiography*, 228). And Llewelyn's here colourless reference to our visitors' book is transformed: "Llewelyn, after his fashion, . . . has told how, when we took him down to the Robbers' Castle under the high garden-wall, and called upon him to write his name in the band's archives, he wrote, in that clear classic hand I had seen in the manuscript of *Tess*, 'Thomas Hardy, a Wayfarer'" (*Autobiography*, 229-30).²⁰

After coming out of Montacute church John showed the Hardys "the house where the most beautiful girl in our village lived" (228).²¹ Hardy's response to this was: "We get back to humanity, back, back to humanity, Powys!"²² It must have been on this visit that Hardy expressed his opinion of Eden Phillpotts (surely not so very far then

into his writer's career), "who was, he said, though he didn't care so much for his books, one of the nicest human beings he'd ever met".²³

The third meeting between Hardy and Powys that we have a specific account of is referred to by both writers. In *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy (1892-1928)* published in 1930 under Florence Hardy's name but largely composed by Hardy himself, we read that by 23 May 1918 Hardy had sufficiently recovered from a cough and cold,

to adjudicate at the Police Court on several food-profiteering cases, undertaken as being 'the only war-work I was capable of', and to receive some old friends, including Sydney Cockerell, John Powys, Lady Ilchester, and her mother, Lady Londonderry (187).

The meeting with John Cowper could not have taken place until well after 23 May because he was in America then and did not sail for England until June,²⁴ but in a letter to Llewelyn of July or August 1918 from Weymouth he gives a detailed and fascinating account of his visit to Hardy.²⁵

"Well, I had a perfectly lovely time with Thomas Hardy". There follows a portrait of Florence Hardy and an account of the conversation at tea which ran on domestic events, burning fir trees to save coal, a honeysuckle bush that had forced its way into the conservatory, about Hardy's "having fined an alderman (or magistrate) for profiteering over whisky, about the poetry of Walter de la Mare, about the question whether our Violet [Mrs T. F. Powys] is really related to him . . . about having given "Wood and Stone" to Lady Ilchester!"

John learned that the night before the visit Florence had read to Hardy John's essay on Henry James in *Suspended Judgements*. He left the Hardys having borrowed their copy of Walter de la Mare's novel *The Return*, "a fantastic strange tour de force". It was at his departure that Hardy said to Powys, "Your future is on the lap of the gods", and again he said, 'I wish you lived nearer . . .' There is no man of letters living

who can compare with this old peasant—Dorset. I love him” (*Letters to Llewelyn* 1, p. 259).

In his essay on Hardy in *The Pleasures of Literature* Powys has given us a remarkable portrait of the man whose features “have come to brand themselves on my consciousness as few other human countenances. There was much of the falcon about his aquiline nose and his hovering and ‘pouncing’ eye-glances, an intensity of regard that was accentuated by the slightness of his figure, by the curiously elfin tilt of his eyebrows, and by his trick of holding his head a little on one side, as though the frailty of his form were constantly deprecating the terrible and august passion of his thought” (612-13).²⁶

Llewelyn also records the impression that Hardy made on John Cowper: it is recognizably the impression just quoted but the situation and the telling are ruder than the version given in the polite tones of *The Pleasures of Literature*. On his return to Montacute from his first visit to Hardy, John, so Llewelyn reports, for the delight of his younger siblings, “drew for us a caricature on one of the white deal boards that formed the walls of this ‘Bushes’ home’, a striking picture that the passages of snail, ant and wood-louse were never able quite to obliterate. Especially did the sketch emphasize the novelist’s hooked nose and goblin eyebrows”.²⁷

Powys observed for himself what has become a cliché for us: namely that Hardy was a keenly observant man. The image of the falcon is not empty rhetoric. Powys saw Hardy, during his visit to Montacute “stand staring like one in a trance at a certain spot in the road, a spot where his eyes had marked down, as if he had been some wayfaring elf and no preoccupied biped, the microscopic rufflings upon an infinitesimal puddle that betokened the approach of frost” (*The Pleasures of Literature*, 614). In the *Autobiography* Hardy’s hawk’s eye also notices the frost, and in an allusion to Hardy’s lovely poem “Afterwards” John Cowper compares Hardy, “this other Dorset-born noticer of such things” to his father

(228-29).²⁸ Hardy’s self-description as “a man who used to notice such things” is taken up again in *The Pleasures of Literature*:

He was one to notice everything that moved over the face of that curved segment of the planetary rondure that we call Dorset. With the eye of a kestrel he noted all that scurried, crawled, waded, swam, or flew! He knew how to track the burrowings of the mole, the skulkings of the fox, the noon-sleep of the adder (614).

Near the end of his life John wrote to Louis Wilkinson: “I am a terrific hero-worshipper and genius-worshipper and I never feel ashamed to boast of my various encounters with Hardy or with Walter de la Mare” (*Letters to Louis Wilkinson*, 383).

John Cowper has left ample testimony that in this he was not exaggerating.²⁹ Earlier he had confessed his “obsequious Boswellianism”, his bowing and scraping to Old Hardy (*Letters to Wilkinson*, 119), and to Henry Miller he said: “I played Boswell to Hardy when I got the chance” (*Letters to Miller*, 48).

In the *Autobiography* the emphasis is not on bowing to Hardy—quite the contrary—it is on casting “all sense of proportion to the winds” and talking to country labourers “as I might talk—save for a more quickly beating pulse—to Thomas Hardy” (322).

I take “Boswellian” in the double sense, both as meaning that Powys, the young acolyte, defers to and respects Hardy, the established man of letters, just as Boswell deferred to Johnson, and that Powys serves, after a fashion, as Hardy’s biographer. Of course he has left us nothing like Boswell’s monumental *Life of Samuel Johnson*, but he has given us two fine essays on Hardy and scattered impressions in his other works.

John Cowper, then, is “a hero-worshipper of old Hardy” (*Letters to Benson Roberts*, 15). Hardy was his favourite novelist (along with Scott, Dickens and Dostoevsky), and “the most remarkable human being I’ve ever met” (save Henry Miller, Huw Menai and Theodore Dreiser, Dreiser being “(except old Hardy) by far the

most attractive man of genius I have ever met".³⁰ On another occasion Powys ranked Hardy as one of the three great men he had met in his life; the other two were Augustus John and Charlie Chaplin (*Letters to Wilkinson*, 338).

John Cowper's early romance *Wood and Stone* (1915) is dedicated "with devoted admiration to the greatest poet and novelist of our age Thomas Hardy". That devotion never slackened. Powys builds Hardy into his personal mythology; by this I mean that when he thinks about his own life he does so with an imagination steeped in Hardy. Often his references are of a simple, matter-of-fact kind. He might comment for example on passing the "small hill hamlet which is the scene of Hardy's *Trumpet Major*" (*Autobiography*, 48). Or when referring to reading he did as a schoolboy at Sherborne, he cannot forbear to add "at Mr Hardy's Sherton Abbas" (*Suspended Judgements*, 133).

Sometimes his use of Hardy is more arresting, however. Thus to journey into Sussex for the first time, after being accustomed to the landscapes of Somerset and Dorset, is like the experience of some literary person who has been reading Sir Thomas Browne and Thomas Hardy suddenly discovering "a volume of Water [sic] Pater" (*Autobiography*, 208).

One of the most prominent features of John Cowper's imagination is the pleasure he takes in the association of ideas. Hardy provides abundant material for Powys's associative faculties to work on. Thus "it is hard to see a dwindling hill-road without thinking of Hardy" (*Autobiography*, 308). Moreover, "Few lovers of Wessex can keep the thought of Hardy and his far-swooping hawk's eye out of their minds when they see the shafts of a deserted plough protruding from a bare hill-top, or the outline of a solitary human form silhouetted against a pale sky, or a horse and wagon following the dwindling perspective of some distant white road" (*Pleasures of Literature*, 614). One might add that now it is impossible to see a white track climbing the downs without thinking of John Cowper Powys.

When a girl in a Weymouth tea-shop brings him tea Powys thinks of Tess (*Autobiography*, 263), and when he revised with its publishers the scheme of *The Meaning of Culture*, this event took place in Fordington Field in sight, he adds, of Max Gate (*Letters to Henry Miller*, 55). Likewise, Dud No Man, surveying the prospect around Dorchester, observes "the sacred clump of trees planted by Hardy himself that marked the great writer's home".³¹

If John Cowper is a keen reader of Hardy he shares this taste with certain of the characters whom he puts into his novels. Powys lends his own bookishness to the characters he creates. Mrs Solent reads *The Trumpet-Major*;³² a youth in *Weymouth Sands* sits on the sea front reading *The Well-Beloved*.³³ Implausibly, Mr Um, in one of those curious late tales, *You and Me*, falls asleep reading *The Return of the Native* in bed, too happy to get out to turn out the light (15).

In *Rodmoor* interest turns on the fact that Hardy is *not* being read. Mrs Renshaw has been told by her daughter that Hardy is a great writer. Her nephew, Baltazar Stork, teases her that Hardy does not believe in God but that perhaps she'll come to him yet. Mrs Renshaw will not allow for the possibility of atheism. Deep down, she insists, everyone believes.³⁴ Does Mrs Renshaw here share the attitude that John Cowper's mother had to Hardy, at any rate to *Jude the Obscure*? Writing to Llewelyn, she observed, "I once began to read 'Jude' but I was much distressed by it and could not go on with it, and I thought it ought never to be published or be in a bookshelf. I cannot think that it is good for the soul and spiritual life to read such a book".³⁵

Not surprisingly the novel which is heaviest with references to Hardy is *Maiden Castle*. Eric Kennington's memorial statue to Hardy in Dorchester "that forward-gazing bronze figure",³⁶ makes more than one appearance. Powys's solution to the problem of how, in the wake of Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge* to set a novel in Dorchester, is to make open use of Hardy's masterpiece. Thus Dud soliloquizes: "It's

funny how I began my life in Dorchester just as the mayor began his, only Trenchard [sic] sold *his* woman and I bought mine!"³⁷

Inevitably there are gaps in John Cowper's knowledge of Hardy. He asked Llewelyn where the tower of *Two on a Tower* (which is set at Charborough Park near Wimborne) was. "It's not Hardy's monument, is it?" [the monument to Admiral Hardy at Portisham]. This is way off target. He then asked: "It's that funny one in the woods near Theodore's Moor, isn't it?" (*Letters to Llewelyn*, 1, 137). Does this get back on the right track? Where is Theodore's moor?

Powys is a connoisseur of Hardy's phrases and language. "Powys, I am feeling my age" seems especially to have caught his fancy, for he quotes it several times.³⁸ Other phrases that engage his imagination include "innate reciprocity", "taciturn congruity" and "crass casualty".

It has been suggested that John Cowper's imagination functioned most intensively when he was in exile from the Somerset and Dorset sources of his being. Powys took thought of Hardy and his works with him into exile, that is when he was travelling on lecture tours first in England³⁹ and later in America. Hardy imbues, for example, the multiplicity of exiles implied in these words written by John from Boston to Llewelyn: "I well know the distressed frown . . . with which you will read these foreign and chilling words [about Llewelyn's consumption], so far from Tess and Lodmore" (*Letters to Llewelyn*, 1, 95).

Intensely personal though Powys's attachment to Hardy was, I do not think that it was purely personal, for it sometimes seems to me that Hardy celebrates Wessex not as a local or regional writer but more in the manner that national poets speak for their peoples. Whether or not this is so, it must not be thought, however, that Hardy's focussing of attention on Wessex, until he seems both to speak for and to create it, was easily or simply achieved. He felt the pull of London where indeed, apart from his years as a young man there, and later, residence there with his wife Emma, he became a well-

known literary figure in the habit of spending some time most years. Hardy is pulled to what John Cowper, in this letter to Kenneth Hopkins, recalls him as rejecting: "I like to think of the way—like Brother Llewelyn—you *dig in* to your native soil for your Prestige as a poet as well as your happiness as a Wanderer. I recall Hardy saying 40 odd years ago just that very thing that he preferred a quiet half glory 'in situ' to all the acclamation of the Duchesses in London Town!"⁴⁰

In a characteristic attack on metropolitan and class values John Cowper says, "Hardy himself told me how careful he had to be not to let his megalopolitan admirers kill his genius; how he had to stick to his 'home town', as they call it in America, where such dangerous glory is mitigated by the malice of neighbourhood" (*Autobiography*, 559).

III

John Cowper's literary criticism of Hardy is mainly to be found in two essays: "Thomas Hardy" in *Visions and Revisions: A Book of Literary Devotions* (c. 1915)⁴¹ and "Hardy" in *The Pleasures of Literature* (1938). Besides scattered references in various other works to Hardy as a writer, Hardy also earns an entry (Nos. 70-74) in Powys's *100 Best Books* (1916, Village Press, 1975) where Hardy's contributions to John Cowper's frankly and "shamelessly" subjectively chosen 100 best books are *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Wessex Poems* (50). And there is also (what surely by intent or coincidence must be) John Cowper's obituary essay, "Thomas Hardy and his Times", published in *Current History* (XXVII) in March 1928.⁴²

John Cowper diagnoses three manners or styles in Hardy ("like Henry James"). The first is the "lighter, friendlier work" such as *Under a [sic] Greenwood Tree* and *The Trumpet Major*. Secondly come the great tragedies and thirdly, works that express "in quite a particular way, Mr Hardy's own peculiar point of view"—works such as *The*

Well-Beloved, *Jude the Obscure*, and the later poems (*100 Best Books*, 50).

Powys makes the point several times that it is form above all that appeals to Hardy: "One thinks of the words of William Blake: 'He who does not love Form more than Colour is a coward'. . . The iron plough of his implacable style drives pitilessly through the soft flesh of the earth until it reaches the architectural sub-structure" (*Visions and Revisions*, 167).⁴³ Hardy's early training in architecture

fell upon something eminently congenial in his temper . . .

His landscapes are the landscapes rather of a draughtsman than of a colourist; and it might be said that his supreme power as an artist lay in his genius for reproducing in words what you might call the *tactile values* of the things he looked at (*The Pleasures of Literature*, 613).

Powys discovers two distinct strains or tendencies in Hardy's writing: the sorrowful and the sly. Unusually, these became more distinctive as Hardy grew older, whereas many writers according to Powys "are most unscrupulously themselves when they are young" and mellow into a "more neutral tint" as they grow older (*Visions and Revisions*, 163). On the one hand, there is Hardy speaking for humanity and rebelliously taking its part against the established order of things. On the other, there is too zestful an interest—"a goblin-like alertness"—in the cruel turmoils humanity is caught up in for Hardy to be counted as an undivided rebel against the entire order of things from the political to the divine. Powys is quite right about that "little caustic by-play, for instance, with which he girds at the established order, never denouncing it wholesale like Shelley, or accepting it wholesale like Wordsworth—and always with a tang, a dash of gall and wormwood, an impish malice" (*Visions and Revisions*, 162-63). Powys brings out well here the mistake of supposing that Hardy has a single-minded credo. In reading Hardy one does not find distinctive programmes for political action or reform (why should

one?); yet at the same time, and this is why the thoughts of the reader of the Wessex novels will turn to questions of political remedy, Hardy is the least complacent of writers about things as they are. Indeed, he is abnormally sensitive to suffering and to injustice. Powys is fully aware of this. Hardy is "more sensitized to the sufferings of our race—especially to those that spring from the wounded hearts—and less padded with comfortable palliatives, less sprinkled with the holy water of forgetting" than any other writer, written about in *The Pleasures of Literature* save Shakespeare (606-7).

More than twenty years separate Powys's two essays on Hardy; in both he maintains that Hardy's sensitivity to suffering and his "Promethean" pity are at the heart of his genius as a writer.

Hardy champions "thwarted and frustrated mortality against the malefic element in life, whether he chooses to hypostasize this element as Demiurgic Malice, or to let it go as blind and purposeless chance" (*The Pleasures of Literature*, 612).

Powys's picking out the sorrowful and the malign in Hardy serves as a useful check to any indulgent congratulations we might otherwise direct towards Hardy on account of, or in thanks-giving for, his sensitivity to suffering. After all, Hardy carried this sensitivity as a burden (superbly caught by William Strang in his portrait in the National Portrait Gallery) without the consolations of religion. This is at the heart of Hardy's much-disputed pessimism, a description Hardy himself always repudiated.

Powys's diagnosis of complexity in Hardy is in fact in support of Hardy's own repeated protests against those who would try to pin him down in some one philosophical category or other, of which 'pessimist' is the most notorious. Nevertheless John Cowper insists that Hardy is a pessimist, one of the few we have in English literature (*Pleasures of Literature*, 605-6).

When *Jude the Obscure* was published, Hardy's friend Edmund Gosse, who should have known better, asked what Providence had done to Mr Hardy, that he should rise

up in the arable land of Wessex and shake his fist at the Creator.⁴⁴ Various answers, often biographical, have been offered to Gosse's question down the years. Powys sticks to the texts: Hardy sees that human beings are victims of the nature of the universe (*Pleasures*, 606). The "main driving-force of his genius is a philosophical arraignment of the ways of God to Man" (608).

Powys had already hinted in his *Visions and Revisions* essay that Hardy's attitude to suffering is not, however, innocent. "And yet for all this tragic pity, Hardy is a sly and whimsical chronicler. He does not allow one point of the little jest the gods play on us . . . to lose its sting" (162). This insight is deepened in a remark that Powys lets fall in *The Pleasures of Literature*, not in his essay on Hardy but in his essay on Goethe. Noting the place of sadism and masochism in literary genius, he observes that "Victor Hugo, Balzac, Thomas Hardy, and so many others, delight in *hunting down their feminine victims*" (*Pleasures*, 594). The fates of Fanny Robin, Tess and Eustacea were after all imagined by Hardy.

Powys acutely points out that the subject-matter of the Wessex novels is work. This may seem obvious until it is realised that work (or want of it), which is (or is still) one of the most pressing realities of life for most people, is curiously unobtrusive in many novels. Indeed its total absence from Dostoevsky's novels leads John Cowper into making some important judgements about just what the positive characteristics of Dostoevsky's imagination are.⁴⁵ Not that Powys presents Hardy as some sort of social realist. The picture he finally gives us is closer to his own practice as novelist: Hardy is the master of romance. "Swooping down like a hawk upon our human panorama, he sweeps aside all the modern tangle of social and pathological riddles, and concentrates upon the ancient undying tragedy of the love-hate between men and women" (*Pleasures*, 620).

How such a romance might begin, Powys nicely conjectures when inventing "some kind of romantic plot as if for—shall we say

—a novel by Thomas Hardy" he bids us pretend that:

there is a family living near Wyke Regis churchyard, any single member of which can easily be imagined taking at this particular time of day a Hardyesque stroll, with a heart full of suppressed feelings, from this grey churchyard to this solitary white gate.⁴⁶

More than once Powys reminds us of the obvious fact that Hardy is a writer of the countryside. Indeed the "whole trend of British literature from Shakespeare to Hardy has been country-ward rather than city-ward".⁴⁷

Writing to Louis Wilkinson in 1947 about what he has heard about David Cecil's book, *Hardy the Novelist* (1943), we find him taking a stricter line: "I hear he said that Hardy represented the writer from the country & its peasantry, whereas well do we know from T. F. P. that Hardy was essentially a writer *from the market-town* & not from the little village" (*Letters to Wilkinson*, 233). This is absurd and, for John Cowper, unusually querulous, though it is presumably Theodore speaking through John, and perhaps John seeking to please Wilkinson. In any case, why the either/or? Hardy's countryside includes, but is palpably not confined to, the market-towns.

Powys does not of course restrict his commentary to Hardy's subject-matter. He admires Hardy's distinctive style—"one can recognize any sentence of his, at least any descriptive sentence" (*Pleasures*, 622). Its grandeur and concentration, its fidelity to the object and sardonic tone engage his admiration.⁴⁸ He notes in Hardy's dialogues "a certain old-fashioned stiffness" but hesitates to criticize it, "for it is all part of his rather formal method" (*Pleasures*, 617). About this method, "I can remember well when he showed me the manuscript of *Tess*, how surprised and even perhaps a little shocked I was while he spoke of an earlier epoch when he was 'feeling about for a method'" (*Pleasures*, 622).⁴⁹

IV

John Cowper admired Hardy's poetry:⁵⁰ "Not to value Hardy's poetry as highly as all

but his very greatest prose is to betray oneself", he wrote in *100 Best Books*, "as having missed the full pregnancy of his bitter and lovely wisdom" (50). Not only did John Cowper write about the poetry; evidently he lectured on it too,⁵¹ and that we can be sure with great enjoyment. In the United States, for example, at Newburgh (which he renders Newbug) on the Hudson, "I lectured on TH in a church—clapt Wessex poems right on top of god's private little drinking cup and hummed and hawed in the right-hand chair side o' the holy table" (*Letters to Llewelyn*, 1, 38).

"I have an inkling that the author himself set a higher value upon his poetry than upon his prose", so Powys in his "Hardy" essay (*Pleasures*, 610-11) understates, when he knew full well of course what Hardy's opinion was. At their meeting in the summer of 1918 Hardy "told me to lecture on his poetry which he said alone interested him now" (*Letters to Llewelyn*, 1, 259).

Indeed John's regard for Hardy's poetry was one of the things in their relationship that seems especially to have pleased Hardy. Evelyn Hardy observes that Hardy was fortunate to receive praise and recognition for his poetry before his death: "That from the younger generation of writers, amongst them Sassoon, Masfield, Blunden, E. M. Forster, T. E. Lawrence, and John Cowper and Llewelyn Powys, was especially warming".⁵²

It is a tribute to Powys's insight that he should champion poetry so different from the conventional poeticizing of his own. Certainly he finds Hardy's "strange poetry",⁵³ but welcomes it (for all the "petrified forlornness"⁵⁴ he sees in some verses) as a unique and recognizable expression of Hardy's personality. John Cowper values the poetry highly but "for myself I would put certain great descriptive passages [in the novels] . . . above any verses he wrote".⁵⁵ Moreover, as early as 1916, when it was less obvious than it is maybe today, Powys was writing of Hardy that "His poetry, Wessex Poems, Poems of Past and Present [sic], Time's Laughing-Stock [sic], Satires of Circumstance, make up the

most powerful and original contribution to modern verse, produced recently, either in England or America" (*100 Best Books*, 50). Not of course that Powys himself would attach any significance to the fact that his judgement of Hardy's poetry put him in the critical vanguard. In criticism, or better, appreciation, as in everything else he is his own man. Powys went to literature not to be right but to enjoy. Therefore if from some orthodox viewpoint he can be deemed to have been right, he can just as easily from that same viewpoint be seen to have made bad errors. For if, given the esteem that Hardy's poetry has come to enjoy, John Cowper's praise of it can be seen to have been right, what he says about that same poetry commits him to the bad blunder of supposing that Edgar Lee Masters is equal in stature to Hardy—though note the hint of self-mockery in the last phrase of the quotation that follows:

It was an important moment in my life when I first set eyes on the author of *Spoon River*. I had never known, save in the case of Thomas Hardy, an original poet of first-rate philosophic weight and power, and I gazed with intense respect upon this one.⁵⁶

What makes Hardy's poetry so interesting, Powys thought, is that it "is the most intensely dramatic that we possess". Hardy's dramatic intensity is owing to his being "a master story-teller". Hardy's dramatic power gives the *Collected Poems* an absorbing interest that in comparison makes "half the contents of the Complete Works of Byron or even Shelley . . . uninteresting and unrewarding" (*Pleasures of Literature*, 611). But Powys wants it both ways. If the story-telling strengthens the poetry, Hardy's poetry, it seems, also supports him as a novelist, making the novels stand out against the "sour and flat" work of some subsequent writers (*Suspended Judgements*, 136-137).

John Cowper also thinks of Hardy as a pagan poet. This means that he regards death as an eternal sleep and that like Shakespeare, and conspicuously unlike those writers of the city, Dostoevsky and

Dickens, Hardy is not “ensorcerized by the sayings of Jesus”.⁵⁷ Of course Hardy is the pagan poet of *Tess* and the other novels; he is not pagan simply in the poetry. As often in Powys’s criticism, these remarks are thrown off by the way apropos of other writers and other topics. Powys’s perceptions are both apparently casual and acute; this, rather than sustained, close textual analysis, characterizes his criticism.

Similarly, therefore, Powys notes the tragic strain in Hardy’s writing without making much of it. Greek tragedy, not Shakespeare, is behind *The Dynasts*⁵⁸ and in Greek tragedy Hardy’s affinity is with Aeschylus.⁵⁹

A volume of Hardy’s poems entitled *Satires of Circumstance* was published in 1914. This was followed in 1917 by the collection *Moments of Vision*. Powys told Hardy that this was better than its predecessor.⁶⁰ Is this a case of the disciple flattering the master, automatically praising the latest work as the best? *Satires of Circumstance*, after all, contains what are now thought of as some of the finest poems in the language, Poems of 1912-13, written after the death of Emma Hardy, and including “The Going”, “The Voice”, “After a Journey”, and “At Castle Boterel”. On the other hand, in the earlier collection the “Satires of Circumstance” themselves are poor stuff, or at least some of them are, such as VI, “In the Cemetery”. Moreover, the volume Powys prefers ends with one of Hardy’s finest poems, “Afterwards”, and includes poems much loved by Hardy’s readers, such as “The Oxen” and such typical poems as “The Wind’s Prophecy”, “Midnight on the Great Western” and “For life I had never cared greatly”. So John Cowper’s preference is not craven, and in any case was sincere, for he repeated it to Llewelyn.

Moments of Vision includes within it “Poems of War and Patriotism”; here reprinted as the opening poem is “Men Who March Away” which John refers to in a letter to Llewelyn dated September 1914, and written on board the *Mauretania*: “We have the usual Cunard Bulletin every morn-

ing. This morning it contains Hardy’s Song of the Soldiers . . . which Theodore says his family are learning by heart” (*Letters to Llewelyn*, 1, 158).

V

In 1938 John Cowper observed: “I am old enough now to have lived through three great literary dictatorships. When I was at college, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche were the rulers of our spirit. When I first visited America, Anatole France and Thomas Hardy were our masters”. And in the thirties (“the decade that is now closing”) the ruling powers were Proust and Joyce (*The Pleasures of Literature*, 650).

John Cowper gave particular attention to two writers on this list: Hardy and Dostoevsky. He is particularly attentive to how they differ. He knows that the “adherents” of one are unlikely to be followers of the other (*Dostoevsky*, 18). Hardy is “with an engraver’s clean-cutting edge to his scalpel, subjective in his treatment of Nature” whereas Dostoevsky is subjective in his attitude to God, Christ, Mother Russia and the Church (56). Dostoevsky is more Shakespearian than Hardy “whose imitations of Shakespeare are architectural and monumental and have to do with the plots of the stories rather than the scenery” (25). Indeed Hardy, unlike Dostoevsky, “devotes large spaces of his time and the deepest clairvoyance of his being to the close observation of *scenery*” (97). Powys finds in Conrad, as in Hardy, the power “of conveying to the mind that close indescribable intimacy between humanity’s passions and the little inanimate things which have surrounded us from childhood” (*Suspended Judgements*, 358).

Nearly forty years later (14 December 1955) John Cowper wrote to Louis Wilkinson:

And from T. Hardy I learnt, long long ago, to see all human feelings, gestures, actions, & everything else!—my own and everybody’s—against the Inanimate Background of Nature, whether flat or mountainous or moorish or swampy & marshy or of desert sand.⁶¹

In what capacity did Powys learn from Hardy? In this study I have been more concerned with him as a reader of Hardy than as a writer. And indeed in the letter from which I have just quoted, Powys is more concerned with developing his philosophy of life than with his mastery of the craft of fiction. Indeed I do not myself detect any obvious influence of Hardy when I read John Cowper's romances. Certain scenes may remind one of Hardy, such as John Moreton's last walk in *After My Fashion*,⁶² and Gerda's bird song, in its shameless and exalted abandon of the guardedly mundane, may prompt one to recall the ecstasy of the sword scene in *Far from the Maddening Crowd*. But this sort of thing does not go deep. As Powys was impressed by the differences between Hardy and Dostoevsky, so we should emphasize the differences between Hardy and Powys as writers.

Powys, for all the emphasis in his reflective moments that he accords the dramatic and the thrilling conflict of one human being at odds with another, is not a story-teller in Hardy's class. Powys, to borrow Cavaliero's point, is a cerebral writer; indeed I have quite often found that people who revere Hardy find Powys unreadable.⁶³

I conjecture that the unreadability of Powys's romances, for those unfortunate enough to find them unreadable, consists in taking seriously what Powys himself always averred—namely that his supreme hero is Dostoevsky. I do not wish to argue here that Powys is a Dostoevskian writer; that

would have to be carefully considered and argued for. Here I want merely to suggest that John Cowper's own sense of the difference between Hardy's fiction and Dostoevsky's may be carried over into noting some contrasts between Hardy's novels and Powys's own romances.

Dostoevsky, Powys well knew, makes people uncomfortable in a way that Hardy, for all his gloom and pessimism, does not. It is, for example, far easier to sentimentalize Hardy than Dostoevsky. People have fallen in love with the Wessex novels, or with Hardy's Wessex, but whoever fell in love with *Crime and Punishment* or Dostoevsky's St Petersburg? There would be something pathological in this.

We do not go far wrong if we attend to John Cowper's diagnosis in this matter. Dostoevsky does not tell a plain and simple love-story. Hardy, however, "is the supreme novelist of the simple heart's emotion" (*Dostoevsky*, 51). Dostoevsky is not; nor do I think is Powys.

Even Thomas Hardy, though he divides and tortures his lovers by all manner of thwarting and blistering and blighting stars, takes for granted that the love between them is free from such pathological obliquities as sadism or masochism or exhibitionism or narcissism, and that though jealousy, 'cruel as the grave' may destroy them, their love to the end will be of the old faithful, loyal, ideal kind. (*Dostoevsky*, 51)

That phrase "pathological obliquities" points to Powys as well as to Dostoevsky. Certainly it points away from Hardy.

NOTES

¹ John Cowper Powys, *Letters to His Brother, Llewelyn*, Vol. 1, 1902-1925, Village Press, 1975, p. 259. All references hereafter to John Cowper Powys's books are to the Village Press editions unless otherwise indicated.

² John Cowper Powys, *Wood and Stone*, preface, p. xi.

³ Arthur Mee, *Dorset: Thomas Hardy's Country, The King's England* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1939), pp. 310-11. Mee, who pays tribute to A. R. Powys, reports that Powys's recreation was "seeing

country things". What a characteristic Powysian phrase that is. A. R. Powys died in 1936; the date is misreported as 1931 (the year that the restoration of Winterborne Tomson church was completed) in John Newman and Nikolaus Pevsner's *Dorset* (Penguin Books, 1972), p. 487. For an account of the life of A. R. Powys, which makes references to, and includes a photograph of, Winterborne Tomson church, see Stephen Powys Marks, "A. R. Powys: A Sketch of his Life and Work", *The Powys Review*, 10 (Spring 1982), pp. 49-66. See also the essay by Olive Knott,

"The Old Church that Hardy loved" in her *Dorset with Hardy* (Dorchester: Longmans, The Friary Press, no date but c. 1968), pp. 32-34.

⁴Notice John Cowper says "manuscript" in the singular. Mee, Knott, and Newman and Pevsner give "manuscripts" in the plural. When John Cowper comes back to the matter in his *Letters 1937-54*, ed. Iorwerth Peate, U.W.P., Cardiff, 1974, p. 37, he says "the sale of an MSS by T. Hardy", thus having it both ways, singular and plural. Stephen Powys Marks, *Powys Review*, 10, p. 55, says that in 1928 it was decided to sell certain papers of Thomas Hardy's, including the draft in his own handwriting of his paper to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1906. This must surely be the manuscript John Cowper is referring to in *The Pleasures of Literature*.

⁵For remarks about Hardy by Llewelyn Powys see "Some Memories of Thomas Hardy" (No. 64, 1969) and "A Visit to Thomas Hardy" and "At the Unveiling of the memorial Statue of Thomas Hardy, 1931" (No. 70, 1971) *Monographs on the Life, Times and Works of Thomas Hardy*, The Toucan Press, Guernsey.

⁶*Letters to His Brother Llewelyn*, 1, p. 285.

⁷*Letters to Clifford Tolchard*, p. 29. Is it surprising that Theodore made Hardy nervous? Llewelyn reports that during the *contretemps* in the relationship between the Hardys and himself, on account of his indiscreet report in his essay on Hardy in *The Dial of Hardy's speculations about the life of Keats and the harrasing of Hardy by Amy Lowell that this led to, Theodore refused to visit Max Gate. Florence Hardy had written to Llewelyn complaining of his ill-conduct. This letter arrived in East Chaldon just before Theodore was due to set off on a visit to the Hardys with John Cowper: "My brother Theodore", Llewelyn says in the Toucan Press Pamphlet, No. 64, p. 393, "though he had already put on his Sunday jacket, forthwith abandoned out of hand all idea of visiting Max Gate, and as those who knew him will guess, much Frome water had to flow under Grey's Bridge before ever he crossed the great man's threshold"*

⁸*The Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, Bodley, 1943, p. 196; *Advice to a Young Poet: The Correspondence between Llewelyn Powys and Kenneth Hopkins*, R. L. Blackmore, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1969, p. 68. There is an interesting study of Florence Hardy by Dr Marguerite Roberts in *The Thomas Hardy Year Book, No. 9*, Toucan Press, 1980. To my regret, it scarcely mentions the Powyses, though there are references to Llewelyn's account of the unveiling of Hardy's statue, presumably because they did not belong to the particular Max Gate circle that Dr Roberts identifies.

⁹D. F. Barber, *Concerning Thomas Hardy*, London: Skilton, 1968, p. 69.

¹⁰There are references to Mrs Meech in John Cowper Powys's *Letters to C. Benson Roberts* (p. 46) and to *Henry Miller* (p. 55).

¹¹*Autobiography* (1934), Macdonald, 1967, p. 181.

¹²John Cowper Powys, *Letters to Louis Wilkinson 1935-1956*, Macdonald, 1958, p. 18.

¹³Llewelyn Powys, "Some Memories of Thomas Hardy", Toucan Press Monograph 64, p. 393.

¹⁴*Autobiography*, p. 227; *The Pleasures of Literature*, p. 605.

¹⁵*The Pleasures of Literature*, p. 613. The comparison is well worth pursuing. Both poets have a tenacious, not to say prosy, respect for literal fact and both display a strong attachment to locality.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 528. The story is told twice in this book. It turns up again at p. 615.

¹⁷*Two & Two*, p. 23.

¹⁸This visit is also the subject of a paragraph in Powys's *Pleasures of Literature*, p. 614.

¹⁹Toucan Press Monograph 64, p. 390.

²⁰In *Advice to a Young Poet*, op. cit., pp. 41-42, it is reported that Hardy made the entry in the guest log of the Mabelulu Castle. John Cowper too tells of getting Hardy "to ourselves in the garden at Montacute, in a hiding-place called MABBESLULU", *Letters to Nicholas Ross*, p. 119. See also Stephen Powys Marks, "A. R. Powys, A Sketch of his Life and Work", op. cit., pp. 49-50, for a clear and authoritative treatment of the episode.

²¹Annie Geard—see *Letters to Louis Wilkinson*, p. 154.

²²In the same letter (last reference) Hardy's words are varied slightly: "Ho! Powys, we return to Human Matters".

²³John Cowper Powys, *Letters to Nicholas Ross*, p. 119.

²⁴*Letters to His Brother, Llewelyn*, 1, p. 256.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

²⁶At least two of Hardy's biographers quote from this description with approval: Evelyn Hardy, *Thomas Hardy, A Critical Biography*, Hogarth Press, 1954, p. 319; Harold Orel, *The Final Years of Thomas Hardy 1912-1928*, Macmillan, 1976, p. 6.

²⁷Llewelyn Powys, Toucan Press Monograph 64, p. 390.

²⁸This is not John Cowper's only attempt in the *Autobiography* to present his father in Hardyan terms. Like Tess, his father, he says, was born in the heart of the Blackmore Vale (*Autobiography*, p. 152); and "he was, as Hardy's Martie [sic] says of her Giles, 'a good man and one who did good things'" (*Autobiography*, p. 648).

²⁹Walter de la Mare (1873-1956), a contemporary of John Cowper's, is much less prominent in Powys's writings than is Hardy. Powys implies that he saw less of de la Mare because de la Mare lived far off (*Letters to Henry Miller*, p. 48). De la Mare, however, lived in London, and so was scarcely less inaccessible than Hardy; though after John Cowper had moved to North Wales in July 1935 London would have been too far away to visit.

³⁰*Letters to Henry Miller*, p. 45; *Letters to Llewelyn*, 1, p. 163.

³¹*Maiden Castle*, Macdonald, 1966, p. 196.

³²*Wolf Solent*, Penguin Books, 1964, pp. 408-9.

³³ *Weymouth Sands*, Macdonald, 1963, p. 473.

³⁴ *Rodmoor*, Macdonald, 1973, pp. 425-6.

³⁵ Quoted by Louis Marlow in *Welsh Ambassadors* (1936), Rota, 1971, p. 230.

³⁶ *Maiden Castle*, p. 393.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

³⁸ See for example *Letters to Louis Wilkinson*, p. 223. The phrase is preceded by "As old Hardy said to me": "Old Hardy" is an expression that turns up quite often in Powys's letters, where its familiarity is not out of place. It is, I think, a nervous term of endearment.

³⁹ See for example *Autobiography*, p. 309.

⁴⁰ *Advice to a Young Poet*, p. 159.

⁴¹ Powys, I infer, sent a copy of *Visions and Revisions* to Hardy in April 1915. Carl J. Weber and Clara Carter Weber, compilers of *Thomas Hardy's Correspondence at Max Gate: A Descriptive Check List* (Waterville, Maine: Colby College Press, 1968), p. 105, (No. 1963, April 1915) itemize a book of essays from Powys, "one of which was about Hardy".

Hardy kept the book, which Mrs Hardy read aloud to him, in the dining-room at Max Gate; he liked the essay on Shelley best and that on Dante least (John Cowper Powys, *Visions and Revisions*, Introduction, pp. xvi—xvii; *Letters to Louis Wilkinson*, p. 196). I have not discovered what Hardy thought of the essay about himself.

⁴² I've not read this essay, which is listed in *Thomas Hardy: An Annotated Bibliography of Writings about Him* by Helmut E. Gerber and W. Eugene Davis (Northern Illinois U.P., 1973), item 1366. Gerber and Davis report that Powys describes Hardy's fiction as being largely unaffected by the historical events of his era, one of England's "most momentous epochs", and sees the Wessex novels as a classic viaduct from the ponderous forums of the Victorian age to the hurly burly of the modern market place. Their synopsis ends with the observation: "numerous inaccuracies".

⁴³ Powys also indicates Hardy's preference for form over colour in his comments in *100 Best Books*, p. 51.

⁴⁴ "What has Providence done to Mr. Hardy that he should rise up in the arable land of Wessex and shake his fist at his Creator?", Edmund Gosse, review of *Jude the Obscure* in *Cosmopolis* (January 1896) reprinted in R. G. Cox, ed., *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*, 1970. The accusation, which rightly irritated John Cowper, that Sue and Jude talk University Extension jargon is also in this review.

⁴⁵ *Suspended Judgements*, p. 374; *The Pleasures of Literature*, p. 88; *Dostoevsky*, p. 33.

⁴⁶ *In Spite Of*, Macdonald, 1935, p. 112.

⁴⁷ "Dickens", *The Pleasures of Literature*, p. 117. Also see *Visions and Revisions*, p. 162.

⁴⁸ *100 Best Books*, p. 50; *The Pleasures of Literature*, pp. 622 and 531.

⁴⁹ This remark must have been made at an early meeting, if indeed not at their very first. John Cowper

in his *Dostoevsky*, published in 1946, reports that Hardy made the remark "half a century ago", p. 95.

⁵⁰ Among the items listed in the Webers's *Hardy's Correspondence at Max Gate*, is a letter from John Cowper Powys about Hardy's poetry, item 1976, 1 June 1915, p. 105.

⁵¹ For example, in Yorkshire late in 1907, *Letters to Llewelyn*, 1, p. 34.

⁵² Evelyn Hardy, *Thomas Hardy, A Critical Biography*, 1954, p. 313.

⁵³ *Visions and Revisions*, p. 211.

⁵⁴ *Suspended Judgements*, pp. 215-216.

⁵⁵ *Pleasures of Literature*, p. 611. The descriptive passages Powys means include the description of Egdon Heath at the beginning of *The Return of the Native* and the approach of the storm in *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

⁵⁶ *Autobiography*, p. 549. Later Powys says of Masters what has often been said of *him*: that Masters will treat sympathetic people "as if they were miracles of intelligent response, and even if they are very stupid he will still talk to them as if he were talking to Shakespeare" (p. 549).

Powys's admiration of Masters is noted by Geoffrey Moore in his *Penguin Book of Modern American Verse* (1954), p. 45.

⁵⁷ *Pleasures of Literature*, p. 73, pp. 118-119; *Dostoevsky*, p. 160.

⁵⁸ *The Pleasures of Literature*, p. 137. Powys says very little about *The Dynasts*. Theodore Dreiser, Powys says, "asked me so hesitatingly and nervously if I liked that 'poem of Hardy in three volumes'—indicating that he secretly admired it, but thought I would think it very bad poetry" (*Letters to Llewelyn*, 1, p. 172).

⁵⁹ *The Pleasures of Literature*, p. 140, p. 523. On the other hand, earlier John Cowper had picked up from Hardy, "The Sophoclean power of transubstantiating the burden of any victim's suffering . . . till . . . it becomes, by the sheer poetry of its identification with human suffering all the world over the very bread by which we live and move" (*Visions and Revisions*, p. xix, my italics). But Hardy's irony is not Sophoclean (*Pleasures*, p. 160).

⁶⁰ In correspondence sent to Max Gate in July 1918, see Weber and Weber, op. cit., item 2318, p. 118; and in *Letters to Llewelyn*, 1, p. 259: "And certainly I think his last book of poetry, "Moments of Vision", the very best one of all".

⁶¹ *Letters to Louis Wilkinson*, p. 338.

⁶² See my review in *The Powys Review*, 8, pp. 18-19.

⁶³ What Glen Cavaliero says about Lawrence and Powys, applies I believe, to Hardy and Powys too: "Admirers of the one man have seldom admired the other equally", "Phoenix and Serpent: D. H. Lawrence and John Cowper Powys", *Powys Review*, 2, p. 51. Lawrence is sometimes seen as Hardy's successor in the English novel.

Furse Swann

Thomas Hardy and the “Appetite for Joy”

Matthew Arnold in his famous essay on Wordsworth in *Essays in Criticism, Second Series* (1888) singles out Wordsworth’s capacity for conveying the experience of joy as central to our experience of his poetry, and sees it, indeed, as the principal cause of its greatness. Can we say the same thing, I wonder, of Hardy? Certainly joy is not the emotion that first springs to mind when one thinks of Hardy or his work. Yet without that experience I wonder whether Hardy would inspire the kind of devotion that he does. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the notion of ‘greatness’ as applied to Hardy’s poetry and the degree to which Hardy’s adopted phrase, the “appetite for joy”, is enshrined within it.

The negative image of Hardy, the image of those who feel little affinity with his work, is to be found, somewhat surprisingly, in R. S. Thomas’s poem, “Taste”:

for many a major
Poet, for me just an old stager,

Shuffling about a bogus heath,
Cob-webbed with his Victorian breath.¹

One would have thought the similarity of the problems that beset both R. S. Thomas and Hardy might have elicited a rather different response.

Such a disparagement and questioning of Hardy’s greatness, however, has been voiced more subtly, perhaps, by Donald Davie in his book, *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry*:

In most of the senses of ‘great’ as we apply it to poets, Hardy is not a great poet at all. He is not ‘great’ because, except in *The Dynasts*, he does not choose to be, does not enter himself in that competition.²

And Davie talks of his modesty:

His modesty was that of the expert technician, imperious within his expertise, diffident or indifferent outside it.³

And he goes on:

It begins to look as if Hardy’s engaging modesty and his decent liberalism represent a crucial selling short of the poetic vocation, for himself and his successors. For surely the poet, if anyone, has a duty to be radical, to go to the roots.⁴

Geoffrey Grigson, too, in a Hardy Society Birthday lecture a few years ago, talked of there being too much to question and negate and demolish in Hardy, very little that was positive. What was missing was the celebration of life; the rain fell too incessantly; there was an absence of “relish”.

My intention is to try to counteract this sense of disappointment, to suggest that, despite the tragic vision which is indisputably his (John Cowper Powys said that were it not for Shakespeare he “would be tempted to call Hardy the only great pessimist in our literature”),⁵ there is in his work also this very real experience of joy, call it if you will, with W. B. Yeats, a tragic joy that laughs into the face of death, but a joy nevertheless. Hardy quotes the Wordsworthian phrase, the “appetite for joy”, in *Tess* in that passage when Tess and Angel are driving back “through the gloom” having taken the milk churns to the station and Angel is seeking reassurance of her love for him. Tess clasps him to her and kisses him “with all her heart and soul”. “The ‘appetite for joy,’” comments Hardy, “which pervades all creation, that tremendous force which sways humanity to its purpose, as the tide sways the helpless weed, was not to be controlled by vague lucubrations over the social rubric”.⁶ Notice the

of time present and time past is something Hardy is acutely aware of, and more often than not there is a sense of the great divide that exists between past joys and present sorrows. But, then, too, there is a sense of the meaninglessness of time altogether as in the poem "In a Museum". Here the song of the contralto heard last night and the unheard but imagined (Keatsian) song of the now fossilised birds fuse together in the imagination of poet and reader alike and become part of that seamless "full-fugued song of the universe unending". And how right is the image of the fugue—the same tune repeated at different levels and on different instruments across the ages.

The tune goes on, as Hardy makes clear in "Apostrophe to an Old Psalm Tune". He has known the tune since childhood when "full of wonder, and innocent"; he has heard it "much riper in years" though, like him, somewhat changed:

You wore no frill,
And at first you startled me. But I knew you still,
Though I missed the minim's waver,
And the dotted quaver.

And the tune moves him to tears, "eyes-full"; and the tune is more than a tune, it is oracles, the receptacle of mysterious truths which make him "tremble":

Here in these turmoiled years of belligerent
fire
Living still on—and onward, maybe,
Till Doom's great day be!

The song—and how many of Hardy's poems *are* songs both in name and in spirit—the song is what matters.

Remember Dick Dewy again at Mellstock Cross:

The song (many times interrupted by flitting thoughts which took the place of several bars, and resumed at a point it would have reached had its continuity been unbroken) now received a more palpable check, in the shape of 'Ho-i-i-i-i-i!' from the crossing lane to Lower Mellstock, on the right of the singer who had just emerged from the trees. [The voice is that of Michael Mail] . . .

Dick Dewy faced about and continued his tune in an underwhistle, implying that the business of his mouth could not be checked at a moment's notice by the placid emotion of friendship.¹³

It is thought which interrupts the song—

Though I am not aware
That I have gained by subtle thought on things

Since we stood psalming there

—thought, again like Keats, opposed to sensation, feeling. And the emotion of friendship is "placid" compared with the emotion generated by the song. It's the *song* that really matters!

Hardy is a man, like us all, of moods. This is most eloquently expressed in the poem "So Various" with its final—and thirteenth—stanza:

Now . . . All these specimens of man,
So various in their pith and plan,
Curious to say
Were *one* man. Yea,
I was all they.

I have always thought that the contrast between himself and "The Darkling Thrush" is simply one of moods.

The aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,
In blast-beruffled plume

is one of Hardy's alter egos, to outward appearances a symbol of what he now is but also of what he once was, or would like to have been, flinging his soul,

In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound

—indeed. The joy defies reason, but it does not cease to exist because it appears irrational. The tension that exists between warm sensation and cold philosophy in Keats is fundamental to Hardy's work too. Indeed, there are close parallels between the vision of Hardy and that of the suffering Moneta in "The Fall of Hyperion". Both look down on the world with a deep and painful compassion.

And notice, too, the significance of the image of the "tangled bine-stems", which "scored the sky / Like strings of broken lyres". The lyre is traditionally the instrument of Apollo, the god of poetry, the seven stringed instrument symbolising the underlying harmony of the universe.¹⁴ Now, in these years, the strings are tangled, the score no longer in parallel straight lines but twisted, tangled. The strings of the Mellstock choir are no longer played but they live on in Hardy's writing, as the "lutes" and "viols" and voices of the heavenly "band all in white" in "The Choirmaster's Burial" continue to sound, like the "multitude of the heavenly host",

Singing and playing
The ancient stave
By the choirmaster's grave.

It is just a tale, but a wonderfully *good* tale in every sense of the word—and a marvellous put-down for the vicar! Like all good fairy tales, the tale embodies the truth of the dream. And we remember W. B. Yeats's remark in a letter three weeks before he died: "Man can embody truth but he cannot know it".¹⁵ So, too, the thrush. The "Hope" of which perhaps it sings *may* be an illusion, a dream, but the dream can embody a "truth" just as what we like to call "reality" embodies another "truth".

Ultimately, optimism and pessimism, the dream and the reality, pain and pleasure, joy and woe, are not opposites but complements one of another—as William Blake knew well:

Man was made for Joy and Woe
And, when this we rightly know
Thro' the World we safely go.
Joy and Woe are woven fine
A Clothing for the Soul divine;
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.
("Auguries of Innocence")

Just as Mnemosyne and Moneta in the two 'Hyperions' are personifications of Memory and reveal to the young Apollo and to Keats himself respectively the nature of reality—a reality once known, then forgotten, and

now recovered—so Hardy goes back in memory to a reality once known (in childhood or during those first years with Emma), then lost, but which in memory and in imagination and in his art he recaptures permanently. Thus, too, Wordsworth in the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality". (And how close the opening of "Before Life and After" is to that poem:

A Time there was—as one may guess
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell—
Before the birth of consciousness,
When all went well.

In both there is a yearning for that dream-world before the Fall, a nostalgia for Paradise.) Or, again, compare Coleridge in "Kubla Khan":

Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long
I would build that dome in air . . .

And it is just this that Hardy does, whether it is the "mindless . . . outpourings" of his childhood at Stinsford "singing one-voiced" "And swaying like the trees" or the time with Emma "when our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers". And the recreation of these moments of joy are no less real because they partake of what Mircea Eliade calls "sacred time", a time that transcends time, rather than "derisory" time.¹⁶ Hardy revives the song of memory and builds his dome in air.

Hardy's thrush and Keats's in "What the thrush said" are caught up in those of Edward Thomas in "March", only his third poem, written in December 1914:

What did the thrushes know? Rain, snow,
sleet, hail,
Had kept them quiet as the primroses.
They had but an hour to sing. On boughs
they sang,
On gates, on ground; they sang while they
changed perches
And while they fought, if they remembered
to fight;
So earnest were they to pack into that hour
Their unwilling hoard of song before the
moon

the heart of our planetary universe had a more mystical effect upon him than any other phenomenon between earth and sky. The only thing superior to it in its power to stir him was the dazzling glitter of the sun on the sea. Sunlight and water—whether the water were salt or fresh—always struck Sylvanus as being the nearest revelation of the Ultimate Being that man could attain!¹⁹

In fact, as Sylvanus Cobbold goes on to say: "the Absolute was to be found in the concrete and not in the abstract, in thought dipped in the life-juice".²⁰ This is clearly a more zany and more mystical awareness of the importance of apparently unimportant things than one finds in Hardy, but a poem like "The Little Old Table" or "Old Furniture" or "On a Discovered Curl of Hair" all testify to the importance of the apparently trivial. And they are important because of their associations. Even "the feeble light, which came from the smoky lamp of a little railway station" (the station referred to earlier, to which Tess and Angel drove) Hardy describes as "a poor enough terrestrial star, yet in one sense of more importance to Talbothays Dairy and mankind than the celestial ones to which it stood in such humiliating contrast".²¹ What price 'greatness'? And who but Hardy would ever have written a poem upon a "Pat of Butter"?

Once, at the Agricultural Show
We tasted—all so yellow—
Those butter-pats, cool and mellow!
Each taste I still remember, though
It was so long ago.

This spoke of the grass of Netherhay,
And this of Kingcomb Hill,
And this of Coker Rill:
Which was the prime I could not say
Of all those tried that day,

Till she, the fair and wicked-eyed,
Held out a pat to me:
Then felt I all Yeo-Lea
Was by her sample sheer outvied;
And, 'This is the best,' I cried.

Notice the particularity of it all—of the occasion, of "each taste", of "This . . . And

this . . . And this . . ." And yet what matters, as so often in Hardy, is not so much the thing itself but the human association: the girl, "fair and wicked eyed", who held out the pat of butter for him to taste, and in doing so caught his eye and his heart.

There are countless poems, too, where Hardy simply records what his eye has observed with pleasure (and one recalls Stephen Dedalus, on the Dublin shore, remarking: "Signatures of all things I am here to read"),²² like the description of Hampton Court in "A Spellbound Palace":

On this kindly yellow day of mild low-
travelling winter sun
The stirless depths of the years
Are vague with misty blues:
Across the spacious pathways stretching
spires of shadow run,
And the wind-gnawed walls of ancient
brick are fired vermilion.

Or the encounter with "seven buxom women" one icy day on Yell'ham Hill in "Ice on the Highway", laughing loudly "as they stagger and slide!" Or the acceptance of all weathers, rain, snow and sun, and of all farm chores, in "We Field-Women". Hardy is no romanticiser of country life but neither does he minimise the intense pleasure that it sometimes gives. Take, for example, "Four in the Morning" when

Earth is a cerule mystery
As if not far from Paradise
At four o'clock . . .

And yet Hardy was not first up. There is another,

Taking his life's stern stewardship
With blithe uncure, and hard at work
At four o'clock!

For all the sense of personal isolation and loneliness in Hardy, as in Powys, there is also an intense awareness of the lives of others, above all in the experience of love shared, between people. There is a delightful anecdote in his *Autobiography* when Powys recounts his second meeting with Hardy on his being invited with Emma to Montacute. They had been shown round the village and had visited the Abbey Farm and

the parish church, and Powys relates "how, as we issued forth from these symbolic meditations amid the tombs of Mr. Phelip's ancestors, and I pointed out to our visitors the house where the most beautiful girl in our village lived, (Hardy) gave a curious little start. 'We get back to humanity, back, back to humanity, Powys!' he chuckled".²³ And the greatness of Hardy, of course, is precisely in his humanity.

Much has been said about Hardy's love poems, and the greatness of the "Poems of 1912-1913" in particular has been widely recognised. Indeed, Jon Stallworthy has written: "Love betrayed, eclipsed and suffering (is) perhaps the central theme of all Hardy's work".²⁴ But the poignance of the betrayal, the eclipse and the suffering would not be so great had there not also been the joy.

In "A Procession of Dead Days" Hardy records a succession of days he will "not soon forget"—a "ghost day of delight", a "day that brought the kiss" and,

Ah, this one. Yes I know his name.
He is the day that wrought a shine
Even on a precinct common and tame,
As 'twere of purposed aim.
He shows him as a rainbow sign
Of promise made to me and mine.

It is the ordinary, "the common and tame", that so often is transformed, made to "shine", rainbow-like, in Hardy's experience. Or, again, of another day:

The next stands forth in his morning clothes
And yet, despite their misty blue
They mark no sombre custom-growths
That joyous living loathes,
But a meteor act, that left in its queue
A train of sparks my lifetime through.

Not only does Hardy testify here to his experience of "joyous living", but the day, like "a meteor act", leaves "A train of sparks *my lifetime through*". It is not just "moments of vision" Hardy is concerned with, but a *procession of moments* which accompany him in experience or in memory a "lifetime through".

In poem after poem it is the imagery of light that strikes the reader. In that lovely

poem, "The Last Signal", it is the light, "the sudden shine" on Barnes's coffin that "flashed the fire of the sun that was facing it, / Like a brief blaze", which seems like a personal farewell "signalled on his grave-way, / As with a wave of his hand". Nothing could be more personal, more moving, more cheering. In "The House of Silence", Hardy talks of "a mind with sight" that sees *beyond* the silence and the dark trees surrounding the house to the dancing figures which together with "music and laughter like floods of light / Make all the precincts gleam". It is "a poet's bower" (echoes, again, of Keats),

Through which there pass, in fleet arrays,
Long teams of all the years and days,
Of joys and sorrows, of earth and heaven,
That meet mankind in its ages seven,
An aion in an hour.

And here we are back with Blake. Time to the visionary, to the "mind with sight", is a largely meaningless concept; to be absorbed by it, indeed, is almost derisory. All right—all things come to an end, but so what? Death comes to all.

What then? Joy-jaunts impassioned flings
Love and its ecstasy,
Will always have been great things,
Great things to me.

Not even death takes away that joy, that passion, that love, that ecstasy. And in his art, as Hardy himself said in the *Life*, all natural things, however defective, are capable of being "irradiated" with "the light that never was", seen, again as with Blake, not with the natural eye but with "the spiritual eye".

No essay which seeks to draw attention to Hardy's realization in the moment of the "appetite for joy" would be complete without reference to one of Hardy's finest poems, "At Castle Boterel". Here, far from taking issue again with Donald Davie, I would merely applaud his reading.²⁵ What matters in this poem is quite simply that "minute".

It filled but a minute. But was there ever
A time of such quality, since or before,

A kiss. Just that. "It cannot have died; that know we well". And it travels onwards, "Far from earth's bounds / In the infinite". Who says Hardy wasn't a man of faith?

NOTES

¹R. S. Thomas, *Laboratories of the Spirit*, 1975, p. 34.

²D. Davie, *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry*, 1973, p. 39.

³*Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵J. C. Powys, *The Pleasures of Literature*, 1938, p. 606.

⁶T. Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 1895, p. 248.

⁷J. C. Powys, *Wolf Solent*, 1929, p. 642.

⁸J. C. Powys, *The Pleasures of Literature*, p. 605.

⁹*Under the Greenwood Tree*, 1898, p. 34.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 269.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴K. Raine, "Traditional Symbolism in Kubla Khan", *Studies in Comparative Religion*, 1967, p. 114.

¹⁵J. Hone, *W. B. Yeats*, 1971, p. 480.

¹⁶M. Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, 1968, pp. 57-71 and *Images and Symbols*, 1961, pp. 57-59.

¹⁷K. Marsden, *The Poems of Thomas Hardy*, 1969, p. 73.

¹⁸J. Bayley, *An Essay on Hardy*, 1978, p. 19.

¹⁹*Weymouth Sands*, (1934), 1963, pp. 391-2.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 402.

²¹*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, p. 243.

²²J. Joyce, *Ulysses*, 1937, p. 33.

²³J. C. Powys, *Autobiography*, 1934, p. 228.

²⁴J. Stallworthy, "Read by Moonlight", *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy*, ed. P. Clements and J. Grindle, 1980, p. 175.

²⁵D. Davie, "Hardy's Virgilian Purples", *Agenda*, 1972, p. 115.



Charles Lock

Confessions of Two Brothers

JOHN COWPER POWYS and LLEWELYN POWYS.

Sinclair Browne, 1982; £7.95 (hardback), £3.50 (paperback)

Confessions of Two Brothers, the book published in 1916 by Claude Bragdon's Manas Press, of Rochester, New York, has now been published for the first time in England, providing an occasion for modest celebration and an opportunity for reassessment.

As the shape and nature of the book were so largely determined by external factors, and as the book's greatest weakness is its failure to conceal that, it seems a useful and mitigating exercise to present in detail the story of this odd work's origin.

By the beginning of 1915 the entire Powys family had just one published book to its credit, John's *The War and Culture*; his first two books of poetry had been charitably printed by William Rider and Son, managed by the Powys's aristocratic cousin, Ralph Shirley, and John and Louis Wilkinson had together financed the printing of Theodore's *Interpretation of Genesis*.¹ None of these books yielded any profit, nor gained for their authors any significant readership outside the family. In terms of publication and circulation there could hardly be a greater contrast between these and *The War and Culture*, hastily written and published in October, 1914; being topical and polemical it not only brought John fame and respect but also, a reprint being required just two weeks after publication, inaugurated John's career as a professional author—however fragmentary and insecure that career was to be.² Its success was the more remarkable and unexpected in that it was the first title of a new publisher, Arnold Shaw, who had been Powys's lecture-manager for some years. Shaw promptly followed up this auspicious opening with *Visions and Revisions*, published in

February, 1915, and reprinted four times within the next twelve months.³

These two being the only books that he had published, Shaw had good reason to be confident, and to make ambitious plans. It was probably at the time of the publication of *Visions and Revisions* that Shaw and John Cowper agreed on the publication of a long novel, *Wood and Stone*, to be written in the summer and published in the autumn of 1915. The publication of this novel should have coincided with the publication of a more unusual and logistically still more ambitious book, which was certainly planned in February of 1915. In that month John wrote letters to four of his brothers, of which only that to Llewelyn, dated 20 February 1915, survives:

Now look here—Arnold and I have 'a stunt on'. We are announcing for the Autumn a book entitled *Confessions* by the Six Brothers Powys.

. . . I've just written to inform Littleton, Theodore and Bertie that they will have to write each of them an article of 12,000 words, the whole book to be 300 pages of big print . . . Littleton can write about his ideal of Education, Bertie about his ideal of Architecture, and you can give old Will a few guiding hints . . .

Of course old Bob [Theodore] can be safely left to astonish us all by some masterpiece of irony! and what will Lulu write? Why shouldn't the Powys Brothers compose such a book as has never in the History of the World ever been written? I love the idea of all of us going down to posterity together—even as we have lived.⁴

This last sentence, exemplifying the Powys clannishness, is particularly odd considering that John was in New York, Llewelyn and

Will in East Africa, while the other three brothers were in England but in no sense together. Mary Cowper Powys, the centre who held them all, had died in July 1914, and one might see in John's plan an attempt to create a permanent bond, or at least to memorialise the relationship between the brothers as it had been while the mother was alive.

There is no space here to analyse the influence of the mother and the effect of her death on the children. One aspect, however, is of relevance, the notion that the Powys children owed their first allegiance to each other, and that only from each other would any of them receive any help in this world. The legacy of this, felt acutely just after the mother's death, seems to have constrained John from making a literary career for himself unless his brothers could share his success. (John must have assumed that his sisters were supposed to emulate Mary Cowper's ideal of sacrifice. Very interestingly, while John made no attempt to get his sisters into print, he was, at the end of 1915, trying to persuade Shaw to publish something written by his wife Margaret.)

At this date there was not yet in the family a clear distinction between the writers and the others. That John is already focusing on posterity is evidence of his vast assurance of his family's literary genius—on the basis of no publications. "Of course" Theodore would produce a masterpiece, even though he had so far—with one slight exception—been read only in manuscript, only by partisans. It was assumed by John that all the brothers would be capable of producing something worthy of posterity's attention. It so happened that John's generous offer, a crucial opportunity for publication, was taken up only by those who had been found unfit for military service—Theodore and Llewelyn. Bertie and Will were both in the army, and Littleton was exempted from active service only because of his value as a schoolmaster; not surprisingly, his sense of patriotic obligation did not permit unnecessary diversion of energy.⁵

Arnold Shaw's deadline for receipt of manuscripts was 1 August 1915.⁶ Theodore

set to work almost immediately after getting John's letter, for his contribution was written in the spring of 1915.⁷ By the beginning of June it was decided that only three brothers would contribute:

the Confession Book is nearly finished & Lulu is doing his part. It will be us three alone. Theodore is very delighted with the idea—it is worth it for that only—dont you think so?⁸

John had finished his part by 19 June, and he then began working intensively on *Wood and Stone*.⁹ At the end of October Shaw rejected John's contribution, and shortly afterwards he rejected Llewelyn's; given the nature of the project, Theodore's part, though not rejected, could not be accepted.

There is no reason why Shaw should have taken three months to make this peculiar and unexpected decision. At some date somebody must have realised that, if only three brothers were contributing, each would have to double the length of his piece, to 24,000 words, in order to make a full-length book. Shaw presumably extended the deadline to mid or late October, 1915, it being in his own interest that John first finish *Wood and Stone*, enabling Shaw to publish one of his autumn titles as scheduled. Llewelyn never found the time to add to his part, and on 11 October he sent John his original 12,000 words together with his diaries, and asked John to weave them together until the desired length was achieved.¹⁰ On 29 October John was in the middle of a long lecture-tour of the mid-West, and had not yet received Llewelyn's package; by that date Shaw had already told John of his rejection, but had not told John that, as we shall see, he had also intercepted and rejected Llewelyn's part.

Typically, although very annoyed himself, John felt particularly sorry for Theodore who had done everything as instructed, and whose piece had to be sacrificed through no fault of its own. Somehow between John's fraternal sense of injustice and Shaw's capricious sense of business, *A Soliloquy of a Hermit* was created. It has long been known that this

book was an off-shoot of *Confessions*, but it has not, I think, been noticed how closely we can follow its construction through the vagaries of 1915. It is evident that Theodore's original 12,000 word "confession" makes up sections 1-11 of the published book, for section 12 opens:

The first part of my confessions . . . are [sic] finished.¹¹

In that first part, however, the word "confessions" is not once used. One guesses that John, asking Theodore to write twice as much, also reminded him that it should be a "confession", not just random thoughts of an autobiographical nature. Llewelyn had also been reminded of this by John, one suspects, and it was this that prompted the disclaiming "Foreword" to Llewelyn's part:

I do not think these vague autobiographical ramblings should . . . bear the title of Confessions.

Theodore attempts to redress the situation, however, and refers to "the first part of my confessions" in sections 12 and 13, and in section 14 he addresses the reader of "a confession like this".¹²

Theodore's most blatant solution to the problem of length is his incorporation into section 13 of the quite independent story of Mr. Thomas, making that section far the longest in the book. That story is so memorable, and of such an independent quality, because it is organically distinct from the rest of the book. Another excuse for word-consuming expatiation was suggested by John, as Theodore indirectly reveals:

I am told by one wiser than I that I must throw more light upon this subject of immortality that I have alluded to here and there.¹³

Provided in diverse ways with further material, Theodore managed, with characteristic precision, to expand his contribution from almost exactly 12,000 words to almost exactly 24,000 words.

Having supervised and encouraged its enlarged form, John probably took Theodore's share of the book with him to

America when he left England on 11 September 1915. When John's part was rejected at the end of October, he attributed some of the blame to Shaw's preoccupation with *Wood and Stone*, due to be published on 13 November.¹⁴ On 7 November John returned to New York City after his lecture-tour of the mid-West, and there he saw Llewelyn's piece for the first time.¹⁵ Without informing John, Shaw had already rejected it, and probably written to Llewelyn himself; a letter from Llewelyn to John about the rejection of Llewelyn's confessions is dated that same 7 November.¹⁶ Llewelyn's package must have been addressed to Shaw as well as to John, or just the former, and Shaw decided on his own that a scissors and paste job by John would not make sufficient improvement to Llewelyn's part.

On his own account Llewelyn was not especially disappointed or surprised by his rejection, based on what he knew to be inadequate:

I've felt no satisfaction in them since they left my hands. It was a very difficult thing to do. I think though that it has been a disappointment to East Chaldon.¹⁷

Of that guilt towards Theodore felt, independently, by both John and Llewelyn, Shaw took swift and cynical advantage. To redress the unfairness of Theodore's plight was best done by publishing his part on its own, and Shaw was confident of its commercial viability. A small volume duly appeared in January 1916 as *The Soliloquy of a Hermit*; sales through 1916 earned Theodore the not entirely contemptible sum of ten guineas,¹⁸ and it has been reprinted many times since, by three different publishers in England alone.¹⁹

The letter of 27 October 1915, in which John told Llewelyn about the rejection by Shaw of his part of *Confessions*, was written in Rochester, a city in upstate New York, on Lake Ontario. Powys had a friend there, Claude Bragdon, who loyally attended all his lectures, and whose presence in the audience encouraged John to be outrageous.²⁰ That much Powys tells us

himself, in the *Autobiography*, and, as with so many of his highly-praised and exotic-seeming friends, much depends on the eye of the beholder. Bragdon (1866-1941) was an interesting, many-sided and somewhat pompous man, primarily an architect—student and disciple of Louis Sullivan—also a theatre-designer, occultist and author of at least twenty books, most of which he published himself.²¹ The Manas Press, which he started in 1909, was non-profit-making and published only what Bragdon wrote and what he liked.²² Of literary importance, apart from *Confessions*, Bragdon's most significant publication was *Verse* by Adelaide Crapsey (whose memorable name is too often forgotten).

Bragdon's account of how he came to publish *Confessions of Two Brothers* is to be found in *The Secret Springs—An Autobiography*, published in 1938. Writing over twenty years after the event, Bragdon confused two distinct episodes and has misled commentators ever since. I quote the relevant passage:

Powys was devoted to his younger brother Llewelyn, who aspired to authorship, and to that end had written a diary of his experience in a Swiss sanatorium for consumptives where he had spent a dreadful winter. To help him get this story into print John supplemented it with one of those long essays in introspection at which he was a past master, and naming the joint product *The Confessions of Two Brothers*, he sought a publisher. I read the manuscript and liked it so well that I offered to publish it myself, and did so.²³

The shift from “a diary” to “this story” reveals Bragdon's confusion of Llewelyn's *Confessions*, which he published, and some short stories—essentially those of *Ebony and Ivory*—which he turned down.²⁴ This does not, however, entirely explain Bragdon's muddled account; of at least equal importance is that this, surely, was John's version of events. He could not hope to interest another publisher in a manuscript known to have been rejected by his own lecture-manager who had, furthermore, virtually commissioned it. This is an excellent example of Powys's cunning, for,

with deceit and a hard-luck story, he plays accurately on Bragdon's character: his vanity, his willingness to patronise, and his naive self-importance. It may have been Powys's conscience, always burdened by a deed such as this, that pricked him to compliment Bragdon in the *Autobiography*, thus by flattering another to assuage his own guilt.

It remains uncertain whether, in the summer of 1915, John had the time to make his “Confession” twice as long; it is at least unlikely, considering that in that summer he wrote the whole of *Wood and Stone*. When Powys expressed his feelings about the rejection he wrote: “It annoys me that I wasted those three weeks—and I like what I did”.²⁵ Three weeks seems an exceptionally long time for John to write 12,000 words, given that in *Wood and Stone* he wrote eighteen times as much in about fifteen weeks. If one supposes that John had written the final version of 30,000 words by October, one then has a more consistent rate, of 10,000 words per week for *Confessions*, 15,000 words per week for *Wood and Stone*. Circumstantial evidence, however, is against such a simple solution: if John had not seen Llewelyn's part until November, and did not know until then that he had been unable to add to his 12,000 words, why would he have written 30,000 words? We know that what John had finished on 19 June 1915 was not his final version as published, for that exists in manuscript, prepared for the printer, while the 19 June version was typed by Ticknor Edwards, a neighbour at Burpham.²⁶ From manuscript and internal evidence the final version seems to fall into three segments: sections I-III, which in the manuscript are not so divided but form a single “Preface”, sections IV-VIII, and sections IX-XI. Sections IV-VIII are much the most interesting and lively, and probably constitute the version completed on 19 June; in them he refers to “well-constituted people”, a major theme of the contemporaneous *Wood and Stone*. John then wrote sections IX-XI probably at the end of 1915, for he speaks of the effect of war on his literary work: “I have written more

laboriously, more carefully, in this last year, than ever before in my life".²⁷ And in the "Preface" he writes about the "Confessions" that he has already written: "What I have attempted to do . . ." (C, 41)

Before presenting the manuscript to Bragdon, probably near the beginning of 1916, John must not only have added substantially to his part, but he must also have carried out Llewelyn's wishes with regard to his contribution; that is, to weave some diary extracts into Llewelyn's 12,000 word original, and to "cut out anything insipid".²⁸ The revised version of Llewelyn's part still contained only 16,000 words, and it must have been when John had completed his work on this that he wrote the "Preface" to his own part, bringing his total from 24,000 words to 30,000 words, and the total for both parts to 46,000, almost the 48,000 words that Shaw had wanted by October.

After acceptance of the manuscript, Bragdon seems to have left John's part untouched but to have made two small changes in Llewelyn's part, which made Louis Wilkinson angry.²⁹ We would expect Wilkinson to be irritated by the dilution from "Some women are made only for embraces, and should never be permitted out of their beds" to "Some women are intended for embraces alone", even though the change makes the sentiment no more acceptable and no less typical of its author. Llewelyn's section was also bedevilled by misprints—"Mr Bragdon seems fond of fooling me" he wrote to John³⁰—of which one of the more obvious, "The Dairy of a Consumptive", was corrected before going to press. But "rabbits" instead of "pierrots" continue to be "pirouetting, fantastically silhouetted against the Atlantic" (C, 223),³¹ and in every single case Llewelyn is *sic*. Despite these minor bothers there was general admiration for Bragdon's design of the book, with its attractive layout and lettering, the ethereal corpse on the end-papers, and the strong binding.³²

On 21 February 1916 *Confessions of Two Brothers* was published, Bragdon being entirely unaware of the title's diminution—

which now of course and quite by chance has the benefit of a Tennysonian echo—and of his unwitting salvage of a sorry mess.³³ The book generated some interest, and was quite widely and favourably reviewed; demand was at least sufficient to over-extend the distributing facilities of the Manas Press, and in October 1916 Bragdon handed over the stock to Knopf.³⁴ Over the years Knopf presumably continued to distribute the book, but they never reprinted it and for a long time it has been a rarity.

A week later John wrote to Llewelyn, either enclosing a copy of *Confessions* or covering a copy despatched by Bragdon. John's tone is diffident and apprehensive, for Llewelyn had not yet seen his part at all, and it is also rather sly, hinting at the trickery that got the book published:

I'm glad we got our *Confessions* out—Bragdon is hugely bucked about that book. He thinks it is a masterpiece—but he's a bit of a simple fellow.³⁵

John had good reason to be less than confident of Llewelyn's opinion, for he never flattered John as a writer and seldom praised him—and never when praise was due. On this occasion, however, praise was not due, and most readers would concur with Llewelyn's first impressions:

I read your *Confessions* at midnight . . . I have not reread 'em. They are to me a little too inhuman, a little too analytic, they are also too modest, and I do not get glimpses of you as I know you . . .³⁶

This last complaint is, I suspect, made with equal conviction by readers coming to *Confessions* after the great novels and, especially, after the *Autobiography*.

John Cowper's confessions lack not only autobiographical material, places, people, sequences of events, but also his characteristic awareness of the external world. Llewelyn is specific about this:

your confessions are . . . too subjective, and one comes with relief on the words lichen and sea-shell and upon the description of that moss-grown path in the Middlecot garden.³⁷

A fairly typical sentence, illustrative of the problem, is the following:

When some provoking butterfly-lure beckons me over hill and dale, it is something if the excitement of the pursuit prevents my perverted mind from hearing the throbs of that hope-murdering World-Pump. (C, 162)

There is a deliberate process of subjectification and “generalisation” at work here: “butterfly-lure”, a mental state, prevents us from visualising a particular butterfly, and the cliché “over hill and dale” deprives us of the verbal, visual and associative satisfaction that we would have got from “on Dartmoor” or “in the Adirondacks”. The rest of the sentence merely numbs and appals.

Although we know very well that John Cowper is capable of this kind of rhetorical slackness, especially in the philosophical books, one feels that in *Confessions* there is a specific reason. Theodore and Llewelyn, as we have seen, simply ignored the projected title—neither of them took “Confessions” to be prescriptive—and the word was dropped from Theodore’s title and excused in Llewelyn’s. John meant it.

“Confessions” implies something intimate, even alluring, often in a penitential mood. It also bears a distinction, between the transitive confessing of sins and the reflexive confessing oneself—common only in a religious context. At the opening of the book John speaks as from within the confessional: “I am ready to confess myself”. (C, 11) Such a confession ought to be personal and specific, for the general confession, however therapeutic, is singularly uninformative. Powys begins by recognising this, “It is after all, as Goethe says, the *personal* which interests us”, (C, 17) and he insists that literary criticism (in which field, at that date, Powys primarily worked and saw himself) “is nothing if it is not extremely personal”. (C, 24)

Such promises are withdrawn, indeed reversed, when he tells us, in exact anticipation of Llewelyn’s charges:

I have not indulged in descriptions of how I feel in English country gardens, as compared

with my sensations in the corridors of American hotels . . . What I have attempted to do is to sum up as clearly as possible, the most salient and persistent of my instinctive reactions to the general drama of the world. (C, 40-1)

Hope of exciting personal revelations is even more firmly quashed when Powys writes:

What I want to do is to give a picture of a certain type of character thrown upon the world. (C, 100)

He is not afraid or ashamed of the predictable outcome, and announces to the reader in the post-scripted “Preface” that “This sketch . . . is meagre and dry and sapless . . . because . . . my mind is meagre and dry and sapless”. (C, 39) Expecting the reader to ask why he publishes “such a depressing document”, Powys justifies it on psychological grounds, it being, “as such, of immense and suggestive interest”. (C, 39) To this, the reader’s reaction is not considered.

The reader is asked by Powys not only to treat his “confessions” as a psychological document but also, specifically, not to regard them as a work of art. For one thing, they contain no element of imagination, and Powys speaks with detachment of the imaginative projections and dramatisations of artists—in utter contrast to himself:

I am all for the bare, bold, merciless determinism of drastic conformity with fact. (C, 38)

Confessions should be honest and, above all, “true”, so, says Powys, these are “drastically sincere” when they could easily have been:

made much more interesting and effective, if I set out to project a deliberately imaginative dramatic figure, such as I could wish to be . . . (C, 37)

Furthermore, Powys “confesses” his ability to deceive, that very quality of which an artist would be proud:

I have the power of suggesting the existence of abysmal gulfs of “wickedness” in a deep and terrible soul . . . I have been ridiculously

tempted now and again to assume the Luciferian cloak and stride forth as a kind of poetic Manfred, ravaged by scoriac scars.

How much more exciting I could make this quiet sketch, if I gave way to these promptings and indulged in hints and suggestions of dark evil profundities in myself of which I was the Satanic victim! But I am too sceptical for this and my mind is too clear. (C, 29-30)

The temptation of the Luciferian cloak must remind one of the *Autobiography*. That great work is precisely what, in 1915, Powys was refusing to write. Having spurned seductive imagination Powys claims that it would be extraordinarily difficult for him to write "anything of an autobiographical nature". Even anticipating the stylised, formal use of his great "vice", sadism, in the *Autobiography*, Powys warns us of what he could write if he succumbed to the temptation of the imagination:

My imagination . . . could persuade me, for instance, to turn this harmless little work of patient analysis, into a most formidable and lurid picture.

Led by it I could enlarge upon certain of my inherited vices . . . It could persuade me to take possession of one particular vice—a mere accident of birth—and thrust it, with awe and terror, into dark mysterious caverns of primeval being, until it became like the smoke of Hell. (C, 31-32)

Honesty versus imagination, truth versus art, critic versus creator: for those who see literary realism as the product of the Protestant work ethic (lead us not into imagination), and modernism—in the broadest sense—as the emancipation therefrom, *Confessions* is certainly a document of "suggestive interest". Powys describes himself frequently as a critic—as which, of course, he was then well-known—and denies any ambition to be an artist. Just about to begin writing his first novel for publication, but by no means his first attempt at fiction, Powys insists: "I do not at all like the responsibility of 'création'". (C, 67) It is not that Powys dislikes responsibility—that would be a mistake of hindsight—but that "creation" is a low, not quite

proper sort of responsibility. Powys instead wishes to devote his life to "the memory of great men and the interpretation of their labours", a thoroughly respectable task. (C, 42) Responsibility is a word hard to reconcile with the author we know; so are truth, honesty, sincerity, reality, words alien to the great writer but here touchstones—as, in the very nature and purpose of "confessions", they should be.

On its own admission, then, *Confessions* is not a work of art, nor of imagination, and claims only to be a psychological document, an analysis of "the mind of a clever critic". (C, 39) Seen in the context of Powys's career, it is certainly a document of "immense and suggestive interest". For this is a book written in deliberate defiance of those faculties which Powys knew he possessed, and which he subsequently used—and, apart from *Confessions*, we have no opportunity to read Powys without his imaginative, irresponsible, self-dramatising dishonesties. Once he became an artist he never penned an honest sentence, not in his letters, not in his essays, and certainly not in that supreme fiction, *Autobiography*.

It is to be expected, therefore, that, given its premisses, John Cowper's *Confessions* would be disappointing. But has any other artist ever left us such an account of his last days as a non-artist? The compromise that constituted realism, between "truth" and "art", "honesty" and "imagination", was breaking up, for Powys as for other modernists. *Confessions* is almost exactly contemporary with *Prufrock and Other Observations*, *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, *The Rainbow*, *The Voyage Out*, with the embarking of Proust, Joyce and Musil on their great novels. One might argue, in defence of the uncertain tone of *Confessions*, that Powys knew that this was a futile, reactionary last stand against the possibilities of art liberated from truth, honesty, and reality. Whether or not Powys was conscious of this, that is how *Confessions* appears in perspective—a document of great value not only for the understanding of Powys's development but also as a

unique illumination in the history of modernism.³⁸

Of Llewelyn's "vague autobiographical ramblings" much less need be said. They make far easier, more pleasant reading than John's, and are straightforward early work, treating themes, subjects and places to be elaborated in later, better books, *Black Laughter*, *Somerset Essays*, *Skin for Skin*. This section is an extreme contrast to John's, being full of places, people and dates; indeed, more "external facts" about John are to be found in Llewelyn's 80 pages than in John's 160. If Llewelyn's approach has anything in common with John's "confessions" it is to be found in an occasional artlessness, a rare cessation of the striving for effect. One does not expect a sense of immediacy from one who, on first spitting blood, quotes Keats, but sometimes, when the poeticising and the "Luluising" are in abeyance, we get direct glimpses; in particular, the part about Davos gives us a clearer picture of the sanatorium than is permitted by the allegorising of *Skin for Skin*.

The first English publication of *Confessions of Two Brothers* is simply a lithographic reproduction of the Manas Press edition, complete with all misprints, as the publisher informs us. For purposes of comparison and page references, however, this is much more useful than a re-setting, and, though we have lost Bragdon's binding and ornamental designs, we still have his typographical lay-out. The sole additional feature is a 17 page (unpaginated) Introduction by the late Malcolm Elwin. Unfortunately, Elwin relies largely on material used in his *Life of Llewelyn Powys* (1946), and makes very little of the recently published letters of John to Llewelyn, which Elwin himself edited. He continues to take Bragdon's account on trust, rather than compare it with John Cowper's own words. As Elwin died some ten years ago much of the information is outdated, and could easily have been amended: John's letters to Llewelyn "will be published one day" and John "wrote stories which have never been published" (see *Romer Mowl and Other Stories*, edited

by Bernard Jones, Toucan Press, Guernsey, 1974).

One must also object when extended currency is given to old prejudices. Elwin says of John's wife Margaret, that:

after the birth of a son in 1902 John had to live on a pittance himself while providing for the education of his son and for his wife's comfort as a county lady in an admirable house in Sussex.

That is disgraceful slander. John insisted that Margaret carry on living in Court House after they became semi-estranged, because he was too proud to let her move into a smaller and more convenient house; Littleton Alfred went to Sherborne because John considered that the only proper education, and it was Margaret who effectively had to pay. The sheer emotional difficulty of being semi-estranged, abandoned but not quite, hoping for a reconciliation long after



John had given up any such intention, and being expected to welcome him "home" every summer until at least 1919, demands some consideration. The marriage of John and Margaret was full of contrasts and complexities (including his own description of it as "my undeservedly fortunate marriage"),³⁹ and deserves better than repetition of malicious gossip, much of which was promoted by Louis Wilkinson.

The final objection is to Elwin's imposition on an unwitting public:

This book is a springboard from which to take off on a voyage of exploration into the works of two great writers.

It is not. Anyone whose introduction to the Powys world this is, will go no further. For

the rest of us the book is, of course, indispensable. We should be extremely grateful to a brave new publisher.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to Mr. Francis Powys and Laurence Pollinger Ltd. for permission to quote from the writings of John Cowper Powys. I am very grateful to Professor R. L. Blackmore for allowing me to look at the copies of John's letters to Marian Powys in the library of Colgate University, and to Mr. E. E. Bissell for showing me the manuscript of *Confessions of Two Brothers*, in his possession.

NOTES

¹ Louis Wilkinson, *Swan's Milk*, 1934, p. 215; *Welsh Ambassadors*, 1936, p. 78.

² John Cowper Powys, *Letters to His Brother Llewelyn*, Vol. I, 1902-1925, 1975, p. 170 (hereafter referred to as *Letters to Ll. P.*, I); in 1915 *The War and Culture* was published in England, under the title *The Menace of German Culture*, by William Rider and Son, thus repaying Shirley's charity with a commercial success.

³ See fly-leaf of first edition of *Suspended Judgments*, 1916.

⁴ *Letters to Ll. P.*, I, p. 184.

⁵ The situation between Littleton and John was ironically reversed in the summer of 1915; John had returned to England to write *Confessions* and *Wood and Stone*, and Littleton persuaded him to do some teaching, of English, at Sherborne prep. which was severely under-staffed. John was not, however, found suitable by his brother for a full-time appointment for that term. See J.C.P.'s letter to Marian Powys, 2 June 1915.

⁶ *Letters to Ll. P.*, I, p. 184.

⁷ See H. Coombes, *T. F. Powys*, p. 169.

⁸ J. C. P. letter to Marian Powys, 2 June 1915.

⁹ J. C. P. letter to Marian Powys, 19 June 1915.

¹⁰ Elwin, *Life of Llewelyn Powys*, 1946, p. 125.

¹¹ T. F. Powys, *Soliloquies of a Hermit*, 1916, p. 63.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 66, 84.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁴ *Letters to Ll. P.*, I, p. 191.

¹⁵ J. C. P. letter to Marian Powys, 21 October 1915.

¹⁶ *Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, ed. Louis Wilkinson, 1943, p. 79.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

¹⁸ T. F. Powys letter to J.C.P., 16 December 1916.

¹⁹ The title of all but the first edition, *Soliloquies of a Hermit*, seems right, and was, perhaps, not used by Shaw only because of a false notion of numerical agreement: confessions of two or more authors, soliloquy of one.

²⁰ Claude Bragdon, *The Secret Springs—An Autobiography*, Andrew Dakers, London, 1939, p. 257; J. C. Powys, *Autobiography* (1934), 1967, p. 540.

²¹ Some of his books are still read: *Projective Ornament* (1915) is cited by E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order*, 1979, p. 311.

²² Bragdon, *The Secret Springs*, p. 252.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

²⁴ See *Letters to Ll. P.*, I, pp. 195, 199. It is remarkable that, for both Theodore and Llewelyn, a first publication did not generate momentum; *Mr. Tasker's Gods* was rejected by Shaw and *Ebony and Ivory* was rejected by Bragdon. Not until 1923 did they see their second books published.

²⁵ *Letters to Ll. P.*, I, p. 189.

²⁶ J. C. P. letter to Marian Powys, 19 June 1915; the ms. of the final version is in the collection of Mr. E. E. Bissell. Neither the tps. nor the ms. of the first version is known to have survived.

²⁷ *Confessions of Two Brothers* (hereafter, parenthetically, C), p. 143.

²⁸ Elwin, *Life of Llewelyn Powys*, p. 125. Llewelyn in his Foreword acknowledges permission from *The New Statesman* and *The New Age* to republish diary extracts already printed in those magazines. Which passages these are, and which are first printed in

Confessions, and what part John played in the selection, we do not know. Clarification is to be expected from Margaret Eaton's forthcoming bibliography of Llewelyn.

²⁹ *Letters to Ll. P.*, I, p. 198.

³⁰ *Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, p. 85.

³¹ See *ibid.*

³² See *Letters to Ll. P.*, I, p. 200; *Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, p. 84; J. C. P. letter to Marian Powys, 20 January 1916. That the book was only two-thirds of its intended length (had Theodore's part been included) encouraged a spacious lay-out. In order to make a full-length book of 265 pages there are only 200 words to the page.

³³ 21 February 1916 is the date given by Elwin, *Life of Llewelyn Powys*, p. 279. J. C. P. was on a lecture-

tour and on 22 February he wrote to Llewelyn from Ohio, to say that *Confessions* was not coming out till March; on 24 February he writes again from Virginia to say that the book is out already. See *Letters to Ll. P.*, I, pp. 198, 199.

³⁴ *Letters to Ll. P.*, I, p. 213.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

³⁶ *Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, p. 85.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ For further consideration of John's *Confessions* in the context of modernism, see my article in *Powys Review*, 5.

³⁹ *Autobiography*, p. 298.

Peter Foss

The Confessions of a Diarist

“Llewelyn’s early writings, and in one sense *all* his writings, were based on his early Diaries”.
J. C. Powys to Kenneth Hopkins in a letter, 14 August 1936

Llewelyn Powys’s brother, John Cowper, was enthusiastic about the literary value of Llewelyn’s diaries, recognizing the account they provide of the education of a soul. “I long to read your diary again”, he says in a letter of 11 May 1910; “please continue to let it be a masterpiece”.¹ Later, in 1918, he refers to “keeping on with your Diary and putting all the salt and spice and sharp taste and sweet savour of your experiences into carefully chosen eccentric and Lulu-like words”.² To some extent, it is true, John’s enthusiasm was coloured by the love he bore towards his brother and his charitable encouragement of his literary talents. But it would be wrong to assume that there was not also a typically Cowperian perception of how an extraordinary personality with

extraordinarily complex and candid responses to the world can be caught and pinned to the words on the page. A more detached and detailed estimate is to be found in Bernard Price O’Neill’s letter to Llewelyn of 20 February 1911, which he sent to Llewelyn at Clavadel on receiving the 1910 Diary (with its Clavadel setting) by post for him to read. I give the reply at length because of its value as an assessment in its own right:

I have received your diary with the greatest interest. It is so remarkable that I feel a difficulty in characterising it. What a wonderful spontaneous yet artful record of all sides of your nature. How naturally yet with what bewildering variety and even oppositeness are set down side by side delicate



little landscapes, conversations with worldly women, philosophic maxims, amorous encounters and reveries? . . . That is a characteristic remark you make three times “Ants, possibly goblins”, “Jesus possibly a Goblin” and once on another occasion, which I am not certain of. Into what a voluminous record the days mount up—this struck me as I held the tiny little book in my hand. The strokes are now broad and strong as befits concrete individuality, and now light as gossamer, when you speak of delicate imaginings or call up scenes of the past which are like the dream-touched etchings of Whistler. Especially do I enjoy your grasp of every stray wisp of personality that you come in contact with; the sudden change in Dr. Zenda’s attitude, the clean independence of Lizzie, the swift look at you of the pale poetess, the gradual yielding of the young man to your persistent and subtle influence. This, alert throughout in personality and in concrete things, makes the diary extremely fascinating. How delighted I was when you spoke of Goethe’s salad ladle which you actually handled. The limitations of Zenda were painful considering how well he seemed to start off and what curiosity he at first aroused.

The inclusion of letters in fragments or as wholes add a dramatic touch as well as present an even greater variety of personalities which are shown in all sorts of illuminating aspects. Willie’s, Jack’s, your mother’s, Lizzie’s and others, how vividly they seem to glance at us like eyes out of the page!³

The description contained here is remarkably just in its understanding of the special qualities of Llewelyn’s diary—its mixture of spontaneity and artifice, of philosophical detachment alternating with a sense of urgency, its random obtuseness. As his brother once said of it, “the thing is to have all the Diary in its completeness”,⁴ for only then can we savour this quality and come to some estimation of the peculiar way it reflects Llewelyn’s personality—a personality which in some measure he was creating through the medium of this “literary record”.

It is in this context that I would like to examine briefly the way Llewelyn adapted

his diary in his earliest literary work—that work which he characterised as “vague autobiographical ramblings”, *The Confessions of Two Brothers* (1916), and then to say something about the diary “in its completeness” and how this may give us a different view of Llewelyn from that which the published extracts afford.

Certainly it is true, as John Cowper said in the letter to Kenneth Hopkins quoted above, that all Llewelyn’s early works derive from the record of the diary—and for this alone, the record is important. It is as much so of those works which do not have a specifically autobiographical intent, such as *The Cradle of God*, as it is of, say, *Skin for Skin* or *Love and Death*. From the early unformed contribution to *The Confessions of Two Brothers*, through the *Ebony* stories and *Black Laughter*, the experiences described and the reactions examined draw upon the first fruits of the incidents as recorded in the diaries, and they can be as authentically re-created as to be a virtual copying-out of the entry, or more usually a “literary and aesthetic” adaptation of the facts, which may in the event throw an interesting light upon Llewelyn’s personal motives *vis-à-vis* both the diary itself (as a record of ‘truth’) and the use of it in its published form (as a literary work). Of particular interest in this context is what Llewelyn does with the passages in, for example, *The Confessions* and *Ebony and Ivory* which purport to be extracts from the actual diary. Invariably, on examination, they prove to be nothing of the sort.

Take, for example, the fourth section of *The Confessions* called “A Consumptive’s Diary”, beginning with the date 29 November 1909 and ending with the date 5 April 1910. As Malcolm Elwin pointed out in his *Life of Llewelyn Powys*,⁵ in compiling this account he “expanded selected extracts and often altered dates”, whilst extracts of the original diary in its correct form can be seen for comparison in Louis Wilkinson’s *Welsh Ambassadors*.⁶ Why Llewelyn should have changed the dates so radically—except for the sake of neatness in the compressing of events—is a matter for spec-

ulation. But the overall emendation and selective expansion has the effect of emasculating the account and rendering it what Llewelyn later recognized to be 'insipid'.⁷ In addition to this, there is also the 'gloss' of a narrative fiction which Llewelyn grafts onto the account—a narrative in which the lady called the "Hamadryad" is taken ill in her room during a fancy-dress ball at the sanatorium, dies and is taken away quietly while the other patients are preoccupied with the party. Three entries later the 'fictionalised' account describes how the Russian boy, madly in love with the "Hamadryad", attempts suicide. Some of the elements of the story—dead patients disposed of surreptitiously in the night, the forlorn lover driven to suicide and the "wild and wilful personality" of the "Hamadryad" (based in all probability on Hélène Caspary, the Belgian Jewess)⁸—are taken from different parts of the diary where they appear sometimes only in the form of hearsay. But the story itself is pure fiction, and the part the Llewelyn 'persona' plays as detached observer is achieved partly through shifting some of the embarrassment and folly of his own involvement with Miss Caspary onto the character of the Russian boy, thereby giving himself something of the 'public' image as "privileged spectator" which these early accounts enforce.

One of the few characterisations which survives the recreated version of the diary is the portrait of the Hungarian Dr. Zsenda—described in "A Consumptive's Diary" as "a graceful serpentine figure, strangely emaciated . . . a disciple of Montaigne". In the 26 December entry of *The Confessions* extract, he is described as "fallen under the spell of Napoleon" sitting in his room,

packed with histories of that period and with busts and pictures of the great man. 'There,' says he pointing to the crowded relics, 'there is the past; and there,' indicating his table strewn with papers and musical instruments, 'there is the present; and there,' and now he pointed to his bed, 'and there is the future!'

The death-mask of Napoleon, plastic and monumental, lay on an ebony stand by itself. He noticed that it had caught my attention. 'I

have often sat watching that for hours,' he said. 'That is rest.'

Compare this—almost the only passage which bears close resemblance to the original—with the authentic diary entry for 18 February 1910 (not included in *Welsh Ambassadors*):

At nine o'clock I first entered Dr. Zenda's [sic] room. There were many books there and two noble busts of Napoleon, and on a table by his bed lay the great man's death-mask; it reposed there still and majestic like the dead face of a God! Napoleon's spirit seemed to fill the room. "I have often sat watching that death mask for hours, for THAT IS REST", and then I left him, but when I reached the door, "This," he said pointing to the Napoleonic relics "represents the past, and this *the present*" indicating this table strewn with books and papers, "and there," he said patiently "waits the future" he made a sign towards the bed. He is, I believe, a very great man and I love him.

By the time Llewelyn came to write *Skin for Skin*, elements in the character of Dr. Zsenda had been adapted to the "German boy" of Chapter Four, who is "learning to play the guitar in anticipation of his last days". Both the quip involving the advantages of the guitar over the piano and the conversation about his success as an author ("No," he said, 'I have done nothing but try to cure this'—and he tapped his chest—'and even that has been a failure'") bear parallels to Llewelyn's talk with Zsenda in the 1910 diary (and quoted in *Welsh Ambassadors*, p. 224).

When we turn to the diary extracts specifically relating to Llewelyn's African experiences, in *The Confessions of Two Brothers* we find that the version recorded for public consumption (the "Montacute to Gilgil" diary published in *The New Age* in January 1915) is shorter than the original but keeps mainly to the facts. The dates, for instance, are correct; Llewelyn did leave Montacute for Africa on 4 September 1914; and the personages that feature in the extracts—the English parson, the Asian doctor, the entomologist—were all of them travelling companions of Llewelyn on the journey.

Still, important excisions are made. There is the notable example which displeased Llewelyn (because it was cut by Claude Bragdon rather than himself or John) of the last part of the sentence under 10 October:⁹ "Some women are intended for embraces alone—they should never be permitted out of their beds". Elwin put the record straight in his *Life* (p. 118). A typical example can be cited which serves to 'weaken' the account and which must be laid at Llewelyn's door if we take it as given that it was he who adapted the diary, not John.¹⁰ The tour of Zanzibar, for example, under the date 14 October with its rancid smell of Arab streets, is toned down, and missing too is the interesting description in the original of Llewelyn's encounter with the pimp, included on p. 244 of *Welsh Ambassadors* ("You can have anything you want—you can see DANCING"). Under the first two entries of "From Montacute to Gilgil", the barely-suppressed rage and contempt evinced in the original towards Llewelyn's travelling-companions is almost wholly excised, so that the drama of the writer's mood and the dynamics of his response to the personalities involved cannot be conveyed. Passages such as "on my left a singularly silly and empty-headed girl with a great deal of fussy hair and an absurd conceited mouth. On my right a fat German curiously fearful of being taken as a spy. He wears a black coat and would obviously betray his country for a drink and a cigar" have a pungency in their own right and seem like portraits out of George Grosz; whereas "the Lady who looks like a prostitute" (*Confessions*, p. 244) instead of "the whore Stella" (as in the original) is a definite weakening.¹¹

In one sense Llewelyn as the traveller and diarist in his 'persona' as "privileged spectator" comes off well in the re-written versions of the diary in *The Confessions of Two Brothers*, unlike the exaggerated self-revelation to a point beyond truth of the corresponding "Sheepman's Diary" of the journey back from Gilgil to Montacute in *Ebony and Ivory*. There is, in fact, a world of difference between the tone of the two accounts, which may serve as reason for the

latter's rejection by J. C. Squire of *The New Statesman* in 1919. Claude Bragdon had remarked back in 1916 that the diary-extracts of Llewelyn's "confessions" were "brilliantly done, with touches of mordant humour deliberately calculated to shock the puritanical". Certainly the mind at work behind them was recognized as heterodox, individualistic and daring, but by the time Llewelyn came to submit the *Ebony* stories to magazines in America in 1916, their rawness of detail and the self-revelatory persona they betray, was causing a "scare" among editors.¹² "A Sheepman's Diary" is a case in point—an autobiographical journal which has more of the character of a confession than any of Llewelyn's earlier *Confessions*, and yet which becomes, through the intimacy with which it explores the subject's psychology, tantamount to a 'false' confession because an exercise in masochism. On occasions, the forcefulness of the diary rather than being toned-down is toned-up, as for example in the entry under 4 June in "A Sheepman's Diary" where Llewelyn talks with L-- (Pringle) about "country matters—of the afterbirths of cows, of scab, and of the cure for foot-rot. I think if I had looked, I should have found dung from the cattle boma still on his boots". In the diary the milder line is given as "traces of hay seeds in his hair and cow dung on his boots . . . good conversation with him on country matters—on afterbirths of cows and wool and lambings". And even more revealing it seems to me, is the description of the Greek whom the exaggerated I-persona of the *Ebony* Story would like "to crush as I would a mutilated and unpleasant insect". When read in the context of the diary, it has a different, more ameliorating effect:

When I passed him sitting on his chair I could not even give him good day. I longed to crush him to death with my foot as I would an evil beetle—the only other feeling I had towards him was one of fear lest I should catch from him his famous sickness.

It is important, for instance, in the context of the diary that the Greek was "dying of

syphilis” and not just “sick”, that he is described as “miserable” and not (as in “A Sheepman’s Diary”) as “looking horrible” and “unpleasant”, and that Llewelyn chose in the diary to record his fear of infection as an example of his own “cowardice”, and his self-consciousness in the presence of the Greek as symptomatic of a psychology worthy of scrutiny. “I noted my attitude towards this human being”, he says—a line which serves to frame and objectify the “callous” reaction in the light of the Greek being a human being and a sufferer. The Llewelyn-persona turns out to be more compassionate in the diary extract than in the casual starkness of the version given in *Ebony and Ivory*.

Llewelyn’s diary is the confession of a complex personality. It records the writer’s conflicting reactions to the incidents he is simultaneously describing with as much veracity as he can muster. It combines guileless candour born of genuine innocence with the dramatisation of a created self in such a way that truth vies with untruth with kaleidoscopic effect. John recognized this effect when he wrote to his brother that he believed Llewelyn’s true genius resided in his diaries as his own resided in his lectures and Theodore’s in his letters; they were all “a pose”.¹³ And we gather an idea of this in part also from the way in which some of the more celebrated statements in the diaries—those for example included in Elwin’s *Life*—have the character of ‘effect’ contrived to give the diary philosophical substance in the event of its possible publication. The celebrated line, “The art of living is to be fully aware of one’s personal existence—to become a privileged spectator”, on p. 76 of the *Life* Elwin detaches from its diary context to point up Llewelyn’s “attitude of detachment”; and it was this line, so startling, so seemingly assured (and yet in context, in 1910, the statement of a confused mind) which excited Ethel Mannin when she first read it—again detached from its context—in *Welsh Ambassadors* in 1936. When this, and other similar statements, are come across among passages describing Llewelyn’s amorous follies, the rivalries, the

blood-spitting, the uncompromising and pathetic portraits of dying patients, the effect is both macabre and surreal. Certainly the ‘philosophical’ statements in the Clavadel diaries are but part of one of the most revealing accounts of life experienced *within* a tuberculosis hospital.¹⁴

What comes across in the diaries in their “completeness” can be said to be slightly at an angle to the received view of Llewelyn in the written portraits we have of him, both those written by himself of his own experiences and based upon adaptations of his diary entries (as in *Skin for Skin*) and also in the extracts chosen in the biography. This fact would account both for the ‘mythic’ view of Llewelyn that is part of the received impression, and also for the way in which he created his own image of himself in his writings to the extent that his wife, Alyse Gregory, could say (in her *Journal*) that the ‘true’ Llewelyn was the Llewelyn of the writings and not the Llewelyn of the biography.

One of the elements of the diaries that could never receive due emphasis is, of course, the element of bawdry; and that aspect also which might be termed Llewelyn’s ‘scatalogical vision’. When in *Skin for Skin* Chapter 8, Llewelyn writes of “our very excrement transformed—Ha! what divine mustard of the Gods!”, we are given an idea (right enough in its context) that Llewelyn’s excremental vision is corroborative of his perception that the fundamentals of animal existence are embraced and metamorphosed through the leap of the poetic imagination—that “all was delectation, all was entrancement!” But in the context of the diary, the impression is different because the revelation of those fundamentals—whether descriptions of sexual release or defecation—are recorded starkly as formative of Llewelyn’s desire, on the one-hand to be true to the pagan in him, and on the other to be one with the earth in the most intimate way which his body can allow: “I get a fine pleasure in dropping my excrement here and there over the neighbourhood and wish never again to squeeze my bum into an oval hole. How

proudly how gaily how stag-like I burst through the bushes with arse green-stained, leaving my brown man's turd—a present to the flies" (7 August 1911); "Shat wonderfully under the hedge. 'By Heaven! What divine mustard of the Gods!' cried Bernie" (2 September 1911—at Martock).

At the other extreme, as it were, are the diary descriptions of 'ecstasies'—moments of spiritual transport which Llewelyn came later in his public role to deprecate and pronounce against. Llewelyn would not like to have been called a mystic, chiefly because he associated the word with religion and the church, and with those unconscionable characters whose 'ecstasies' are the result of mortification and extreme introspection. Llewelyn's 'mysticism' (for that is what it was) was born of the kind of intimate taking-on of the earth (the earth in him and the earth under foot) which involved the kind of physical transformation implied in the 'dunging' episodes related in the diary or the orgasmic rhapsodies in woods and delves described in *Love and Death*. It was the world of the senses, the world of eye and ear and touch, that produced these transports, what Llewelyn described in his diary as "the wonderful mystic reality of 'concrete life'".

As I skirted the soft mountain side in the clear afternoon a strange thrill of joy passed over me—the immemorial joy of spring time. Something in the feel of the soft grass under foot, in the appearance of the girl and man picking flowers, in the warm freshness of the clear afternoon light had touched harmoniously dormant nerve centres making them once more articulate and full of utterance. In that exquisite vague tingling or tremor of the soul was concealed the life ecstasy of how many dead bones? (11 April 1911)

In the afternoon we walked down to Ringstead Bay—the sniff of the salt drenched beach gave me an ecstasy, and I must needs dip my hands in the sea to gratify a strange amorous instinct such as I might feel for a girl. (25 October 1911)

A great deal of the quality that emerges from the diary is accountable to the dream-like nature of the experiences it describes, and this in turn is related to the species of

revelatory 'ecstasy' in the presence of concrete actuality which continually informs the descriptions of nature and Llewelyn's response to it. There is also—as Bernard O'Neill realized—the habit Llewelyn has of mirroring himself and his responses in the letters and conversations of his family and friends, as well as the modifying reflections of present reality contrasted with past 'memory'—those scenes conjured up "like the dream-touched etchings of Whistler . . . light as gossamer . . ." A memory-picture such as that of the night spent in Laon on 7 December 1909, acquires with the passage of time a kind of mythic status in the memory of the two brothers. It starts as a hurried note by John himself in the diary entry ("The ascent—"LA HURER" The bottle of wine—the shadow of the iron gate. The sound of the wind—the echoes of the interior of a bronze bell. The cathedral . . .") and then begins to become significant through Llewelyn's mode of imaginative re-creation, as well as through John's recollection of the events in his letters, and still later in his *Autobiography*, where he describes Llewelyn as turning everything he encountered into grist for his mill "of plucking out the heart of Laon's mystery". Only two months after the event, Llewelyn was mythicizing it, as the diary entry for 2 February 1910 indicates:

I have not forgotten that city on the hill, with its ancient cathedral towering up into the sky, its market street, and antique peasant vendors, its narrow lanes, its quaint prohibitions nor the Divine Tavern, warm and hospitable where Jack and I became as the Immortals.

And still later, the memory recurs in a passage in *Swiss Essays* where he describes how "muffled up against the night air, and dizzy with the wine in our bellies and the exaltation in our heads, we stumbled over the egg-shaped cobbles of the foreign streets to the famous cathedral".¹⁵

The diaries are full of such oscillations between past and present, just as they are full of shifts of perspective, shifts of res-

ponse, and that vivid urgency as to the deadly predicament of the sick consumptive alternating with frivolity and the casualness of thrown-off comments. The effect is often feverish, even phantasmogoric, and parallels the oscillations of dream and reality which are symptomatic of the consumptive condition. As Louis Wilkinson had said, Llewelyn's consumption was "important to him", but not only because it "quickened and intensified all his perceptions". It was also important because it served in part to condition that very 'mystical' experience of the ultimate unreality of 'reality', an experience intensified by the awareness that the more one delves through the layers of truth (which Llewelyn characterised by "plumbing the furthest depths of *intimacy*—leaving not one single crevice of soul mind or body unsounded")¹⁶ the more likelihood there is that one discovers that there is no 'truth' but only that which one creates. It is there—at the point where it may be said that ontology and empiricism meet—that a concept such as 'reality' has no meaning, in the same way perhaps that facts and fantasy coalesce in the 'waking dream' of the tuberculoid fever. Hence the significance of the many dreams which Llewelyn records in his Clavadel diaries, and which, from a psychological point of view alone, are extraordinarily revealing. The subject is a large one and complex, but we may recall that over ten years after, Llewelyn was to write in Chapter 3 of *Skin for Skin* how vivid the impression of these dreams was to his conscious mind: "I used to have the strangest dreams at this time of convalescence. Especially would I dream about death. I had done this since my childhood, but during this period these insubstantial images would be more palp-

able, more real, than ever before". The dreams recorded in the diaries of these years are not only about the trappings of death as may be gathered from the brief reference in *Skin for Skin*, but when they are they point often to the vital force surviving through those very images of annihilation which Llewelyn in his conscious mind was struggling to deny; and this too would explain in part the kind of ecstasies he was wont to experience in the presence of things unutterably irredeemable and of the dust—in short, his earth-mysticism.

If we were given the opportunity of publishing Llewelyn's diary "in its completeness", we should have to ask what differentiates this particular document from other diaries which are notable records of a literary personality or a literary coterie. The form is *per se* limited in scope and artistically unsatisfactory; and our interest invariably focuses on what it tells us about the man or woman behind the diary, or the light it throws on the creative background to the works of the author, his friends and relations. All these criteria also—and with abundant relevance—apply to the diary of Llewelyn Powys. There are fine descriptions of nature and vignettes of a rarified social milieu which the classic diaries of the Victorians also provide. But Llewelyn's diary is exceptional and that not only for the exceptional personality behind it (chameleon and paradoxical as it was) but also because the diarist himself was creating his own literary identity through it. Its kaleidoscope of images and dramatic realisations—what Bernard O'Neill called "its bewildering variety and even oppositeness"—serve to make it a fascinating document. If the word 'confession' means anything at all, then the diary is Llewelyn's confession.

NOTES

¹*Letters of John Cowper Powys to his Brother, Llewelyn*, Vol. I, 1902-1925, 1975, p. 64.

²*Ibid.*, p. 261.

³Transcribed by Llewelyn into his diary, p. 2 of Alyse Gregory's transcript of the 1911 diary. I have kept punctuation etc. as original. For my reading of the complete diaries, I am indebted to Rosemary Manning.

⁴*Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson*, 1958, p. 368.

⁵Elwin, 1946, p. 70.

⁶P. 212. Louis Wilkinson transcribed the extracts as a continuous block, but the diary makes it clearer to what dates the entries apply, although Llewelyn did tend to flow one entry into another.

⁷Elwin, p. 125. Llewelyn also occasionally referred to the insipidity of his diary actually in the diary. Llewelyn's reservations about the *Confessions* are contained in a letter on p. 85 of the *Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, ed. L. Wilkinson, 1943.

⁸Llewelyn used the title "The Hamadryad" for another lady at the sanatorium. He was fond of giving the real-life characters soubriquets which either captured the essence of their personalities for him or

which enabled them to become characters in the 'Luluised' drama of the world around him. Other examples in the diary are: The Tetrarch, The Jocular Whisperer, the Madonna.

⁹*Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, p. 85.

¹⁰*Letters . . . to his Brother Llewelyn*, Vol. I, p. 198.

¹¹It cannot be argued that Llewelyn is changing the entry to avoid the recognition of the people involved; they would presumably recognize themselves anyway, and a simple substitute name (such as Adele for H el ene Caspary in *Welsh Ambassadors*) would have sufficed.

¹²*Letters . . . to his Brother Llewelyn*, Vol. I, pp. 202, 208.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁴Compare it with the picture given in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, published in 1920 but based on a visit Mann made to Davos Platz before the first World War. There too flirtations and amours vie with inert philosophical diatribes against a background of fever and death.

¹⁵*Swiss Essays*, 1947, p. 65.

¹⁶*Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, p. 54. He is speaking about his boyhood relationship with Lionel Mylrea.

Gamel Woolsey: A Selection of her Letters to Llewelyn Powys, 1930-1939

edited by Kenneth Hopkins

There was no public record of Llewelyn Powys's love for Gamel Woolsey until the publication of Malcolm Elwin's *So Wild a Thing*, the letters of Llewelyn Powys to Gamel Woolsey, in 1973; and the publication of Alyse Gregory's journals covering the same period, under the title *The Cry of a Gull*, in the same year. A good deal more was recorded in Gerald Brenan's second volume of autobiography, *Personal Record, 1920-1972* (1974). The publication of Gamel's letters to Llewelyn completes the story as told by the principal actors, although it must be added that Gamel's



letters to Alyse are also central to an understanding of the matter. These will be published in due course, and will make a much bigger book, for whereas the letters to Llewelyn (as they are known to survive) cover only ten years, those to Alyse cover more than forty, and contain references to Llewelyn throughout.

When I came to publish these letters in book form I had to decide how much to include. Elwin published only a selection from Llewelyn's letters, linked by a narrative explaining the facts of this chapter in Llewelyn's life. I have thought it best to print Gamel's letters complete, with only one or two very small omissions, and I have not thought it necessary to supplement Elwin's narrative, which sufficiently sets the scene. In due course I shall publish a memoir of Gamel Woolsey, in which any further information will be included.

The present selection was made for *The Powys Review* by Belinda Humfrey.

K. H.

(No place. Postmark 10 Aug 30)

My dearest Llewelyn,

You know nothing that can ever happen can really separate us. I don't know how it was but somehow our dreams got mixed, and that little figure you loved is still following the horses' hoofs through bracken and over mud and stone and in the wash of the sea. It always will follow. Will you remember that.

When you left me in the clover field I thought I would die of the separation. I felt like that little filly in the stable, only its mother, its father, its little colt brother were being taken away. It was alone, it was being

left alone in the world, and it was so frightened.

Llewelyn, do not let us be so unhappy. We need not be so unhappy. All will yet be well.
My darling lad—

The letter ends thus; but it is impossible to say if a part is missing. The text finishes in a manner that does not indicate if there is another page. It is addressed to Llewelyn at his brother A. R. Powys's house in Hammersmith.

*(No place or date. East Chaldon.
Postmark illegible.? Aug 1930)*

My dearest Llewelyn,

There are so many things I want to say to you.

One is that you must not rush off to America too soon. The New York papers say the heat is frightful. Do not think you have to leave Dorset to escape seeing me. I shall go away myself anyway. I would be too unhappy here without you. It is haunted and empty.

I went up to the White Nose just after you had gone yesterday. I did not mean you to see me. I meant to hide in the hedge & see you as you went away, but you had just gone like John in my dream. But in my distraction I did not think of the window towards Gertrude's, and they saw me.

Lulu, you must take care of Alyse, comfort her somehow. She is in despair. I think we never realized how deeply she was injured. Oh, I hope it will all come all right. You must take care of yourself. That is the main thing. We both must.

I can not somehow believe that we shall not somehow be happy together again. We must somehow get through our worst time. Please, please do not be too unhappy, and write me truly how you are.

I love you—
Gamel

Addressed to Llewelyn at A. R. Powys's house; Llewelyn and Alyse had left East Chaldon on (I think) 7 or 8 August, and they sailed from Southampton for New York on the 14th.

(No place or date.

Postmark Wells, Norfolk 20 Oct 1930)

My darling Lulu,

I am so relieved that you have heard from me at last. It made me so very sad to think of you going day after day to the little country post-office and never a letter from me. And I was so far away and could not come up the road to your door and tell you I loved you—I loved you. In a dream last night I was there, and as I hesitated waiting to hear your voice Phyllis and Mr Powys came up. It was night and I suddenly saw Phyllis and was so happy and so happy to think that you were just inside, and in a moment I would be with you. But it was only a dream. It was over before the door was opened, before I saw you.

Night before last there was a wonderful Aurora Borealis. Like a curtain of light shaken by a wind, paling the stars.

Gerald was driving back from Norwich, he had never seen the Northern lights before and was very excited. I stood on the little beach near the house under the fishermen's houses and all around & behind me in the dark I faintly saw and heard men and women and children standing in the street and sitting on their doorsteps watching the lights.

I remember in Woodstock how often I have walked home lit by their green glowing and all the leaves seemed to glow faintly with the reflected light. It was like going home by glow-worm light. I can't describe how eerie how lovely and impossible it was, like walking in some other world, perhaps the land of the [word illegible], or some star which has Aldebaran for its only light.

I wonder if that night you may have seen the Northern lights swaying over those New York fields—lighting the golden rod, the Michaelmas daisies—your face.

I have been reading De Quincey on the Lake Poets with great pleasure. And I thought that we were like them and did not think of it. That you were my Wordsworth, the writer long sought, whom to have near was to be in happiness.

I hope you will see Rex, and see that

shabby little room where I have so often lain watching the pigeons flying and the shadows of the pigeons upon the wall.

With my love to my dear love
Gamel

“Woodstock” is Woodstock, New York, where Gamel was acting in 1923.

The shabby little room was in Patchin Place, New York, where Gamel and Rex lived after their marriage.

Llewelyn was staying in the cottage near Edna St. Vincent Millay at Austerlitz, New York; about that time he was finishing *Impassioned Clay*.

(No place or date.
Postmark place illegible, possibly
Mundesley. 12 Nov 30)

My dearest Lulu,

How lovely your letters are. How happy and how sad I am in reading them. How well I remember then how we crept out as children in the early morning and saw the dew on the grass and in the cups of the flowers, the chilly morning dew. How well I remember.

It is sad how much of our lives we have been apart. How easily we might have been together. As if a hair has divided us. And all those years the impenetrable walls kept us apart. Walls of time, of space, of no-knowledge. But we met at last. Let me never forget the wonder the miraculous dispensation that we met—in spite of all probability, in your irresponsible Gothic universe we came upon one another—in a narrow dusty hole, in a city foreign to both of us we met at last.

Today I heard from my little Russian friend Cecelia Krinkin, who wishes she could come to me and I could “find her a place in a fisherman’s hut.”

Do you remember, Lulu, that dream I had two years and more ago that you would come some day and find me in a poor cottage by the sea with your child upon my knees. I wonder if it happened somewhere long ago, will happen somewhere years hence.

The world is very strange—I can not understand. I do not know.

You should not be troubled because Gertrude comes. It is a physical link between us. We will talk of you—she will remind me of you. She will speak of “years” and talk of your childhood at Montacute.

I have to go to Norwich to have my picture taken because Grant Richards wants one. If they are good I will send you one.

I think you will be in the country when you get this letter. I wonder if the wind will blow as wildly then as now. I looked through Gerald’s glasses at the moon the day we went the longest walk. I will look tonight. Perhaps we will meet in the Valley of Rainbows, my true love.

Goodnight,
my dear love,
Gamel

Grant Richards was to publish *Middle Earth*, but the photograph is not used on the dust wrapper of that book. I don’t know what use he may have made of it. It may be the large cabinet photograph of 1930 which was taken in a photographic studio, but that was by Whitlock of Bruton Street, London. Maybe the Norwich one was not liked.

(No place or date. Mundesley
Postmark 28 Nov 30)

My darling Lad,

There is a wild storm—the wind is tormenting the rain, beating it against the pain [sic] shattering its drops on the glass. I am lying in bed with a candle which waves in the wind.

Since I wrote that two days have passed and I could not seem to go on with my letter. I am trying to correct my novel for typing though it isn’t finished and Gerald reads it over with me after tea and after supper and then I try to correct it in the morning. And I must be alone with you when I write you and this is hard sometimes to manage. But I think of you so constantly, and in my mind I am always alone with you.

Lulu, the proofs of my poems came. Wasn’t that exciting. They look very handsome with heavy good paper and a type I

like, and the type beginning rather high on the page which I like with poetry.

I so loved your description of Phyllis and Mr Powys and their house. Why could I not have been there to watch Phyllis showing you her jewel case. How strange and charming she must have looked as she showed them one by one. I wish I could be with you always invisibly I should not mind that no one spoke to me or knew I was there if I could watch you always—my dear love. But sometimes when I read your letters your words seem to speak of themselves and I think I have been there.

I wonder if Cherry was like Peter. I think she must have been, for I was like that when you first went away, frightened, and wanting to hide.

But my darling we must be good. I am sure we were right to separate for a time. There was too great danger in the air, possibilities of such unhappiness for us all. We go to London next Monday. There is a great deal to do here and I am to go down to see Gerald's parents over the week-end. They are coming up to see me next Wednesday which is very kind of them. Then Gerald is to stay with them while I go to East Chaldon. I do not know what I will feel when I go to Dorset again. I only know that it will be haunted and even the ghosts there are better than the flesh and blood of all the rest of the world

With my love to my darling,

xxx
Gamel

Addressed to Austerlitz.

The novel was probably *One Way of Love*.

At this time Gamel usually called John Cowper Powys "Mr Powys".

East Chaldon,
Dorchester
(No date, late 1930)

My darling Lulu,

I am at East Chaldon again. How strange to be at Mrs Wallis's again, and yet you not

on the White Nose. It is strange that I do not feel sadder here, I feel happier than I did in Norfolk. Perhaps the influence of our sunny days is still so strong that I can not be unhappy. Only once I walked up to Chydyok and I happened to stand out of the way as a team of horses went by in that little opening into a field. And it came to me with a dreadful shock "*This is where Lulu left me.*"

Lulu I am sure we will all be happy yet. I know it. We must not do anything foolish or reckless. It would only make everything terrible again. I can not stand any shocks neither can you. You can not leave Alyse. You must make her happy. I can not leave Gerald Brenan. He has become too attached to me, Lulu. I can not do it. It would be wicked. We let him take me away when I was ill and in a helpless state. He took care of me and has become very attached to me. He wrote me this morning from his parents. "Oh I *long* to be with you again. I *long* to be with you again. You are all my life to me and I can not support my life without you. That is why I thank God you are dependent on my care of you, for I am dependent, utterly dependent upon you."

You see he feels as you told me Alyse made you feel always, not alone any more, that terrible cosmic isolation gone at last.

Lulu, my dear love, we can not hurt these people who love us and whom we love. Gerald almost succeeded in killing his love for me at the idea of my continuing to love you. But his feelings have broken their bonds, and poured towards me. I can not leave him. The outward symbols of marriage and a house could not possibly commit me any more than his feeling for me and my acceptance of his love and care have committed me already.

Darling, my darling, we must be good. We must treasure our love and protect it for the future. No one shall take it from us, can take it from us. It is a strong wildflower. It shall stand many winter winds and summer suns.

But I can not bear it, Lulu, when you talk of leaving Alyse. It is not possible. I will not do it. Oh, if you could only reassure her. I am often so unhappy about her.

I should be so happy if I thought she was, and you were, too, my true love, my dearest Lulu.

Lulu, much may be hidden in the womb of time. It may bring forth happiness for you and me. Somehow I believe it will.

I often grieve that I did not have our child at any cost. I feel I wronged you. You must forgive me that as all my sins and wrongs, because I loved you, and I love you. I only meant to make you happy.

I met Grant Richards twice. I liked him. He seems really to like the poems very much. I hope he will not lose too much money by them, but I expect he will.

You know we leave for Italy I believe two days before Christmas. My address will be Care Cook's, Rome till we settle down somewhere. It is so that we will be out of England till we can be properly married in the spring. Because we have to pretend to be married in some places and not to be living together in others, and it is too difficult and dangerous.

I stayed a week end with Gerald's parents and they were very kind. I was frightened of his father, but he liked me and took me to a meet of the hounds, and I patted his hunter on the nose, and watched him jump a stone wall.

It all seemed like a chapter in some one else's story. But I was glad they liked me because it made it nicer for Gerald. He said he would simply break with them if they showed signs of disapproving of me, and he is really attached to them. Now he is afraid that they will like me too much, and it will be hard to get out of staying there often.

Oh, Lulu, this is all part of *our* story. Do not mind it. Nothing ever happens that I do not some how relate to you.

"We shall be telling it all again
Some ages and ages hence."

With love, always the same,
your
Gamel

(No place or date. January 1931)

My darling Lad,

I have just had your letter written after you had mine written after Gertrude left and it made me very sad. Lulu, how can you say it made little difference when you went away. I could not sleep and forgot to eat. I felt such pain as I have never felt, or imagined, as if my life had been taken away. It was your decision to leave me. I could never have left you.

My life with Gerald has been a strange one. I almost left him when we first went to Norfolk. I thought he was unhappy with me because of you, and I thought that I would start life over again alone. When I got better I would go to London, and try to earn a little money by writing, and live there alone, hoping some day we might meet again. It was only that Gerald was so patient and kind that made me stay in the end. It must have been very difficult for a proud and shy creature to be treated as we have all treated him. Oh, Lulu, I must try to make him happy. Life is too difficult. I can not hurt Alyse. I can not hurt Gerald. And I love you still in my secret way. As if our thoughts and dreams had become tangled together some day when we sat under a hedge together, like our hair, and we could never disentangle them. It is as if you and I alone in the universe knew the words of a play. Everyone else makes the wrong questions and replies. Only you answer me.

Lulu, wasn't it awful. I had a little time to spend with you while Gerald took Violet and Doris to Weymouth and *Betty Muntz came to call*, and now it is almost all spent because Gertrude will be coming before tea. I could cry because it was my best chance to write you alone and undisturbed until we get to Italy.

Lulu, I do love you so. I always shall.

Your

Gamel

The quotation I have not identified. Gamel may have been thinking of Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (III.I.III),

How many ages hence

Shall this our lofty scene be acted o'er.

My address will be Post Restante, Amalfi. I think that is enough.

Elizabeth Muntz was the sculptor who later lettered the memorial stone to Llewelyn Powys which is on the cliff top near White Nose, Dorset.

Hotel Luna,
Amalfi,
Salerno.

(No date. Postmark 11 2 31)

My dearest Lulu,

After not having any mail for nearly four weeks because we were travelling and there was a mistake in forwarding letters, I got your letter at last here.

I am so very distressed that I made you unhappy, Lulu. But I did write you a letter that was meant to reach you just at Christmas. But I made the mistake of putting a little thing in it, and I think that is why you never got it. It was like the razor blades I sent you to Capri. But the first letter I wrote you from East Chaldon should have reached you between Christmas and New Year anyway. The cablegram was sent to you and Alyse and should have had her name on it too. I am sorry it was on holly paper. But I can not provide against all the vagaries of the Western Union.

But Lulu, you are very cruel in your letters. You blame me for telling Gerald about our trouble. But it was *you* who told me to tell him. I have never told anyone about our love or our trouble except Phyllis and Mr Powys. And I only told them because I could see that Mr Powys knew something already from the things he said. And you have completely misunderstood what he said when I told him. But that was my fault because I was in such a state when I told you. Gerald sympathises with us very much, and he thought the story of our trouble so painful that he begged me not to tell him any more about it. He doesn't know what happened before I came to England. You are cruel, Llewelyn, to talk of "eligible" lovers, as if I were some servant to "better myself". How can you talk so when you think of all there has been between

us. Or even if you think of my living unmarried with Gerald, which is hardly an "eligible" thing to do. It is very wrong of you, Lulu, to be so suspicious of me.

I was fascinated by the oddness of my staying with Gerald's parents as if I were a suitable fiancée for him, and behaving like one. I felt like a book in which a few pages of some other book have been found by mistake. A prospective father-in-law who talks of taking me hunting with him next fall seemed too amazing as an incident in my life.

You do not realize, Lulu dear, that I always think of myself as a slavey. It is rather the theme of Mariana. I always feel that I was meant to wash dishes and scrub floors. It is part of my conviction of sin. I feel that is what I ought to do, what I was meant for. You don't understand.

Darling Lulu, what a disagreeable letter I am writing.

And I do love you so much. And I do trouble and grieve about your happiness—and about your health. Lulu, if you make yourself ill on my account I shall drown myself. That is a fair warning. I could not bear it.

We must take things quietly. We can be very happy. If we will let ourselves. If we control ourselves, Alyse will become reassured. Gerald will become less uncertain and unhappy. And we can all be happy. If we love one another no one can separate us.

Lulu, I am worried about Gerald. He is not well. He has grown thinner and he says he has felt a gradual decline of strength going on for several months. Since he has been here he has been very tired and feverish. I am afraid it may have been partly the recurring difficulties of our life together, preying on his mind and affecting his nerves. I do not know. I hope it is nothing. But I am worried. I wish we were all together well and safe.

I must stop. The porter says there is some mail for me. Perhaps there is a letter from you.

With love
Gamel
xxxxxxx

Addressed to Llewelyn at Austerlitz, c/o Eugen Boissevain (Edna St Vincent Millay's husband).

The "trouble" was Gamel's recent pregnancy by Llewelyn.

The "theme of Mariana" refers to the heroine of *One Way of Love*.

(*No place, East Chaldon.*) 13 August 1931

My dearest Lulu,

I was so sad that you were not happy. And I had no chance to talk to you. It was so awful to sit in the bus and then separate like that. I wish you had walked over the hill with me. We should have been alone and could have talked a little more.

Lulu, you must not be unhappy and get all in a trouble.

There is nothing fatal except death. You must remember that.

We shall have many happy days—when you think how happy we can be together it is mad to spend our short hours in trouble and fret.

We are not like the spirits of lovers in the poem who returned to earth for one hour and quarrelled all the hour about how they should spend it. We never quarrelled. We were always happy together.

I am afraid I was difficult and more inclined to be cross than I might have been. I did not feel well and was nervous. And the nervous difficulties of my life which have continued for years now find me less patient than they used to. I grow more easily tired and have less energy for adjusting difficulties than I used to.

My whole personality recoils from difficulties with other people now. Like the sea anemones into whose tentacles boys have been dropping stones. When I am buried they must say on my tombstone G.W. Asks Endless Rest as they did on Roman graves. Because I am tired. You must remember that I had years of difficulty before I went away with Gerald and a year of difficulty since. It is curious that wanting so little and not wanting to injure anyone, making no claims I should always be in such difficulties with human beings.

I believe things will grow better always. I do not mean by the change which Alyse suggested. But because we will all grow adjusted to our situations. And everything will be taken for granted. And gradually things will become easier. I shall be able to go on expeditions more freely. Everything will be well. I do believe it. If you will only be patient, Lulu. Only take a longer view of things. Not think that any hour of any day is essential but remember that if we live there is time before us. And many lovely unexpected days may be in it.

With my love
your

x x
xGamelx
x x
xxxxxxx

It is unusual for Gamel to date a letter, but August 13 was Llewelyn's birthday—although the letter gives no birthday greetings.

(*No place or date*
Postmark East Lulworth Nov 13 31)

My dearest Lulu,

I beg you not to be unhappy. I constantly think of you and always love you. I have never altered. But when I am harrassed and especially when I think you are unfriendly and have strange and even ugly thoughts about me I can not be myself. It is all a misunderstanding. We must try to keep the field between us as open and sunny as it always was.

Lulu, it is possible that Gerald may go up to London the beginning of next week without me for a day. If he does I would come over to lunch that day. I am not sure just when it would be or even sure it will happen but in any case I will make some arrangement next week. Try to keep the first part of the week open. I will Telegraph you.

But can you and Alyse come to supper on Friday. We will talk later when we see one another.

This is in haste because Major Brenan is to take us to Weymouth on their way back.

With my love

Gamel

Churriana

(No date, Autumn 1934)

My dearest Lulu,

I was so glad to get your letter last night. But what a cross wicked letter. For I *have* written you. Haven't you had a long letter from me since your book came, and your letter saying you were you hoped really getting better. I was so happy to hear it and had so many things I wanted to say then.

But perhaps you have never heard, for Spain is still in a state of War. The papers are full of court martials, and the English people in Malaga have been telling us how often letters never arrive at all. I sent you a little plan of the garden too. Have you never received it?

Lulu, I am so happy when you say that you think you are really getting better. It is so wonderful to think of. Do you think we shall actually one day go for a walk together. It seems such a simple thing to write about. But what a golden adventure to walk in the sunlight would be.

And to think that we might all take ship together and go from port to port, to Lisbon, to Tangiers, to Gibraltar and all come together to Churriana at last, and hear Maria and Rosario and Antonio unbarring the door with a great clang.

And you would love it here, I know. Your tower is lovely. You can watch tiny ships on the far off sea, or black oxen ploughing the land.

You must be very careful Lulu, I beg of you to be very careful, and not endanger your recovery by any rashness.

I wish this paper were not of such horrid texture. I feel like the characters of Genji, girls living in lonely country houses who regret that they have no paper of more distinguished texture on which to answer the letter of the prince.

There is one thing that always puzzles me about your coming to Spain. What are we going to call you in Spanish. They can never manage Llewelyn. We must find a Spanish name in the Ballads that is like it, or another name that you like. Alyse will be Alicia, the c is like th, if she likes that. Bertie is fortunate, he becomes Don Bertran, and Faith, Fidelia. Donna is Portugese, the Spanish is Dona.

Lulu, I do like your book so much now I have read it all. It is charming when you talk of Newman and his divining rod. You have such appreciation of *true* religion where it is found.

Did I tell you I have been reading a book that thrilled me. One of Gerald's special books on his subjects. I can't remember its name which is stupid, but it is by a German Jew Eister, and about the Messiah and John the Baptist Legend as it can be drawn out of Josephus by comparing the different mss. and printed versions, and especially the ones recently discovered in Russian. It seemed so thrilling to me to have heathen and unfriendly testimony. To think that what Origen says of Christ's being small and ugly, stooped, and with meeting eye-brows, may actually have come originally from the 'Hue and Cry' published by Pilate, and used by Josephus.

But you may have read this book—

So many people seemed to come to us and to stay last autumn, Gerald's parents, Blair, Mrs Anrep, Arthur Waley, Mark C.S., the Churchills—and then there was that awful packing, and all the time trying to work. And we were both profoundly saddened by Roger Fry's death. It was in itself so sad & such a loss, and it made the world appear such an insecure place in which friends at any moment might be torn shockingly away for ever.

(Since then Gerald *has* lost another very old friend who was coming out to stay with us in March, poor Francis Birrell.)

I know you say that we should realize at every moment the insecurity of life to heighten our awareness of it.

I must tell you we bought a *dragon tree*—a draco draconiensis—Strabo describes them growing in Cadiz, and they grow nowhere

else in the world except in the Canaries. It is a giant lily. [Sketch of lily.]

I must stop

With my love
Gamel

In January, 1935, Llewelyn Powys, James Cobb, Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland were prosecuted for an alleged libel concerning the running of a home for mentally defective girls at East Chaldon. The story cannot be compressed into a footnote, but may be read in Malcolm Elwin's *Life of Llewelyn Powys*.

Churriana,
Malaga.
(No date. Early spring 1935)

Dearest Lulu,

I am so happy to think that you did get to Weymouth and that you enjoy being there, and all the things you see in the streets and in the sea. Oh I do wish I was there too. Its sad to be so far away and never to see you—or Alyse or Phyllis, or John or Gertrude or Theodore.

I do like great houses in beautiful gardens. But I'd rather live in little cottages and see the people I love.

Its such a long time that we've been here and we've done nothing but worry over repairs and expenses, and put in trees and flowers. It was like a kind of dreadful machine that began to grind, dragging us along with it, and once it began we couldn't disentangle ourselves and we couldn't stop it and it went on and on. We've spent so much money. I don't know how we shall ever live. We must make some, I suppose.

But Lulu I am so sorry that your digestion is such a trouble again. It is so difficult I know to find out what to do with so many troubles to avoid. I do hope you get better every day. I'll pray to all the gods—By chance I may hit upon the Right One—

I like to think of Alyse and Phyllis going to a movie together. Do you remember that you and Alyse and I went to one together in Weymouth—how did we ever persuade you

to go, I can't imagine—it was a Wild West one.

But you know I did once meet Miss Stevenson, the White One, as we say of our house keeper Maria to distinguish her from the last one who was a wicked old witch. It was in the street in Weymouth, and I thought she was charming.

I love to think of Theodore and his Susie in the churchyard together. What charming things there are in the world. Its like a scene from some old 'Life'—it has the quality of Hooker rocking the cradle beside the sheep and reading his book, or Dorothy Osborne when she is writing to Temple, while she watches by her father who is ill late at night, telling him that her "fellow servants" the attendants have just come to invite her to join them in their ale, so she will stop writing for a while.

All our twenty new little orange trees are thriving and half a dozen are already in bloom. Our grape cuttings which we feared were dead, today are putting out little cottony tufts. I have two lovely white rabbits with pink noses eyes and ears. They were a present from Juan Navajo. And I have another brown rabbit I bought which has just had seven little rabbits. They live on alfalfa which we buy, and on weeds and grass from the garden.

Lulu, I use my little red pin every day. I use it for pinning flowers. And already this year it has pinned roses, violets, jasmine, fresas, carnations, stocks and mimosas.

The weather is so lovely now, it is warm enough to sit out until sunset with a jersey on, so we have all our meals outside except supper sitting under a big custard apple tree. As I write now I hear the wind blowing about the house with that curiously romantic sound it has when it blows about large houses (I don't mean that it is more romantic but it is different) and I hear the perpetual falling of the fountain and flowing of the cistern, a sound that I love. Today I heard the cuckoo for the first time as I was sitting at tea—there was a clear primrose yellow sunset, and suddenly I heard Cuckoo! from somewhere beyond the wall out in the sunset. I play on the Recorder

a song about the cuckoo from the Appalachians. It is rather different from the English one and has a most lovely air. It is one of those airs which seem to be sweetly, indifferently telling about something quite apart from the words. But that would interest Alyse more than you.

It will be so strange to see Bertie here. I can't believe he is really coming. I do hope nothing happens to prevent them.

The other Bertie, Bertrand Russell, wants to come just after him.

A first cousin of Gerald's, Gordon Graham, was here yesterday. He is a Lt. Commander. He was very nice, simple and direct. You would have liked one thing he said. He was on a submarine during the war, and to our surprise he said he liked it. But he explained that what he really liked was the heightening of life he felt after being penned in and under water—he said when he came ashore everything seemed wonderful to him as if he had never seen the world before.

But I must stop now. Please Lulu be very careful and get well quickly—

With my love

Gamel

Churriana.
Malaga.

(No date; probably Dec 1935 or early 1936)

My darling Lulu,

I did love my little fairy unicorn's horn. I wish I could blow one blast upon it so thin and clear that you should hear it blowing across the downs and come to me—Perhaps if I were dying like Roland and blew it for you you would come.

Christmas is not a day that I shall ever like. If it were only religious, the birth day of a god, I should like it better. But these festivals which serve only to mark the absence of things that once were present seem to me truly *dies nefasti*. I am willing to give presents or cook Christmas dinner as I had to do this year, but I do not celebrate them in the heart. Like my birthday I should like them forgotten.

I loved the little horn, but Lulu your letter made me very sad. I do so want you to be well—to be well. You must get better. I feel so helpless, and so sad when I think of you so ill and so far away. I have so wished that you were here where we could see you every day. How can I tell if it would be good for you—but I believe it would.

I have been for a long time in the sort of twilight dimness into which I sometimes wander. I do not know whether it is due to lack of health or what causes it. It is an odd state in which I do not care about anything, I should like at those times never to be reminded of anything that mattered at all but I have sometimes suspected that it was due to a fearful shrinking away of the mind from too many painful regions of thought, so that in the end the feelings were unwilling to be touched at all. I know you would think me strange in not wanting to talk or think about the past. There is hardly any period in my life which I would willingly dwell upon in my thoughts, much less live over again if such a thing were possible.

I had a letter from the Sunday Referee saying that they were sending a paper under separate cover with your 'compliments' but alas no paper has ever come, perhaps it yet will, for Spanish mails are uncertain. But I did get the Literary Guide and liked very well to see in what honour the Rationalists hold your name. I liked the paper really too. It seemed so simple and honest. And I liked H. G. Wells on Huxley—and better than that Huxley's own very noble head.

Did you know that no religious service has ever been held at Johns Hopkins. It was a condition made by its Quaker founders that there never should be any religious service of any kind, and Huxley was invited to give the inaugural address. That was what made me think of it.

Gerald has had a strange fit of work upon him. Several days before Christmas he suddenly began and has worked all day and often until midnight every day since then. Today he has not even come out for his meals. I have taken them in to him, and always found the same absent look, and the intent hard rapidly writhing words here and

there on the page to form one of his indecipherable palimpsests.

I long to see Louis's book which he says will soon be out. He has promised to send us a copy—But I do not like his title.

I wrote to Alyse a long letter a long time ago—& did not send it—but *why* would be a long story—I shall write her very soon.

Oh Lulu I wish we could see each other.

With my love

Gamel

Gamel's uncle, Daniel Coit Gilman (1831-1908), was the first President of Johns Hopkins University.

Louis's book was probably *Welsh Ambassadors*, which would date this letter 1936.

Churriana,
Malaga.

(No date. April 1936)

My dearest Lulu,

I still feel so sad for Bertie's death and for you—It was an unforgivable wrong. What a sad thing life is for all its fairy colours—all fairy gold.

I feel troubled by being afraid you are not well. Oh I do want you to get better quickly. Today I read in the Spanish papers that they have made some important discovery in America, some medicine for the cure of tuberculosis, which they have been working on for the last nine years—but it is impossible to tell from the Spanish press what it is or whether it has really been tried. Have you heard anything about it?

I am so tired of seeing people—it sounds strange to say so here, but so many people seem to come, and the Russells stayed such a *long* time. And I only half like him. Its queer that I can never really like him. My heart never warms to him at all. His guiding forces are vanity & love of power and to gratify them he wasted his amazing talent for Mathematics and took to writing his books on happiness and marriage, and all the

subjects about which he so evidently knows nothing worth saying. But in many things he shows great integrity of thought and character. And I *admire* him, only I can't really like him. I never quite know why.

Just now I felt almost embittered towards them both for coming when they knew we did not really want them, stopping poor Gerald's work, and staying six weeks. I go so tired of always talking. I wish human beings were more silent creatures. It would be lovely never to speak but only to think and feel.

To-day I heard the cuckoo. It was a cloudy windy restless day, and suddenly out of the grey sky over the green fields I heard the cuckoo. It was lovely to me. I might have been in England. I might have been in East Chaldon in Mrs. Legge's room. How green the spring was there. And how beautiful the charm of the birds was when the sky was beginning to be bright.

I was sitting in the garden doing nothing at all, only looking at the flowers, the stocks and tulips and calla lilies in bloom. Do you suppose I shall be doing this all the year?

Lulu, this time last year Bertie was with us. I do not forget him. I remember that little church so well, and sitting with you waiting on that bank.

I could not help laughing very much at your stories of Theodore. Who was it who says that we have not done our duty to our friends when we 'have conveyed the breathless body to the earth'. We are to remember them, & to raise up their work after them if we are able.

Dear Bertie—I am sitting in the chair just where he sat before the fire here. I wish he were *here* tonight. I wish I could have seen him oftener and known him better.

I am sure he threw his life away, as you wrote Gerald. He was too sure of his strength.

Write me a few lines if you feel well enough. Did you get my letter a few days ago. They say the post is very insecure now—

I thank you very much for the Dorset Echo—your article about the boy drowned in the river had a lovely quality.

Sometimes I feel so lost and alone in this world.

I long to hear that you are better.

With my love

your
Gamel

(No place or date. Churriana, c. June 1936)

My dearest Lulu,

Such lovely earrings came for my birthday, of that colour and substance that I love so much—and what lovely poems my great master writes when he has a mind—

O what a tiresome world in which all summer I suppose we will not meet—but you must get well, Lulu. The only reason I have to be glad we are probably not coming home is that you seem to get better when we are *away*—get well, get well—

The new prime minister of Spain is consumptive, and has spent a great deal of his life in bed, I am told. When he took office everyone said it would kill him, but the doctors said 'people over fifty don't die of consumption', a saying I liked very much to hear. Poor man I'm told he both eats and sleeps at his office for he has no time to go home. But I don't suppose his government can last beyond the next election.

You may have seen in the English papers that there have been a lot of riots in Malaga. There is a private war between the Syndicalists and the Communists who take turns murdering one another—then there's a riot and a general strike, and the buses aren't allowed to enter the town. We haven't been in for a long time. All the trouble is between the fishermen who are Communists and the fish sellers who are Syndicalists. Our village is almost entirely Syndicalist and the village is run now by a Syndicate, a sort of public meeting at which everyone has a voice. I sympathise with Syndicalism, which is a form of Anarchy and peculiar now I think to Spain, but it seems to be based on what seems to me so obviously a fallacy—that

human beings are naturally good and don't need to be restrained from injuring each other, so that it appears to me totally impractical. Communism I loathe. Gerald says you can only sympathise with it, by not reading Communist books. He has felt obliged to read them lately as he wants to write about Spain. And what books they are—what hate, what meanness of spirit, ignorance, mysticism as cheap & ridiculous as that of Christian science, brutality, self-pity, hypocrisy.

It's impossible not to think of politics in Spain, for everyone talks about them always. It is exciting and depressing. I wish that I could feel for once in a stream of movement towards some good end, as Alyse felt in the suffrage movement, or Yeats in the Irish. But we are all standers-by now. And the movement I'm afraid is towards a bad end when we will all be more brutal and stupid than ever—for hate will create hate. Gerald says hate came from the Jews. It was their great contribution to the world, carried on by Christianity. Before that hate was local and evanescent, the Jews and the Christians taught us burning constant hate & 'vengeance that endureth for ever'.

It is a pity to think of hate & revolution when all around one shines the loveliest day, the sea wind is stirring the tops of the giant canes, the water falling in the cistern & the fountain; beyond the wall the corn beside the olive yards is the palest gold—and the pomegranates are in bloom, and some great scarlet hibiscus flowers. It is lovely, and I love this country—but I wish I were in England. I wish I could come over the downs towards Chydyok, and suddenly feel 'life more abundantly' as I drew near—

Lulu, I thank you for sending me your article on Bertie. Dear Bertie, I do not want him forgotten too easily. I want his family, his friends to struggle against the forces of oblivion that rush in upon the place where someone *was*.

I wear your earrings often and love them—

Is Phyllis at Rats Barn—who is her Aunt Hannah? O dear I do want to be in England. I would like to see Aunt Hannah. You must

get well. If I could only spend a week in Dorset—

With my love

Gamel

Llewelyn's article on Bertie is reprinted in *Somerset Essays* (1937)—"Albert Reginald Powys".

Aunt Hannah—lived her later years at Corwen, where she and Miss Playter's mother had the house next door to John Cowper Powys and Phyllis.

(No place or date. Churriana, 1936)

Dearest Lulu,

I am trying to send you this note to tell you that we are perfectly well and unharmed, but I don't know when it will get to you as all ordinary communications are cut and the frontier closed.

I hope I shan't ever have the opportunity of writing to you again from the midst of a Civil War, but I confess, though I am ashamed to say so, that I have enjoyed it extremely.

Our first notice of it was when Maria in the morning waking us said "They've been fighting in Malaga all night and the city is burning down". It was under a pall of smoke as we could see from our Tower.

We had been hearing for a fortnight from the Upper class Spaniards that the Right was to make a coup. During that time the Government had made 1500 arrests of 'fascists' and the Right leader had been assassinated.

Then Gen. Franco suddenly landed near Cadiz with a detachment of the Foreign Legion the only Regular Troops Spain has. After some fighting they took Seville. And their plan is certainly to go on to Madrid. They can't apparently bring much of the Legion because the boats keep mutinying and refusing to carry them. I saw the boat that brought the first detachment come into Malaga yesterday. The crew instead of returning to Ceuta for more troops had shot their officers and brought the boat here.

I think the Right have been *wicked* they have attacked their own country as if it were a foreign country at war, with a body of troops known for their cruelty and excesses.

To come back to our own experiences. As the day went on there was a constant rushing by of commandeered cars and buses crowded with young workmen. The buses had literally a pistol projecting from every window, young men stood on the running boards clasping the Red flag to their breasts, shouting 'Viva la Republica!' The cars bristled with arms, revolvers, rifles, knives and swords.

In the afternoon a great friend of ours Alonzo the Master painter, and his son, arrived to tell us that people were coming to burn down the house next door, a beautiful old house which belongs to an old gentleman of Right sympathies. Its gardener's house is joined to it and our gardener's house, joined to us, are only thirty feet apart so that it was very unpleasant, even if the burning of houses stopped with that one. However as Gerald remarked it was not a good day for burning houses the temperature in the shade was 93°.

Shortly afterwards a great lorry of armed men drew up and they got out and demanded entrance into Don Antonio's house. The porter said he had no key, which we were afraid meant that the old man was hiding there, (we had heard that his house in Malaga had been burnt already) so they broke the door down. However they only searched for arms and went away again. Then everyone said "It's tonight they'll burn all the houses". That from a house burning point of view seemed to me very sensible as fires are so much finer at night. So we were prepared. Gerald sat up until four working and then waked Antonio for the rest of the morning. We all found it hard to sleep at all, the excitement and the rushing cars.

During the evening a very sinister rumour spread about the country that "El Terico", the Foreign Legion was coming to Malaga, a regiment had landed at Algeciras and had nearly reached us. It was possible either to follow the main coast road or if they found

great opposition to come inland a little in which case they might have come down from Albhaurin on top of Churriana.

Everyone spoke in voices of horror, it was as if a Legion of Devils was coming. And I believe they behaved like one in the Asturias last year.

We listened in at midnight to our neighbour, the Marchesa's, wireless. it was strange to hear the sharp barking voice of the soldier in command in Seville announcing that the Right had taken Granada, which I'm afraid is true, and that all the Northern provinces had risen. And then a minute later the Madrid announcer saying that the Rebels were being dominated everywhere, and that the miners from the Rio Tinto were blockading Seville and laying their dynamite charges.

Our two little local aeroplanes droned bravely about all night laying explosives under bridges so that they could be blown up if the 'Tercio' appeared.

We woke to the same excitement, more armed cars, Malaga still burning. However they said the 'Tercio' had gone towards Seville instead. We believe now they never landed at Algeciras.

Gerald, I need hardly say, had been enjoying himself hugely. He went off to Torremolinos to see what was happening there and to see if any English people wanted to come to us. In his absence a great country house a little below us broke into flames, and we thought "Now its begun!" A band of twenty young men armed to the teeth came and demanded arms or to search the house. I received them politely but coldly as I thought they ought not to search English houses. They came in with their guns held forward as if they were boarding a pirate. As I opened the door to them alone it seemed particularly absurd, the servants to my surprise had disappeared, I found later they had rushed off to conceal the best knives etc. Then Rosario and Antonio appeared and Rosario scolded these young men for bothering English people who sympathized with their cause. The poor young leader kept opening drawers, full either of my underclothes or Miranda's

headless dolls. And got more and more embarrassed. We parted on friendly terms, all exchanging the workers greeting "Salud!"

Everything today is more quiet. We are to try to send letters by an English battleship said to be in the harbour.

My love to my dear Alyse.
With my love,

Your Gamel

Don't feel at all anxious for us, today the police and soldiers are both out and there seems to be perfect order.

The burning of houses in Malaga was done with great order. It began because of sniping, then in the early morning the poor quarters rose and burnt in revenge, but even they observed the greatest order, stationing firemen to protect houses belonging to harmless people and foreigners, so that there are some houses belonging to English and German firms still standing in the smoking ruins of the Calle Larios, they did not burn anyone, but told them they must leave the houses as they were to be burnt.

*(No place or date. Farnham, Surrey.
Early Summer 1937)*

My darling Lulu,

I was so happy to have your letter this morning and happier still to hear that you are getting well, oh, how lovely those words sound. How wonderful if we shall walk again through the flowers in the fields or watch the sea together, look for flints together. I shall treasure our instants too. But I hope they will be many—more perhaps than we have ever had.

I liked so much what you told me of the peasants. What the little boy said about the red sheep—that he could not give his whole heart to it. And what the peasants carved upon their houses made me wish again that I could be a Christian. I remember what a thrilling shock I once felt on a lonely mountain in Italy when we had been walking for a long time and came to a rough white

building and carved over the door it had "The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness", "Vox Clamati in Desserato" I suppose it was. It was a Carmelite Monastery. But it gave me that feeling that there are people who possess qualities, emotions that I lack. For I never, even as a child knew even the meaning of the word—the tender arms of Jesus never reached out for my small child's body and if they had I should have thought "Yes, the out-stretching arms of the personified West in Egyptian Mythology, how interesting to find these things in the world". Just as I love taking Communion at Edgeworth for I feel one in a long chain of worshipers who have eaten gods and drank their blood. The only religion I ever have felt was a sort of pantheism. A feeling that it was somehow mixed with summer's weather and winter storms.

I've had at Edgeworth a really rather bad attack of influenza with a temperature of 104°—but at last I feel almost well again and more happy and somehow myself than I did before. I seem at last to have cleared away a sort of depression that infused the air when I came back from Spain. Poor Webb Miller the *Star* reporter of the United Press who had been with both sides told Jay Allen that it was horrible, but after what he'd seen in the last four years, he was in Abyssinia too, he couldn't help loathing human beings and having a sort of dread and horror of them.

I think after only seeing a little that Bertrand Russell is probably right when he says that the feelings (and the behaviour) let loose in a modern war are so appalling that there's probably nothing that would justify starting one. It would be like deliberately rising the devil.

Gerald is at work on a book about Spain. I hope to start work soon. This is a horrid little modern Villa, but it is warm and comfortable, Miranda is happy at her school. We have a very nice girl, the daughter of the Village Inn keeper named Sybil. Though its all rather overgrown with horrid little red brick houses here Surrey must have been a beautiful county. There are beautiful old houses and great orchards with red apples

still hanging on the trees. But most of it now is like an English Bronxville.

I shall try to go up to London for the opening of Gertrude's Exhibition, I hope it will be successful. I am so happy when I think of you actually *walking about*, it seems a sort of miracle, and I bless the place that performed it. This is a dull letter in return for a lovely one. Much love to Alyse. With my love.

Your Gamel.

Bell Court,
Aldbourne,
Marlborough.

(Printed heading. No date. 20 April 1939)

My darling Lulu,

I've meant to write to you for so long. I do want to hear that you are better & that you are still drinking *goat's milk*.

Is Willie better? I hope he is. I am so sorry he is ill, and it is such a trouble to you. I feel so melancholy about these wars & rumours of wars—As if there were marching armies between us.

Gerald has gone to London today to make enquiries about work for himself in a war. He is going to the Military Intelligence offices.

We think the Italians may be going to occupy Tangiers. But I don't suppose that would mean a war. If they did the French might occupy Spanish Morocco—and so it would go until we were all brought in. What a splendid man Roosevelt is. He is the only statesman I have ever felt a kind of hero-worship for—

I don't think there ever was such a spring. It is as bright and hot as midsummer. Our big pear tree here is just beginning to bloom and the hedges are white with blackthorn—everything is very late—Our garden is very bright with primulas & pansies & little rock plants & the lilacs are in bud.

And how happy we could be in the world if human beings weren't quite such wicked creatures—

Gerald has taken some pictures of the cottage to send you but they have not come back yet.

How charming your article on the Welsh as lovers was—Oh I forgot—I finally signed (two days ago) a contract with Longmans, but now they will not bring it out until Autumn. And I think we may all be in Death's Other Kingdom by then.

I felt sad about it for I finished the book so long ago—Longmans had it over six months. And now I feel it may never come out. However they say they are going to print it now & I will get the proofs in a week or so—and if they have printed it I suppose they *will* bring it out some day.

Will Life and Death really come out on the first of May. It is a lovely time for it to appear—among the flowers—in the month when I was born. But I can hardly believe that it will really come out then. I long to have it to read again and again.

Yesterday walking back from Ramsbury (which is on the *Kennet* & was a bishopric before Old Sarum) I came through the woods and passed the little hollow where I picked the first primrose. It is full of large bushes of blackthorn & if you lay there now the blossoms would drift over you like snow.

My broad beans & lettuces & carrots are coming up very well but I think the birds must have eaten the parsley. The Spaniards call parsley *hierba buena* the Good Herb, and put it in everything. Didn't the Greeks wear parsley crowns?

Good bye Lulu, please write to me how you are—I so long for you to be better. I will soon write Alyse. Please give her my dear love. And my love to Lisaly, I liked her card so much.

With my love

Gamel

x

I send you one of my pansies because I loved this [word illegible] when I was a child.

Gamel signed her contract with Longmans for *Death's Other Kingdom* 18 April, which dates this letter.

Life and Death: Gamel has forgotten the new title of this book, *Love & Death*, which was published 1 May 1939.

(No place or date.
?Aldbourn, May 1939)

My darling Lulu,

It had been raining and dark & cold for days, & then suddenly one morning it was warm & the sun was shining & I went downstairs & on the table was *Love & Death*. I was so happy to see it at last in its actual dress—published & in the world for ever—for I truly think it is an “immortal book”, one of the few that will outlast the modern world—

“I will build you a monument more lasting than brass—”

I so long to read it again but I have not been able to more than look at it yet for I had a hundred & twenty foolscap pages of typing for Gerald to do in a hurry—and we both feel dazed with it.

But it is lovely to me to think that I can read it over & over whenever I have a mind to. And all is not lost & wasted. Something was caught, & fixed for ever, of our golden days, not only for us but for people still to come.

But I will write you when I have read it again—

Today it is warm, beautiful spring. We have our meals outdoors on the marble table—we went walking to the four barrows & the air was trembling with the unceasing singing of the larks—

Last night it was moonlight & warm. Gerald in his half sleep put out a hand & touched my hair & said “Pussy—on the bed!” thinking in a half dream that it was a cat which had got up on the bed, and making me laugh.

Then I lay awake & listened to the clock striking two and then *I heard a cuckoo*. I could not believe it but there it was, calling cuckoo—cuckoo over & over—in “the time that is always over the hedge, always beyond each gatepost, always on the other side of the next hill.”

Gerald will not read *Love and Death*. I think he may be wise. He is a strange being. He says he will read it some day perhaps, but now it would only disturb him & rouse old feelings he would rather have left quiet.

We are now under the reign of the dande-

lions. A flower of yours. Just then I heard a cuckoo call. I wish we could have heard it together & gone on hearing it together all the year.

I must stop writing. It is after eight & the clouds above the red-tiled roofs & the pink

blossoms of the apple trees are faintly stained with rose & the light is failing.

What a lovely thing to happen in May—
Love & Death to be published.

With my love

Gamel

Some Letters from Alyse Gregory to Mary Casey*

Chydyok 20 September 1941

My dear Mary—I have thought about you so much since I got back to my little room—and it grieves me to think that with your gift for enjoying the beauties of nature, the fruits of the intellect, of responding so sensitively to each experience of life—you should carry within you this seed of despair and negation—It has always been my own temptation so I do understand it—and that is why I know how important it is to combat it whenever it appears—Life is both shallow and deep—false and true—ugly and beautiful—but you should see what is beautiful not by ignoring what is ugly but by assimilating it with what is beautiful—If you have fear in your own heart, fear will pursue you wherever you go—Emerson once wrote “He has not learnt the lesson of life who does not every day surmount a fear”—Instead of retreating into yourself away from what troubles you you must conquer and build your philosophy as I do on despair *if needs be*, but build it firmly against the storms and hurricanes of life—You are a gifted girl, with a deep, ardent nature (deny it as much as you like) but you are so self-distrustful that you turn against the very thing which might bring you deliverance—I would certainly not avoid reading *War and Peace* for fear it would be painful for you—It is one of the great masterpieces of literature—and the test of a masterpiece is whether it frees the mind and lifts a burden from the heart—and consoles us for the savagery and sadness of existence—There is as much joy in life as sorrow—you have only to watch the squirrels in the branches of the trees to

*These two letters, with extracts from a third, which may be read as an accompaniment to the review of Mary Casey's poems within this *Review*, were kindly sent to the Editor by Rosemary Manning.

have that proved—as much beauty as ugliness—and indeed what seems ugly can often, seen from another angle, show pathos and beauty—you have the wonderful chance of having such beautiful and poetic mother—something which most girls know nothing of—a love which can never forsake you—Do not avoid the woodcutters when you pass, but look at them with a human and humble interest as if you were a disembodied spirit—and with a historical interest—and free of fear—these two simple, hard working men at their ancient labour—I long to strike every chain away that shackles you, dear Mary—Live for your own thoughts—write down the simplest observation—such as the look of the toadstools coming up from the brown earth,—Read *The Idiot* by Dostoevsky—and the poetry of Walt Whitman—which show life from the two extremes—Do not trouble to answer this letter—I think you are a most sweet companion—your only fault is turning upon yourself—I feel so sympathetic because I know these tendencies in myself—
with my love and blessing, dear, dear Mary.
Alyse.

Chydyok 28 November 1941

My dearest Mary—Thank you for your little letter tucked in with the book—which I *hoped* would be there—Yes, I do care for the consolations of philosophy—I care for any consolation I can get in this difficult world—whether it comes from watching the goldfish swimming in my pond, or the old cart horse grazing free on the downs—or from merely sitting still by myself in my room safe from the howling wind—Last night I staid up till half past one reading a biography of Benjamin Constant who lived

at the time of the French revolution and fought for all the liberties which are now so rapidly disappearing in this war—If you have not read recently a history of the French revolution look it up in one of your histories for it is very exciting—Have you read Carlyle's History of the French Revolution—Katie has this in three little volumes—indeed, I think it was one of Lulu's books—and I could send it to you if you would like it—

Yes, I snatch at any consolation I can find whether it travels on the wind or comes out of my head—any straw serves—The fatal thing is to let one's thoughts turn in upon oneself—[cut made]

And now in reading over your letter I have only just discovered that paragraph that was added on the other side of the page—Dear Mary, what a sensitive heart and an understanding mind you have—one day to happiness, one day to sorrow—And I think of you with a pressure of anxiety so often against *your* heart that you cannot communicate in a world so harsh and menacing—But remember that what makes you suffer also makes you different and deepens your understanding—Why do you not try writing some poetry—or writing a little essay about some author you admire—or about one of your walks—You are a writer, I can feel it—you must not turn against yourself, for you have a rare gift—tremulous and intense—I hope you will let me know if you get any fresh news about being called up—How we can get used to anything, even suspense!! Write to me often, dearest Mary, for I always love to hear from you and I treasure your understanding words very, very much.

Alyse

Chydyok [15 October 1944]

My dearest Mary—you have become the philosopher and I the student—for your letter is full of poetry and wisdom—I think it is sad that you have never had a companion of your own age to share your perceptions—for our perceptions are the measure of our days—

Of course you must write, dearest Mary,—you are a born writer—your very difficulties prove it—and you have all the chief gifts—poetic sensibility, closeness of observation, a feeling for words, a sure and delicate taste, and divine imagination—but what you lack is toughness and objectivity—the power of taking reverses and trying again—and of course most important of all you have no one to spur you on, guide you, and stir your imagination—I am no writer at all. I am a window gazer—you always say something in your letters that lights up my imagination—

Yes, we distort our feelings when we try to put them into words—but more often it is that the targets we aim at prove fallacious—Nobody dances to our step and so we must either dance alone, which is possible, or learn to dance to others' tunes—you have said the same in other words.

Reviews

On Missing Mary Casey

Full Circle; Christophoros,
MARY CASEY.

Enitharmon Press, 1982; each volume £4.50 (hardback), £3.00 (paperback).

My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord. These words and the whole of *Quam dilecta!*, the eighty-fourth psalm, have come to mind while reading Mary Casey's poems, for I know of no other writer who has acknowledged that thirst so completely. It is both the subject and the object of the writing. Phrases pile up that reflect and inflict happy anguish—"afflicted with longing", "the longing heart the loud cry of the lover", the terrible, paradoxical simplicity of the statements in "*Ah, my dear be satisfied*" that the end of desire is reached only through drinking the cup that she prays might pass away, when for "a little space / is my most bitter soul / fulfilled". Only a little space, for as she cries elsewhere:

why must it be that fulfilment
is like wind in the hand?

Recognition and expression of longing is usually partial, whether in the *ubi sunt?* poetry that looks elegiacally back or the poetry of love-longing that looks forward. Even in religious poetry—I mean the poetry of religious experience such as Herbert's or R. S. Thomas's, not versified doctrine—it is usually a mood and not a mode. Other people who draw on the water of these poems will find other things—it goes deep; at the moment for me Mary Casey's greatest achievement is to have realized our being in the present, in a state of unfulfilled desire.

Christophoros is overtly religious poetry in that much of it deals with scriptural characters. *Full Circle* is no less religious but will seem more accessible to non-Christians. All the poems body forth, rather than making explicit, a faith matching the strength of desire, consequent upon and complementary to it. In "Redemption" she wrote:

does religion begin with the cry of the lover
I want your body.

Her "O"—"O in this pure cold dawn / what might I not know", "O listen this thrush singing", "O my love"—is the emblem of "illuminated emptiness" waiting to be filled as well as the "full circle" of accomplishment from which one volume is named. It is one with the "empty house / round with round door" to which in "Nests" she compares her poems:

a living work to fill
a waiting dusty space
so with tired mind I tuck
my childless happy verses
into the placeless crevices of thought.

The poignancy of the "tuck" that suggests children's bedtime is met by "childless happy". Many women when they have children sing lullaby to their longing and their artistic creativity also: the rosy cheeks can be woven into the "flowery band that binds us to the earth". Mary Casey had none. If this was a grief to her she clearly took it, or whatever griefs fell to her lot, as one of those *who going through the vale of misery use it for a well.*

As most readers of this will already know, Mary Casey died in January 1981. Her poetry was known to very few people, and these two books have appeared posthumously. I never met her, but I feel as though I have known her because there is that in her poetry, a depth and a directness of communication, that is only otherwise experienced in friendship. She has spoken of this feeling herself in a poem called "On Missing Plotinus", where the word "missing" needs to be read in the sense of "feeling the loss of" as well as "not coinciding with". She pursues this and every such intimacy with an intensity I cannot fully share and towards a mystical conclusion where I cannot follow—where I doubt if many can. Here it seems that she has actually known Plotinus:

for while I was writing
he was living within me
interpenetrating intellect
in poetry of creating.

I have no doubt—solely on the evidence of the poems—that this to her was a dryly factual statement. If the words sound boastful or seem naively to "betray" an erotic sense, it is our failure and not hers. "Just at Dawn" (rightly

printed opposite though dated five years later) goes further, explicitly denying “eros” and comparing “this living woman / her being in the genius of man”:

with a piece of jade
innocent not because it is uncarved
but because after submitting to all workman-
ship
and impressions of the craftsman
there is perfect reversal +

These words approach the mystery of creativity as it imitates the Creation and the Incarnation. As she says:

the writers who touch this note
have passed beyond the scope of tenderness

—and she is one of them. Her frequent admissions of weariness show her passion for truth also: a lesser religious writer would have eschewed them. She is deeply disturbing. I suppose for most people who envisage Christianity there is a more or less unsuccessful attempt to bring that vision and the mundane vision together, as you see with faulty binoculars only by squinting down one lens or the other. Mary Casey had a more perfect focus, both eyes together, giving a naked revelation we have been conditioned to think indecent, a brightness our eyes are not used to.

Her style as well as her vision can be a stumbling-block, ungrammatical, unpunctuated, full of roughnesses—inevitably, because reality as humanly perceived is not smooth, the rough places not yet plain. This sounds like special pleading. So the explanation of evil (incidentally, where she “met” Plotinus) can sound like a can’t lose argument. I sometimes felt there were places that jarred unnecessarily. An example is a line I quoted earlier—“in poetry of creating”—which seems both ugly and tautologous. But often in these cases a later reading reveals the necessity. Jar jars upon worldly ears; it is certain He cannot flatter them. It would be foolish to claim she never made a mistake, and it is possible that some of these poems would have been worked further: but I believe, again from the writings themselves, that it is probably wiser to assume our own inadequacy and to go on trying, if we have ears, to hear. Of a pilgrim poet who recognized that “rhythm is proportion” and a poem like a life “a journey for the feet”, we can believe that what seems to halt now may be part of a figure we cannot see entire.

The poems seem to me unlikely to meet with

general acclaim. I hope I am wrong, but in any case Powys readers are used to standing firm against the current if they are aware of it—and the more free and fortunate are unaware. As Charles Lock says in one of his introductions, they have a scriptural quality, and with wise humility he avoids too extensive an interpretation. He speaks convincingly of the Christ-bearing function of the poetry, but in his peroration says that it will be part of a “long, humble, vibrant apology” for Christianity—words that may reflect his own impatience for *progress* (even if slow) rather than the poet’s. An apology, even without the qualification, is more humble than a justification: but I wonder if apology of any kind is compatible with Christ-bearing. Milton set out to “justify the ways of God to men”: but Dostoevsky’s Christ had no word to say for himself when confronting the Grand Inquisitor. Mary Casey’s sacramentalism seems closer to the “piercing call” (her phrase for silence) of the latter.

Birds, the image of souls, are her most frequent and most loved sign-givers. She thought how “Orpheus wind-swift fingers / enticed sparrows after him to Hades”; and the sweetness of this lyricism which she can command when it is right should give us pause before pointing to “lapses” elsewhere. Swallows, “O best-loved of birds”, “sharp blue-winged air-cutting birds” are an emblem of her own “sharp longing” for home as she alternated like them between England and Africa, and her longing as one of those who “seek a country”. Once more Psalm 84 comes to mind: *Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young*. In her dauntless and successful search for spiritual food in a sometimes bleak world, Mary Casey resembles what she herself observed:

a small bird
never still in wintry twigs
intent and finding the life it seeks.

“I tell only of Mary”, she wrote truthfully: whatever we tell is only what we are. But it is thus she conveys the otherness of other people and things, and speaks with powerfully prophetic voice through the personae of Moses, John the Baptist, and Mary the Mother of God. She becomes the keen-sighted Moses experiencing the attrition of wilderness and knowing the two-edged fact that what he sees is “graved with clear meaning”. Again in the desert, which she knew in Africa as well as in the soul, she becomes the

Baptist, a hollow pipe for the spirit to blow through. She confronts our solitariness "in the abyss of pain" with the consolation of "truth and the poet". In the "Meadow of Truth" where she meets Plotinus, meet also other poets, "Wyatt, Surrey, Emily Brontë . . .": "in this Alone / there is a fellowship". Her writing is part of the "occupation trail" of those who are pilgrims in this world, "a mark for those who come after". To meet Mary Casey is consolation because of her insistence, with Hardy, on giving "a full look at the worst". Indeed her awkwardness sometimes recalls Hardy too, who had the same good reason that he was often saying something almost impossible to express. But in her acceptance, and of course in her faith which makes it possible, she is quite unlike him. She is effectively saying, with her Namesake, "Ecce ancilla Domini, be it unto me according to Thy Word", accepting the bitter water that the name Mary signifies, expressing "love recognized", "connaissance". Such acceptance turns every kind of song to praise—for English poets, as Jeremy Hooker wrote in *Englishman's Road*, "of all arts . . . the most difficult". *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be always praising thee.*

KIM TAPLIN

A Memoir of D. H. Lawrence (The Betrayal),
G. H. NEVILLE; edited by CARL BARON.

Cambridge University Press, 1981, £18.00.

Apocalypse and Other Writings on Revelation,
D. H. LAWRENCE; edited by MARA
KALNINS.

Cambridge University Press, 1980, £12.50.

The process which F. R. Leavis believed he was initiating in 1955—that of establishing D. H. Lawrence's reputation as a major novelist and one of the most important writers of the twentieth century—has come to fruition in the form of the Cambridge University Press's massive Lawrence-publishing enterprise. Lawrence has for decades now been canonized in critical studies, research projects, publishing

ventures, higher education courses, the school examination syllabus. It remains for C.U.P. to award him the final accolade: a uniform *Collected Works*, supported by volumes of correspondence and biographical reminiscence. No-one would question the value of producing, to replace the notoriously corrupt texts we have been obliged to rely on, texts of Lawrence's works in authoritative editions, with scholarly introductions and informative annotations. But canonization transforms an author into a kind of light which starts to illuminate the darkness of hitherto unexplored mines of cultural history, starts to clarify with gratuitous significance hitherto uninteresting books, places, people. Once the *Collected Works* begins to appear, any detail of information connected with Lawrence becomes "significant"; anyone who knew him becomes a potential source of scholarly information.

This will seem immediately unfair: George Henry Neville was a close friend of Lawrence's in childhood and adolescence; he appears as a subject in Lawrence's fiction itself;¹ his biographical testimony, unlike the many accounts of those who met Lawrence through his writing, is a first-hand witness not only to Lawrence's life but to the social and cultural history through which the developing writer lived. In fact, since Neville too came from a mining background (removed by one generation) and worked his way through Nottingham High School to the Ilkeston Teacher Training Centre and a teaching post, he was himself an active part of that history in which Lawrence's early life needs to be located.

The value of Neville's contribution to the Lawrence biography remains, however, a matter of argument. Does it, as Dr Carl Baron claims, provide us with some otherwise unrecorded biographical facts; offer us a valuable interpretation of Lawrence's life made by one who knew him well in youth; and "expose for our contemplation" the character of Neville himself (pp. 2-3)? The *Memoir* does furnish us with some new facts and some informative anecdotes; though far less thoroughly and effectively than the reminiscences of the Chambers sisters, or Helen Corke, or William Hopkin.² And it certainly offers us a revelation of Neville's own character: but in such a way that the validity of the proffered "interpretation" of Lawrence's early life is seriously compromised.

Neville tells us some nice original stories,

which have the unmistakable ring of truth about them. There is the anecdote about Mrs Lawrence's suppression of a friend of Lawrence's, a girl who persisted in using the slang expression "I've got the pip":

'Tell me do you know what "pip" is?' . . . the little woman sniffed and tossed her head. Then she looked hard into Franky's eyes and said, 'I thought not. Well!—"Pip" is a disease that canaries have', and then, after a pause, she slowly added, 'under their tails'.

There was a frightfully embarrassed silence . . . (pp. 68-9)

Then there is the story, related to Neville by Lawrence, of how Louie Burrows, in the course of brushing Lawrence's jacket, succeeded in spilling his collection of rubber contraceptives across the lawn in full view of her family. This is Neville at his best: relating bits and pieces of Eastwood life with a light comic touch, and resisting the temptation to "interpret" too analytically, or to over-dramatize his own role in any of the events he describes. "Facts" like these, narrated effectively and convincingly, are the best kind of impression we can have of Lawrence's early family and social life.

In other instances, Neville is far too concerned to accentuate the importance of his own part in Lawrence's life to give an accurate and convincing record of events (the "Betrayal" of the title is a supposed betrayal of confidence—Neville implies that his relationship with Lawrence was so intimate that to write of it, even positively and sympathetically, constituted a "betrayal"). Neville relates an episode in the Lawrences' family life, in which Lawrence has acquired a new suit, bought by his mother; his father arrives home, and angry at the discovery, initiates a quarrel. The episode begins convincingly enough; but gradually modulates into a badly-written redramatization of a passage from *Sons and Lovers* (see Neville, p. 59); and becomes hopelessly artificial when Neville presents himself stepping in as peacemaker, stopping the fight and dispensing sound advice to both father and son. Neville may well have witnessed such a scene. But his *narration* of it seems much more like someone rewriting a piece of fiction to give himself a starring role. Neville's presence as a character in *Sons and Lovers* would, we deduce, have resulted in a resolution of all the bitter conflicts and tensions fought out within the Morel family.

In this way Neville's "interpretation" of facts

is too subjective to be of much value. His polemic against Middleton Murry's *Son of Woman*, though a necessary enterprise, seeks to normalize and domesticate Lawrence himself, the family and the whole Eastwood community. In doing so, he succeeds in humanizing Lawrence; but fails to create a convincing image of the author of Lawrence's fictions.

Neville's *Memoir* is, in a sense, a kind of primary material for scholarship and criticism: but its significance needs to be extracted, refined and corroborated by a judicious and intelligent biographer. John Worthen's forthcoming biography of Lawrence, also part of C.U.P.'s publishing programme, will perhaps discover its usefulness and put it into its place. The less said about Dr Carl Baron's introduction and appendices, the better; his suggestions as to how these biographical materials could be incorporated into critical discussion of the fictions, seem to me typical of the unnecessary and sterile speculation encouraged by the compilation of scholarly data, not for its own significance, but merely because, touching upon "the Life", it is assumed to have some necessary connection with "the Works".

Apocalypse stands at the opposite end of Lawrence's writing career; it was written in late 1929/early 1930, shortly before his death. Mara Kalnins's volume contains the long study of *Revelations* entitled *Apocalypse*, a review of John Oman's *The Book of Revelation*, and Lawrence's introduction to Frederick Carter's *The Dragon of the Apocalypse*. Discussion of these writings should really be left to those who are interested in the mystical and metaphysical side of Lawrence's thought. This volume will be welcome to them—though it must be said that no amount of editing and annotation will disguise the fact that *Apocalypse* is an unfinished, unrevised, badly-written and contradictory essay—the work of a brilliant but dying man.

Apocalypse begins splendidly, with a fascinating account of the religious teachings and practices of Lawrence's childhood. He describes the powerful impact on his young sensibility of the language and imagery of the Bible; and shows the part played by the myths and symbolism of *Apocalypse* in the religious culture of that working-class, Dissenting, Midlands society from which Lawrence came. The Christianity of *Revelation*, Lawrence argues, is always the religion of the proletariat; it was practised in Eastwood especially by the miners who built their own Primitive Methodist Chapel; a vital

religion, full of apocalyptic prophecy, lurid symbolism and intense class-hatred. Lawrence's Congregationalism was a creed of a different kind: much more sober and rational—the Chapel he attended was built by mine-owners. These passages give us not only a vivid insight into the cultural history of Lawrence's society, but reveal also the sources of the intense contradictions which characterize Lawrence as man and writer. He *lived* these tensions between proletariat and lumpenproletariat; between the Primitive Methodism of the miners and the Congregationalism of their masters; between the dark, irrational vitality of the class-conscious and subversive elements of Eastwood society, and the sober common sense of the more conventional culture represented by his mother; and his art flourished on these contradictions, dramatized them time after time, and sought perpetually to explain, explore and resolve them.

Gradually *Apocalypse* moves away from this vivid picture of lived religion and dynamic culture into a turgid welter of metaphysical speculation written in discourse which is sealed off from social reality into a self-sufficient realm of abstraction. This may have encouraged Mara Kalnins to insist as forcibly as she does that the nastier side of Lawrence's philosophy, clearly displayed in this book, should not be taken literally:

Lawrence's distinction between 'aristocratic' and 'democrat' does not involve any of the undertones of authoritarianism or of what, since Mussolini coined the term for us, we have loosely termed 'fascism'. Lawrence's view of man is deeper; it is not political but spiritual . . . (p. 23)

It is the old defence of Lawrence's authoritarian thought, and it no longer convinces. Mussolini did more than coin terms, and 'fascism', however loosely we may use the phrase and with whatever distaste we may encase it in inverted commas, is a reality which Lawrence should have understood better than he did. But let the book speak for itself:

As a citizen, as a collective being, man has his fulfilment in the gratification of his power-sense. If he belongs to one of the so-called 'ruling nations', his soul is fulfilled in the sense of his country's power or strength. If his country mounts up aristocratically to a zenith of splendour and power, in a hierarchy, he will be all the more fulfilled, having his place in the hierarchy. (p. 147)

The great strength of Lawrence's philosophy is that he constantly strove to integrate his mythological and metaphysical interests into the solid medium of actual human association, the concrete material of real social existence. The rainbow, for him, stood on the earth. It is no service to Lawrence to attempt this separation of the "spiritual" from the "political". And however true it may be that Lawrence was contemptuous of what he knew of fascism, and would have hated the Third Reich had he lived to see its rise to "a zenith of splendour", it does not alter the fact that his "spiritual" ideology was complicit at this point with the "political" ideology of fascism. The end of the rainbow of *Apocalypse* was, as the much-maligned Bertrand Russell correctly remarked, Auschwitz.

GRAHAM HOLDERNESS

NOTES

¹The unfinished novel *Mr Noon* (see Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore (ed.), *Phoenix II*, Heinemann, 1968); and the comic play *The Married Man* (see *The Complete Plays of D. H. Lawrence*, Heinemann, 1965).

²See E. T. (Jessie Chambers), *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record*, Cape, 1935; May Chambers, "The Chambers Papers", in Edward Nehls, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*, Madison, 1957, vol. III; and W. E. Hopkins, in Nehls, vol. I.

And Tomorrow Comes,
REX HUNTER.

Warren House Press, 1982, £7.50.

The theme of Rex Hunter's collection of poems *And Tomorrow Comes* is, essentially, disillusionment. Its mood is one which hovers precariously between wistful, *fin-de-siècle* romanticism and the mockery of it; between the painful confrontation of the sensitive poet with the sick values he despises and his desire to dream. Many of the poems are set against the background of the wasteland we have come to know from the 1920s, and it is no coincidence that the book was first published (in 1924, oddly in Copenhagen and Chicago) only two years after the other tour of the dragon's realm, *The Waste Land* of T. S.

“dream” and the “dreamer” is of course central to the psychology of the poems, but may pall when not used specifically for that purpose. And how, I ask, are we to take, today, words such as “entrancing”, “enchancing”, and phrases such as “tower of strength” and “web of life”?

The qualitative reservations are many, but the poems have their effect. They arise from a mind disenchanted with itself and its times; they speak of the restlessness of an ideal love, not only too ideal to last but too ideal to be real; and they speak of the wasteland of urban civilization. In this latter, particularly, we are on home ground, for the vision of a manufactured world, bizarre and sick, whether in Manhattan, Chicago or London, is no less relevant today than it was when Hunter wrote:

But here the dirty little ones
Whip up with drugs their limping lust,
Drink obscene music that drowns out
The twilight's song with raucous shout.
Girls lift in the glare hard painted faces,
Under the paint flesh grey like dust.

PETER FOSS

A Preface to James Joyce,
SYDNEY BOLT.

Longman, 1981, £4.25 (paperback).

Joyce's Politics,
DOMINIC MANGANIELLO.

Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1980, £12.50.

The centenary of the author of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* has not gone unnoticed. Dublin was full of Bloom and Joyceans from everywhere, and a spate of new books on multiple Joyce has appeared to celebrate his centennial. Many of these studies are typical products of the James Joyce industry: they are either overspecialized, catering only for the professional few, or of marginal if not trivial importance, making much ado about very little. The two monographs under review do not belong to either category, fortunately. *A Preface to James Joyce* approaches the ideal introductory study aimed at sixth-form and undergraduate readers, and beyond at the

general reader wishing to acquaint himself with Joyce's reputedly difficult writings; *Joyce's Politics* is a work of serious scholarship that really contributes to our understanding of Joyce's attitudes to church and state, and it is therefore bound to be of permanent value.

Sydney Bolt's study is obviously the result of years of teaching literature and Joyce in class, and its scope is primarily pedagogical. Within the space of two hundred pages it marshals the background information neatly into parts and chapters with a maximum of accuracy and lucidity. In the reference section (Part Three) we find short biographies of a number of people influential on his life and work: members of the family (his father and his brother Stanislaus), his Irish contemporaries (George Moore, George Russell and Oliver St John Gogarty), his European connections (Sylvia Beach, Frank Budgen, Edouard Dujardin, Eugène Jolas, Valéry Larbaud, Ettore Smitz and Harriet Shaw Weaver), and his literary peers (Samuel Beckett, T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats). These entries are certainly useful additions to the otherwise rather thin chapter on the cultural background, although the potted biographies on Joyce's literary peers risk being too summary. In addition there are some thirty functional photographic illustrations, several of which are relatively unknown and therefore of considerable interest.

The best chapters are on *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, where competent scholarship and intelligent criticism are perfectly matched to produce a readable and valuable account of these central works. What is new and arresting in Sydney Bolt's discussion of *Ulysses* is his focus on the so-called Linati scheme rather than the more widely known Stuart Gilbert scheme. The advantage of this unorthodox presentation of the general plan of the novel is that it offers some penetrating readings, taking into account several discrepancies between the two schemes, for instance as regards the names of colours and the thematic correspondences. Moreover, it offers opportunities for students to write essays on this intriguing aspect, as do his comments on Joyce's handling of symbols. It remains a pity that no further information is given about Carlo Linati beyond stating that he was “a friend”, whereas we happen to know much more about him. Sydney Bolt rightly stresses Joyce's “medievalism”—that is, his obsession with “figures in all things”, or correspondences on all levels of the narrative,

which makes him, in my view, a thoroughly modern allegorist.

The only defect in *A Preface to James Joyce* is the chapter on *Finnegans Wake*, which in a mere eleven pages tries to do the impossible and clearly suffers from a lack of critical direction. It seems to me that a responsible introduction to this unteachable book would have to take its pedagogical clue from Joyce's own set of working symbols used in his notebooks, the so-called *sigla* (admirably described and interpreted by Roland McHugh in 1976). These abbreviations for characters and conceptual patterns underlying the text should be illustrated by some well-chosen passages in order to demonstrate the overdetermined texture and structure of *Finnegans Wake*. Moreover, the bibliographical reference to F. R. Leavis's review in *Scrutiny* in 1933 can hardly be called useful, given the vituperative tone and the negative verdict on *Work in Progress*. Its value is, at most, archaic and counter-productive anyway. But for this one criticism, Sydney Bolt's study leaves nothing to be desired and it can therefore be thoroughly recommended to anyone coming to Joyce's world and work for the first time.

The object of *Joyce's Politics* is to dispel the still widely held view that Joyce was indifferent to politics and only cared for his art. A few years ago Richard Ellmann, Joyce's indefatigable American Boswell, had already produced some evidence in his *The Consciousness of Joyce* to counterbalance such a view by publishing a long list of Joyce's Trieste 1920 library with many political books and pamphlets, but the fuller argument and evidence for presenting Joyce as a political writer had to wait until the present study, which originated in a dissertation under Ellmann's supervision at Wolfson College, Oxford. Dr Manganiello's study is to be warmly welcomed: it is elegantly written, very well documented, especially on the Italian connection of Joyce's political thought and journalistic activities, and shows convincingly how political issues and discussions are central to his work, from the (now lost) poem, "Et Tu, Healy" (composed at the age of nine, shortly after Parnell's death in 1891), to the many scattered references to political events taking place in Ireland during the 1920s and 1930s in *Finnegans Wake*.

Manganiello's book is divided into five chapters with subsections, as follows: Chapter I, "Old Ireland", analyses Joyce's reaction to Parnell's downfall and how it shaped his views

of Irish history and national consciousness; Chapter II, "Young Europe", with subsections on Trieste and Rome, documents his acquaintanceship with Italian political thinkers such as Guglielmo Ferrero, a political journalist, and Arturo Labriola, an intellectual socialist, and with political movements like Irredentism and Risorgimento, which considerably Europeanized his political views and made him realize the Irish situation more sharply; Chapter III, "Perspectives: Socialism and Anarchism", concentrates on Joyce's abiding interest in socialism (albeit without Marx) and anarchism, especially in the writings of Bakunin, who emphasized the liberation of the individual from any smothering forces or coercive authorities, and of Benjamin Tucker, the chief American exponent of individual anarchism, who saw both church and state as the fundamental institutions of man's enslavement. With a wealth of quotations Dr Manganiello shows how Joyce's major novels echo in detail these socialist-cum-anarchist views, notably in the voices of Stephen in *A Portrait of the Artist* and Bloom in *Ulysses*: Stephen's "non-serviam" is both a political and an artistic statement, akin to Bakunin's anarchist stance, as is Bloom's vision of a classless, humanitarian, pacifist and co-operative society; Chapter IV, "The National Scene", deals with Irish political history in the early decades of the twentieth century and shows how Joyce's radical political ideals coloured his responses to the Easter Rising of 1916, particularly to Sinn Féin and the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922. Contrary to received opinion (even that of his master's voice), Dr Manganiello argues that Joyce remained highly sceptical of the new Irish republic and its leader de Valera, whose presence can be detected in many hidden puns and in the character of Shaun in *Finnegans Wake*.

The last chapter "Literary Politics", throws a fascinating light on the political concerns of the writers Joyce admired most, notably Dante, with whom he felt he shared a common 'moral' purpose in relation to the inhabitants of their native cities; Blake, whose spiritual revolt against all authorities and institutions could not but appeal to him; and Ibsen, whose attitudes towards literature and socialism were similar to his own. Two conclusions can be drawn on the basis of Dr Manganiello's exhaustive analysis of Joyce's political views as they found expression in his writings: firstly, that he was totally averse to violence of any kind, whether committed by Irish Fenian extremists or by European terrorist

anarchists, preferring argument to action, or (in Stephen's words) the "cold steelpen" to the gun; secondly, that he opposed anti-semitism wherever he encountered it, in the writings of Richard Wagner, in Oliver Gogarty's revolting anti-Jewish pronouncements, and elsewhere. Both convictions are most powerfully expressed in the most political chapter in *Ulysses*, the Cyclops episode.

Enough has been said, I hope, to conclude that *Joyce's Politics* is an invaluable study. It is, in the words of Francis Bacon, to be chewed and digested with diligence and attention.

MARIUS BUNING

In Defence of the Imagination,
HELEN GARDNER.

Oxford University Press, 1982, £12.50.

Luckily, Bitzer was not asked to define the imagination. Without recourse to fact he would have had to make it up. If he had read Dame Helen Gardner's Charles Norton lectures he would have been little the wiser, although he might believe it has a lot to do with literary criticism. Of the six chapters and appendix which comprise this haughty polemic, three are detailed arguments with established critical positions, and three are a mixture of criticism cum literary history cum pedagogy cum cultural commentary. There is nothing on the word "imagination" itself, nor how the word's meanings have changed through time. Here, imagination means its literary products, not its workings; and what she has to say about such products is appreciative and anodyne.

This book's real business is literary politics. These are conducted through a defiant attempt to resist what its author calls the new New Criticism in favour of "a restatement of the humanist belief in the value of literature as the core of a liberal education". She lumps all contemporary criticism together and concludes it comprises a "whirl of new doctrines whose overwhelming impression is frivolity and triviality". (Harold Bloom is a single honourable exception). Criticism takes "extravagant forms" and these mark for her the real loss of belief in the value of literature and literary study. Given that the main thrust of much of contemp-

orary criticism is a serious questioning of the varying relationships between these grand terms "literature" and "criticism", Dame Helen still believes the two are bound each to each in natural piety, their identities secure, their respective authorities unquestionable. Literature is primary and ineffable, whilst criticism is secondary and humble. Critics are there, she would remind us, to illuminate the text.

Alas, it is a darkened world. When Dame Helen surveys our modern critics she finds them sadly wanting. Harold Bloom's dismal image of the poet wrestling with his precursors is unacceptable. Deconstructionist readings are "dehumanising". Frank Kermode's *Genesis of Secrecy* is "deeply disappointing and unfollowable". She could not tolerate Peter Brook's production of *Richard II*, whilst John Barton's interpretation of the same work was "a wholly inadequate rendering of a beautiful play". Her reading of Stanley Fish on Milton left her with nothing to take away but the attempt to establish a non-existent category (the self-consuming artifact). From the assorted ranks of Structuralists and Marxists she has gained "incidental benefits and occasional subtle insights", but the concessionary "their work may have genuine interest for psychologists and philosophers interested in the problems of language" reminds us how far they have strayed from the true and narrow path of English Literary criticism. A subtle insight is made to seem no good thing.

Insofar as one can detect from her practice in this book, Dame Helen's notion of literary criticism is to avoid the complex, keep out the foreign, and say approving and approved things about major literary figures. The engagement with literature is the pursuit of enjoyment, a word this author insists is too easily forgotten. But the view that holds that literature offers a realm where enjoyment and delight are paramount is ultimately an aesthetic of pleasure in the service of truth, whereas there are those for whom literature is but one example, and not a specially privileged example either, of the epiphenomenon of social life. That they may enjoy literature, for whatever reasons, is but an incidental on the way to understanding reality. Pleasure too, they would argue, is constructed and a variant form of social determining. When criticism enters this arena of literary battle, the debate no longer is about a matter of emphases, this critic a social one, this a more "literary" one, but about function and purpose. Dame Helen has found herself reading and disagreeing

with those for whom criticism is not the aesthetic of pleasure but the politics of revelation. Unfortunately, she is not prepared to combat them with intellectual force. She prefers dismissal and irritation.

Of course, those whom she does not confront directly are the radical party in this debate, and Dame Helen finds herself as the establishment. The most distinctive characteristic of establishments, especially literary and intellectual ones, is their paradoxical unwillingness to acknowledge their exalted position. In her argument with Frank Kermode's analysis of the Gospel of Mark which she finds devoid of literary response (whatever that is), she alights on his term "institutional restraint" which he employs to suggest circumspection of interpretation and meaning. She finds it inadequate since it does not distinguish, as indeed it does not, nor could not, between the study of classic texts in approved ways and what Dame Helen sees as its opposite: "forms of analysis that find in literature only endless forms of binary opposition which can be found just as well in limericks, television advertisements or graffiti in underground lavatories as in *Paradise Lost* or the Gospel of Mark". Ignoring why underground lavatories should exhibit more analysable graffiti than overground ones, she moves on to what she considers a vagueness in the term "institution". She finds herself placed within an "in-group of persons within the literary departments of some universities", and thinks these can hardly be regarded as an institution. She expresses her surprise at finding herself so located (she thinks the church is an institution, but not the University), but finally concedes that if so they must be called, she does not belong to the true insiders. These, she believes, are those initiates, "inhabitants of a new Laputa", with their alien disciplines, and their journals of small circulation read largely by their own practitioners. She makes no distinction between them. But the sighting of such aliens is a distraction since what is important is not who is inside or outside, but what it is they are inside or outside of. Perhaps fifty years of teaching at Oxford University has dulled social sensitivities but it is a naive defence to pretend innocence. Her problem with Kermode's institutional restraint is partly her reluctance to acknowledge fully the complicated ways in which the literary, the social, and the pedagogic are connected. I say fully because much of this *Defence* is about the nature of a literary education, and sadly, if not surprisingly, it

sidesteps the important problems of power, privilege and influence.

Along with some detailed criticism, such as her dislike of Casebooks, her concern over the publish-or-perish mentality, her dismay that notes are expanded to become articles, her wish the Ph.D. was not the only route to University teaching, the main thrust of this book comes down to three propositions. She believes in a common culture (English, literary, old, and high), she wishes to see that culture preserved, and she believes literary criticism can help maintain it. She aligns herself with those who have spoken for this before, although she does not name them: Wordsworth, Arnold, Leavis. Her arguments are less convincing than theirs, partly because less powerful, but partly because they precede her. Regret, coupled with a testy defiance, is no longer a positive response, and civilization has long ceased to be what many of its literary defenders maintain it is and for whom. The old authorities have long gone under the hill. Indeed, the powerful thrust of much modern literature made its comments on civilization long before criticism came to contemplate them.

With the old authorities goes commonly agreed truth, which is always a peculiarly nervous and anxious time for the truth-holders. But if criticism is no longer about *the* truth, but, as Frank Kermode suggests, "hopelessly plural, endlessly disappointing" (though there are still falsehoods to be distinguished from significant meanings) criticism in its mutations has not been deprived of a voice. It has merely altered its position on the cultural map. Dame Helen would have literary criticism remind us of moral truths, but modern criticism seems set on persuasion. And what it seeks to persuade us of, when it is not preaching some cause or espousing some ideology, is to provide a pose. It is obsessed with its own rhetorical gesturing and demands concerns for its own integrity. It can, and often does, provide an *ad hominem* theory for its own practice. It asks not for belief, but assent; and like the mass art from which it derives, is often very bright and very temporary. Philip Rahv pointed out not so long ago:

Ours is a consumer society in which culture has been transformed into another provider of goodies, to be processed, consumed, digested to make room for more. In a situation of this kind, the appearance of another Leavis or Eliot or critics of like calibre, is no

longer to be expected. No wonder that the more intelligent young people are turning away from literature to politics.

Dame Helen might concur with the regret of that comment but perhaps not its hopefulness. Politics, especially of the no one really gets hurt variety of literary argument, are now inextricably part of literary criticism. This book will no doubt attract supporters amongst those who want to fight such literary political battles without admitting that that is what they are. Some university teachers might take succour from it since its tone is almost wholly admonitory of other critics and coquettishly enthusiastic about the literary greats. Dame Helen's last words are to remind us she would wish to be considered as a teacher or nothing. We are unlikely to forget. There are sufficient instances where she confuses intellectual debate with the marking of examination scripts. That offensive piety is an occupational hazard as we know too well. After reading *In Defence of the Imagination* we will certainly be more aware of it.

ALLEN SAMUELS

The Collected Poems of Sylvia Townsend Warner,
Edited by CLAIRE HARMAN.

Carcant New Press, 1982, £9.95.

"Self-contradictoriness" is as good a way as any of describing Sylvia Townsend Warner's poetry. Everyday commonplaces make for a surprising outcome. Yet there was consistency in it too. It "ran", as they used to say, "in the blood". Claire Harman, like everyone else, has to write in her revealing introduction to Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Collected Poems* that her "father . . . was Head of the Modern Side at Harrow" (p.xx). What was the old Harrovian up to writing *school* books about industrial relations over fifty years ago? Just as incisive is his unsurpassed handbook on the writing of English, from which his daughter was to learn much.

If such things do "run in the blood", the seeming contradictoriness can be documented at least a generation still further back. To Arthur Quiller-Couch, the Rev. George Townsend Warner was "Our Prospero".¹ This George Townsend Warner (need it be said?—Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge) took over

Newton College—the *Kingdom of Elfin* discloses itself as we move Lyonesse way—and, "as if by the wave of a hand . . . miracles began and continued to happen" (pp.48; 50). Celtic magic—even some Celtic twilight—allied with Prospero. What miracles, then? A galvanized chapel (Sylvia Townsend Warner could use "galvanized" quite poetically), choir, organ, laboratory, a school magazine; the demolition of the gymnasium, making of fives and squash courts and swimming pool; and the levelling of a meadow to make a cricket pitch and ground with its own pavilion. Warner, of course, opened the batting, with Toone, the butler, who knew his place well enough to keep up one end whilst his partner "knocked the bowling about" (p. 51). This is all but Wodehouse. Q, it must be remembered, was a fellow Celt—red-headed—and prepared to see Prospero where others saw only the tyrant; even Ariel wanted his freedom. Q well knew the contradictoriness. Warner, he wrote, "was a gentleman with every attribute of a good Headmaster save a sense of justice, of which he had scarcely a glimmer" (p. 48). The sting of Warner's "justice" must be savoured by noting that it went hand in hand with his school motto: "The Truth shall make you Free" (but in impeccable New Testament Greek, of course). Q added a few words on Prospero's sons George and Robert—"both schoolfellows of mine" (p. 51)—and closed: "the writings, especially the poems, of George's daughter Miss Sylvia Townsend Warner, perpetuate—with a curious turn as often happens—the mental distinction of a family" (p. 51).² The Celt, Q, clearly believed it was "in the blood"—"especially the poems".

These recollections Q wrote in 1937 or shortly after, when Sylvia Townsend Warner (1893-1978) had published plenty of prose fiction. None the less: "especially the poems". Q's insight was not in my mind when I lost the battle with Sylvia Townsend Warner's old publishers to bring out her collected poems at a time when she felt the pinch of the ending of her father's royalties and the misery of the death of Valentine Ackland, with whom she had long lived at Frome Vauchurch. The suggestion had been made in consultation with Sylvia Townsend Warner and a mutual friend.³ Miss Harman's edition vindicates the attempt—indeed she reveals that Sylvia Townsend Warner was working on *Collected Poems* almost up to the time of her death—although she will not now enjoy the reward of her poetic resurrection, except as a haunter.

In America, Louis Untermeyer and Robert

Frost rated the poems highly, and Q—for so long King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at Cambridge—took their measure at home.⁴ The gap between such high esteem and general ignorance is so great that it can be understood only by reading between the lines of publishing history.

Sylvia Townsend Warner just missed—some would say luckily—the Georgian anthologies, but by 1925 their idiom had by no means been routed out of academic respectability. Her first two volumes, *The Espalier* (1925) and *Time Importuned* (1928), came out essentially, therefore, as a natural development of it. Miss Harman perhaps protests a little too much about the Georgianism of these first two books of poetry. There was bad Georgian poetry and there is good Georgian poetry, and if one takes Edward Thomas's and Andrew Young's poetry as natural growths of good Georgianism, there is no reason why Sylvia Townsend Warner's poetry should not be set beside theirs. Like Thomas, she used—if less extensively—the instantaneous present tense in expression to convey immediacy of poetic experience,⁵ and like both Thomas and Young she splays a complicated syntax across what are often unstopped—and even stopped—short stanzas. Like Thomas, and even more like Young, she was given to what Miss Harman calls “the reversed viewpoint”—“we must stand on our heads to view [such poetry] clearly” (p. xvii). I wonder if Miss Harman would be hurt by the suggestion that her phrase could be improved into “the obverse viewpoint”? “Reversed” has a tinct of “perverse” about it, of which something will be said further on. Links such as these do not lower Sylvia Townsend Warner's own poetic standing. Nor does it seem wise to urge that she was “a much more diverse poet than Hardy” (p. xvi) because she referred to a string of earlier poets—so too did Hardy. Their respective diversities were not, of course, identical. But in terms of subject matter Hardy covers far more ground in his poetry than Sylvia Townsend Warner does in hers, whilst in sheer variety of treatment he leaves her far behind.

In technique Sylvia Townsend Warner is mostly formal and traditional, even to the point of working in the tradition of the folk jingle. Poeticisms abound, though naturally, and are sprinkled broadcast from beginning to end—“betwixt”, “twain”, “darkling”, “ye”, “do” turn up anywhere. She knew her Hopkins:

So solemnly the sky
Carried the moon's majesty
Through a mist of hoar-frost,
As through a transparency
Of earthly-veiled heavenly,
That I thought of Our Lady
Being so far gone
That the child in her belly
Shone like the full moon.

(“On the Eve of St Thomas” (1933), p. 10)

There are also many usages of “dazzle”, “dim”, and “dandle”—

Small difference now
’Twixt leaves unborn or dead underfoot to him
Whom spring no more concerned.

Lengthening days would but strengthen his
care,
Nor spring be even what once it had been—
A dazzle in dull eyes, chance heart-thrust
of a bird's song,
Hint of a covenanted joy all creatures share;
For he too long
Had watched a wildflower's visage, and had
seen
No hope, no purpose there.

(“Peeping Tom” (1923—dedicated to T. F. Powys), pp. 130-38)

“Visage” is another favourite STW word—it turns up in her last poem. Words themselves are not copyright, but such collocations and repetitions help to define an idiolect. Those who equate Georgianism with “moon” poetry will find plenty of “support” in Sylvia Townsend Warner's poems. Reliance on near rhyme possibly came from her knowledge of Tudor song rather than from the influence of Wilfred Owen's versification, although she would not have missed Owen. Stanzas of short verses with skilful running-over verse and stanza were favourites with her, although she could handle stately longer measures when she chose. Internal rhyme and near rhyme she particularly enjoyed using. Like Frost, she would have regarded “free” free verse as playing tennis without a net. The poetic country, then, is both well known and new. The range of tone is not wide, but it is distinctive—and yet it echoes in its own aspect a wide span of the British verse tradition. Hardy is in the background, but so is Bridges too—even

poems haunt and she knew it. She worked at them to the last as if there were a race against time—*Time Importuned* indeed. They are of their age. Some would see Emily Dickinson in them, but Sylvia Townsend Warner's gait is altogether more loose-limbed. Despite differences of language, the freedom within formalism in the poems shews some kinship with the poems of Pasternak and Anna Akhmatova, as well as to the sound Georgian tradition that Sylvia Townsend Warner inherited. Miss Harman invites readers to send in additional poems in order to bring the collection nearer completeness. The more the better. Additional poems will not greatly affect the overall impression conveyed by the present *Collected Poems*, however, which is a brave deed that makes widely available the range of Sylvia Townsend Warner's poetry that has hitherto been known only to those who sought out the old volumes from library basements and shelves of dusty periodicals. Such an achievement in the face of obstruction must not pass unacknowledged.

BERNARD JONES

NOTES

¹Q (Arthur Quiller-Couch), *Memories and Opinions: An Unfinished Autobiography*, 1944, p. 46. Subsequent page-references to this book are given in the text.

²The student of word usage may care to note that what to Q about 1940 seemed "the mental distinction of a family" had become by 1981 "the urge to be odd": Martin Seymour-Smith, "Notes on Sylvia Townsend Warner's Poetry", *PN Review*, 8, xxiii, 57-61.

³See *The Dorset Year Book*, 1981, p. 31. At the time it was believed that Sylvia Townsend Warner's old publishers would bring out her *Collected Poems*.

⁴Miss Harman's surmise that Roert Frost was "puzzled" when Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland dedicated *Whether a Dove or a Seagull* to him (p. xx) is an unlikely one. Their Dorset circle included the late Evelyn Evans, the sister of Maurice Evans, one of the finest of English verse speakers of the day. The presence of the Gielguds, Oliviers, Richardsons and Redgraves drove him to America, where he already had connections. These were frequently in Dorset, and the web was tight. I heard from them of Robert Frost. Evelyn and Maurice Evans are the children of A. H. Evans, the Dorchester chemist who founded The Thomas Hardy Players.

⁵This observation was made in a paper, "Edward Thomas—Fixed and Free", read by Dr F. Austin at the University of East Anglia in 1981.

⁶No doctrinal or church affiliations should be read into this remark. See: "Sylvia Townsend Warner in Conversation", *PN Review*, 8, xxiii, 35-7.

⁷The Peter Le Neve Foster Lecture, published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, May 1959, 378-86. Mrs Sarah Trimmer was an eighteenth-century writer of "improving" books for children.

⁸Bernard Shaw, "Postscript" (1944), *Back to Methuselah* (World's Classics; rev. 1945), pp.299-300.

The Inner Journey of the Poet, and Other Papers,

KATHLEEN RAINE;

edited by BRIAN KEEBLE.

Allen and Unwin, 1982, £9.95.

Critical Writings on R. S. Thomas,

edited by SANDRA ANSTEY.

Poetry Wales Press, 1982, £6.95.

In Brecht's *Life of Galileo* the abolition of the heavens coincides with confirmation of the Copernican system, dated at 10 January 1610. Sagredo, shrewd friend of the mathematician, appeals not to Galileo's abilities as theologian or mathematician but to his humanity to explain the location of God in his cosmography. "Within ourselves or nowhere" is Galileo's reluctant retort: man must subsequently look not to the stars but to the human psyche itself for the location of the sacred.

It is precisely this focus which provides the theme for Kathleen Raine's latest book, and indeed she asserts that man's journey inward has been the theme of most of the imaginative poetry of mankind. *The Inner Journey of the Poet* is a selection of eleven occasional papers, delivered for the most part over the past eight years to such diverse institutions as the British Academy and the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries, and brought together here by Brian Keeble. The first five papers in the book present the basis for and assumptions behind Dr Raine's writings, whilst the remaining papers deal with specific poets (Hopkins, David Jones, Keats, two on Blake) and with Cecil Collins the painter.

The occasion for these essays is a crisis in communication, a loss of access to the sense of the numinous resulting from loss of access to our

own inner worlds. It is in fact a sense of the sacred which her work in poetry and prose over the past fifty years has sought to communicate and defend. As a student of Natural Sciences in the Cambridge of I. A. Richards, F. R. Leavis and the prestigious science of the Cavendish Laboratory, Kathleen Raine attended some of Richards's lectures on Practical Criticism and witnessed what she describes as simply a teaching method for Richards become a "weapon" in the hands of Leavis: during the decades of the inferiority complex students burdened with a sense of their own ignorance were encouraged by being able to analyse a poem divorced from its context. In this way the emphasis was shifted from what a poem means to the way in which it is constructed. The quantitative criteria of scientific materialism were, she argues, adopted by the literary critics, thereby precluding orders of reality and value other than the physical. In this way literary study began to concern itself with a *scrutiny* of the assembled parts, and the possibility of communication between minds through the medium of language is denied. In "Premises and Poetry" she recalls the remarks of Jacob Bronowski interpreting the cathedral of Rheims in terms of its construction, a marvel in the strains and stresses of stone. As she says, "The vision of God and his Mother, the theology of Aquinas, the aspiration of worshipping multitudes, might never have existed". And she asks, rather pertinently, why the same passion for engineering in our own day has not produced Rheims or Chartres but Megalopolis and the New York temples of commerce. It is the view of the poem as simply "words on the page" which she argues equates with Bronowski's view of architecture. It was by a "sleight of hand", she observes, that poetry came to be read in a context and according to premises alien to that in which it was created.

It was against such a background that Dr Raine discovered the writings of Carl Jung, whom she describes as, among her contemporaries, "one of the two or perhaps three minds to whom I am most indebted". In Jungian psychology she found confirmation for the Romantic view of poetic inspiration, expressed in Coleridge's definition of the primary Imagination as "the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM". It was through her reading of Jung and her study of Blake that she became familiar with "a whole rediscovered world of the psyche"—

"Jung was the tireless reminder of our forgetful age that the psyche is real". Largely as a result of Dr Raine's researches it can now be taken as axiomatic that the Romantic doctrine of Imagination was learnt through Thomas Taylor's translations of, and commentaries on, Plato and the neo-Platonists. Taylor's "paraphrase translation" of Plotinus's "Concerning the Beautiful" (*The Enneads* I, Book IV) became a source book among the Romantics and, under the influence of Schelling, Coleridge sought to unite the notion of art as the presentation of an idea in the artist's mind with the neo-Platonic doctrine of art as the representation of reality itself. It is in this way that Dr Raine describes poetry as a sacred language: "Within tradition poetry and the other arts have a clear function: to awaken in the reader or auditor the primordial images, and by this means to reintegrate the time-and-place-bound ego with the eternal Self". All of Kathleen Raine's writing is rendered unintelligible unless we recognise these, her fundamental presuppositions, which are discussed in all of the essays in this book.

Kathleen Raine reads poetry not in order to dissect but to discover. "The voices of the greatest of poets is always prophetic", she argues, their myths, symbols and archetypal figures being the creations of the collective unconscious, the Platonic "other mind". Apropos the modern world she relates Cecil Collins's remark that "He who is not 'with it' is against it". And Kathleen Raine is certainly against all that is "with it". Primarily she opposes the way in which the arts as taught in the universities have come to be seen according to the quantitative criteria of current ideology, the identification of mind and brain, and the assertion of the primacy of matter. The educationalists, she argues, are beset with 'originality' and 'creative writing', whereas the only originality that has value is a return to the origin, "the lost knowledge of the Imagination". Her aim in all her writing has been to reinstate the primary importance of the artist and to demote the critic from his self-exalted position and put him back where he belongs, as servant to the poet.

It should I think be noted that Kathleen Raine is a reactionary writer, and this gives a distinctive tone to her arguments. I occasionally find this book rather too polemical; being a selection of lectures and essays it does not present a developing argument and is therefore rather repetitive, it being much easier to diagnose than to treat the peculiarly modern problem of the

separation between the arts and the sacred in a materialist society. I find her own psychological approach to literature extremely fascinating and illuminating, but also find it necessary to add that she replaces one form of specialization with another. It is for this reason that the most penetrating essays in the collection are those which address themselves to the problem she sets in "What is Man?", the first essay here: "To recreate a common language for the communication of knowledge of spiritual realities and the invisible order of the psyche, is the problem now for any serious artist or poet, as it should be for educators".

In this context I find the oldest (1968) and longest of the essays, "Poetic Symbols as a Vehicle of Tradition", also the most interesting. In the first part of this essay, Dr Raine examines the symbol of the New Age, or Great Year, in Virgil, Blake, Shelley and Yeats, all of whom attempted to relate the symbol to history. She argues that we too are *within* this symbol of the Great Year, which she sees as having particular relevance for our own time, and this is developed into a discussion of what form of religion we can relate art and poetry to in the modern situation. It is poetry which she sees as the vehicle of the metaphysical, the *sophia perennis*, which is what she means by 'tradition'—not history, but revelation. It is because she no longer sees the possibility of mediating a collective experience through the symbols of any cult that she posits a transference of the sacred from cult (in which she includes Christianity) to poetry. If in this way she is making religion a mode of poetry, she is also, with Blake, making poetry a sacred art.

The two most engaging essays reprinted here are those on Hopkins and David Jones, which I am glad to see put into wider circulation. They are each among the finest pieces of writing in the considerable attention these poets have received. Both had a firmly incarnational view of the world—as she writes of Hopkins, he "re-situated symbol in physical fact". Quite apart from their merit as studies of the individual poets, these essays should counteract the widespread misconception that Kathleen Raine's writing embodies a neo-Platonic dualism between matter and spirit. Just as Jung gave to the unconscious a compensatory and mutually dependent relationship to consciousness, her own position has always been that of Blake in his annotations to Swedenborg's *Wisdom of Angels Concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* that "to think of holiness apart from man is

impossible to the affections". It is simply because we have reached a time when matter is proclaimed as primary and not relational that her writing has reflected a compensatory bias.

It is interesting to notice that Kathleen Raine often returns to Celtic writers to evince signs of what Yeats described as the "rise of soul against intellect". Yeats, A. E. (George Russell), Edwin Muir, Dylan Thomas and Vernon Watkins are among those who have held on to this metaphysical tradition. She argues that "the breakdown of regional and racial social groups, of vital collectivities of cult and culture, class and caste, is one of the most disquieting processes we witness in the modern world". As I write this in a country whose "vital collectivity" is being increasingly threatened it is clear to see that there are also powerful political ramifications to this argument.

Kathleen Raine has always been a difficult writer. She constantly baffles the reader with the depth and eclecticism of her scholarship: to read her is to enter a process of re-mythologization, which was so vital a part of Jung's methodology, and to be prepared to change one's premises. To all who are interested in the place of the arts within society, or who are concerned to recover that sense of the holy, Brian Keeble has done a considerable service in bringing these papers together. The book is further enhanced by the addition of eight (unfortunately) black-and-white plates, three from David Jones, the others from Cecil Collins. *The Inner Journey of the Poet* deserves to be widely studied and discussed; there are perhaps too many vested interests in the institutions she criticises for it to have popular appeal, and some of her arguments are easily refuted. But I cannot help feeling that here is one of those books which we cannot afford to ignore.

R. S. Thomas has been long familiar with the work of Kathleen Raine. In his *Penguin Book of Religious Verse* (1963), which he describes as an attempt to broaden the term "religious", he has "generously represented" her poetry as part of this aim. He aligns himself with the Romantic conception of the poet, poetry and religion being brought together by the unifying power of the imagination. This is a theme to which he returned in John Ormond's television interview in 1972, defining the imagination as "the highest means known to the human psyche of getting into contact with the ultimate reality", and again in *Abercuawg*, the lecture delivered to the Cardigan National Eisteddfod in 1976. There is

also an attempt to relate the symbol of the Great Year to history in that important poem from *Laboratories of the Spirit*, "The Moon in Lley":

The last quarter of the moon
of Jesus gives way
to the dark; the serpent
digests the egg.

And later,

Religion is over, and
what will emerge from the body
of the new moon, no one
can say.

There is a sense in which the focus of R. S. Thomas's poetry since *H'm* has also been an exploration of the kind of religion to which poetry can be related in the modern world.

Sandra Anstey has collected twelve pieces of criticism of R. S. Thomas's work, and I must confess to finding the result disappointing, if only because it highlights the lack of a significant body of incisive criticism of Thomas's poetry. I think that my dissatisfaction with this volume arises partly out of the nature of the task Dr Anstey set herself: in her introduction she states that she wishes both to indicate the way in which the response to R. S. Thomas's writing has developed over the last thirty years and also to provide material which would "stand on its own as a valuable contribution to an assessment of R. S. Thomas's literary achievement to date". We therefore have here items of a purely historical interest—amongst which I would certainly include Cecil Price's short essay of 1952 and Kingsley Amis's rather extravagant and too often quoted claims in his review of *Song at the Year's Turning*—mixed with some of the finer essays which contribute to her second aim. I find it interesting to notice just how many later reviewers set out to counteract Amis's unsupported praise; and in fact this is my chief quibble with Sandra Anstey's selection here. Leaving aside that I find it rather self-defeating to attempt to map responses to Thomas's work whilst he is still writing, her selection from these responses is unrepresentative. I find it disturbing that there is so little *dissent* in this volume whilst the contents of her own bibliography reveals that reactions have been decidedly more equivocal. One simply cannot afford to ignore these if one is attempting to assess development. John Carey's characteristically pungent review of *Pietà* in the *New*

Statesman in 1966 is the most eloquent amongst these: the rut from which Thomas seemed unable to find release in the late 'fifties and early 'sixties is attributed by Carey to the poet's not making sufficient demands of himself, a remark not in my opinion especially relevant to *Pietà*, but certainly to several of the volumes which preceded it. More recently William Bedford has disassociated himself from the "increasingly predictable chorus of praise" in his review of *Frequencies* in *Agenda* (17, ii, 1979, pp. 94-97), not noted in Dr Anstey's bibliography. His complaint is not theological but literary, seeing a poverty in the poetry which inhibits the beliefs from coming alive in his writing. But the most significant piece of all, which surely merited inclusion in this volume, is Leslie Norris's guarded letter to the *Poetry Wales* special number on the poet where he at once wishes to agree with the tributes paid to R. S. Thomas but at the same time finds himself holding back. Such holding back has been a marked feature of responses to this poet's work from the beginning, and I therefore find something approaching dishonesty in Sandra Anstey's opening sentence to this collection ("R. S. Thomas's reputation as a poet is well established") when it seems to have become little more than an editorial principle.

That said, I feel that Sandra Anstey has been more successful in her second aim. Among the most interesting items are the interviews by Benedict Nightingale and Timothy Wilson, particularly the latter, which I had not noticed previously. They reveal some glimpse of the man behind the poems, which is particularly useful when it is coupled with Timothy Wilson's intelligent empathy with his subject, as when he writes that "Thomas's attacks on modern civilisation have the justification of creative needs". R. George Thomas's essay, "Humanus Sum: a Second Look at R. S. Thomas", is valuable for its attention to the problems implicit in the author's opening remarks, that the finest living Welsh poet is writing in the English language. It is regrettable that the editor has not chosen her words more carefully when she writes that R. S. Thomas is not *prepared* to write poetry in any other language than English; it is more, R. G. Thomas suggests, a matter of *compulsion*, "a hard fact of linguistic experience". "The Creative Writer's Suicide" and *Words and the Poet* indicate just how apposite "hard" is here. I am not, however, convinced that R. S. Thomas is "essentially a poet to be read aloud",

especially in the light of his own statements to the contrary; in any much-needed analysis of the development of this poet's language consideration will need to be taken of the fact that it is increasingly the case that the shape of his poems is governed thematically rather than formally. I suppose it is inevitable that H. J. Savill's essay on the Iago Prytherch poems would find a place here, if only because it is the most detailed study there is. A careful analysis of the relationship between these poems and Thomas's later concerns remains of course to be done. Lyndon Pugh's review of *What is a Welshman?* is of interest, although I cannot accept his thesis that Thomas's earlier view of Wales was simply "ruthlessly honest". It seems to me that it was ruthlessly partial too. Clive Betts, writing in the *Western Mail* in 1977, suggested that *What is a Welshman?* was a response to some gentle chiding from Dafydd Elis Thomas in *Poetry Wales* a couple of years previously, that R. S. Thomas had failed to appreciate that significant Welsh experience was also to be found in contemporary industrial Wales. If this is true, *What is a Welshman?* seems only to compound that failure. I would cite Ned Thomas's profoundly important book, *The Welsh Extremist*, here: R. S. Thomas's is that "older kind of nationalism" associated with Saunders Lewis, Gwenallt and Kate Roberts, something "deeply committed and sustained by an inner vision, but under strain". Ned Thomas continues, "If you are going to live a life of protest for the foreseeable future, it is important to be able to see it as a superior way of life, a happier, more honest and more glamorous way".

The two outstanding contributions to this book are those by Randall Jenkins on the occasional prose and Peter Abbs on "The Revival of the Mythopoeic Imagination". I am in full agreement with Sandra Anstey when she writes that R. S. Thomas's prose deserves more notice than it has received, and Randall Jenkins's contribution is an excellent study of this output in both English and Welsh. It is also good to find someone taking seriously the idea that T. S. Eliot's poetry has had a "significant influence" on Thomas: unfortunately he does not develop this here, but it seems to me that the *Four Quartets* has set a context for almost all of R. S. Thomas's later poetry. Peter Abbs, comparing Thomas's work with that of Ted Hughes, places the former firmly within the metaphysical tradition of poetry and suggests that Thomas's work illustrates a "Celtic-Romantic rebellion

against the closed world of analytical reason". I have found it significant to notice that linking all of R. S. Thomas's published volumes to date, adjectives connected with mental activity are invariably associated with sterility or ferocity or destruction. Although not a mystic, there is a clear movement towards transrational experience and a record of mystical experience in Thomas's poetry, which Peter Abbs relates to Celtic poetry and art.

I am glad to see A. M. Allchin's extensive writings on Wales given recognition here by the inclusion of his latest essay on R. S. Thomas, in which he argues that in *Laboratories of the Spirit* we are encountering a major religious poet. His essays point to something of the richness of Thomas's religious vision, which has been the theme of Allchin's work on other writers, most notably in his *The World is a Wedding* (1978) and *The Dynamic of Tradition* (1981). John Mole's "Signals from the Periphery" is also included here, detecting a central theme of the recent poetry as the inadequacy and failure of language. Like so many essays in this book, original insights are left undeveloped. What George Steiner has called "the retreat from the word" by the most articulate in his brilliantly perceptive book, *Language and Silence* (1967), is for me the most fascinating dimension of Thomas's recent writing. But we are left with no more than hints of this here.

The closing essay is Brian Morris's "The Topography of R. S. Thomas", in which he argues that R. S. Thomas's surroundings "have exercised a profound and creative influence on his thought and art". The essay is a kind of reader's guide to the places in which the poet has lived and worked. Professor Morris traces Thomas's relationship with Prytherch in terms of his search for the Welsh-speaking community which the poet longed for. Once he found this in Aberdaron, Prytherch disappears, illustrating that Thomas's poetry "takes its origin from dissatisfactions, it broods and breeds in discontent, it is essentially a poetry of search". This essay is full of sharp insight, yet again I find that the conclusions are not pushed far enough: surely if we accept that Thomas was influenced by his surroundings, we should examine how these appear in his poetry. For this we need to turn to Belinda Humfrey's discussion of Thomas's emblematic use of nature and landscape, the only essay so far which has effectively tried to tackle this. I would have been happier had this essay been included in this volume,

together with Brian Morris's earlier and more penetrating essay on "Mr. Thomas's Present Concerns", especially as the nature of Sandra Anstey's introduction repeats much of the information that Professor Morris deals with in the essay included.

The most useful part of this book is the seven pages of bibliography appended to it. It is described as "select", and indeed there are some important omissions, but it is clear that Dr Anstey has undertaken this task with some thoroughness. It will prove valuable for all serious students of R. S. Thomas's poetry in the future.

The feeling I am left with after reading this collection is one of simply how many gaps it has not sought to fill. Canon Allchin's essay deals well with the quality of the poet's faith, but there is virtually nothing on the quality of his doubt, which Eliot always found the more profound in the writers he admired. *H'm* comes off rather badly in the book, and yet I think that here R. S. Thomas was attempting to come to terms with vital and important concerns. *The Way of It* is all but ignored, whilst *Abercuawg* is left unmentioned. So many of the insights in these essays are partial and undeveloped, and the tenor of most of the contents is too cautious. I do not direct this criticism to the editor: although my own choice would have been different, it has as much to do with the material at her disposal. When a writer has been so important in one's development as R. S. Thomas has been for the present writer, some degree of respect will not want to be avoided. Yet I find myself required to repeat Jeremy Hooker's imperative in his review of *The Lilting House* (1969) in the *Anglo-Welsh Review*, where he wrote that Wales's poets need critics "cruel enough to do them the friendly service of creating a climate of ideas in which criticism that is astringent, urgent, exacting, and, when necessary, hostile will always be heard".

SIMON BARKER

Publications Received

William Barnes (Dorset Worthies 1);
Thomas Hardy (Dorset Worthies 14),
BERNARD JONES.

The four-page leaflets issued by the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society would make an excellent training ground for budding authors anxious to learn the art of combining compression with analysis. Dr Jones showed himself a past master in this field with his *John Cowper Powys*, no. 3 in the series. (His Barnes was no. 1, and is now revised; the Hardy, no. 14, is new.) This account of Barnes stresses his interest in antiquities and archaeology, while at the same time noting the price paid in wordly terms by his eccentricity of dress (so lovingly dwelt on by John Cowper in the *Autobiography*) and, more significantly, by that production of dialect poetry which is now his principal claim to fame. Dr Jones devotes due space to Barnes's researches in this field; but he also makes high claims for Barnes's non-dialect verse, asserting that Barnes "stands with the foremost poets of his own or any time"—an exaggerated claim, though arguably more as a matter of fact than of desert.

Hardy is a far tougher nut to crack in the space of a mere pamphlet: wisely, Dr Jones has chosen to give his own preferences their head, and not to attempt an exhaustive account of that historically long career. Instead we have an appreciative account of such a neglected novel as *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, a rather misdirected comparison between *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *The Woodlanders*, and the overconfident declaration that Michael Henchard is the equal of Oedipus or Lear; really, such contentious judgements are more worthwhile than textbook-authenticated platitudes. However, despite his vindication of *The Dynasts*, the author does scant justice to the poems, and one feels moved to protest at the way in which they are lumped together in a single paragraph, felicitously worded though that paragraph be. But at least Dr Jones declines to probe into Hardy's relations with his two wives, a subject which can direct one away from, rather than towards, his true achievement. Instead we are given an account of the posthumous *Life* that stresses Hardy's achievement as "a fruitful autobiographer". It would be of interest to read a comparison between Hardy's smoke-screen tactics and those deployed more shamelessly by

John Cowper Powys. Perhaps Dr Jones can be persuaded to supply one?

G. C.

Selected Poems of Alun Lewis,
Edited by JEREMY HOOKER and
GWENO LEWIS

George Allen and Unwin, 1981, £2.50
(paperback).

This is a handsomely produced book, its grey and black cover echoing "the pity of war". We expect war poems, dirt, fear, a foreign landscape, *hiraeth* and a new view of the self. Wilfred Owen stands in the poetic historical wings: he came face to face with hell and his work jolts us, confronting it. His work was "modern", direct, urgent, and free of patent artifice. He takes the experience and thrusts it at you with no "poetic" manner or received form coming in between the reader and the subject matter. Would that Alun Lewis had taken a leaf out of Wilfred Owen's book! On reading and re-reading this collection I yearned for the smell of reality. He had so much to write about—so many sights, sensations, foreign parts (India no less), but there is so little here that remains in the mind after the reading. No remarkable lines come to mind, except from "The Mahratta Ghats", which is a fine poem, and rightly widely anthologized. Love and War and History are his themes, but they are "mental" themes. He stands back from life and thinks. He is at times

embarrassingly superior: "Think of them, as the derrick sways and poises / Vacantly as their minds do at this passage, / Good-natured agents of a groping purpose" ("On Embarkation", p. 57). His love for his wife, which is the dominant subject of this collection, is unfortunately expressed in such conventional diction, and in such predictable forms, that it invites the appellation "Georgian" and turns what I am sure was a realistic, loving and sincere relationship into something artistically attenuated and at times sentimental. In "Goodbye": "And watch you slip your dress below your knees / And lie so still I hear your rustling comb / Modulate the autumn in the trees"; the last line is dreadful; it destroys the directness and honesty of the other two. There is here an unfortunate quality of artistic effeteness; of striving for clever verbal effect; of pretentiousness; which I can only ascribe to an uncertainty about his style, typical of a person who becomes a poet without absorbing, assimilating and discarding the work of other poets. The influence of T. S. Eliot—which is discernible in most able twentieth-century poets—is absent; there is none of his dramatic vivacity, his originality of structure, his capacity to surprise the reader. The writer of "the water glitters and discloses / Time's chalice and its limpid useles tears" seems to be of another century. He uses many words which we do not use in speech; thus Auden's perceptive "definition" of poetry as "memorable speech" makes this work seem decidedly minor.

JOHN IDRIS JONES

Reports and Requests

The Modern Language Convention
Los Angeles, California, 28 December 1982

For the first time in several years a conference on the Powyses was held at the convention of the America-based Modern Language Association in Los Angeles. Four papers were presented under the rubric "John Cowper Powys and his brothers: Achievement versus Reception". The conference focused upon the problem that any discussion of the Powyses in the United States must confront: Why has their work fallen into a state of almost complete neglect in the United States? While the work of John Cowper and, to a lesser extent, that of Theodore and Llewelyn have elicited a significant interest in Great Britain, France and Germany, American scholars are almost completely unfamiliar with the remarkable Powys family. As a first step, the four papers attempted to account for this regrettable gap in contemporary American literary culture.

In his opening statement Ned Lukacher discussed the significance of J.C.P.'s return to England in 1934. A number of factors, doubtless chief of which was the lawsuit over *A Glastonbury Romance*, sent Powys into what amounted to a self-imposed exile in Wales. J.C.P.'s reputation has yet to recover from the effects of thirty years of relative isolation. Mr. Lukacher concluded by detailing several aspects of Powysian textuality that make his work highly topical in the terms of contemporary literary theory. Denis Lane elaborated upon two features of J.C.P.'s work that may account for his neglect in literary history: 1.) Powys's failure to develop a coherent vision of a social reality and a sense of human community; 2.) the complexities and idiosyncrasies of Powys's animistic natural religion. Lane suggested how these features present difficulties for readers of modern literature and how they might be overcome. Ben Jones, in a paper entitled "Powys's Alien Story", discussed how pervasive the theme of alienation is in J.C.P.'s life and work. Jones concluded by suggesting that it may be precisely Powys's alienation from the literary conventions of his time that may provide the basis for a renewal of interest in his work today. Finally, J. Lawrence Mitchell presented a closely documented account of the extent to which the

genesis of T.F. Powys's work was affected by his circle of friends. Detailing how T.F. went about revising his work for publication and how his work was received by the public, Mitchell concluded by suggesting that a variety of problems in the reception of his work may account for T.F.'s decision to stop writing. The papers were followed by a wide-ranging and animated discussion.

The four panelists regard this conference as a first step toward the reinsertion of the Powyses in the canon of modern British literature. They plan to pursue their inquiry with another conference at the Modern Language Association convention devoted to critical readings of J. C. Powys's Wessex novels, which they regard as the best point of entry into Powys studies for American academic audiences.

N.L.

Editor's note. Subscriptions to *The Powys Review* from American (and Canadian) Universities are satisfactorily quite numerous. The complaint in this report about the "almost complete neglect" of the work of J. C. Powys in the United States looks puzzling from this side of the Atlantic. However, Colgate University Press appears to be the only current Powys publisher in the U.S.A., and it is evident that British publishers have not been energetic enough in finding American co-publishers and markets for the Powys works and the related critical studies now available in Britain.

The Letters of John Cowper Powys

As members of the Powys society will know, I volunteered in 1977 to start locating, and if necessary obtain photocopies of, the many letters written by J.C.P. There are probably about 15,000 of these and I am grateful for the correspondents who have sent me originals to copy and return, photocopies of others, and details of the locations of substantial collections.

There are, I am sure, quite a lot of letters in private hands of which I have no knowledge as yet, and it would be very useful to be able to borrow originals for photocopying and receive details of letters in existence. I am not a collector

and do not wish to purchase any letters or indeed deprive any owner of his Powysiana. But it is generally agreed that publication of THE COMPLETE LETTERS OF JOHN COWPER POWYS in due course, under a general editor and separate editors for each of the probable ten volumes, is desirable.

What I would like to do, as I have done with other authors, is to compile a list for presentation to a publisher. Time is of essence if letters are not to be lost or forgotten or inadvertently

destroyed. May I once again remind readers of my interest and seek help in my quest. All postage and photocopying expenses will be paid.

Gerald Pollinger

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

SIMON BARKER is engaged in research on R. S. Thomas at Saint David's University College, Lampeter.

MARIUS BUNING is a Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the Free University, Amsterdam, and the editor of the *Dutch Quarterly Review*. He has published articles on Joyce and Beckett in addition to two on T. F. Powys (*English Studies* (1969) and *The Powys Review* (1980)).

T. J. DIFFEY is a Senior Lecturer on Philosophy at the University of Sussex. He is the editor of *The British Journal of Aesthetics* and for twenty-five years has published articles on aesthetics regularly in the *British Journal*, the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* and *Ratio*.

PETER FOSS is at present engaged in research on Llewelyn Powys at Saint David's University College, Lampeter. He is the author of *Poems for Peckleton* (1980), and his book *The History of Market Bosworth* will shortly be published by the Sycamore Press, Melton Mowbray.

GRAHAM HOLDERNESS has worked for the Open University and lectured at University College, Swansea. He is currently Tutor in Literature in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education at Swansea. He is author *D. H. Lawrence: History, Ideology and Fiction* (1982), articles on Mark Rutherford, D. H. Lawrence, John Cornford, Dickens, Tolstoy, Shakespeare and Conrad, and of a number of Open University teaching texts and television programmes. His book *Shakespeare and History* will be published by Gill and Macmillan in 1984.

KENNETH HOPKINS after a career in journalism has been a Professor of English at various universities in the U.S.A. during the last twenty years. He has published about fifty books including critical studies, mainly on poetry, and also *The Powys Brothers* (Dent, 1967). His *Collected Poems 1935-1965* and *Collected Poems 1966-1977* (Warren House Press,

1978, 1981) gather the contents of twenty-two separate collections.

IAN HUGHES will take up an appointment as a lecturer in English at the Normal College, Bangor in September 1983. Following research at the University College of North Wales, Bangor, he is working on a critical edition of J. C. Powys's *Maiden Castle*. His publications include an early small collection of poems, *Slate* (Arfon, 1977) and others in *Poetry Wales*.

BERNARD JONES is the editor of *The Poems of William Barnes* (1962), *The Letters of John Cowper Powys to Glyn Hughes* (1970), and *Romer Mowl and Other Stories by John Cowper Powys* (1974), and he has published numerous articles on nineteenth and twentieth-century writers.

JOHN IDRIS JONES is author of *Football Match and Other Events* (Cameo Club Alley Press, Cardiff).

CHARLES LOCK, awarded a D.Phil., Oxford, for a thesis on J. C. Powys's early writings, lectured for two years at the University of Karlstad, Sweden, and is now living in Toronto.

MICHAEL POUILLARD is a Professor of English at the University of Aix-en-Provence. He is currently engaged in writing a shortened English version of his book, *T. F. Powys (1875-1953): la solitude, le doute, l'art* (Paris, Didier-érudition, 1981).

ALLEN SAMUELS lectures in English at Saint David's University College, Lampeter. His exhibition "Rudolph Ackermann and the Art of the Book" was recently shown at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

FURZE SWANN is a Senior Lecturer in English at the Dorset Institute of Higher Education, Weymouth.

KIM TAPLIN is the author of *The English Path* (Boydell Press, 1979) and of essays and reviews in *The Countryman* and other journals.

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(President. G. Wilson Knight)

The Powys Society exists to promote the study and appreciation of the work of the Powys family, especially that of John Cowper Powys, T. F. Powys and Llewelyn Powys. Meetings are held three times a year, two in London; the third is a weekend conference in a provincial centre. Members receive copies of *The Powys Review* containing papers read to the Society and other material. The *Review* will be published twice a year.

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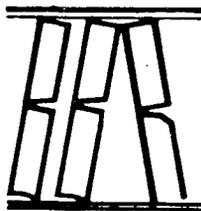


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