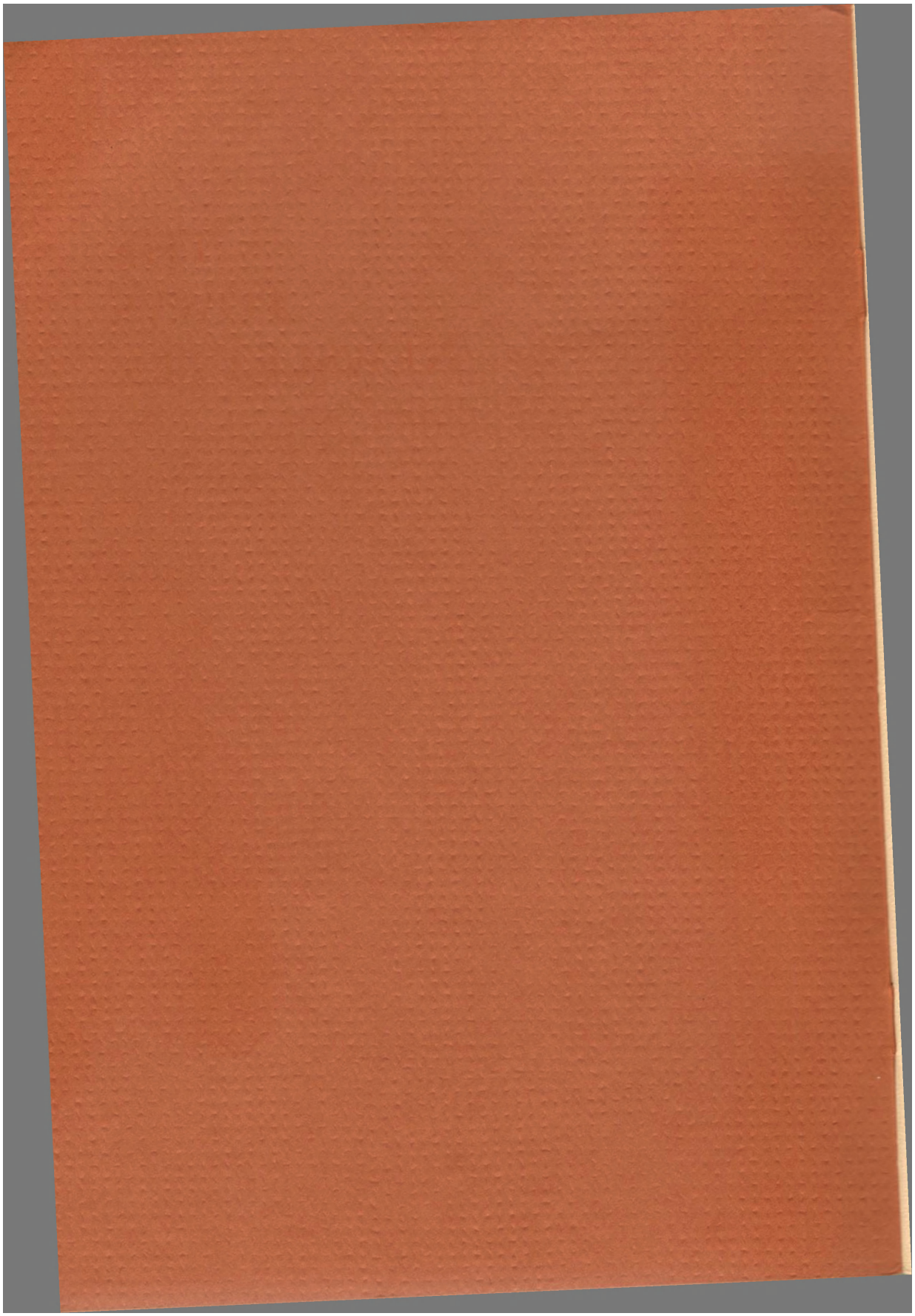
THE POWYS NEWSLETTER

FIVE
1977-78



Seven of the eleven children of Charles Francis
and Mary Cowper Johnson Powys published books.
The POWYS NEWSLETTER reviews Powys scholarship
in America, and presents unpublished works
primarily by

John Cowper Powys, 1872-1963
Theodore Francis Powys, 1875-1953
Llewelyn Powys, 1884-1939

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PREFACE FOR THE JAPANESE PUBLICATION OF *THE MEANING OF CULTURE*

by John Cowper Powys, 1957

I must begin by expressing my deep gratitude to my friend Professor Ichiro Hara for preparing this new edition of my small book on one of the greatest of all possible subjects. As an old man looking back on my long life, for I shall be 85 next month, I certainly would not hesitate to say that Literature has been the cause of the most lasting happiness of my days. Its only rival has been sex, but in childhood with all of us sex is practically non-existent and in extreme old age it is also non-existent or very nearly so. But sex is as agitating and disturbing as it is thrilling and exciting, although there can undoubtedly be between a grandfather and a grandmother a union of calm delight in each other's company which, as sons and daughters and grandsons and granddaughters watch it, possesses an "aura" or atmosphere of peace and contentment which is soothing to all who enter its orbit. But the happiness evoked from sex and emanating from the life of any happy couple is bound to be disturbed, bound to go up and down, bound to be shocked and shaken by the simple and natural fact that however devoted to each other the couple are a man's view of life is often different from, and sometimes opposite to, a woman's view of life. But I have found that Literature whether prose or poetry when once you have acquired a taste for it is unceasing in the happiness it brings. The only diminution of this happiness in old age—at least that is my personal experience—comes when the desire to rise from your couch or chair to open one of your favourite books like the Poems of Wordsworth or the Plays of Shakespeare or the Essays of Elia or Sterne's Tristram Shandy or a translation of Goethe's Faust, dies away by reason of the physical and mental effort which such a movement entails. Literature is not the only form Culture takes. There is also Architecture, Painting, and Music; and lucky indeed are those who can get the happiness of visiting the places on this earth where the two first of these can be found. Of Music I must speak more diffidently and more reverently for unfortunately I am personally unmusical. But these two things I am able to say of music: firstly that I begin in my old age to enjoy it, especially the sound of a piano and a harp, a little more than I have ever done before: and secondly that now since we can possess "Records" and an Instrument to play them, there is no necessity for us to move from our chair or our bed to understand more of music than we have ever understood before; and the more we understand it the more we enjoy it and the more it adds an indescribable and mysterious element to our happiness.

What Nature does to increase our Culture and what we get from Nature is the simplest and most primordial of all the aspects of our human life on earth. A prisoner in his cell, as long as he can see a small space of sky between the bars, or just a small space of outer air, has wherewithal to be consoled. Human feeling

towards the earth is the most primitive and in the truest sense the most classical of all our feelings in life. And it is also the most universal and international and super-racial. It comes after the satisfaction of our primal animal appetites, appetites the gratification of which in some way or another is necessary if we are to remain alive, such as eating and drinking, and, if we are not too old or too young, the gratification of our sexual cravings, as long as such satisfaction does no harm to any other living soul. Since our ancestral progenitors came out of the Ocean and down from the Trees and up from the cavernous recesses of the ground, this same old planet earth has been both Mother and God-Mother to us. Between our five senses and this imperishable parent of us all there is a strange connection as old as time itself. There can be no question as to our attitude to this old mother. All our history from the very beginning is intimately linked with her. We are, just as she is, under the power and domination of the sun. We are, just as she is, closely allied to the elements of water and air and fire. We depend on them as she does. We respond to them as she does. And what is more, and here I touch the fringe of the most tremendous of all mysteries, we apprehend from contact with her, a sense—as the most elemental of all earthly poets says—"of Something far more deeply interfused." What his "Something" is that rotates along with the bones of our best loved dead "in its diurnal course with rocks and stones and trees" will no doubt be still the same mystery that it is today when time has advanced as many years into the future as it has advanced to our day from the time of Pericles. Yes, if our Culture does not imply and is not based on a growing intimacy with the salt Sea and the burning Sun and above all with that mystical nightly companion of ours who influences us with a strange, weird, disturbing influence, unlike that of any other power in the world, I speak of the Moon, we do not deserve to build up our character with stoical rules or to enrich our life with Music and Painting. If we do not make "The stars in their courses" as our English translation of the Hebrew "Old Testament" says a portion of our life, though we are wiser than Aristotle and more scientific than Galileo, our wisdom and our science will be child's play if we fail to mingle our life more and more and more with Background of our Stage.

If there is anything I have learnt from my long life it is to avoid "laying down the law" where other people are concerned. Every man woman and child in this world is a distinct separate individual with its own feelings prejudices likes dislikes loves hates attractions repulsions reserves expressions and the essence of true culture is to respect other people's peculiarities and assume without a single exception that we have got something to learn, however learned and clever we may be, from the very simplest person, young or old, that we encounter. The essential element in our own individual culture must be to be on the look-out to learn something from every single human being we know. Our motto ought to be Goethe's grand phrase—im ganzen, güten, schoenen resolut zu leben." "Resolve to live in the *Whole*, the Good and the Beautiful." And may we all not fail to note that Goethe does *not* say "in the Truth" but "in the Whole," indicating our relationship to the whole Universe or Multiverse rather than the fanatical assertion of our particular "Truth" or the particular "Truth" of our Sect. What also I have learnt from life is that it is better for our own character and for the character of others to enjoy ourselves as much as we can and to meddle as little as possible with other people's lives. Console them to the best of our ability, but if we want to "help" them, let us confine ourselves to

giving them something naturally and freely that will make their life pleasanter if it be only for a day.

The chief point to keep in mind I would say with regard to Destiny is never to blame yourself and never to blame anyone else for what happens amiss. When we are lucky it is wise to treat it entirely as *chance* and be thankful to that old Greek god of *chance* that Homer calls "ΤΥΧΗ" or as our authorities write it "Tyche." If once we get into our minds that we are *specially unlucky* by some *fatal curse upon us at birth* I can only say *"that way madness lies."* [Over the next four sentences is a single light X-mark, a tentative cancellation in ink of the color used throughout the manuscript. RLB] I think the very best cure for pride vanity and conceit is always to regard every success we have in life as *luck* or *chance*. Of course if we have a *strong will* and have *struggled long and hard* to reach some point we *have* reached, it is natural enough for us to be so proud of our luck that we refuse to regard [it] as luck and put it down to ourselves as proving what strong characters we are! But all that, in my opinion, is a mistake. If we are born with a strong will and a great power of endurance and of struggling on in spite of all—is not that in itself a stroke of good luck or good inheritance? But I think *humility* is the greatest of all human virtues, not only because it makes things so much nicer for others but because it increases your own receptivity to the great creative and inspiring and cosmogonic life-force by which all children of our Mother the Earth are sustained and upheld and saved from madness and misery.

When it comes to the question of Religion it seems to me that the important thing is to combine a deep interest in Religion and a deep sympathy for and even perhaps an admiration of Religious people, with an absolute abysmal scepticism at the bottom of your own heart. I think we should feel with Prospero at the end of the Tempest.

"These our actors as I foretold you
Were all spirits and are melted
into air—into thin air—And like
the baseless fabric of this vision
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces
The solemn temples, the great globe itself
Yea all which it inherit shall dissolve
And like this insubstantial pageant faded
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on. And our little life
Is rounded with a sleep"

And yet if we are not to be bigoted and fanatical in our scepticism and as proud of it as religious leaders are of their creeds, I think it would be wise to glance at Shakespeare's own Epilogue to the Tempest spoken by Prospero himself and so charmingly addressed to the audience whom he begs to applaud the performance.

—"My ending is despair
"Unless I be relieved by prayer
"Which pierces so that it assaults
"Mercy itself and frees all faults
"As you from crimes would pardoned be
"Let your indulgence set me free."

LETTER FROM JAPAN

Ichiro Hara

When I found my annotated editions of *A Philosophy of Solitude* and *The Meaning of Culture* of John Cowper Powys mentioned in Derek Langridge's *John Cowper Powys: A Record of Achievement* and in "Reprères Biographiques" of *Granit*, Automne/Hiver 1973, my surprise was great, because those editions were not publications for general reading public, but merely English text-books to be used, primarily by myself, in the class-rooms in colleges and universities, and I fear those mentionings by Mr. Langridge and *Granit* must have given to people of England, U.S.A., France, and other European Countries a mistaken idea that JCP is well known and much read in Japan.

But the case is quite contrary. JCP is little known in Japan. Students of English literature may know his name, but they know it only as one of the three Powys brothers, reading none of his books. Comparatively speaking, among the three, Theodore Francis may be said to be most appreciated in Japan. As far as I know, I and Professor Tetsuo Akiyama, who admire JCP, are entirely exceptional cases. Many years ago, in 1934, the late Professor Takeshi Funabashi of Doshisha University in Kyoto ardently admired *Wolf Solent* in his preface to Theodore Francis' *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* edited and annotated by him, but he wrote in it, "the bulkiness of JCP's novels shrinks me."

The reason why JCP is not read in Japan is, I think, the same with that in England and America. Students of English literature in Japan are orthodox (not in theological sense but in literary sense) and "flunkeyist" in their estimation and

literary taste. They read those authors alone who are favored and well spoken of in English and American literary worlds, and so they don't read JCP. [*Two sentences added in a later letter*] I think "flunkeyism" was not a pertinent word. I intended to mean the attitude of scholars and students of English literature in general in Japan that slavishly follows the reputation and popularity in English and American literary and journalistic circles and is only interested in such authors highly reputed or popular in England and U.S.A., as, say, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, A. Huxley, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Hemingway, Faulkner, etc., *completely neglecting such a really original but unpopular author as JCP.*

"Reprères Biographiques" of *Granit* calls my editions of *A Philosophy of Solitude and The Meaning of Culture* "traduction japonaise," and even JCP himself writes of them as "translations" (*Letters to Henry Miller*, p. 94 and *Letters to C. Benson Roberts*, p. 107). But they are mistaken; my books are merely annotated texts. But JCP's mistake must be due to his great delight that his work was highly estimated in a country in the farthest East, and his excellent Preface especially written for my edition of *The Meaning of Culture* was, I believe, the expression of that great delight and gratitude.

It is my delight to inform you on this occasion that my book, *John Cowper Powys: His Life and Thought*, is to be published from Kenkyusha Press, and my translation of *A Philosophy of Solitude* from Misuzu-shobo Press, both within this year. [*Solitude* appeared in September, 1977; *John Cowper Powys* is due in December, 1977.] These are the first full-scale introduction of JCP to the reading public in Japan.

I corresponded with JCP from 1953 to 1962, the year before his death. My acquaintance with him was ironically occasioned by my interest in modern Unitarianism, which he apparently disliked. (See his *The Religion of a Sceptic*.) Just after the World War II, I was much interested in rationalistic Unitarianism and liberal Humanism in U.S.A. and England, and among the English Unitarians with whom I corresponded was Mrs. Muriel Hilton, minister of Unitarian Church of Maidstone, Kent. Not a mere religionist, she was a lady of high literary taste, and recommended Elizabeth Myers's novel, *A Well Full of Leaves*, to me, and introduced me to Littleton Powys, the author's husband, who, then, introduced me to JCP. Thus, I, who was first interested in rationalistic Unitarianism and liberal Humanism, was gradually attracted and deeply influenced by JCP's poetic humanism and "sacramental" Elementalism. By the way, my interest in him is purely philosophical, and so my reading is almost entirely confined to his "philosophical books," not to his novels.

When I made a tour to Europe in the summer of 1961 to attend the international conference of IARF (Unitarian) held in Davos, Switzerland, and made pilgrimage to Wordsworthian poetic sites, not only in England, but also in France, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland, JCP invited me to visit him, and, en route from Tintern Abbey to the Lake District, I changed my trains at Chester, entered Wales, and saw JCP and Miss Phyllis Playter at Blaenau Ffestiniog.

I was born in 1902, when JCP's son Littleton was also born. I graduated from Tokyo University, then called Tokyo Imperial University, where I specialized in English literature. When I first became acquainted with JCP, I was a professor of English literature at Hosei University, Tokyo. Then I transferred to Waseda University, from which I am now retired.

January, 1977

MORWYN:
THE HARROWING
OF HELL

Darrell Emmel

In *A Glastonbury Romance* Owen Evans and Paul Trent quote a portion of Taliesin's "The Harryings of Annwn" that deals with the theft of Pwyll's cauldron from Caer Sidi:

> Complete was the captivity of Gwair in Caer Sidi,
> Lured thither through the emissary of Pwyll and Pryderi.
> Before him no one entered into it,
> Into the heavy dark chain that held
> The Head of Annwn's Cauldron, what is it like?
> A rim of pearls, it has around the edge;
> It boils not the food of a coward or a perjurer.

The bright sword of Llwch was lifted to it,
And in the hand of Lleminawc it was left,
And before the door of Hell's gate lamps were burning;
Seven alone did we return from the fortress of the Perfect Ones. (807)

To Owen this cauldron is the ancient heathen grail which can redeem everyone who understands it from the captive fate of Gwair, but only if we harrow the particular hell which each of us harbors within. For Owen this idea was so important that he sought to redeem himself on the cross, and for Powys it was important enough that he wrote a separate work devoted to just this theme. In *Morwyn* Powys combines Welsh mythology with his own particular "hell," the sadistic impulse; for he had come to believe that "beneath" our personal unconscious with its negative personality traits one could discover Annwn and the Cauldron of Rebirth. Jung would have said it much the same: only through the harrowing of our own personal unconscious hell or "Shadow" can we unearth the treasures of the collective unconscious and the archetypes.

Ostensibly *Morwyn* is an attack on the sadistic impulse, and especially as it is practiced by its ultimate refiners—the vivisectionists. One does not have to look beyond these two uncomfortable topics to discover reasons for the dismal sales of *Morwyn*, least successful of all of Powys's books. Critical works barely mention *Morwyn* and yet it is of pivotal importance in Powys's career, in spite of its obvious limitations. It marks his turning away from "the real world" with its insanity and libel possibilities, and his turning into the past and into himself. But most importantly it marks that symbolic point towards which Powys's inner vision had been directing him since the end of *Wolf Solent*. In *Morwyn* we literally descend into the unconscious and there discover those symbols which lie at the bottom of every human consciousness.

Cruelty is the only sin in the Powysian world, and the vivisectionist is the worst of the purveyors of cruelty. But beneath this overt protest in *Morwyn* are the images and mythic characters that continued to fascinate Powys from *Wolf Solent* onward to the ultimate vision in *Porius*: the Golden Age, the heathen cauldrons, Esplumeoir, the Welsh Hades, Caer Sidi, Cronos, Merlin, Caridwen, and Taliesin. The fantasy begins in north Wales when the Powys-like narrator, his spaniel "Black Peter," a Welsh girl named Morwyn, and her vivisector father are out walking, and are suddenly precipitated into hell by a falling comet. The father becomes a convenient ghost and soon joins his natural friends—the Marquis de Sade and the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada—in chasing Powys, Morwyn, and Black Peter around in hell. Just in the nick of time they are rescued by Taliesin—the only man in hell out of imaginative interest, and not from a necessity of his nature. With Taliesin as his Virgil, Morwyn as Beatrice, and the black spaniel as his Faustian "demon familiar," Powys is ready to descend into that abyss "beneath hell" which exists in every psyche and houses the greatest of its treasures. For Taliesin knows that somewhere beneath hell the great Merlin lies sleeping with Cronos and Caridwen.

On discovering the entrance to the long-sought Caer Sidi that he had written about a thousand years before, Taliesin quotes his own "Complete was the captivity of Gwair in Caer Sidi." If we take a psychological look at this fragment and at the whole heroic quest of Arthur in "The Harryings of Annwn," we find that his raids in his ship "Prydwen" against the eight "Caers" of the Welsh underworld constitute

the core of the archetypal hero myth: the heroic consciousness descends into the unconscious-Hades and there is overpowered and held captive by the archaic forces of the unconscious (in this case personified by Pwyll, the Lord of the Underworld, and Rhiannon, his anima-emissary). The purpose of the descent as universally exemplified in the hero-myth is to show that only in the region of great danger (watery abyss, cavern, island, castle) can one find the "treasure hard to attain" (jewel, anima, elixir, victory over death). In Powys's earlier works this great treasure was the Golden Age of Wolf, the Self-Birth of Psyche of Owen, and the Nirvanic Apotheosis of John Geard. In *Moruyn* the treasure is all of these, symbolized in part by the heathen Welsh cauldron-grails.

In Taliesin's poem Gwair descends into Annwn to seek the magic cauldron owned by Pwyll, the dark underworld divinity. But as the Faustian myth makes clear, "the danger is great" in the realm of the Mothers. Gwair is able to enter the Fortress of the Perfect Ones with the help of Rhiannon, the very beautiful "emissary of Pwyll" who "lures" him into Caer Sidi. Here there is a definite suggestion that Rhiannon is serving a negative function in the myth. Sometimes the anima leads the hero to the treasure, and sometimes she *is* the treasure, but she can also be the seductive anima who "lures" the hero into the grip of the unconscious world.

In classical mythology this aspect of the anima is represented in the legend of Theseus and Peirithous who tried to abduct Persephone from Pluto and from Hades. They enter a chasm and descend into the bowels of the earth. When they get far below they stop to rest, only to discover that they have grown fast to the rocks and cannot rise. In other words they remain stuck in the unconscious world and are lost to the upper world of consciousness. Theseus is rescued by Hercules, the death-conquering hero, but Peirithous remains stuck in the underworld. The Welsh Gwair seems to combine both of these characters: he is now a captive and stuck; but, like Theseus, he can be rescued by a death-conquering hero like Johnny Geard.

Who exactly ,this mysterious Gwair is is difficult to ascertain since his only appearance in Welsh myth is in the quotation under discussion. Since he is identified with John Geard in *Glastonbury* he seems to be one of Powys's Self-figures. That he is a resident of the Fortress of the Perfect Ones, even though a captive resident, seems to suggest this interpretation as well. Taliesin's comments on Gwair in *Moruyn* give us more to work with. He is telling the Powys-narrator why he used the word "complete" to describe Gwair's captivity in Caer Sidi:

> It was under the inspiration of that Cauldron that I used the word "cyweir' or 'complete.' Now 'Cyweir' also means 'harmonious' or 'beautifully arranged'; and now—after pondering on the question for nearly a thousand years, for no bard understands at once the full meaning of his words—I am inclined to think I was referring to the deepest secret of all in our . . . . ancient religion; a secret that bears on the mystery of good and evil and upon the mystical light that sometimes shines out from the most noisome regions of evil . . . . I am not able even yet to unravel to you all of my meaning. But I think I meant that Hell, in some special sense . . . when 'harrowed' as the Bible says, and as I say in my "Harrying of Annwn,' may be made a hiding place for the highest. (177-8)

If one doubts that these intimations have a psychological significance for Powys, a comment in *Obstinate Cymric* should clear the air. Here Powys suggests that the

"cosmic secret" of the Welsh "is clearly a psychological secret of unfathomable value and of occult transmigration, a secret which, as the greatest of the bards [Taliesin] declared of himself, 'was with my Lord in the manger . . . was with the muse in the Cauldron of Caridwen.'" (83)

Powys seems to be suggesting that we all carry some "god" and some godlike secret within us, but that this god is a captive in our own unconscious and must be rescued. In *Glastonbury* this "god" was the "Christ within" personified in the Geard-Christ-Cronos-Merlin identification. In *Morwyn* we find that the list has been expanded to include Gwair and Taliesin, who "was with Christ in the manger," but who is now a living ghost looking for the other two captive gods in the book: the sleeping Merlin and Cronos.

When Taliesen finds the entrance to Caer Sidi, he descends, with the narrator, Morwyn, and Black Peter to a large cavern whose door carries the words "Sleep is the bond forged for Cronos." In the front part of the cavern they find Merlin asleep on a raised bed of stone. As the narrator-Powys stares at the "superhuman" size and the superhuman dignity of this sleeping god he realizes that this must be the secret Esplumeoir into which Merlin had disappeared, and that this hidden god lies sleeping near "the pivotal centre, the astronomical navel-point of the whole round earth." (197) Beyond Merlin's chamber is a larger cavern where Cronos and Caridwen lie sleeping on ancient Welsh earth mounds and between them is the cauldron:

> Here I have found [Taliesen says] what I have searched for in vain in a thousand incarnations. This is the Sleeping Place of Cronos, this is the Navel of the Universe, this is the lap of the Great Mother, this is the Centre of the Circle; this is the King's Chamber! Here is the bed of the Indestructible; here is the Cauldron of the Indissoluble. . . . Here and nowhere else is the sleep of the deathless; Here and nowhere else are the seeds of what was and is and is to come . . . . (209)

Small wonder that the narrator feels "this Cauldron of Annwn in the Sleeping Place of Cronos was of some Apocalyptic significance," (221) but it is only Taliesin who realizes the full significance of their discovery. The narrator, too naive and too caught up in his conscious attitude, can best be compared to the wounded Fisher King of the Grail legends. Psychologically he represents a conscious attitude that is cut off from the source of healing in the unconscious—the Grail or any other uniting symbol. This point is brought out when the narrator receives a "dolorous blow" from a wooden spear-like rod wielded by a vivisector. He becomes the wounded Fisher King and the party remains for three months in the cavern while the wound heals, and during this time the Cauldron provides them with both food and drink.

Powys the author provides us with another excellent analogy to the wounded Powys-narrator when Taliesin finds a second wounded inhabitant of Caer Sidi. The titan Tityos, who has been tortured daily for fifty thousand years by Zeus for the rape of Hera, is discovered at the base of a cyclopean flight of stairs leading out of Caer Sidi with two vultures feeding on his insides. Tityos is both a Promethean figure and another man-god waiting to be rescued. Powys emphasizes that Tityos represents more than just a tortured titan, and so does the "Tear of Tityos" which results when Taliesin helps to release him from the beaks of the vultures and to

redeem him from his crime against Hera. Black Peter digs the Tear-jewel out of the dirt and nearly swallows it before Taliesin gets it back from him. The significance of this symbol is obvious in the analogy used to describe Taliesin's excitement over the discovery: "'God slay me if it isn't the Tear of Tityos!' His tone as he repeated this phrase was like the tone of some old alchemist who had discovered the elixir of life." (290)

Taliesin calls the Tear one of the "Three Mysteries of the World" and says that it is the only material proof we have that the whole "System of Things" is potentially redeemable. Powys says that the Tear resembles a "nameless gem" or an "unknown precious stone," but that it is surely much more: "What struck me most about it was that it kept changing its colour. Sometimes it was like a drop of blood; then it would grow clear as crystal; then it would take a pearl-like softness; then it became as blue as a hedge-sparrow's egg, then as green as the most vivid moss; and under all these changes it shot forth an indescribable lustre, that was not of any colour I had ever seen." (292) Here we finally come to Powys's own Philosopher's Stone; a "stone" that is much more than a stone; a rejected stone dug out of the dirt; but nonetheless a stone that represents "a covenant" that the Golden Age will return.

The Tear-jewel is the final discovery in the Welsh underworld, and at the end of the book the still-wounded narrator is carried up the flight of stairs that lead back to Wales. The "treasure hard to attain" has been revealed, but "the captivity of Gwair in Caer Sidi" cannot be redeemed by the mere conscious knowledge of his reality or his location. The psychic wound can only be healed by a meaningful conscious experience of the uniting symbol and of the unconscious process itself. The narrator-Powys of *Morwyn* has not reached this stage in the psychic transformation process, but Powys the author is closer than ever before, and in his last two great works he will complete the process. At the end of *Morwyn* Powys would only have us remember the Tear and remember the god within:

> You are going back into your own world . . . and may that Intellectual Sphere, whose Centre is everywhere and Circumference nowhere keep you in His almighty Protection . . . He works slowly, but He works surely, for His ways are not the ways of power and force, but the ways of mercy and pity. Beware of those who look only to the future; for all true advance is also a return. The sleeping place of the Age of Gold is in the depths of every human heart; and to this must all revert. Bloody religion and bloody science are not forever. At the bottom of the world is pain; but below the pain is hope. Be of good cheer . . . He is overcoming the world. There is knowledge; but He is not in the knowledge. There is religion; but He is not in the religion. Wherever a man refuses to do evil that good may come, wherever a man is merciful and pitiful *even unto his hurt*, there and there only is the great and true God, who is below all, and above all and in us all! (320)

And we must remember, in weighing the importance of *Morwyn* in the Powys canon, that without this harrowing-of-hell fantasy, the ultimate reach of Powys's vision at the end of *Porius* would have been impossible.

Page-number references: *A Glastonbury Romance*—the Macdonald and Colgate Press edition of 1955; *Morwyn*—the Cassell (1937) and Village Press (1974) editions; *Obstinate Cymric*—the Druid Press (1947) and Village Press (1973) editions.

JOHN COWPER POWYS

AND

ARNOLD BENNETT

[and comments about Wilkinson's editing of JCP's *Letters*]

R. L. Blackmore

How startling, after carrying for years an awkward mental image, to see that image come alive in a photograph. Strange . . . uncanny. Might others of those indescribables we hold in head—inherited from our youth, from our dreams, or, in this instance, from our readings—take physical form one day?

In a letter of December 23, 1955, to Louis Wilkinson [page 339 in Wilkinson's edition of the *Letters*] Powys tells of his "deep respect for Arnold Bennett. . . . I shall never forget how once, when somebody was photographing us together, I pressed my hand on the top of his head & he let me do it without a murmur of irritation." Now that very photograph has appeared and is reproduced here, with two others,

as clearly as the old negatives permit. In May, 1977, I spoke on Powys at University of Paris VII where a member of the audience came forward and introduced herself as Mme. Eldin. As a child, she said, she had known John Cowper from his visits to her father. "I still have photographs of them, sitting in our garden." Only then did she tell me that she was Virginia Bennett, Arnold's daughter, long resident in France. (There is a handsome photograph of Mme. Eldin and her family in Margaret Drabble's recent *Arnold Bennett*.)

These are comments she sent to the *Newsletter* with the photographs, one showing her on her father's knee:

> Like you I found no mention in the *Journals* of the Powys afternoon [but my father's] published journals are expurgated. The house is still standing: 75 Cadogan Gardens, off Sloane Street, London. The photos are taken sitting on the steps of the back-garden (I presume) probably leading from the 'drawing room.' I have no memory of those steps, but other photos show the same location. Tho I pass in front of the house when in London I have no access to this back-garden which is for me half photograph, half imagination, so to speak.
>
> The photo of Powys alone is taken in the square in front. Perhaps the tree is still there. Cadogan Square, really one of the ugliest in London, seems to have been very little damaged. I went there about 1952 and it was forlorn & derelict. Now the houses are transformed into flats (idem "75"). Looking from a distance one notices that "75" has pipes on the outside from *each* floor, if I remember correctly. This because AB installed bathrooms in his houses. The house in Essex he had from before W. War I, had 3 bathrooms, installed by him & considered as an eccentricity by the natives.

In another letter Mme. Eldin says that "there are no dates on the prints, but from

the photo of me it must be '29 or '30."

Powys's memory, some two and a half decades after the visit to Bennett, proves excellent, but this coming-to-life of a letter can serve as yet another occasion to remind Powysians that Louis Wilkinson's editing cut much flavor and zest from JCP's words. Because Powys was still alive when the *Letters* were published, some censoring was perhaps necessary. And yet it is difficult to know why Wilkinson removed—without the indication of an ellipsis—two words from another reference to Bennett in the letter of January 14, 1957 [p. 343]. I italicize the omitted words. "Bennett was always so acquiescently kind and passively amused at all my *randy hectoring and* roundabout circus stuff!"

Here is a complete transcription—with JCP's misspellings and italicizing—of the first half of the letter about the photograph, a letter that goes on to become much more outspoken about Aleister Crowley and about memories of Powys's personal horror than the Wilkinson version tells. One day these letters from the Colgate University Powys collection must be issued entire.

> It has just been *Hailing* more violently than I have ever known it. Aye my dear but O & O & O *It does do* my heart good to hear you "run down" (or shall I say "set down" as if they were those smallest figures on a chess-board, what *do* we call them? *pawns?* is it? not *prawns* I know! for they're shell fish!) all that crew of writers especially Shaw—but I confess to a special tenderness and a really deep respect for A Bennet because I have much in common with him ie . . . almost a school-boy perseverance and industry actually *counting* and *counting* how many words or pages he must if he could write each day—and also just as I have or have not a complete lack of Personal Dignity and Powerful Presence [in margin] in both of which as Joan will I know agree you excell! And though with plenty of Vanity I admit about all sorts of funny things with no pride & with barely any conceit.
>
> I shall never forget how once when somebody was photographing us together I pressed my hand on the top of his head & he let me do it without a murmur of irritation: and even I wouldn't have liked that! I have much more physical nervousness of *being touched* by anyone than he had. He had none of that sort of is it feminine? *shrinking?*

POWYS, HARDY, AND WESSEX

David A. Cook

> . . . What cannot be discerned by eye and ear, what may be apprehended only by the mental tactility that comes from sympathetic appreciativeness of life in all its manifestations, this is the gift which renders its possessor a more accurate delineator of human nature than many another with twice his powers and means of external observation, but without that sympathy.
> –Thomas Hardy

Like one of his own heroes, John Cowper Powys began his quest for identity in the shadow of an overbearing parent. For almost fifty years he was eclipsed by his father's massive ontological stature, reduced to "a thing of small measure and faint margins" by the bold outlines of his father's eminence. The *Autobiography* records the gamut of Powys's crippling emotional dependence upon this man, his vain efforts to conform to the paternal image of iron will and primordial strength, and his inevitable, humiliating failure. It is a tale told often enough by the children of Victorian parents; but, unlike so many of his peers, Powys was able to burst the bonds of his dependency through his intellect and his art; and the *Autobiography* is primarily an account of Powys's successful struggle to cast off the Apollonian mask of the false self and affirm the suppressed Dionysian core. The by-product of this victory is the magnificent fictive world of the Wessex series where, having achieved his personal quest, Powys transmutes the struggle for identity into the universal terms of art.

That world is uniquely Powys's own in many respects, and yet it shares a continuity of tradition with those which preceded it in English fiction—the worlds of Emily Brontë, R. D. Blackmore, George Eliot and above all Thomas Hardy. Powys's technical debts to Hardy are so obvious that they hardly need specification. His vast panoramic descriptions, his choruses of rustics, his symbolic use of Roman ruins and prehistoric earthworks, even his locales—Sherborne ("Sherton Abbas"), Glastonbury ("Glaston"), Weymouth ("Budmouth"), Dorchester, ("Casterbridge")—are all derivative of Hardy, as indeed are many of his characters. Gerda Torp and Christie Malakite, for example, are lineal descendants of Arabella Donn and Sue Bridehead respectively. More important and less conspicuous, however, is Powys's spiritual debt to the man, for Hardy was a formative influence upon his life as well as upon his art.

In the spring of 1896, when Powys was twenty-four and Hardy was at the height of his fame (and notoriety), having just completed his own Wessex series, John Cowper was invited to visit the great man at Max Gate. He records it in the *Autobiography* as one of the greatest moments of his life:

> Nothing could have been kinder than Hardy's reception of me. He took me into his study, the chief glory of which was, though it was yet unfinished, the great new *Oxford Dictionary*. He showed me the manuscript of *Tess*. He presented me with a paper edition of the same book. He gave me tea on his lawn. I remember telling him how I detected in his work that same portentous and solemn power of dealing with those abstract-concrete phenomena, such as dawn, and noon, and twilight, and midnight, that Wordsworth displayed in his poetry. (228)

It was for Powys an experience surpassed only by the Hardy's return visit to his father's vicarage at Montacute:

> The longer I fix my mind upn this far-off day the more vividly it all comes back to me. That morning I remember announcing to my father and to all the family that the greatest writer *then living on this earth* was coming to visit us! . . . It was on this occasion that Hardy explained to me how the ancient builders of our church had deliberately left the chancel a little askew in order to represent the manner in which the Redeemer's head sank upon one side as he gave up the ghost; but I well recall how, as we issued forth from these symbolic meditations amid the tombs . . . and I pointed out to our visitors the house where the most beautiful girl in our village lived, he gave a curious little start. "We get back to humanity, back, back to humanity, Powys!" he chuckled. (228-9)

If there seems to occur in these encounters a kind of laying on of hands, it is because Powys would have it so. He admired and respected Hardy as he did few other men in his life, and there is some sense in which Hardy actually *healed* Powys through these interviews and through his novels, supplied some essential lack that calmed the young man's perfervid imagination and helped to contain his terrible neuroses. Powys in fact read Hardy's books as an anodyne for his fits of sadism, and they succeeded where all else failed:

> . . . I would retire at an early hour and find a noble great fire blazing on my hearth; and for hours and hours I would sit up reading *The Return of the Native* or *Far from the Madding Crowd* or *The Woodlanders* or *Jude the Obscure* . . . till by degrees as I listened to the wind in the chimney the genius of Hardy would drive my demon way and some formidable Spirit from Stonehenge would come rushing out of the Magic West into this dark house and my whole inner being would change. Then I would sit with my bony knees close to the red coals and feel myself to be as formidable and as powerful as the south-west wind itself! I would feel myself to be what the great Magician Merlin was before he met his "Belle Dame Sans Merci." (309)

It does not go too far to suggest that Hardy became for Powys a kind of spiritual father who offered strength for weakness and gentleness for pain; and certainly many elements in Powys's Wessex series may be construed as acts of filial piety toward Hardy. But the question of their relationship goes far beyond particular instances, for it is primarily a coincidence of vision.

The worlds of their novels are both controlled by arbitrary, implacable and indifferent Creators—for Hardy the Immanent Will, for Powys the double-natured First Cause—and the only real sense or order in these worlds is that which their characters make for themselves. (See Kenneth Marsden's discussion of Hardy and

existentialism in his *The Poems of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Introduction* (New York, 1969), pp. 233-235.) Thus, the quest for order in history and myth, or in human love, becomes a major theme in both. Arthurian legend fascinates for this reason. Powys has his *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Maiden Castle*, Hardy his poems like "When I Set Out for Lyonnesse" and the full-length verse drama upon the subject of Tristram and Iseult, *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall* (1923), of which, according to Carl Weber, he was exceedingly proud.[1] (Significantly, Hardy's tragedy was set to music by the English composer Rutland Boughton, a neo-Wagnerian whose attempts to develop a national opera had inspired the Glastonbury Arthurian Festival—a short-lived institution (1914-1926) which provided Powys the model for Johnny Geard's Midsummer Pageant.[2]. Indeed, *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall* was performed as a music-drama under Boughton's direction at the Glastonbury Festival in 1924, and, according to Marguerite Roberts, Hardy enthusiastically approved it.[3]) In a sense, both Hardy and Powys longed for the return to Arthur to restore to Britain the race-magic that had passed away from its soil with the dawning of modern Europe, for race is the quintessential medium of order in their work. They are pre-eminently concerned with race-memory and race-consciousness, with human tradition and the continuity of the generations, with "the intensification of feeling," as H. P. Collins has remarked of Powys, "by the passionate love of familiar abiding things."[4] Hardy's thematic commitment to racial continuity stands firmly behind such a passage as the following from *Maiden Castle*:

> The massively-built old town, surrounded four-square by her umbrageous avenues, seemed to welcome their approach with her promise of shady coolness and bodily refreshment. The absence of the weekly traffic had the effect of attenuating to a minimum all the usual vibrations interposed between humanity and the mellow identity of the place.
>
> Like the balmy air of a placid valley drifting over the grazing backs of multitudinous cattle: "All feeding like one," the combined scent of foliage and flowers, of dust and chimney-smoke, of sun-warmed masonry and mossy walls, came forth to meet them. But it was as if this "Sunday smell" of Dorchester contained something quite beyond all these familiar scents. It seemed to bring with it—as if the whole ancient place had been one deep vase of thick-pressed *pot-pourri*—a subtle perfume that was like the sweet dust of long-buried generations, a consecrated secular dust from which all that was foul in mortality had long since evaporated, leaving only thrice-purged residue, a holy deposit, the dust of what was inviolable in ashes, indestructible in embers, destined to perish only with our human senses. (390)

This "magic of the generations," as Powys calls it, is worked upon and through the soil of Wessex; and surely few other writers in our language have cultivated so strong a sense of place as Hardy and Powys. Yet the remarkable thing is that the place itself was largely of their own creation, for the rural England of which they wrote was already in decline when Hardy first took up his pen in 1870 and had passed away almost completely by the time he laid it down again. When Powys started to write, it was as a chronicler of a jaded people and an exhausted soil. His early novels are essentially about the decay of tradition and value in this world and tend themselves to revel in sheer physical deliquescence. Hardy, of course, was not

without his fondness for this aspect of things—for the grotesque and macabre, for the faintly mortal scent of things run to seed. Indeed, according to the *Autobiography*, it was Hardy who introduced the young John Cowper to Poe:

> He called my attention to Edgar Alan Poe's "Ulalume" as a powerful and extraordinary poem. In those days I had never read this sinister masterpiece, but following up Hardy's hint I soon drew from it a formidable influence in the direction of the romantically bizarre. (228)

Ultimately, however, it was love of locality and reverence for the soil which won out over extremes of taste in both writers; and they created a world that Hardy in his famous Preface to the Wessex Edition of *Far from the Madding Crowd* called "partly real, partly dream-country"[5] from the vestigial remains of a centuries-old rural order which had all but vanished from the earth.

For Powys, Hardy and Wessex were inseparable; to write of the one was to write of the other. As he put it in *Visions and Revisions* (1916):

> In Wessex, the traditions of Saxon and Celt, Norman and Dane, Roman and Iberian, have grown side by side into the soil, and all the villages and towns, all the hills and streams, of this country have preserved the rumour of what they have seen. In Celtic legend the country of the West Saxons is marvelously rich. Camelot and the Island of Avalon greet one another across the Somersetshire vale. And Dorchester, Hardy's immediate home, adds the Roman traditions of Casterbridge to tragic memories of King Lear. Tribe by tribe, race by race, as they come and go, leaving their monuments and their names behind, Hardy broods over them, noting their survivals, their lingering footprints, their long decline. (161)

Wessex, then, is invariably Hardy's Wessex; there is no other; and this is not homage but vision. The pervading presence of Hardy in Powys bespeaks less influence than apostolic succession, for Powys took Hardy's Wessex and made it his own. Hardy was a pessimist, it is true; and yet no writer, however pessimistic or even nihilistic his vision may be, believes in *nothing*. Hardy, like other great writers, saw himself in the mainstream of a tradition that he felt in his very pulses, as his poems to Swinburne and Meredith show. In taking up Hardy's mantle, Powys fully inherited this tradition, and to regard him as an interesting eccentric or an unsophisticated primitive, as so many established critics have done in the past, is a great mistake. Such obliquity of judgement can only be the result of misguided attempts to read Powys within an anthropocentric framework as a social or psychological realist; whereas in fact it is just as grave an error to read Powys naturalistically as it is to read Hardy in the same vein. Neither was concerned to depict the quotidian real; and their novels are as little conditioned by society as *Wuthering Heights* or *Moby Dick*[6] (which explains the relative failure of *Weymouth Sands* in attempting to confront it). Their art was *mythopoesis*, and the Wessex they created together is a mythological kingdom where coincidence, absurdity and magic are primary constituents of vision. Glastonbury, Weymouth and Dorchester; Stonehenge, Mai-Dun and Corfe Castle; Sedgemoor, Cerne Abbas and the Vale of Blackmore as they are evoked by these writers become living presences which are in fact larger than life and which require larger-than-life characters to play before them. Furthermore, the land is no mere backdrop to but a constitutive force *in* their narratives, reacting with and against the characters who move through it.[7] For these

reasons, as John Holloway has remarked apropos of Hardy, we must read their novels in a special way:

> The incidents in them which strike us as improbable or strained or grotesque invite (this is not to say that they always deserve) the kind of response that we are accustomed to give, say, to the Dover Cliff scene in *Lear*. . . . Incidents like these are intrinsically at one remove from the probable and the realistic. Almost, it is necessary for them to be unrealistic in order that their other dimension of meaning, their relevance to the large rhythms of the work, shall transpire. Again and again, it is those larger rhythms which finally expand into the total movement of the novel, transmitting the author's sense of life, the forces that operate through it, the values that chart it out and make it what it is.[8]

Both writers have their blemishes, of course. Neither Hardy nor Powys was a flawless craftsman or a subtle stylist, and both could overwrite a scene. But if measure and proportion were not their forte, neither was symmetry a part of their vision. Indeed, a major theme of them both was the *lack* of symmetry in created things.

"Real reality" for both Hardy and Powys was something higher and larger than that through which we daily move, something that could accomodate for a while at least the violent passions of a Michael Henchard and the mystical life-worship of a Johnny Geard. In creating such a world in their novels, they reach back, beyond the novelistic tradition to the bardic and become poets in the literal (and highest) sense of the term. *Poesis* is in fact the white magic toward which John Cowper always aspired. "What is a magician," he asks in the *Autobiography*, "if not one who converts God's 'reality' into his own 'reality,' God's world into his own world, and God's nature into his own nature?" Regardless of our aesthetic preference or prejudice, we cannot deny that Powys has achieved this transformation in his Wessex series. He stands with Hardy as one of the great poets of the novel, and if he has gone unacknowledged, the flaw is not in his vision but our own.

NOTES

[1] Carl Weber, *Hardy of Wessex* (New York, 1940), p. 222.

[2] Geoffrey Ashe, "The New Matter of Britain," in *The Quest for Arthur's Britain*, ed. Geoffrey Ashe (New York, 1968), p. 255.

[3] Marguerite Roberts, *Hardy's Poetic Drama and the Theatre* (New York, 1965), p. 103.

[4] H. P. Collins, *John Cowper Powys, Old Earth-Man* (London, 1966), p. 134. Hereafter cited as Collins.

[5] Thomas Hardy, "Preface" to *Far From the Madding Crowd* (London, 1912), rpt. in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, ed. Harold Orel (Lawrence, Kansas, 1969), p. 9.

[6] Collins, p. 207.

[7] D. F. Barber, "Introduction," *Concerning Thomas Hardy*, ed. D. F. Barber (London, 1968), p. xii.

[8] John Holloway, "Hardy's Major Fiction," in *Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Albert J. Guerard (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963), p. 62.

All page-number references to Powys's works are from the editions reissued by Macdonald in London and Colgate University Press in America: *Autobiography* (1967), *Maiden Castle* (1966), and *Visions and Revisions* (1955).

LETTER FROM ENGLAND

Glen Cavaliero

About eighteen months ago certain important changes were decided upon by the Powys Society. The economic pressure of the times no longer made it possible to issue papers read to the society at the old subscription rates; and accordingly membership now costs £5 annually. At the same time it was also decided to start a Society magazine, *The Powys Review*; and the first number of this, edited by Belinda Humfrey and containing the papers read by Angus Wilson, George Steiner and G. Wilson Knight at the Centenary conference in 1972, is now on sale to the general public [see back cover for availability in America]. Subsequent issues (No. 2 is in preparation) will be for members only. Indeed, more members are urgently needed if the Society is to continue doing its present work; and more unpaid subscriptions by existing members (search your records!) need to be made good. The new magazine should be a far more effective way of keeping overseas members in touch than the previous issue of papers. The standard of production and of editing is high, and there is much interesting material to come.

A lively meeting was held in March at which we were addressed by Professor Robert Blackmore. Among those attending were Mr. Gerald Pollinger, literary agent for the Powys family, and Mr. Jeffrey Kwintner, the owner of the Village Press which has done so much to make the writings of John Cowper Powys available. It is good to know that a paperback edition of *Owen Glendower* is to be brought out by Picador Books: their edition of *A Glastonbury Romance* has sold well, as have most of the other reprints.

Two novels by T. F. Powys, *Mr. Tasker's Gods* and *Mark Only* have been reprinted by Trigon Press, 117 Kent House Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 1JJ, England, at £3.70 ($7.40). My own book, *The Rural Tradition in the English Novel 1900-1939* containing chapters on T. F., Llewelyn and Philippa Powys, has just been published by the Macmillan Press in this country at £8.95 and by Rowman and Littlefield in the United States.

The society's main need at the present moment is money. We have been unable to secure any grant from official bodies, and we must look to our members if the work is to continue. Once membership is high enough to pay for the magazine and to cover such expenses as postage the way ahead is clear. With the magazine, membership is worthwhile for everybody; and I would like to take this opportunity as Chairman of thanking all those who have worked so hard on its preparation and distribution. The Society rests on much devoted voluntary work.

Our SecretaryTreasurer (Mr. T. D. Stephens, 8 Clarendon Street, Cambridge, England,) has asked me to say that subscriptions and contributions are most helpfully paid through an international money order or through a cheque payable on a London bank. At the present rate of exchange we lose out on payment in dollars!

I look forward to reporting other Society events in due course, including the September 2-5, 1977, weekend meeting at Sherborne School in Dorset, where most of the Powys brothers received their education.

September, 1977

LETTER FROM FRANCE

Michel Gresset

It appears to me, as I think of it, that there have been three clearly different phases in the history of Powys in France. The first is, as it were, pre-history. It is often forgotten or overlooked that a French translation of *Wolf Solent*, now long out of print, was published here very soon—only two years, actually—after the original came out in the United States in 1929. The translation, however, by a certain Serge Kaznakoff, was very poor, and even though the dust-jacket of the big, one-volume edition bore a choice of very laudatory comments by such celebrated philosophers as Jean Wahl and Gabriel Marcel, the latter comparing it with *The Brothers Karamazov*, nothing much came out of this publication and apparently the very name of its author was buried again for . . . a quarter of a century.

The second phase began long after World War II, when Louis-Ferdinand Céline's former secretary, Marie Canavaggia, a devoted and opinionated admirer of John Cowper's work, succeeded at last in publishing her own, excellent translation of *Weymouth Sands* (or rather *Jobber Skald*, as it was known then), which appeared in the Spring of 1958 under the title *Les Sables de la mer* in a collection of foreign books in translation under the general editorship of Gabriel Marcel, and with a remarkable preface by Jean Wahl: here were our two philosophers again. Both are dead now, and so is Marie Canavaggia, who died accidentally a year or so ago. May I suggest that Jean Wahl's preface be considered a *must* for translation, after twenty years?

It now seems to me that the history of Powys in France began then, in 1958. This, of course, does not mean that "The Sands of the Sea" was a best-seller: ten years later, copies could still be found at a very cheap price indeed, before the book was finally sold out, not to reappear until 1972 when a pocket-book edition came out with the corrections that Marie Canavaggia had long hoped that she might one day

make in the text (including the restoration of the Channel Island instead of Belgium as the origin of Perdita Wane).

This was the time when, if I may be allowed to lapse for a few lines into my own autobiography, as a young teacher in his first job in Corsica (a most un-Powysian place!), I read Powys for the first time after hearing Professor Jean-Jacques Mayoux, one of his best critics in this country, mention his name to me as a possible hint for the second doctoral dissertation that I then thought I would have to write. Acting upon the shock of the discovery as only young people do, I went to visit the lion in his den at Blaenau-Ffestiniog in the late Summer of 1961: an unforgettable visit, even though he was only then, at 89, the shadow of himself—but a most leonine shadow indeed.

The second landmark in this, the second phase of the history of Powys in France, occurred when Marie Canavaggia's translation of the *Autobiography* was published by Gallimard in May, 1965, and had a most remarkable critical reception from which, it seems to me, the name of Dominique Aury must be singled out. Herself one of our best translators from the English, Dominique Aury was then and has been ever since one on the editorial board of *La Nouvelle Revue française* and, as such, she was able to pave the way to publication to at least a dozen Powysiana from 1968 to the present. As to the sales of the *Autobiography*, I remember asking someone at Gallimard only a few months after publication, and being told that it sold two or three copies a day regularly, which was not bad at all for such a book.

It was then, by the mid-sixties, that the most impressive work still ahead began to be considered: the translation of *A Glastonbury Romance*, this whale of a book. A twenty-page extract was published in the *NRF* in February, 1968, under two signatures: Geneviève de la Gorce and Dominique Aury. The reason was that the job had been undertaken, then abandoned, by the former, and taken up by the latter who, however, in her turn failed to carry it out, so that it was only two years ago that *Les Enchantements de Glastonbury* came out at last, between October, 1975, and April, 1976, in four successive volumes translated by a third professional translator, Jean Queval (who, it must be said in truth, may not have been the best choice for John Cowper's masterpiece).

Meanwhile, Marie Canavaggia had been busy accomplishing her private dream, which had always been to translate the third of her favourite JCP's, *Maiden Castle*, which came out in French under the title *Camp retranché* and the imprint of yet another publisher, in January, 1967. In November of the same year, Gallimard brought out a new translation, by Suzanne Nétillard, of the long-forgotten *Wolf Solent*, with the author's 1960 preface.

Thus for the second phase of our little history of Powys in France: with three major publications between 1965 and 1967, a fourth under way (although it was to be a long way), and many accessory and critical publications, during the same span of years, in well-known reviews such as *Le Mercure de France, Les Lettres nouvelles, Les Cahiers du Sud* and *La Nouvelle Revue française*, nobody could say, then, that the name of John Cowper Powys was unknown in the realm of what I would like to call the great masters in exile. Because everyone of those who reviewed these books and who was not himself narrowly prejudiced by the so-called "Gallic" taste (a myth probably inherited from a frozen conception of our XVIIIth century) had indeed recognized a master. And yet it seems to me that there has been a sort of fatality in

the fact that, with John Cowper Powys in France, everything must be begun anew at each major step: so with the next phase.

It all began in the early seventies, when François-Xavier Jaujard and Diane de Margerie decided to devote the first number of a new literary review to John Cowper Powys alone. I was associated with the project from the first, although they did most of the time-consuming work from A to Z, since all the foreign contributions, including many pieces by JCP himself (essays, poems, extracts from novels, and even hitherto unpublished letters, the rights to which were granted to us by Francis Powys), had to be translated, on top of our writing or revising our own pieces, and especially since Jaujard literally watched over the 475-page tribute from its inception to its very fabrication, and even to its distribution. *Granit*, number 1/2, came out in November, 1973, in two thousand odd copies now almost all sold. As an American put it, it can hardly be denied that this was the most impressive single tribute paid to JCP in any language, including his own.

Not only had Jaujard and Margerie been the actual promoters of the latest Powys revival in France, but they had meanwhile undertaken and carried out the translation of *Ducdame*, which came out under the very Powysian title *Givre et sang* (*Frost and Blood*, because *Ducdame* was simply impossible in French), immediately after *Granit*, so that in the late Fall and early Winter of 1973, Paris was, indeed, resonant with the three magic letters "JCP." Whether it was the excellence of the translation or the fact that here, at long last, was a publisher who cared for a little publicity (or both, as is likely), *Givre et sang* was a "succès de librairie," a commercial success, selling out its first edition in a few weeks. This, of course, encouraged the publisher, Le Seuil, to consider other translations, only one of which has come out so far: *The Inmates*, in the Fall of 1976, under the title *La Fosse aux chiens* (from the hole into which are thrown the vivisected dogs).

In the meantime, yet another female admirer of JCP, a Celt with the most unceltish name of Madame Tran Van Khai, had been translating *In Defence of Sensuality* while working at her doctoral dissertation on Powys. *Apologie des sens* came out in November, 1975, with a preface by Diane de Margerie, and was re-issued recently as a pocket book, along with *Givre et sang*.

Thus, with four new major titles translated and published since 1973, one more to come out soon (*Rodmoor*, translated by Jaujard and Margerie), and others under consideration (*Wood and Stone* and perhaps a book of essays), the third phase can be said to be still underway. Whatever happens now, one hopes that the future reviewers will no longer have to "explain" JCP to the French readers (where and when he was born, how he lived, the reasons for the "conspiracy of silence", etc.).

However, I cannot but feel obliged to say that John Cowper Powys can hardly ever become a popular writer such as, say, D. H. Lawrence, with French readers. On the other hand, neither is he a writers' writer like James Joyce. Although the time for the very large pocket-book audience may never come in spite of the three titles now available, JCP is no longer a writer for the very happy and very few. Or, rather, the circle has now widened in such a way that it can safely be said that the quality of his French audience has changed with its quantity. Now at last, students come to me for theses or even dissertations on his work instead of my feeling that I have been reading, talking, writing and translating alone and in vain for almost twenty years.

September, 1977

LETTER FROM LONDON

I am sure that many of your readers will be aware that shortly after the death of John Cowper Powys in 1963, there were major changes in the publishing house of Macdonald, whose Managing Director, Eric Harvey, had so keenly and personally supported John Cowper Powys during the author's later years. This meant, unfortunately, that many of the books which John had written went out of print and were no longer readily available on the British market.

As your readers will also be aware, my father, Laurence Pollinger, had been closely associated with John Cowper Powys during his lifetime, and I myself had the pleasure of representing Malcolm Elwin (sometime literary adviser to Macdonald) who was the Literary Executor for Llewelyn Powys. Consequently the negotiation of the works of both John and Llewelyn came within our purview. Chatto & Windus, who had published T. F. Powys, maintained their rights under their contracts and corresponded direct with Francis Powys who is, of course, John's Executor.

In 1973 the effervescent figure of Jeffrey Kwintner, owner of a number of successful men's wear shops in London (called The Village Gate) called to see us and expressed great interest in going into publishing, and more than that, in publishing any books by John Cowper Powys that were available, following their disappearance from the Macdonald list. Over a period of years since then we have arranged for Village Press, the name adopted by Jeffrey Kwintner, to issue a considerable number of books by John Cowper Powys, as well as books about him, and currently Village Press have 46 books in print, all in stiff paperback. *A Philosophy of Solitude* is currently out of print, but it is to be hoped that a reprint will appear shortly.

In addition Village Press have under contract, to publish within the next nine months, the following titles:—

American Scene and Character
The Crime Wave in Fiction
Theodore Dreiser
Collection of Essays
Paddock Calls
My Dearest Sea-Eagle
Letters to Llewelyn, Volume 2
The Philosopher Kwang
Letters to Glyn Hughes

The appearance of the Village Press editions has contributed a great deal to the resurgence of interest in John Cowper Powys and in the Powys family, and much support has been lent to this by such leading critics as Angus Wilson and George Steiner.

The most recent development in British publishing is concerned with the mass paperback market. Following their very successful issue of *A Glastonbury Romance*, Pan Books, under their prestigious Picador imprint, are now making arrangements to publish, early in 1978, *Owen Glendower* and *A Brazen Head*. In addition, the Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative Society, who recently acquired Rivers Press, publishers of *Weymouth Sands*, intend to issue that book for the mass paperback market, too. Thus a whole new generation of readers will find John Cowper Powys readily available in every paperback bookshop and on every railway bookstall.

This revival has led to other parties becoming interested, and I was recently interviewed by Michael Dineen on behalf of the *Daily Telegraph*, and certainly the readership of that newspaper will be made aware of Powys and in particular of our current search for the missing typescript of the life of Keats. Employing detective methods akin to Sherlock Holmes, we have now traced the typescript all the way from 1910 to 1956, when it may well have been sold to an individual or a university by a bookseller in Reading, Berkshire. We know that it was not part of the Hanley collection, because that was acquired by the University of Texas, and the Humanities Research Centre there only has John Cowper Powys's autograph notes on the life of Keats.

I am quite sure that your readers will be very interested to know that we shall have available for publication within the next month or two three novellas by John Cowper Powys which have never previously been issued. Francis Powys tells me that the titles of these are *Abertackle, Topsy Turvey* and *Cataclysm*. I am aware that there are probably other unpublished works, but I am equally sure that with the help of all concerned they will be traced and published.

Your readers will also be interested to learn that one of the other matters we are attending to at the moment is locating the many letters that John Cowper Powys wrote. Through the co-operation of many of his correspondents we have received copies of many of these, and I know that Jeffrey Kwintner has also made strenuous efforts to obtain copies of as many letters as possible. In due season of time we shall hope to arrange for the publication of "The Collected Letters of John Cowper Powys," and I am well aware that this will run into several volumes. At the moment there are only plans to publish letters from John to various individuals, but I am sure that it is important to arrange for the complete collection to be published as soon as they can all be located. If any of your readers are in possession of letters from John, I would be very grateful to receive photo copies of same. In this connection I should perhaps mention that ownership is not the same as owning the copyright. In no case do I wish to acquire the ownership of the letters which people hold, because these letters may be very precious to them for sentimental as well as commercial reasons, but publication of letters—indeed, of anything which John Cowper Powys wrote—can only be arranged by the Executors of the Powys Estate, whom I have much pleasure in representing.

In the event that any author or scholar wishes to arrange for the publication of material by John, application for such permission must certainly be made to my company. We will then quote the appropriate fees and supply a formal permission contract, which delineates exactly what is being granted. It also indicates the correct acknowledgements which must be incorporated in any publication.

At some future date I will, with the permission of the Editor of the Newsletter, expand on the remarks I have made in this letter, and perhaps give information about the sales of John Cowper Powys's work in foreign countries, but I feel I have trespassed upon your space too much in this review of the current situation, which you will see augurs well for the future.

Gerald Pollinger
Laurence Pollinger, Ltd.
18 Maddox Street
London W. 1

August, 1977

TEACHING

A GLASTONBURY ROMANCE

TO SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Daniel Booth

The educational philosophy of the Emma Willard School, a girls secondary-level boarding school, is based upon the concept that students are more highly motivated and learn best when given a major part in choosing their own education. Hence the curriculum is primarily elective, giving me the opportunity to experiment with a course about a writer I have been interested in for a number of years. With a bold leap in the spring term of 1976, I selected *A Glastonbury Romance*, which I consider to be the greatest of John Cowper Powys's works. The course was open to juniors and seniors (sixteen and seventeen years old) and was co-ed, for Emma Willard has a Spring Exchange Program with a boys school.

Because of Glastonbury's length and the students' rather primitive appreciation of literature, I was obligated to approach the course this way: the students were expected to read 50 to 75 pages in preparation for each class (the classes met every other day), and I provided some initial class preparations. To make their reading easier, I discussed such topics as Powys's use of image and symbol, the differences between novel and romance forms, and the mythical and Christian associations of Glastonbury with the Arthurian and Grail legends.

I assigned brief (four or five page) written assignments. For instance, in the initial assignment I took the opening paragraphs of chapter one as an example of Powys's personification of all natural phenomena and asked the students to find other examples of this projection of consciousness into non-human "personalities." Another assignment was to relate four different ways in which Powys uses nature to symbolize or express human feelings or desires. Few of the students had experienced the animistic view of nature which permeates *Glastonbury*. "A tree has feelings!" one student exploded, "I call that stupid!" But as the reading progressed, this student became convinced that the feeling quality which Powys saw in all aspects of the natural world was, in fact, really there.

The comments made by the students as they read *Glastonbury* were generally reflective of an uncritical and accepting attitude. Their greatest criticism took a humorous form. On the first day of class when I passed out the book, previously unseen, the length and weight were the main focus of attention: "How can I possibly read *this* in only one term?" and "How can I get my other work done?" and

"This will take real devotion!" I "reassured" them by suggesting that they view the book as a kind of Bible.

As far as their reaction to the *Glastonbury*-universe is concerned, most students were impressed with the sheer force of Powys's imagination, and with his ability to create and sustain such a unique world. And surprisingly, many discovered that it was a world within which they could move, even though that world often reflected experiences completely new to them. Most of the students were more occupied with particular characters than with Powys's metaphysic or his descriptions of time and place. They usually had favorite characters and were interested in their evolution or de-evolution throughout the romance. The two who interested most of them were Cordelia Geard and Owen Evans. Cordelia's struggle with her own feminine nature and with Mother Nature herself, which ultimately lead to Cordelia's liberation and release, was an important encounter—particularly for the girls who were experiencing their own liberation as well as experimenting with society's "women's lib." They had seldom seen the feminine viewpoint expressed with the depth that Powys was able to bring to it.

The character of Owen Evans, and particularly the scene with Owen on the cross attempting to purge himself ot his sadism, stimulated many students to pursue questions of a religious nature, such as the individual need to resolve the question of good and evil as they are seen to be intermixed within everyone. For some, *Glastonbury* represented their first experience of the Christ symbolism in a meaningful but essentially non-Christian context.

Because the feminine, natural, and psychic elements in the book are so powerful, the girls seemed more responsive than the boys, but most of them expressed a very strong identification with Powys at one particular level: they seemed to understand and share in his need to give some form of expression to the unconscious. The means by which Powys gives expression to his own sensations and feelings through the varied natures of his creations was of particular interest to those in the class who were trying to find ways of expressing their own emotions and unconscious strivings. The portrayal of male sensitivity and openness was particularly important to the boys who were from a very male-oriented prep school. I felt it was important that these boys expressed some of their own subjective feelings.

As I reflect on my approach to the teaching of *A Glastonbury Romance*, I do not view the course as having evolved from any kind of conventional critical system. I simply wanted the students to experience Powys and to experience *Glastonbury*—which I found, in part at least, to be a naive assumption. In the beginning extra direction and "map-reading" were necessary on my part, but as the weeks progressed the students became more competent and more confident in their own understanding of Powys. At the end, as at the beginning, the greatest stumbling block was the length of the novel. A third of the students spent the whole term in outrage over how anyone would write such a book; another third were willing to read it but largely incapable of understanding it; the final third were so involved in the work that they not only tended to monopolize the class-time, but they even annoyed their unfortunate roommates who were not in the course. More than one of these reported having had to listen to long quotations on some esoteric subject relating to Powys's First Cause! I plan to teach *Glastonbury* again. My experience with this final third is all the incentive I need.

THE POWYS COLLECTION

OF E. E. BISSELL (II)

In *Powys Newsletter Three*, "The Powys Collection of E. E. Bissell" carried errors deriving from my misreading of the hand-written description of the collection. Here are corrections. For one entry—the various manuscripts of T. F. Powys's *Fables*—tabulation best records the early-state autographed manuscripts, fair-copy manuscripts, and typed manuscripts in Mr. Bissell's possession. (RLB)

John Cowper Powys

Short Stories: The correct title is "The Astonishing Adventures of a Zulu [not Lulu], a Welshman and an English Sailor, as narrated by the Welshman."

Other: *The Acharnians*

New Entry: "A manuscript book in which JCP started what was probably his last attempt at a story—twelve pages" (EEB)

Theodore Francis Powys: Letter to Gertrude Powys (27)

The Moods of God (early version of the first seven chapters of *Mr. Tasker's Gods*)

Father Adam (Tms. [not Ams.] of approximately 21,000 words, unpublished)

Fables

	Early-state AMS.	Fair Copy AMS.	TMS.
"The Clout and the Pan"	x	x	x
"Mr. Pim and the Holy Crumb"	x		x
"The Withered Leaf and the Green"	x	x	x
"The Seaweed and the Cuckoo-Clock"	x	x	x
"The Ass and the Rabbit"	x	x	x
"John Pardy and the Waves"		x	x
"The Dog and the Lantern"	x	x	x
"The Stone and Mr. Thomas"		x	x
"The Hat and the Post"	x	x	x
"The Bucket and the Rope"	x	x	x
"John Told and the Worm"	x	x	x
"Darkness and Nathaniel"		x	
"The Corpse and the Flea"		x	
"The Spittoon and the Slate"			
"The Blind Hen and the Earthworm"	x	x	
"Mr. Tapper and the Tree"	x	x	
"The Coat and the Crow"	x	x	
"The Hassock and the Psalter"			
"The Candle and the Slow-Worm"	x	x	

Llewelyn Powys: Letters to T. F. Powys (79)

Other: signed proof engravings for *The Glory of Life*; a complete set of proofs, several inscribed by Robert Gibbings to Llewelyn.

EDITOR'S NOTES

This issue, long delayed because publishing funds are scarce and because more than half of the copies are given away under our original promise to scholars reprinted below in "Distribution," hopes to provoke written response from readers. Certainly, the articles range wide in approach and opinion, as well as geography.

Publications, recent and forthcoming:

- Theodore Dreiser's *Notes on Life*, with an introduction [1946] by John Cowper Powys, was published by the University of Alabama Press in 1974. Co-editor Marguerite Tjader, Dreiser's long-time literary secretary, opens her "Foreword" with the statement that Powys was "a friend closer to Dreiser by temperament and genius than most mortals can be."
- The Swedish journal, *Jakobs Stege*, 2/1977, carries Henry Miller's tribute to JCP, Sven-Erik Täckmark's article on Powys, and his translation of a passage from *Weymouth Sands*. Mr. Täckmark is the "Eric the Red" of Powys's *Letters to Wilkinson*.
- *The Powys Review*, Number One (see "Letter from England") is available from Colgate University Press at four dollars, postpaid.
- Roger and Judith Sheppard (Trigon Press, 117 Kent House Road, Beckenham, Kent, England) have reprinted William Hunter's *The Novels and Stories of T. F. Powys*.
- Kenneth Hopkins' Warren House Press has published *Twenty Eight Sonnets* by Gamel Woolsey. A catalogue of Warren House Books by others in the Powys circle is available from 12 New Road, North Walsham, Norfolk, England.
- *Powys to Knight*: The Letters of John Cowper Powys to G. Wilson Knight will be published in the spring of 1978 by Cecil Woolf, Publishers.
- Two university library journals carried articles about the Powyses in their summer, 1977, issues: "John Cowper Powys: the *Autobiography* and the Man," by Walter Eden, in Syracuse University's *The Courier* (XIV, 3); and "Hal Trovillon and the Powys Brothers," by Kenneth Hopkins, in Southern Illinois University's *ICARB* (III, 2).

Manuscripts: Temple University Library reports the acquisition of the correspondence of John Cowper Powys to James Hanley, the novelist—forty-nine letters written between 1947 and 1960.

Distribution: The *Newsletter* goes at no charge to Powys scholars who are in touch with Colgate University Press. For others, the cost is three dollars per number, postpaid. Distributing a journal in so small a quantity is possible because of the many hours contributed by Lucia Blackmore of Colgate Press, Joshua Faigen, Marian Blanchard of Colgate's Office of Public Information, Earl Widtman of Brodock Press—and the continuing support of the Colgate University Humanities Faculty Development Fund.

Subscriptions: Because *Newsletters* vary in size and time of publication, we cannot take prepaid subscriptions. Rather, we will accept standing orders, with an invoice accompanying each issue as it is mailed.

R. L. Blackmore
Hamilton, N.Y. 13346
December, 1977

Colgate University Press has
published or distributed these
works by John Cowper Powys:

ALL OR NOTHING (first edition)

ATLANTIS (first edition)*

AUTOBIOGRAPHY (introductions by J. B. Priestley and R. L. Blackmore, 1968)

THE BRAZEN HEAD

A GLASTONBURY ROMANCE (preface by the author, 1953)

HOMER AND THE AETHER (first edition)

LETTERS TO LOUIS WILKINSON (first edition)

LUCIFER (signed edition)*

MAIDEN CASTLE (introduction by Malcolm Elwin, 1966)

PORIUS (signed edition)*

RODMOOR (introduction by G. Wilson Knight)

SELECTED POEMS (edited by Kenneth Hopkins, 1965)

UP AND OUT*

VISIONS AND REVISIONS

WEYMOUTH SANDS

WOLF SOLENT (preface by the author, 1960)

these paperbacks produced by Village Press:

DOSTOIEVSKY

IN DEFENSE OF SENSUALITY

OBSTINATE CYMRIC

A PHILOSOPHY OF SOLITUDE

THE INMATES

REAL WRAITHS

TWO & TWO

Louis Marlow's WELSH AMBASSADORS: *Powys lives and Letters*
(a new edition with an introduction by Kenneth Hopkins, 1971)

Louis Wilkinson's BLASPHEMY AND RELIGION
BUMBORE: A ROMANCE

* out of print