

TITLE PAGE

‘John Cowper Powys ... became so well-versed and so absorbed in the mythology and origins of the landscape and history of Wales that he was able to use them as keys to a cosmology of his own’. (Emyr Humphreys)

Examine Powys’ concepts of Wales and Welsh identity and the influence they had upon his fiction.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of MA in Celtic Studies.

Colin Laker

Student Number: 2002290

2020



Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

Declaration Form

1. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Name: Colin Laker.....

Date ...23rd July 2020.....

2. This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of ...MA in Celtic Studies

Name: Colin Laker.....

Date 23rd July 2020.....

3. This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references.

A bibliography is appended.

Name...Colin Laker...:

Date: 23rd July 2020.....

4. I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying, inter- library loan, and for deposit in the University's digital repository

Name...Colin Laker.....

Date.....23rd July 2020.....

Supervisor's Declaration.

I am satisfied that this work is the result of the student's own efforts.

Signed:

Date:

University of Wales: Trinity Saint David

E-Thesis Deposit Agreement

Details of the Work

I would like to deposit the following item in the digital repository maintained by the University, and/or in any other repository authorized for use by the University:

Title ‘John Cowper Powys ... became so well-versed and so absorbed in the mythology and origins of the landscape and history of Wales that he was able to use them as keys to a cosmology of his own’. (Emyr Humphreys)

Examine Powys’ concepts of Wales and Welsh identity and the influence they had upon his fiction.

.....
.....

This item is a product of my own research endeavours and is covered by the agreement below in which the item is referred to as “the Work”.

I agree that the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David may electronically store, copy or translate the Work to any approved medium or format for the purpose of future preservation and accessibility. The University is not under any obligation to reproduce or display the Work in the same formats or resolutions in which it was originally deposited.

UW: TSD Digital Repository

I understand that work deposited in the digital repository will be accessible to a wide variety of people and institutions, including automated agents and search engines via the World Wide Web.

I understand that once the Work is deposited, the item and its metadata may be incorporated into public access catalogues or services, such as national databases of electronic theses.

I agree as follows:

1. That I am the author or have the authority of the author/s to make this agreement and do hereby give the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David the right to make available the Work in the way described above.
2. That I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the Work is original, and to the best of my knowledge, does not breach any laws including those relating to defamation, libel and copyright.

3. That I have, in instances where the intellectual property of other authors or copyright holders is included in the Work, gained explicit permission for the inclusion of that material in the Work, and in the electronic form of the Work as accessed through the open access digital repository, *or* that I have identified and removed that material for which adequate permission has not been obtained and which will be inaccessible via the digital repository
4. That University of Wales: Trinity Saint David does not hold any obligation to take legal action on behalf of the Depositor, or other rights holders, in the event of a breach of intellectual property rights, or any other right, in the material deposited.
5. That I undertake to indemnify the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David against all actions, suits, proceedings, claims, demands and costs occasioned by the University in consequence of any breach of this agreement

Name: Colin Laker.....

Date: ...23rd July 2020.....

ABSTRACT

John Cowper Powys claimed a Welsh identity throughout much of his life and several commentators have noted his fascination with Wales and the Welsh. Few, however, have concentrated on what Powys himself meant by those concepts, and even fewer have examined how those concepts changed over time, especially once he moved to Wales in 1935 (first to Corwen and then, in 1955, to Blaenau Ffestiniog, until his death in 1963).

This study is primarily concerned with two main issues. Firstly, to examine Powys's concepts concerning Wales and Welsh identity over time and to chart how and why they changed. Secondly, to attempt to show how those changing ideas were manifested in his writing and influenced the fiction he produced in America, England, and Wales.

It will suggest that a crucial stage in the development of Powys's conceptualisation of Welsh identity was his move to live in the country in 1935, opening him up to the reality of the Welsh people, landscape and culture, as well as his reading of anthropologists of Welshness. These changing conceptualisations can be detected especially in a reading of Powys's novels *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Maiden Castle*, *Owen Glendower* and *Porius* and his collection of non-fiction essays *Obstinate Cymric*.

‘John Cowper Powys ... became so well-versed and so absorbed in the mythology and origins of the landscape and history of Wales that he was able to use them as keys to a cosmology of his own’. (Emyr Humphreys)¹

Examine Powys’ concepts of Wales and Welsh identity and the influence they had upon his fiction.

Despite being born, in 1872, in what he called the ‘Omphalos of England’² in Derbyshire, attending an English public school (Sherborne) and living in England and America into his sixties,³ John Cowper Powys claimed a Welsh identity throughout much of his life, saying ‘I am inclined to think that there has seldom been a mortal soul- certainly no modern one- more obstinately Cymric than my own’.⁴ Several commentators have noted his fascination with Wales and the Welsh, but few have concentrated on what Powys himself meant by those concepts, and fewer have examined how those concepts changed over time, especially once he moved to Wales in 1935 (first to Corwen and then, in 1955, to Blaenau Ffestiniog, until his death in 1963).

Part of the reason for this is no doubt the extensive nature of Powys’s corpus, both in terms of number but also, especially in his ‘mid period’ of the 1930s and 40s, the sheer length of the books concerned (*Owen Glendower* is 900 pages plus, *A Glastonbury Romance* over 1000 pages and *Porius* 750). A second issue is also the nature of Powys’s ideas in his fiction, which tend to be so complex that writers prefer to confine themselves to examining them within a single novel or theme.⁵

¹ Emyr Humphreys (1990) ‘The Crucible of Myth’ in M. Wynn Thomas (ed.) (2002) *Emyr Humphreys: Conversations and Reflections* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) p. 15.

² Powys, John Cowper (1934) *Autobiography* (John Lane, The Bodley Head, London) p. 1.

³ Powys was born in Shirley, Derbyshire, living there until 1879. After a brief stay in Dorchester, the family moved to Montacute, Somerset, and Powys attended nearby Sherbourne School. After attending Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, Powys lived in Sussex, teaching in girls’ schools and as an Extension Lecturer for Oxford and Cambridge Universities. From 1905 to 1934 he was largely domiciled in America.

⁴ Powys (1934) p. 26.

⁵ Roland Mathias’s title (‘John Cowper Powys and ‘Wales’. A limited study’ in *The Powys Review* Vol V 1985 pp. 5-26) came closest to a wider study but was largely limited to a study of *Maiden Castle* and was in itself a correction to his own ‘The Sacrificial Prince: A Study of *Owen Glendower*’ in Belinda Humfrey (ed.) (1972) *Essays on John Cowper Powys* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff). Robin Wood has written interestingly and importantly on Powys’s use of and engagement with Welsh mythology, such as ‘*Owen Glendower*: Powys’s Faustian Prince’ in *The Powys Journal* Volume V (1995) pp. 92-107 and ‘John Cowper Powys’s Welsh Mythology: Gods and Manias’, in *The Powys Review* Number 22 Volume VI ii (1988) pp. 3-13, but these, as their titles suggest, are largely confined to either one novel or one theme. Similarly, Joe Boulter’s ‘John Cowper

Thirdly, however, there is also the issue that Powys's views, especially in relation to Welsh identity, have tended to be seen (especially in a Welsh context) as problematic. Ned Thomas, for example, commenting on Powys's 1947 book of essays *Obstinate Cymric*, asked 'does any nation deserve to have inflicted on it the zanier projections of [his] romantic imagination?', suggesting that 'in the end, it's not to us, the Welsh, that he speaks, at least not today'.⁶ Powys's contemporary reception, amongst Welsh nationalists in particular, was little better. Though he was lauded by the main contemporary advocate of Anglo-Welsh literature, Gwyn Jones, as 'a writer of genius, of Welsh genius, attached to this land of ours by ancient ties of blood, a student and lover of her literature as of her way of life',⁷ Powys was criticised by Pennar Davies in *The Welsh Nationalist* as one of the Anglo-Welsh writers who 'define essential Welshness as a species of racial character rather than as a developing national life which must be given fair play in the sphere of economics and politics'.⁸ Davies further accused Powys (alongside Rhys Davies) of attempting to 'replace a view of the nation as a civic democratic, territorial space in which all citizens are allowed their voice, with an essentially racial view in which Welshness is based on ancestry'.⁹ This racial dimension has also led, it seems, to a reluctance by modern writers to deal with Powys's ideas about Welsh identity. Morine Krissdóttir's most recent biography, for instance, has only one single reference to *Obstinate Cymric*,¹⁰ that being Powys's own

Powys's [De]construction of Welsh Identity in *Porius*' in *The Powys Review Vol VIII iii & iv* (1997) pp. 9-20 and Nicholas Birns 'Porius and Owen Glendower: John Cowper Powys's Radical Medievalism' in *The Powys Journal* Volume XXVI (2016) pp. 32-56 have important things to say about Powys's engagement with those topics, but are largely limited to the confines of those novels.

⁶ Ned Thomas (1979) 'Obstinate Cymric' in *The Powys Review* 4, Winter/Spring p.75.

⁷ Gwyn Jones (1939) *The Welsh Review* Vol I, No 6, August 1939 pp 4-5. In the same editorial Jones noted on the coincidence of Powys settling in Corwen which, with the presence of James Hanley already, he described as 'a provincial centre of literature' *Ibid.* p5, issues further explored in Robin Wood (2003) 'Resident Foreigners and Bards! John Cowper Powys & James Hanley in Wales' in *The Powys Journal* Volume XIII pp. 144 -165.

⁸ Pennar Davies (1948) 'Anti-Nationalism among the Anglo-Welsh' in *The Welsh Nationalist* (February 1948) p. 8, cited in Daniel G. Williams (2015) *Wales Unchained: Literature, Politics and Identity in the American Century* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) p. 155.

⁹ Williams (2015) p 155. Rhys Davies (1901-1978) already been a target for the ire of Pennar Davies (who wrote under the pen-name of Aberpennar) in 1946, numbering him among the 'professional Welshmen ... lost on the ocean of English life', who 'posed a serious threat to the cause of Welsh nationhood' Pennar Davies, 'Anti-nationalism among the Anglo-Welsh' in *The Welsh Nationalist* February 1946, quoted in Huw Edwin Osborne (2009) *Writers of Wales: Rhys Davies* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) p. 37.

¹⁰ Morine Krissdóttir (2007) *Descents of Memory: The Life of John Cowper Powys* (Overlook Duckworth, New York) p. 371.

dismissal of it; there is no analysis of the content of the essays, crucial for understanding Powys's thinking about Welsh identity in his first years in Wales, at all. Similarly, the recent *Cambridge History of Welsh Literature*, locates Powys as amongst 'a number of other writers in this period who also use the early history of Wales to imply continuity or to create a more coherent sense of nation'. In commenting on *Porius*, 'which he believed to be his masterpiece' it is noted that it 'is significantly located in the same Arthurian world of sub-Roman Britain which Jones explores in 'The Sleeping Lord',¹¹ implying that *Porius* is a lesser work than that of David Jones, but also failing to examine Powys's particular concepts of Welsh identity.

This study will therefore be concerned with two main issues. Firstly, to examine Powys's concepts concerning Wales and Welsh identity over time and chart how (and consider why) they changed. Secondly, to attempt to show how those changing ideas were manifested in his writing and influenced the fiction he produced in America, England, and Wales.

Section 1 will outline Powys's early conceptions of Wales whilst in England and America, illustrated in his early novels, *Autobiography* and *A Glastonbury Romance*, centred around the idea of Wales as part of the wider Celtic World. Section 2 will concentrate on the impact that Powys's initial move to Wales had upon his concept of the country and his view of the identity of its people, particularly when completing *Maiden Castle*, and Section 3 will examine the development of Powys's conceptions of these issues whilst living in Wales, as exemplified in the 'Welsh' novels of *Morwyn*, *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*. Section 4 will provide an overview of Powys's conceptualisations and draw some conclusions.

¹¹ Geraint Evans & Helen Fulton (eds) (2019) *The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge) p. 461. This follows on from Evans's earlier work, where he characterises Powys's work as 'being mainly concerned with the psychology of myth and the dynamics of personal relationship' unlike Jones, in whose case 'the subjectivity of [his] work locates it as functioning in the same discursive field as Welsh-language writers whose use of history has little in common with the late romanticism of Powys'. Geraint Evans (2012) 'Modernist Arthur: The Welsh Revival' in Helen Fulton (ed.) *A Companion to Arthurian Literature* (Wiley-Blackwell, London) p. 440.

Section 1: Powys Outside Wales

The prime source for Powys's early views of Wales and the Welsh is his own *Autobiography*, published in 1934, which is peppered throughout with references to his self-identified Welshness. Powys began the book when he was 60 and produced a 'skilfully constructed'¹² but essentially partial account of his own intellectual (and physical) development and his devotion to his own 'Life Illusion'. There is, though, according to his most recent biographer, 'something distinctly odd' about the *Autobiography*, as 'there is no mention of the person who is arguably the most important person in a baby's first years – the mother. She is never mentioned in the entire *Autobiography*';¹³ neither is Powys's first wife, Margaret.¹⁴ It was if Powys had set out to write his account with 'the curious omission of any women [important] in a life story'¹⁵ except the, often anonymous, women who were the object of his sexual fantasies. *Autobiography*, then, is a problematic source, as in it, 'Powys's self-presentation is largely dependent upon his treatment of himself in the manner of a fictional character'.¹⁶ However, it is also the main source for Powys's early life. Some other sources from this early period do exist, primarily his letters to his brother Llewelyn, published in two volumes,¹⁷ and other extant correspondence, for example, with James Hanley and Louis Wilkinson.¹⁸ From 1929 there is also Powys's own diary,¹⁹ and in the 1930s other first-hand accounts and

¹² Krissdóttir (2007) p. 21.

¹³ *Ibid* p. 23.

¹⁴ Powys married Margaret Alice Lyon in 1896; their son, Littleton Alfred, was born in 1902. Williams suggests that it was something of a forced marriage saying Powys 'was driven into Margaret's arms by the strictness of his mother's view of the right and proper way for a young Victorian gentleman to behave' Herbert Williams (1997) *Border Lives: John Cowper Powys* (Seren, Bridgend) p. 43. It remained 'a marriage in name only for most of its fifty-three years existence' *Ibid* p. 39. Margaret died in 1947, by which time Powys had been living with Phyllis Plater, whom he met in America, since 1923. Powys and Margaret never divorced and Powys and Plater did not marry after 1947, though felt they were 'married in all but name' *Ibid* p. 145.

¹⁵ Krissdóttir (2007) p. 315.

¹⁶ Jeremy Hooker (1973) *Writers of Wales: John Cowper Powys* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) p.6.

¹⁷ Malcolm Elwin (ed.) (1975) *Letters of John Cowper Powys to his brother Llewelyn Volume I 1902-1925, Volume II 1925-1939* (Village Press, London).

¹⁸ Published as Chris Gostick (ed.) *Powys and Lord Jim* (The Powys Press, 2018) and Louis Wilkinson (ed.) *The Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson 1935-1956* (MacDonald, 1958).

¹⁹ Available in published form between 1929 and 1939 as Morine Krissdóttir (ed.) *Petrushka and the Dancer: The Diaries of John Cowper Powys 1929-1939* (Carcenet Press, 1995) and Morine Krissdóttir & Roger Peers (eds.) *The Dorset Year: The Diary of John Cowper Powys, June 1934 to June 1935* (The Powys Society, 1998). The manuscript versions, which continue to Powys's death in 1963, are held in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

memoirs begin to emerge, such as that of Louis Marlow.²⁰ Nevertheless, it is with the *Autobiography* that any attempt to understand Powys's engagement with Wales and Welshness must begin.

The *Autobiography* recounts the 'founding story' of Powys's Welsh identity coming from his father, whose 'eyes used to burn with a fire that was at once secretive and blazing ... when he told us how we were descended from the ancient Welsh princes of Powysland'.²¹ This was reinforced by Powys's own reading of his father's favourite book, Aytoun's *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*,²² which created in him 'that peculiar Celtic emotion ... which, like the spirit of Wales itself, is always returning, like water seeking its level, to its own proud evasive, ingrown, interior building'.²³ Powys refers in this passage to Matthew Arnold's description of the Celtic emotion, suggesting that since he 'describes it beautifully... [it is not] important whether he describes it correctly'²⁴ and we may, perhaps, ascribe the same view to Powys's concept of his own Welshness in this period; it doesn't matter whether there was any basis to his father's account, what matters is that Powys himself appears to have believed it. So, in their school room at Montacute was displayed a flag of 'the ancestral Welsh dragon, painted in red and gold above the fire-place',²⁵ and his first known piece of writing, as a schoolboy at Sherborne, was *Mordaunt Ap Gryfith: A tale*, which Belinda Humfrey considers 'should be displayed as evidence of Powys's very early interest in writing fiction concerned with the history of Wales'.²⁶ Powys's romanticism and his strong belief in

²⁰ Louis Marlow (1936) *Welsh Ambassadors (Powys Lives and Letters)* (Chapman and Hall Ltd, London). See also Belinda Humphrey (ed.) (1980) *Recollections of the Powys Brothers* (Peter Owen Ltd, London).

²¹ Powys (1934) p. 26.

²² Powys described Aytoun as 'the book that "has influenced my Deepest Life more than any other book", and he spent hours "showing the T.T. certain illustrations of swords & bucklers & Helmets & graves on lonely moors & ruined Castles above swollen rivers & crescent Moons above lost battles and Broadswords brandished in Victory"'. Krissdóttir (2007) p. 341. [The T. T. is Powys's name in the diary for Phyllis Plater and the quotations are from the (unpublished) Diary for 4 December 1940]. *Scottish Cavaliers* is a series of poems by W.E. Aytoun, published in 1849, covering aspects of Medieval and Early Modern Scottish history, such as *The Heart of the Bruce*, *The Execution of Montrose*, *The Widow of Glencoe* and *The Burial of Dundee*, which Powys references in his *Autobiography* (Powys (1934) p 26. A facsimile of the 1st edition (minus the illustrations that Powys refers to, which must have been in a later edition) can be found at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10945/10945-h/10945-h.htm>

²³ Powys (1934) pp. 25-6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid* p. 121.

²⁶ Dated c.1888-89 when Powys was 16/17. Belinda Humfrey (1986) 'John [Cowper] Powys's "Mordaunt Ap Gryfith, A tale" 1888?': an explanatory note' *The Powys Review* Volume Vii Number Eighteen p. 24. The tale itself follows on pages 26-28.

his Welsh ancestry led him to claim, according to the *Autobiography*, that he felt ‘like a reincarnation of Owen Glendower’ in Dorchester aged 9,²⁷ and a reincarnation of ‘Taliessin – from the ancient Druids’²⁸ much later when he was in America. The latter is reinforced by a Diary entry for 16th February 1931, when he asks himself, ‘have I not the blood of Taliessin in my veins’.²⁹

Powys’s self-identifying Welshness seems to have reached a particular crescendo on the birth of his son in 1902, when he says:

‘I suddenly acquired a passion for everything Welsh. I bought Welsh grammars, Welsh dictionaries, Welsh modern poetry. I bought an elaborate Welsh Genealogy, called “Powys-Fadoc”, and mightily chagrined was I when I found no mention of my father’s ancestors in it! I bought everything I could lay hands on that had to do with Wales and the Welsh people.’³⁰

He ‘soon gave up trying to learn Welsh’³¹ in deepest Sussex. Nevertheless, despite abandoning his quest for his own princely roots, Powys continued his interest in ‘the *idea* of Wales and the *idea* of Welsh mythology [which] went drumming on like an incantation through my tantalized soul’, resolving himself, ‘to realize with my whole spiritual force what it meant to be descended ... from those ancient Druidic chieftains!’.³² These ideas are represented in his early fiction, such as in his first novel, *Wood and Stone* (1915), where, in introducing the ‘impious heathen fortress of Leo’s Hill’, created in ‘pre-Celtic times’, he outlines that ‘the aboriginal tribes have been succeeded by the Celt; the Celt by the Roman; the Roman by the Saxon; without any change in the place’s inherent character’;³³ or in *Wolf Solent* (1929), where ‘Christie’s Welsh mother claimed descent from Merlin’ and it is ‘her *Merlinish mirror*, in Christie’s room, that prevents Wolf from consummating the relationship’,³⁴ or in the character of Dr Mabon in *Weymouth Sands* (1934) who, if [he] is

²⁷ Powys (1934) p. 63.

²⁸ *Ibid* p. 454.

²⁹ Krissdóttir (1995) p. 64.

³⁰ Powys (1934) p. 334.

³¹ *Ibid*.

³² *Ibid* pp. 334-5.

³³ John Cowper Powys (1974) *Wood and Stone* (Village Press) p. 2. He also refers to it as ‘the Druid hill’ p.8.

³⁴ Hooker (1973) p. 36.

a doctor he is also a Celtic god'.³⁵ However, this 'drumming' perhaps appears most loudly in *A Glastonbury Romance* (researched and written 1929-1931) and *Maiden Castle* (researched and written 1934-36).

A Glastonbury Romance

Powys's research and preparation for *A Glastonbury Romance* was heavily influenced by his reading of Welsh mythology, Arthurian romance and the Grail legend which, for Powys, all appeared to be aspects of the same thing. His diary entry of Friday 23rd August 1929 (whilst in America) read:

'Read Rhys' Arthurian Legend all day and meditated on 'Mythology' – thinking not only of Glastonbury but of Stonehenge – and not only of Stonehenge but of heathen nature-worship in reality – the sea- the sun- the moon' ...³⁶

and for Sunday 25th August 1929:

'All day I have been reading Rhys' Arthurian Legend until I now have got on the track of the mythological Graal far older than the Holy Graal. I have learnt about the Birds of Rhiannon, and about yr Echwyd and about the Castle of Carbonek and about the Cauldron of the Head of Hades (Pwyll) and about Bran and the Graal and about Yspydaden and the father of Olwen – and the Mwys of Gwydno Garan-hir – and about Avallach the Unknown – and about Gwyn son of Nud and about Gwlad yr Hav (*Aestiva regio*) and about 'Bendigeitran' and about Urdawl Ben who is said (by himself) to be 'gorlassar' a dark blue livid colour...³⁷.

Herbert Williams's assessment of *A Glastonbury Romance*, that 'it is a novel in which Arthurian and other Welsh legends intertwine with myths relating to the Grail and tales of early Christianity',³⁸ is not uncommon to critics, with Hooker discerning that a 'shift is evident from *Wolf Solent* where Welsh mythology plays an important but subsidiary role, to *A Glastonbury Romance*, where it is central'.³⁹ Several characters embody a 'Welsh' content;

³⁵ *Ibid* p. 59.

³⁶ Krissdóttir (1995) p. 16. See Section 2 for a further discussion of the ideas of Rhys and their importance in Powys' thinking.

³⁷ *Ibid*.

³⁸ Williams (1997) pp. 102-3.

³⁹ Hooker (1973) p. 44.

the Welshman Owen Evans, ‘an antiquarian bookseller who is one of the most sensitive mediums of the Glastonbury psychic aura’ and who ‘incorporates aspects of John Cowper Powys in his personality’,⁴⁰ who ‘is writing a life of Merlin more comprehensive than any in existence’;⁴¹ Megan, the wife of John Geard, who ‘belongs to the ancient Welsh family of Rhys’ and their daughter Cordelia, who is ‘the very spirit of the old Cymric race’.⁴² The book begins with an epigraph from *The Black Book of Carmarthen* (translated by Sir John Rhys) as its frontispiece,⁴³ and has a long, rambling speech from Mr Evans about how ‘Glastonbury is the Gwlad-yr-Hav, the Elysian Death-Fields of the Cymric tribes’, with a source list of his knowledge ‘from the Book of Taliessin and from the Triads and from David ap Gwilym and from Lady Charlotte’s Mabinogion and from Sir John Rhys, and from the Red Book of Hergest, and from the Vita Gildae and from the Black book of Carmarthen, but in my own Vita Merlini I’ve gone further than any of them into these things’. ‘This place’ says Evans, ‘has always been set apart... from the earliest times... Urien the Mysterious, Avallach the Unknown, were Fisher kings here’.⁴⁴ Thus, *A Glastonbury Romance* is ‘an amalgam of Romantic thought and Celtic mythology given a special imaginative twist by Powys’.⁴⁵

Maiden Castle

Wales seems to have also been on Powys’s mind in the mid-1930s. From beginning the writing of *Autobiography* in August 1933 through the research and writing of *Maiden Castle*, Powys’s diary shows him thinking of moving to Wales and being deeply interested in Welsh mythology: ‘We talked of going to Wales & I was ‘elated’’,⁴⁶ ‘I wrote such a long letter to Lulu & Alyse, together, all about our idea of leaving America forever & going to settle in Wales and for me to lay my bones in Wales! ... I have an idea that with that background I shall write the greatest Romance of modern times, with the Welsh Legends & Myths to back me up’;⁴⁷ ‘I talked about Wales ... I tell her that I have long long long thought of going to

⁴⁰ Williams (1997) p. 102.

⁴¹ Hooker (1973) p. 44.

⁴² Williams (1997) p. 102.

⁴³ ‘A grave for Mark, a Grave for Gwythur/ A grave for Gwgawn of the ruddy Sword/ Not wise (the thought) a grave for Arthur’.

⁴⁴ John Cowper Powys (1996) *A Glastonbury Romance* (Overlook Press) p. 739.

⁴⁵ Hooker (1973) p. 50.

⁴⁶ Krissdóttir (1995) 27th August 1933 pp. 132-3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid* 29th August 1933 p. 133.

Wales'⁴⁸ and,

‘As I stood down by Alders River beyond Spinney on which the Sun
shone so strong as it rushed so black and glittery between its snow-banks
here came over me another Inspiration or rather a powerful Impulse a
Magnetic Imperative towards my Book about Merlin and Taliessin &
Ceridwen & Welsh Mythology’.⁴⁹

Maiden Castle was completed in draft in 1935 (published 1937); Hooker sees it as ‘an act of imaginative archaeology; it digs deep not in order to reveal an historic or prehistoric continuity with the present in which its characters are rooted, but to recover powers that are at once aboriginal and psychic’.⁵⁰ Several authors have noted ‘the ancient Celtic character of the novel’, whose structure is evidence of ‘Powys’s awareness of the Celtic calendar’,⁵¹ built around the Celtic festivals of Imbolc (Christianised as Candlemas), Beltane (now transposed into Lammastide) and Samhain (All Souls and All Saints Days). Angela Blaen further suggests that this deliberate transposing and emphasis extends to characters in the novel; ‘The Celtic theme is stressed throughout the novel, for example in the explicit parallel between Dud and the nearby Cerne Abbas Giant’.⁵² The noted Powys scholar, G. Wilson Knight, suggests that ‘*Maiden Castle* is a transition work. On it pivots Powys’s shift of interest from Wessex to Wales’⁵³ and another noted Powys commentator, Glen Cavaliero, writing nearly ten years later, cited that view approvingly.⁵⁴ Knight sees one of the main characters, Uryen Quirm, as ‘a composite of essences from Hastings in *Ducdame* and from Geard and the occasionally corpse-like Mr Evans in *A Glastonbury Romance*’, who is searching ‘like Mr Evans, for a secret housed in ancient Welsh wisdom concerned with

⁴⁸ *Ibid* 5th September 1933 p. 134.

⁴⁹ *Ibid* 16th January 1934 p. 144.

⁵⁰ Hooker (1973) p. 63.

⁵¹ Angela Blaen (1985) ‘*Maiden Castle* and the Celtic Calendar’ in *The Powys Review* 15 Volume IV iii p. 32.

⁵² *Ibid*.

⁵³ G. Wilson Knight (1964) *The Saturnalian Quest: A Study of the Prose Work of John Cowper Powys* (Methuen & Co Ltd) p. 49.

⁵⁴ Glen Cavaliero (1973) *John Cowper Powys: Novelist* (Clarendon Press) p. 93. In a more recent evaluation, Cavaliero commented: ‘In discussing *Maiden Castle* those thirty years ago I quoted approvingly Wilson Knight’s designation of it as a ‘transitional work’. I would now be more inclined to describe it as a pivotal one. It summarises and holds up to inspection conclusions which have been sounded in its predecessors; it also confirms those attitudes the hard way and frees the author for the expansive canvases of *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*’. Cavaliero G. (1999) ‘*Maiden Castle* Revisited’ in *The Powys Journal* Volume IX p. 37.

horror and death'.⁵⁵ It is also significant, suggests Knight, that 'When he visits Maiden Castle a ghostly wind is aroused, making a weird music, rising and falling... which is Powys's theme-song for ancient Wales, to be used again in *Owen Glendower*'.⁵⁶

However, there are three important elements to emphasise about Powys's attitude to Wales and Welshness in this period. Firstly, Powys's self-identity is far from exclusively Welsh. He considers himself as much influenced by Classical culture and myths, especially Homer, as by his readings of Taliesin and *The Mabinogion*⁵⁷ and, especially whilst in America, he was as wont to use 'We English', 'We Jews' or even 'We Negroes' to identify himself, claiming heritage at various points from all of these sources.⁵⁸ Moreover, throughout both the *Autobiography* and the Diary he is open about both his physical and intellectual interests, recounting his visits to the beach in Brighton to catch a glimpse of just the right sort of female ankle and his delight in particular types of Victorian/Edwardian pornography. His self-identified 'Welshness' does not feature in the list of his 'supreme mania[s]' as outlined in *Autobiography*.⁵⁹

Secondly, many of his own family thought that his association with Welshness was essentially affected, perhaps a way of being exclusively close to his father. A.R. Powys, for example, dismissed 'all this nonsense of Jack's about our being Celtic or Welsh'.⁶⁰ Another brother, Littleton, 'pointed out that the family had been in England for four hundred years

⁵⁵ Wilson Knight (1964) p. 52.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *The Mabinogion* is 'the subtlest & loveliest of all Mythology after Homer' Krissdóttir (1995) 18th January p.177 My emphasis.

⁵⁸ There are numerous examples throughout Powys (1934) such as 'We English' p. 461, 'there mere fact that we are Englishmen' p. 577, 'Expatriated Englishmen – and there are several of us here' p. 574, 'I am incorrigible, whether I got it from the Druids or from African negroes' p. 455. Marlow (1936) notes that 'On American lecture-platforms I have heard him speak of "We Jews"' p. 46. In a description of Powys, Marlow comments how 'the formation of his features, above all of his nose, has an unmistakeably Jewish suggestion' p46 and that he is 'the most Celtic and Jewish of his family' p. 48, as well as 'the high-toned seemingly artificial colour of his "Red Indian" cheeks' p. 42.

⁵⁹ Where they are listed as 'sylpholeptism, 'winnowed sadism' and 'wandering along narrow roads and deserted cattle-tracks, past barns and sheds and windmills and water-mills, past church yards and ancient inns, over time-worn bridges, by the edge of old canals, through ancestral parks and along borders of lakes, up forest-paths among fern-grown rocks and across smooth levels of pine-needles, down by the margins of reedy swamps and the dusty outskirts of market towns' Powys (1934) pp. 399-400.

⁶⁰ Marlow (1936) p. 46.

and that, despite the name, there was no real proof of Welsh origin'.⁶¹ Certainly, it could be argued that in this period Powys's Welsh identity was purely *theoretical*, in that he had very little contact with either Wales or Welsh people. Indeed, the only reference to an actual visit to Wales in *Autobiography* comes during the time that Powys is a student at Cambridge, around the age of 19 (so c. 1891/2), when he, his father and brothers Littleton and Theodore go on holiday to Barmouth. This led to Powys explaining to his father 'at considerable length... that I detested mountains and that the only scenery in which I felt really happy was the fen-country of Norfolk'.⁶² He failed to ascend Cader Idris, 'took care to avoid physical contests with a Rugby football captain' and appears to have been decidedly underwhelmed by reaching the summit of 'our ancestral mountain', Snowdon.⁶³ Powys admits that, since he had never been to Wales before, 'this visit ought to have been a memorable one... but it by no means returns to my memory with any feeling of pleasure'.⁶⁴ As Krissdóttir notes, in many ways for Powys 'Wales was an "elsewhere"', 'a long-held fantasy',⁶⁵ but one that made him stand out from his peers, even within his own family, and it is worth remembering, as Hooker points out, that '*Autobiography* and all the novels of the first major creative phase, except *Maiden Castle*, were written in America about the places of his childhood. It is evident, surely, that America had a liberating effect upon Powys, that it set him free to be more fully himself than would have been possible in the inhibiting atmosphere of class-conscious English society; and that with this liberation came a sinking down into the places of childhood, an imaginative recreation of them, with all the intensity of early sensations nostalgically remembered'.⁶⁶

Thirdly, the nature of Powys's understanding of Welsh identity in this period is largely, even exclusively, based on the supposed Celticity of the Welsh. As Krissdóttir notes, 'the 1890s saw the rise of the "cult of the Celt"', and Powys was not alone in embracing this trend, though she suggests that 'characteristically Powys took advantage of a vogue but

⁶¹ *Ibid* p. 47.

⁶² Powys (1934) p. 189.

⁶³ Or 'Snowden' as Powys spells it. *Ibid*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid* p. 187.

⁶⁵ Krissdóttir (2007) p. 322.

⁶⁶ Hooker (1973) pp.17-18.

made it peculiarly his own by ignoring the Irish and concentrating on Welsh literature and myth'.⁶⁷ His early childhood reading, after all, was about the Scottish Gaels in Aytoun, and a significant influence on his earliest published poetry, as well as Romantics such as Wordsworth and Keats, was W.B. Yeats, with Powys dedicating one of his earliest poems to him and corresponding with him.⁶⁸ Powys's reading of Matthew Arnold also seems to have been a key influence in this respect. Arnold, in his lectures on 'The Study of Celtic Literature' in 1866, had been a central figure in the beginning of the Celtic revival, with his emphasis on the works of Taliesin as just one part of 'the poetry of the Celtic race and its names of places [which] quite over powers me'.⁶⁹ Arnold himself, on a visit to Llandudno in 1864, had almost offered a template for the eliding of Romanticism, Welshness and Celticity that Powys adhered to in this period, gushing over 'Wales, where the past still lives, where every place has its tradition, every name its poetry, and where the people, the genuine people, still knows this past, this tradition, this poetry and lives with it and clings to it; while, alas, the invader from Liverpool and Birkenhead, has long forgotten this'.⁷⁰ Indeed, although Powys was aware of the views of Sir John Rhys⁷¹ concerning the importance of the pre-Celtic people in Wales, it was rather Rhys's views of the Celts and their link to the Arthurian myths which dominated his thinking through to the mid-1930s. He was so entranced by Arnold and Rhys's ideas of Celticity that he could describe his great friend Bernie (Bernard Price O'Neill), being of both Welsh and Irish descent, as 'a double Celt'.⁷² He also emphasised the shared 'native Celtic strain'⁷³ between himself and James Hanley, with his Irish background, noting that the latter's son, christened 'Liam (Irish) Powys (Welsh) Hanley (Danish)' in J.C.P.'s honour, was 'Celtic (double) and Scandinavian'.⁷⁴ Indeed, Geraint Evans suggests that these early novels 'are essentially English modernist novels whose focalization is never

⁶⁷ Krissdóttir (2007) p. 81.

⁶⁸ *Ibid* pp. 288-89 makes an interesting comparison between Powys and Yeats (1865-1939), including that 'In early adulthood, both were attracted to theosophical beliefs. Yeats's particular blend was Rosicrucianism, spiritualism, Irish mythology, whereas Powys was attracted to Welsh myth and eastern philosophies ... Both artists sought to be magicians...'.
⁶⁹ Emyr Humphreys (1983) *The Taliesin Tradition* (Black Raven Press) p. 178.

⁷⁰ Emyr Humphreys (1978) 'Arnold in Wonderland' in *The Powys Review* 3 p. 50.

⁷¹ See Section 2 for a further discussion of the ideas of Rhys and their importance in Powys' thinking

⁷² Powys (1934) pp. 269.

⁷³ Gostick (2018) p. 23.

⁷⁴ *Ibid* p. 21.

Welsh, and in this Powys is following the tradition of Celtic Revivalism'.⁷⁵

Therefore, Powys's initial concepts of Wales and Welsh identity, as seen in *Autobiography*, *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Maiden Castle* and the earlier novels, appear fully consistent with a Romantic view of Welsh identity as part of a wider Celticity, influenced by both his father, his early exposure to writers such as Aytoun, Yeats and Arnold and his fascination with Welsh 'Celtic' mythology such as *The Mabinogion*. Welshness and Celticity were bound together in his thinking; Robin Wood, for example, suggests that 'the impression in *A Glastonbury Romance* is that the adjectives Cymric, Welsh and Celtic are interchangeable'.⁷⁶

This therefore suggests that the appeal of Wales and his adoption of a Welsh identity in England and America are, for Powys, an attempt to further his identification with a part of the 'Celtic world' with which he himself believes he has a personal link, though in fact he has very limited personal knowledge of the 'real', especially contemporary, Welsh landscape and people.

⁷⁵ Geraint Evans (2012) p. 440. In relation to *A Glastonbury Romance*, he goes further, and suggests that, by singling out the choice of Glastonbury, which was 'itself a powerful symbol of the English appropriation of Arthur', that 'Powys's early romances confirm the ideology of empire by locating the assimilated remnants of Welsh culture in a modern English town' *Ibid*.

⁷⁶ Wood (1988) p.6. See also note 102 on Powys's use of 'Cymric' in *Autobiography*.

Section 2: Powys in Transition

Whilst still in America in the early 1930s, Powys had repeated discussions with Phyllis about moving to Wales⁷⁷ and continued to believe that ‘I must and will write that masterpiece about Wales in Wales’.⁷⁸ For his birthday in October 1933 Phyllis bought Powys ‘A Guide of North Wales and a lovely Itinerary thro’ South Wales by that excellent Ernest Rhys’⁷⁹ and across 1933 and 1934 he developed supposedly specific plans to move to Aberystwyth to use the resources of the National Library to support the writing of his Welsh epic. He also wrote to his new friend James Hanley, who had moved to Wales in 1931, ‘I like well to think of you on a Welsh hillside such as I can see in the picture – alas! It has a tendency to make me quite home-sick for the old country’.⁸⁰ In 1932 he commented again, ‘I do like the sound of that Welsh country-side & the look of it in these pictures’ and hoped ‘that after another decade out here, or thereabouts, I may suddenly make my way to Wales so as to spend my declining years & lay my old weary bones in the land of my remote ancestors’.⁸¹ However, in February 1934 he also wrote in his Diary that ‘[W]e discussed seriously and most earnestly the Idea of going to live with W & E in Africa’,⁸² and when he and Phyllis finally depart America in June 1934 it is not Wales, but Dorset, that is their destination and a ‘Dorchester Romance’ (*Maiden Castle*), not a novel based on the Welsh myths, on which he embarks in literary terms. Indeed, knowing that his destination was Dorset, he wrote to Hanley ‘I am leaving this country & hope to lay my bones ... not finally just yet please the fates... in my native land’.⁸³

It may not be too much of an exaggeration to suggest that Powys’ move to Wales in 1935 and immersion in the writing of *Owen Glendower* thereafter was as much due to other people’s bidding as his own. In November 1934 Hanley invited Powys to stay with him at Ty-Nant, just outside Corwen, but Powys declined, saying ‘I must not take any exciting trip,

⁷⁷ See notes 46 – 49.

⁷⁸ Krissdóttir (1995) p. 133.

⁷⁹ *Ibid* p. 136.

⁸⁰ Gostick (2018) p. 8.

⁸¹ *Ibid* pp. 15-16.

⁸² Krissdóttir (1995) p. 150. W & E are Will and Elizabeth, John Cowper’s youngest brother and his wife, who live on a farm in Africa.

⁸³ Gostick (2018) p. 25.

like that to Wales, til I have done a little solid work here'.⁸⁴ Instead, the Hanleys visited Dorchester for two days in March 1935, staying at *The Antelope*, the 'nicest hostelry here',⁸⁵ and it took a great deal of badgering, with Hanley making all the arrangements, for Powys and Phyllis to eventually take a holiday cottage in Cynwyd in May 1935. In the previous February, Powys had opined in his Diary that 'I want to go to live in Wales & to write a shelf of great romances – and a Masterpiece about Mythology'⁸⁶ (probably based around *The Mabinogion*, which he considered 'the most subtlest and loveliest of all Mythology after Homer');⁸⁷ but it was clearly Phyllis, according to the same source, who in May 1935 (before the North Wales holiday) 'wants me to write a Romance about Owain Glyndwr'.⁸⁸ Powys and Phyllis eventually went on holiday to Corwen, courtesy of the Hanleys, between 20th and 28th May, becoming so entranced with the 'amorousness of Wales ...[and] the 'aura' of Owen Glendower's domain' that they purchased a 'proletarian house' at 7 Cae Coed, and moved there on 5th July 1935.⁸⁹ This was despite Powys' first encounter with a person from the village, Mrs Evans the Grocer, being something of a disaster, as he tried to buy ink from her using 'the most eloquent signs as one of writing', being under the somewhat naïve (but self-confessed) misapprehension 'that all Welshmen [and presumably Welsh women] talked only Welsh'!⁹⁰ Clearly, although steeped in the mythology of Wales, his ability to encounter and relate to 'real' Welsh people had not advanced much from his student days at Barmouth.

⁸⁴ *Ibid* p. 35.

⁸⁵ *Ibid* p. 37.

⁸⁶ Krissdóttir (1995) p. 179.

⁸⁷ *Ibid* p. 187.

⁸⁸ *Ibid* p. 188.

⁸⁹ *Ibid* 23 May 1935 p. 188 & 9 July 1935 p. 191. They called the house 'Bodlondeb', which, as Powys explained, 'This word is not in the dictionary but "Bodlon" means "contentment" and "deb" at the end of the word means something like our "ness" – a state-of-being-something-or-other. So that in our ignorance of the language what we did really was to call our house by a word as it were "contentmentness". But so far it's only in our heads; it's not written on the house or gate so can do no harm to anyone...' Wilkinson (1958) p. 17. In fact, of course, even though it may not have been in the particular dictionary that Powys was using, bodlondeb is a well-attested word in the Welsh language, being first noted in *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* in the 16th century, with a range of meanings such as contentment, gratification, satisfaction; see <http://welsh-dictionary.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html>. It is now, of course, a well-used name for both houses and, especially, care and retirement homes.

⁹⁰ Krissdóttir (1995) pp. 187-8.

Maiden Castle revisited

Roland Mathias, in his study on 'John Cowper Powys and 'Wales'', would accept much of the argument in Section 1 of this study. He agrees that Powys was 'Celticised not by anything Welsh but by hearing his father read from Aytoun's *Scottish Cavaliers*' and that he adhered to a 'childish Welsh patriotism' handed down from his father, accepting also 'the probability that C.F. Powys's pride in his supposed origins was never again shown so clearly as at Shirley to his eldest son'. 'The rebirth of the passion' for Wales in 1902, he agrees, was connected to the birth of Powys's son and his vision of Wales in this period acted as 'a refuge or hiding place' for Powys; 'The Welsh became what he was himself, avoiders and evaders, pursuers and pursued, guerrillas on the edge of the great orthodoxies'.⁹¹

However, Mathias' main purpose in writing this article was as a corrective to his previous study on *Owen Glendower*, which he subsequently considered as 'impressionistic rather than well-judged'.⁹² He applies this corrective through a close study of *Maiden Castle*, a novel published earlier than *Owen Glendower*, in 1937, and provides support for his view through marshalling evidence from the later collection of essays, *Obstinate Cymric*, published in 1947. As the first essay in the latter collection suggests, Powys by this time was interested in 'Welsh Aborigines', that is the supposed descendants of the pre-Celtic peoples of Wales. Mathias sees these views as being clearly represented in *Maiden Castle*, 'the last novel J.C.P. wrote before leaving Dorset... also the only one of his major novels that he wrote while actually *living* in Dorset, a matter of some importance if one is to measure the maturity of response as between a Dorset novel and a Welsh one'.⁹³ He further suggests that Powys's views concerning the pre-Celtic peoples were primarily drawn from the works of Sir John Rhys, 'the first Professor of Celtic at Jesus College, Oxford, and the greatest of the pioneer scholars of Wales at the end of the nineteenth century'⁹⁴ mentioned by name in both *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Maiden Castle*. This line of argument would seriously challenge the view put forward in Section 1 of this study, that Powys's thinking about Wales and Welsh

⁹¹ Mathias (1985) pp. 7-8.

⁹² *Ibid* p. 5.

⁹³ *Ibid* p. 6.

⁹⁴ *Ibid* p. 8.

identity, until he began to live in the country, was bound up with a view of Wales as part of a broader Celticity.

Rhys (1840-1915) wrote widely about a range of Celtic subjects, such as *Lectures on Welsh Philology* (1891), *Celtic Folklore: Welsh and Manx* (1901), *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* (1891) and *Celtic Britain* (1904). He also published, with J. Gwenogvryn Evans, the first scholarly text of *The Mabinogion and other Welsh tales from the Red Book of Hergest* (1887). However, it is his collaboration with David Brynmor-Jones on *The Welsh People* (1900)⁹⁵ that Mathias highlights as important for Powys's thinking about Welsh identity.

Rhys and Brynmor-Jones suggested that there were two waves of Celtic invaders, the Brythons, who were comparatively late and probably related to the coming of Cunedda at the end of the fourth century AD and the much earlier invasion of the Goidels, who had initially subjugated those people already living in the British Isles, whom the authors see as the aboriginal inhabitants. The latter, largely on grounds of inscriptions and their philology, were identified as from Pictish backgrounds and constituted a non-Aryan people (unlike the two waves of Celts).

Rhys was also of the opinion that significant parts of the Four branches of the *Mabinogi*, particularly the Second Branch, involving the stories of Branwen and Bendigeidfran, were also of a 'native, pre-Celtic and non-Aryan' source, and represented the oral storytelling of those earlier peoples assimilated and adapted by the Celts. Mathias further supports his argument by suggesting that 'it is inconceivable that John Cowper, erratic scholar as he sometimes was, could have imagined that the Celts had anything to do with the building of Stonehenge and Avebury, despite some niggles about the identity of the Beaker-Folk'.⁹⁶

Extracts from *Maiden Castle* that Mathias cites certainly appear to illustrate Powys's awareness of these issues, particularly in Chapter 6, where, for example, Mr Quirm tells his son:

“‘Mai-Dun was a civilized polis long before the Romans came, and it is only an impoverished imagination that sees them as living in miserable thatched holes along with bones and cinders

⁹⁵ Full title *The Welsh People – chapters on their origin, history, laws, language, literature and characteristics*.

⁹⁶ Mathias (1985) p. 12.

and potsherds. You must remember, lad”, he said, “we’re talking of the civilization that built Stonehenge and Avebury. Why should the dwellers in Mai-Dun be regarded as wretched earth-burrowers, when their contemporaries could raise such monuments?””⁹⁷

and, directly referring to Rhys:

“Sir John is inclined to think”, Mr Quirm concluded, in a tone of patronizing indulgence towards the good intentions of scholarly erudition, “that King Pellam, and Urban of the Black Thorn, and Yspyddaden the father of Olwen, and Uthr Ben the father of Arthur, are really every one of them just local names for the Urien in me as I was incarnated down the ages.

“He makes it clear that the word ‘Urien’ is no Celtic word, but far older, a word belonging to that mysterious civilization of the dwellers in Dunium, and in the great cities about Avebury and Stonehenge and Caer Drwyn and Caer Sidi and Cattrath and Carbonek, that was not Aryan at all, but a civilization possessed of secrets of life that Aryan science has destroyed””.⁹⁸

There is no doubt that Powys read Rhys, as earlier quotes from Powys’s diary whilst researching *A Glastonbury Romance* indicated; indeed, on Monday 26th August 1929 he notes, ‘read the Arthur book for the ninth time’.⁹⁹ There is also no doubt that he was aware of Rhys’s theories about both the pre-Celtic aboriginals (having borrowed Rhys’s ‘book on the Welsh People’ from Dorchester Library in June 1935)¹⁰⁰ and the possible earlier origin of some elements of the mythology traditionally seen as ‘Celtic’, such as the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*. In *Autobiography* Powys was ‘quite prepared to admit that the Cymric tribes were not the aboriginals of Wales. But whatever they were, even though they made use of legends and traditions belonging to the conquered, who in their turn probably made use of the yet earlier legends of the men who carried out of Wales the “foreign” stones wherewith to build Stonehenge, they seem to have been, to use Jung’s phrase, the most “introverted” of all races’.¹⁰¹ However, it is clear that in this passage Powys is using the term *Cymric* to mean Celtic, going on to claim that ‘I am inclined to think that there has seldom been a mortal soul – certainly no modern one- more obstinately Cymric than my own’,¹⁰² clearly emphasising the *Celtic* identity of the Welsh. In *Obstinate Cymric*, however, not only had his

⁹⁷ John Cowper Powys (2009) *Maiden Castle* (The Overlook Press) p. 230.

⁹⁸ *Ibid* p. 245.

⁹⁹ Krissdóttir (1995) p. 16.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid* p. 190. See W.J. Keith (2008) *Aspects of John Cowper Powys’s Owen Glendower* (The Powys Society, London) p. 15 for a discussion of which book by Rhys this was.

¹⁰¹ Powys (1934) p. 26.

¹⁰² *Ibid*.

use of ‘Cymric’ changed to represent the aboriginal rather than the Celtic version, but so too had his understanding of what this version of Welshness signified. Mathias appears to think that this was present, or least latent, all along, but admits that his is ‘a limited study’; in not going back before *Maiden Castle*, he does not see the significance of this transition in both definition and identification. Moreover, by not having access to the published diaries, he is not able to fully assess the cause of this change – the move to Wales.¹⁰³

Although Mathias asserts that *Maiden Castle* was wholly written in Dorset, the diaries show that Powys had only reached chapter V (of IX) by the end of June 1935¹⁰⁴ and that he did extensive work on it between July 1935 and its completion in March 1936. He was working again on Chapter V on July 20th, and considered that ‘I must [triple underlined] thicken out this book & make it have more weight’, primarily because Phyllis was ‘very upset’ by it ... “Is this”, she said “the result of our 15 years life together?””.¹⁰⁵ By 9th October’, having read Chapter VII to Phyllis, he complained ‘it’s no good. She really does condemn this whole book as unreal’.¹⁰⁶ During this period Powys decided to learn Welsh (again), and on her return from London on 13th September, Phyllis brought ‘a wonderful lot of Welsh Books including a Dictionary & two Grammars & a New Testament in both tongues’.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, throughout the time he was working on *Maiden Castle*, he was exploring both the physical and the social reality of the Welsh landscape and society around him, encountering the unemployed, farmers and tramps, the impressions of whom he records in his diary;¹⁰⁸ after one such entry (on November 15th) he notes, ‘worked pretty well at last on chapter VIII’.¹⁰⁹ On 10th January 1936, Powys notes ‘what a terrific storm [double

¹⁰³ Cavaliero (1999) seemed to be edging towards this view without fully embracing it : *Maiden Castle* ‘was written at a critical turning-point in John Cowper’s life, a time in which he was driven to turn his back on the boyhood land of his imagination in the name of a dream based not on memory but on self-commitment and intellectual and cultural investigation’ p. 32; ‘after *Maiden Castle* the tone changes. Powys having sifted his own personal fantasies by recreating his own circumstances in a story which, unlike its two predecessors, was without any representative or epical quality, is now free to project his philosophy through the medium of Welsh history’ p. 35.

¹⁰⁴ C. Lock, review of *The Dorset Year: The Diary of John Cowper Powys, June 1934 – July 1935* ed. and intro. Morine Krissdóttir & Roger Peers in *The Powys Journal*, Volume IX (1999) p. 187. Lock is quoting from the diary for Wednesday June 26th, 1935.

¹⁰⁵ Krissdóttir (1995) p. 192.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid* p. 195.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid* p. 194.

¹⁰⁸ See esp. 27th October & 15th November 1935 *Ibid* pp. 196-7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*. Sunday 17th November p. 197.

underlined] there was last night ‘and that ‘I brought this storm into my chapter IX & made it occur during a crisis at Glymes!’.¹¹⁰ Clearly there is significant rewriting involved in *Maiden Castle* once Powys had moved to Wales, and events, people and ideas from his first months there found their way into the novel - indeed, as Krissóttir notes in her commentary to the diaries, ‘rather than ‘centring’ him, the move to Wales initially puts him off balance’,¹¹¹ enriching (or at least adding to) his writing of the novel.

Obstinate Cymric

As to the intellectual ideas that eventually find their way into *Obstinate Cymric*, we also have some clues as to influences and chronology. The book was published in 1947, but is subtitled *Essays 1935-1947*. Few are clearly dated,¹¹² some can be internally dated by Powys’s references to how long he had lived in Corwen, others by their publication date elsewhere, since, as Powys’s letter to Iorwerth Peate of November 16th, 1947 confirms, this is a ‘little collection of *old* essays of mine *re-published* by the Druid Press of Carmarthen’.¹¹³ The final essay of the ten, *My Philosophy up-to-date as influenced by living in Wales* was only added when the publication date was delayed from the previous December until the end of 1947. *Welsh Culture* was originally published in *The Welsh Review* in June 1939 and *Pair Dadani* in *Y Cymro* in a Welsh translation by Peate in April 1945. The others can be fairly securely dated as *Resemblances between Welsh and Chinese Culture*: 1947;¹¹⁴ *Wales and America*: summer 1944; *My Welsh Home*: 1947 and *The Simple Vision*: 1946.¹¹⁵ This leaves the first in the collection, and most important in terms of Powys’s ideas on Welsh identity, *Welsh Aborigines*. Although published in July 1943 in the publication *Wales*,¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 203.

¹¹¹ *Ibid* p. 201.

¹¹² *Answer to “Wales” Questionnaire, Summer 1939* being the obvious exception.

¹¹³ Peate (1974) p. 72 Powys also confirms in the letter, written in November 1947, that they are ‘essays writ in these last 13 years – since Phyllis & and her mother & aunt settled down in this excellent couple of next-door little new houses’.

¹¹⁴ ‘having now lived for the last twelve years continuously in the land of my fathers’ John Cowper Powys (1947) *Obstinate Cymric* (Druid Press, Carmarthen) p. 49.

¹¹⁵ Preface to *The Simple Vision*, poems by Huw Menai published 1946. *Owen Glendower* is also dedicated to Menai. The other essay, ‘Finnegan’s Wake’, would certainly not qualify as an ‘Article on Wales’.

¹¹⁶ An enquiry to the Secretary of The Powys Society, Chris Thomas, produced the following reply: “Re *Welsh Aborigines* - I cannot confirm exactly when it was written but it first appeared in published form as an essay in the periodical *Wales New Series* No 1, July 1943 p.60-69 - it is cited in both the Dante Thomas bibliography of JCP and also in Derek Langridge's JCP, *A Record of Achievement*”.

there is nothing, unlike in *Welsh and Chinese Culture*, for example, to date it internally. However, in the *Diary*, Powys mentions in March 1936 that he was working on ‘no less than Three ‘Beginnings’! My Anti-Vivisection Story, my Article on Wales & my book on Reading to be called ‘Read to Live’.¹¹⁷ Since *Obstinate Cymric* consists of *Essays 1935-1947*¹¹⁸ (i.e. written since Powys’s arrival in Wales), and no other relevant article in the collection can be dated to before 1939, *Welsh Aboriginals*, although not published until later, would have a good chance of being that article.¹¹⁹ In that essay, Powys directly quotes a work by Iorwerth Peate, *Cymru a’i Phobl*.¹²⁰ From 1937 Powys begins a regular correspondence with Peate (the two also met in 1937)¹²¹ wherein they present and comment upon the books and articles that they are writing and reading. However, at no point does Powys comment on Peate’s views in *Cymru a’i Phobl*, or Peate comment on Powys’s in *Welsh Aboriginals*.¹²² All of this circumstantially suggests that Powys had read Peate’s work before 1937 and that *Welsh Aboriginals* is the earliest essay in the collection, dating to 1935/36, that is, to Powys’s first months in Wales and whilst he was still rewriting significant parts of *Maiden Castle*. Despite quoting extensively from *Obstinate Cymric*, Mathias appears to have overlooked this reference to Peate, whereas, if the dating explanation presented above is valid, reading Peate’s work (which was published in Welsh)¹²³ was one of the key influences on Powys’s developing ideas on Welsh identity. It may have brought back to mind and revised the ideas

¹¹⁷ Krissdóttir (1995) p. 205. The ‘Anti-Vivisection Novel’ became *Morwyn*, published in 1937 and ‘Read to Live’ presumably became *The Pleasures of Literature* published in 1938.

¹¹⁸ My emphasis.

¹¹⁹ ‘Welsh Culture’, which in name might be a contender, is very much a reply to Saunders Lewis’s lecture ‘Is there an Anglo-Welsh Literature’ given in Cardiff in December 1938, and prompted by the editor of *The Welsh Review*, Gwyn Jones; this was presumably the upshot of the ‘nice letter’ received from Jones by Powys mentioned on 19th February 1939. Krissdóttir (1995) p. 298.

¹²⁰ For its significance in terms of content, see below. There is no direct evidence that *Cymru a’i Phobl* was one of the ‘Welsh books’ brought back by Phyllis from London in September 1935 (see note 106), but it may be tempting to think so.

¹²¹ ‘I first met John Cowper Powys in 1937. My friends, the late John Morgan and Mrs Elena Puw Morgan, with whom I was staying the night in Corwen, pressed me to visit the ‘wonderful man’ who was living in a council-estate house, Cae Coed, just above the town’ Peate (1974) p. ix.

¹²² *Ibid.* Peate edited a selection of these letters for publication in 1974; in his introduction he suggested that Powys had made ‘extravagant claims for the pre-Celtic ‘aboriginal Welsh’’, so it is surely unlikely that no discussion took place. One conclusion could therefore be that they had had this discussion before the correspondence started in 1937.

¹²³ Hence Powys’s remark that he ‘would like to paraphrase’ Peate’s ideas, ‘though clumsily I fear’. He also claimed ‘I can myself read the Welsh language well enough to discriminate with an almost infallible instinct between those among our Welsh writers who are the real thing and those whose tone and temper and attitude of mind betrays the Romanized Celt, or the Normanized Celt, or the Anglicized Celt, or an aggressive mixture of all three mixtures’ [which in itself is quite a claim!]. ‘Welsh Aboriginals’ in Powys (1947) p. 8.

of Sir John Rhys, but Peate appears to have been the catalyst, and this found its way into the revisions to *Maiden Castle*, a book, as we have seen, that he thought needed to be ‘thicken[ed] out’ and given ‘more weight’.

Iorwerth Peate (1901 – 1982) had been a student of H.J. Fleure at Aberystwyth University, under whom he had completed his MA dissertation in 1924. Fleure was an anthropologist who published *The Peoples of Europe* (1922) and *Races of England and Wales* (1923). Although he was ‘a strong and genuine opponent of the Nazi regime’ in the 1930s and wrote ‘articles attacking antisemitism and the concept of ‘Aryanism’’,¹²⁴ he ‘was far from willing to abandon racial classification measured and observed by skull shape and size as well as hair, skin and eye colouring’.¹²⁵ These ideas found their way into Peate’s *Cymru a’i Phobl*, published in 1931 and were ‘so avidly received that it was reprinted twice’.¹²⁶ Fleure, according to Powys in *Wales and America* ‘one of our authorities in these remote matters, finds to-day in the highlands round Plynlimmon human heads with the outstanding peculiarities of a definite branch of Neanthropic men, the men who followed the disappearance of the aboriginal Neanderthals’, which was proof for Powys ‘that the mass of the Welsh people is more ancient and indigenous than most of our mixed European races’.¹²⁷ Fleure’s student Peate, Powys emphasised, had provided an explanation for this, when he had introduced a geographical factor into this analysis, through ‘his conviction that it is the inaccessibility of certain parts of our land that has saved our “remnant” of Real Welshmen’, so that the ‘people of the mountains were the natives’”.¹²⁸

Crucially, Fleure and Peate’s analysis differed from that of Rhys in one key element: the role of the Picts. Rhys ‘was inclined to identify the aboriginals with the Picts and was disposed to

¹²⁴ Tony Kushner (2008) ‘H. J. Fleure; a paradigm for inter-war race thinking in Britain’ in *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol 42, No 2 p. 151.

¹²⁵ *Ibid* p.154.

¹²⁶ In 1933 and 1948. Catrin Stevens (1986) *Writers of Wales: Iorwerth C. Peate* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) p. 21.

¹²⁷ Powys (1947) p. 59.

¹²⁸ *Ibid* p. 8-9. Peate’s work had flowed from both his MA research (supervised by Fleure) on ‘The Dyfi Basin: A Study in Physical Anthropology and Dialect distribution’ (1923-4) and his work as part of Fleure’s team producing *Gyda’r Wawr* in 1923. In both endeavours he ‘sought out inhabitants who could trace their ancestors over two generations so that he could measure their physical characteristics with callipers’ Stevens (1986) p. 13.

believe that the whole story of Bran (or Bendigeidfran) and his sister Branwen... was Pictish in origin',¹²⁹ but Peate (and Sir John Morris-Jones, also mentioned in *Welsh Aborigines*) did not; neither did Powys, including the Picts 'in our black list', so that 'we have been conquered by Picts and Goidels and Brythons and Romans and Saxons and Angles and Danes and Vikings and Normans',¹³⁰ all Aryan peoples, unlike the pre-Celtic, non-Aryan aborigines.

Powys's theory of the 'Welsh Aborigines (or The Real Welsh)' therefore appears to have solidified within his first few months in Wales. More modern readers, such as Ned Thomas, have suggested that 'his attempts to isolate the aboriginal, pre-Celtic, qualities of the Welsh people' were part of the 'great deal of confusion in the discussion of "race" and "culture" at the turn of the twentieth century', and amounted to little more than an 'attempt to bolster intuition with phoney history, false logic and a-historical generalization'.¹³¹ However, as with his father's views of the family's aristocratic origins, and Powys's own earlier subsuming of Welsh identity with a broader Celtic identity, perhaps what matters here is not whether it was true, but that it was what they believed, and what motivated them. Certainly, in John Cowper's case, his new concept of the 'real Welsh' allowed him to ascribe to them all the virtues he respected and aspired to, which were developed in the rest of the essays. It also allowed him to distinguish more clearly between the 'real Welsh' and various waves of invaders upon the Welsh nation, especially the Goidelic and Brythonic Celts and, subsequently, the Anglo-Normans. Many of the deficiencies Powys saw in contemporary Welsh life could be ascribed to the influence of those invaders. It also allowed him to emphasise the non-Aryanism of the pre-Celtic Welsh. Drawing on the linguistic work of Sir John Morris-Jones,¹³² Powys concluded that 'though the words are Celtic their grammatical use, the way the sentences are arranged, shows that our original Welshmen... were *not*, as both the Goidels and Brythons certainly were, of Aryan blood. It seems indeed certain that

¹²⁹ Mathias (1985) p. 8.

¹³⁰ Powys (1947) p.10.

¹³¹ Thomas (1979) p. 76.

¹³² Morris-Jones (1864-1929), a student and then co-worker of Sir John Rhys on the book of the Anchorite of Llandewi Brefi (1894), produced *Welsh Orthography* (1894) and *A Welsh Grammar, Historical and Comparative: phonology and accidence* (1913), the latter also having a good claim to being one of the books that Phyllis brought back from London in September 1935 (see note 107).

those among us for whom the Goidels and Brythons were only the first, or more probably if we include the Picts in our black-list, only the second in a bloody series, would be regarded not only by the barbarous Hitler, but by such a proud tradition-bearer of Greek and Roman culture as Nietzsche himself, as, along with Jews, Arabs, Africans and Egyptians, outside the pale of “Good Europeans””.¹³³

It also led Powys to contrast, for the first time, the ‘difference between an Irishman and a Welshman... The Irish are typical Celts, with the typical stiffening of Norman or Norse blood; and between them and their Viking friends they succeeded in killing off, along with their snakes, all their aboriginals. The Irish are born extroverts and born politicians’,¹³⁴ whereas ‘we Welsh Aborigines are the most unpolitical and the most introverted ... To sign upon the dotted line of an “Ynys Prydein” turned communist would be no hardship to us, who in our ways and habits, and feelings and even in many of our customs have never adopted the sexual and social restrictions of the touchy nervous, solitary Celt, or the class-conscious and humorous Saxon’.¹³⁵ No more celebration of the ‘double Celt’ for him in the future!

In his study of Powys’s Welsh Mythology, Robin Wood argues that ‘Powys’s concern with re-creating the ancient Welsh mythology arose *because he believed* that the modern Welsh, especially those living in the remote mountainous areas, are the survivors of a once great

¹³³ Powys (1947) p. 10.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* p.12. Note the complete difference in the assessment of Celtic introversion/extroversion compared to the quotation from *Autobiography* above.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 16. This too was, perhaps, a reflection of Peate’s ideas. In what he called the ‘Llanbryn-mair Tradition’, Peate emphasised how his hometown had acted as a ‘doorway’ to the Talerddig pass, which ‘held a symbolic meaning ... throughout his life. On the western side the Welsh way of life seemed safe and unassailable, whilst from the east wave after wave of new, foreign influences stormed the citadel and challenged its independence as in times past’. This ‘need to defend the ‘doorway’ had produced in the people an attitude of mind and independence of spirit which some anthropologists, and Iorwerth Peate in particular, came to term *Traddodiad Llanbryn-mair* (the Llanbryn-mair tradition)’ Stevens (1986) pp. 5-6. Although not directly related to Powys’s ideas about *Welsh* identity, here may also be some resonance here from the ideas of H.J. Massingham. Ballin suggests, for example, that ‘Powys took from H. J. Massingham’s *Downland Man* the notion that civilization had begun in Britain as a peaceable agricultural order that had migrated to Britain from the shores of the Mediterranean’. Michael Ballin (1990) ‘*Porius* and the Cauldron of Rebirth’ in Denis Lane (ed.) (1990) *In the Spirit of Powys: New Essays* (Bucknell University Press, London and Toronto) p. 219. *Downland Man* was published in 1926, and Massingham put forward similar ideas in his *Pre-Roman Britain* (1930). See further points below in relation to *Porius*.

civilization, whom he calls the Welsh aboriginals'.¹³⁶ This led Powys to emphasise the Welsh aspect of this literature and mythology, as opposed to its general 'Celticness', with a rejection of both the approach of Matthew Arnold (which 'applies to an assumed "Celtic" note in English literature and we are after something more narrowly Welsh')¹³⁷ and that of Sir John Rhys, who interprets 'Arthur and Merlin and all their cycle from what he calls their "congeners" in Ireland', whereas what scholars ought to be emphasising was 'not how the Welsh Arthur resembles the Irish Aíre, or how the Welsh Merlin might be equated with the Irish Conchobar, but *what there was* about the Welsh handling of Arthur and Merlin that conquered the imagination of Europe in a way Conchobar and Cúchulainn did not'.¹³⁸ Also notable here is Powys's overt criticism, we might almost say renunciation, of Arnold and Rhys, both writers being, of course, at the centre of his first, Celtic, construction of Welsh identity.

Jeremy Hooker has suggested that 'Even before *A Glastonbury Romance* [Powys] was seeking this condition [of man] in Welsh mythology. Thereafter, with the partial exception of *Weymouth Sands*, his novels move steadily towards the identification with aboriginal Wales which he himself had made, imaginatively, in early manhood at the latest, and was to make completely in 1935'.¹³⁹ From the more nuanced evidence suggested here, however, it would appear, rather than being a gradual development, Powys's move to Wales in fact initiated a decisive break in his conception of Wales and Welsh identity, from seeing Welshness as being an integral part of the 'Celtic Twilight' to being something he considered as derived from a much older and 'purer' (in terms of ideas and values, racial, linguistic and cultural heritage), one that was not only not part of general Celtic civilisation, but directly antagonistic to it. This conception of Wales, as we have seen, found its way into elements of the first novel Powys completed in Wales, *Maiden Castle*; it continued to do so thereafter, until it culminated in the organising ideas of *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*.

¹³⁶ Wood (1988) p. 5. My emphasis.

¹³⁷ Powys (1947) p. 42.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* Original emphasis.

¹³⁹ Hooker (1973) p. 66.

Section 3: Powys in Wales

Powys's experience of the Welsh landscape around the Corwen-Llangollen area was one influence in developing his attitude to the actual Wales, rather than the theoretical one; another was his interaction with Welsh people in the town. Krissdóttir notes that, in 1936, 'the Diary suddenly teems with new characters; Ebenezer and his 'ooman' Hannah; Llew Williams the shopkeeper; Jones the signalman; Thomas the nationalist; the unfortunate Mrs Morgan and baby Fenna; Ellis Evans the chemist; admiral and Mrs Cotton owners of the Cae Coed cottages; Annie Davies from the almshouses; John 'Goch' the town crier', so that, 'rather than "centring" him, the move to Wales initially puts him off balance'.¹⁴⁰ His experience of life in Wales, where he perceived 'the curious emergence of twentieth century life out of a remoter and more romantic past', became mixed with the historical and mythical past of Wales, so that 'at first he felt he was living in "some story in the Mabinogion"'.¹⁴¹ His interactions with local people were, as Mathias suggests, probably limited by the fact that 'society... was largely Welsh-speaking, and John Cowper, despite his book-Welsh, seems to have been relatively incapable of conversation and little disposed to try', so that, 'most of what he learned about his neighbours came from his far more outgoing companion Phyllis'.¹⁴² Nevertheless, Powys's interactions were such that it helped him to develop a sort of sociology of local society. He was impressed by 'real Welsh' figures he met such as Mr Thomas the Station Man, who 'talked about Llywarch Hên. Think of an English labourer talking about Beowulf!!!'¹⁴³ or his 'favourite Postman' who, when asked 'about Englynys this complicated form of poetry in a Quatrain that I find in the *Mabinogion*' took off 'his pack from his back & down he squatted in hedge & wrote one from memory on a torn envelope',¹⁴⁴ and the poet Huw Menai, whom he met after giving a two-hour lecture on *The Mabinogion* in December 1938 and considered 'as an example of the "Helpless and yet Original type of Welshman"'.¹⁴⁵ It also led to considerations of:

¹⁴⁰ Krissdóttir (1995) p. 201.

¹⁴¹ Krissdóttir (2007) p. 326.

¹⁴² Mathias (1985) p. 22.

¹⁴³ Krissdóttir (1995) Thurs 12 Sept 1935 p. 194.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid* Sat 19 June 1937 p. 246.

¹⁴⁵ Krissdóttir (2007) p. 336.

‘the Welsh character and about the [to him] astonishing way more ‘a-moral’, helpless, weak feeble, semi-imbecile persons can survive & defy the Darwinian ‘Survival of the Fittest’ here in Wales than is possible in England. Those old Dole-men on the bridge at Dorchester were formidable-proud diplomatists compared with the waifs who have pensions here; waifs, wraiths, and lathes of thin transparency these people are and you have to accept the situation and note a defeat of moral and intellectual Evolution and the permanence of the ill-constituted and unfit’.¹⁴⁶

He also notes ‘how Welsh farmers like to be dressed in a picturesque manner as indeed so do the very tramps here. All these Welsh go to & fro with a huge inner life-illusion of a dramatic appearance’.¹⁴⁷ All of this undoubtedly contributed to his view that contemporary society was divided between those who were the descendants of the various waves of invaders and those who were the descendants of the ‘superior’ stock of the Welsh Aborigines. It certainly led Powys to reflect, by June 1936, that ‘at first we generalized about Wales but the more we live here the less we know according to mental logic – but really according to an illogical knowledge – we are slowly knowing more’.¹⁴⁸

Morwyn

The first novel that Powys wrote solely in Wales, however, his ‘Anti-Vivisection story’ *Morwyn or the Vengeance of God* (1937), showed limited impact of his change of views on Welsh identity, even the Welsh-sounding title being suggested by Phyllis, ‘so as to mislead buyers of it’.¹⁴⁹ The book opens on a walk in Wales, ‘as usual up the slope of the Berwyn Range’, with the unnamed narrator (a vivisector), Morwyn and the narrator’s dog, Black Peter (the latter, ‘more than my interest in Owen Glendower’ being ‘the real bond between’¹⁵⁰ the narrator and Morwyn). However, as Brebner puts it, ‘the tale’s Welsh setting is nominal – a mere twenty-six pages describe events on the earth’s surface’,¹⁵¹ and the novel soon descends, literally, into Hell. Taliesin (‘the only person in world-history who

¹⁴⁶ Krissdóttir (1995) 27 Oct 1935 pp. 196-7.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid* 15 Nov 1935 p. 197.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid* 3 June 1936 p. 213.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid* 16 September 1936 p. 221. Though Michael Ballin has tried to emphasize the role of Taliesin, along with Morwyn and the narrator, making a ‘Welsh Triad’ in the novel. Michael Ballin (2014) ‘In Defence of *Morwyn*’ in *la lettre powysienne* No 28.

¹⁵⁰ John Cowper Powys (1977) *Morwyn The Vengeance of God* (Sphere Books Limited) p. 12.

¹⁵¹ John A. Brebner (1973) *The Demon Within – A study of John Cowper Powys’s Novels* (Macdonald) p. 153.

visits Hell for intellectual reasons')¹⁵² and Merlin ('the great lost magus')¹⁵³ figure as characters in the underworld, but play no greater part than the Marquis de Sade, Torquemada, the Emperor Nero or Socrates. The cauldrons of Ceridwen and of Annwn feature, Taliesin, in his speeches 'with bardic wisdom ... blends Greek, druidic and Celtic myth',¹⁵⁴ finally revealing 'the object sought after by Owen Evans [In *A Glastonbury Romance*] and Uryen Quirm [in *Maiden Castle*] – Caer Sidi, the "Esplumeoir of Merlin and the Welsh secret of life', but throughout it is clear to Brebner, for example, that 'Powys draws inspiration from Dante, whose name is mentioned frequently, [and] he is even more subtly influenced by the Homer of *The Odyssey* to whom he also refers'.¹⁵⁵ G. Wilson Knight suggests that '*Morwyn* is Powys's most dense metaphysical work',¹⁵⁶ though Krissdóttir questions 'whether *Morwyn* is a story or a sermon'.¹⁵⁷ It has, as Krissdóttir suggests, elements of a Grail Quest, but 'despite Powys's astonishing depth of knowledge of mythical underworld journeys, the imagery and the symbolism of this inferno story is lifeless'.¹⁵⁸

Owen Glendower

According to the Diary, Powys began 'my Romance about Owen Glyn Dwr'¹⁵⁹ in the Chapter House at Valle Crucis Abbey on the same day that Cassell's publishers had accepted *Morwyn* for publication (24th April 1937). Again, Phyllis had been, as we have seen, at least in part, an originator here.¹⁶⁰ By the summer of 1937, he was deep into the detailed research for the novel, corresponding with Iorwerth Peate 'concerning early medieval Welsh costume',¹⁶¹ working (according to the Diary) on Chapter IV in November 1937 and 'well into Chapt. VI' by 19th December 1937.¹⁶² It was another two years until he completed the novel, on 24th

¹⁵² Knight (1964) pp. 65-6.

¹⁵³ *Ibid* p. 66.

¹⁵⁴ Brebner (1973) p. 156.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid* p. 155.

¹⁵⁶ Knight (1964) p. 67.

¹⁵⁷ Krissdóttir (2007) p. 326.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid* p. 328.

¹⁵⁹ Krissdóttir (1995) 24th April p. 238.

¹⁶⁰ The Diary records, in May 1935, whilst they were still in Dorset and Powys was writing *Maiden Castle*, that 'she wants me to write a Romance about Owain Glydwr [sic]. Yes, she spoke eloquently of my Romance to be writ about Owen Glendower'. *Ibid* 15th May 1935 p. 187 Powys's spelling on Glyndŵr's name slips between the English and the Welsh constantly, and sometimes mixes the two. The spelling of *Glydwr* may be a misspelling of Powys's own or a mis-transliteration into the published version; there is no comment on it by the editor.

¹⁶¹ Peate (1974) p. 1.

¹⁶² Krissdóttir (1995) 7th November 1937 p. 256, 19th December 1937 p. 258.

December 1939: 'I climb to the top of Mynydd y Gaer to finish my *Owen* there, carrying pen, ink & paper to where I imagine Owen's body burnt';¹⁶³ as he commented in a letter to Nicholas Ross, 'it took three years, the longest I've ever taken to write aught'.¹⁶⁴

The length of writing was partly due to the prevalence of death in Powys's life,¹⁶⁵ partly because he was forced to concentrate on other works that might be financially more successful (primarily *The Pleasure of Literature*),¹⁶⁶ and also because of the criticism of his work in progress by Phyllis.¹⁶⁷ However, it was also because Powys was doing something quite intricate, complicated, vast and personal to his own concept of Welsh identity. We have already seen, in the *Autobiography*, that Owain Glyndŵr had been something of a touchstone figure for Powys in his early life, one of the figures that he saw as quintessentially Welsh, like Taliesin or Merlin, a star within the Celtic cosmos. By the writing of 'Welsh Aborigines' however, Glyndŵr is referred to as 'that great Normanized Celt, for whom we Aborigines shed so much blood, [who] married off nearly all his large brood among the Celtic-Norman Barons of the Border';¹⁶⁸ hardly a figure, one would imagine, that Powys would want to devote nearly 1000 pages to in a large novel. By the time of 'Welsh Culture' (published 1939)¹⁶⁹, he was more positive in his view of the self-proclaimed Prince of Wales: 'it is in Glyndŵr's patrimony that I have the privilege of living'.¹⁷⁰ Powys then goes on to explain the appeal of Glyndŵr, contrasting the contemporary Welsh attitude towards history with the nature of English historical understanding and perception; 'In England you would have to turn to the historians or to a tomb in a cathedral to learn about Owain's antagonist,

¹⁶³ *Ibid* 24th December 1939 p. 333.

¹⁶⁴ JCP to Nicholas Ross, 14 January, 1940. *Letters to Nicholas Ross* quoted in *la lettere powysienne* No. 4 autumn 2002.

¹⁶⁵ Two of his brothers (Theodore and Llewelyn) and one of his dogs, the Old, died in these years.

¹⁶⁶ John Cowper Powys (1938) *The Pleasures of Literature* (Cassell and Company Ltd, London).

¹⁶⁷ 'The T.T. gave me some very grave and serious Criticisms of my Book ... I had made Owen unsympathetic.... I have been too fussy about details...I have so many characters with weird names' Krissdóttir (1995) 17 April 1939 p. 306; 'She said I must make Owen more upset by Rhys getting Bad News ... She said my next chapter must be more personal ... More present reality is required' Diary 30th May 1939 - not in published version, quoted in Krissdóttir, M. Introduction to John Cowper Powys (2003) *Owen Glendower A Historical Novel* (The Overlook Press) p. xv.

¹⁶⁸ Powys (1947) p. 12. This is also another reason why I would argue for an early date for the composition of this work.

¹⁶⁹ In *The Welsh Review* Vol 1, no 5, June 1939.

¹⁷⁰ Powys (1947) p. 46.

Henry IV; but here there isn't a homestead where the imagination cannot leap back five hundred years!'.¹⁷¹ Indeed, he claims that:

'It is impossible to converse for long with any small-holder in these hills without being told very soon of a stone or a table or a knife or a spoon or a pathway that has been preserved through five centuries as connected with him. Why, even yesterday I met an aged postman who at once, without preface, informed me that he – speaking of Glyndŵr as an Irishman of to-day might speak of De Valera – must have gone to Dolgelley along the crest of the Berwyns'.¹⁷²

Glyndŵr, he found, meant something profound to the 'Real Welsh', so Powys had to reassess his understanding of the figure, through deep historical research¹⁷³ and correspondence with Iorwerth Peate,¹⁷⁴ but primarily he had to explain *why* Glyndŵr meant so much to the Welsh People. He could not have been, in Powys's scheme of things, just 'the pure-blooded Brython' that Morg Ferch Lug, the wife of Broch-o'-Meifod in *Owen Glendower* accuses him of being.¹⁷⁵

Owen Glendower is many things, but what it probably is not is the subtitle that Powys (or possibly his publisher) chose for it, *A Historical Novel*, or at least not in the sense that it was understood at the time of its publication (1940 in the US, 1941 in Britain). Roland Mathias, suggests that Powys 'chooses to ignore the heart and spirit of early fifteenth century Wales in favour of a deep-rooted theory of his own... With whatever brilliance, history is not to be trifled with in this way – at least in what the author is pleased to call a "historical novel"'.¹⁷⁶ Other critics see it as 'so careless of historical facts as to be irredeemably flawed'.¹⁷⁷ This, Jeremy Hooker suggested, stemmed from a weakness in Powys as a writer; 'in spite of his knowledge of history his imagination is not really historical at all. He has a fine grasp of

¹⁷¹ *Ibid* p. 47.

¹⁷² *Ibid* pp. 46-47.

¹⁷³ We know, for example, that he read key works by J.E. Lloyd ('the historian of Wales'; he borrowed Lloyd's 'History of Wales, a wonderous work' from the University Library at Bangor in June 1937) and J.H. Wylie (*History of England under Henry IV*, four volumes), as they are mentioned in the 'Argument' at the end of John Cowper Powys (1941) *Owen Glendower An Historical Novel* (John Lane. The Bodley Head) pp. 939-952.

¹⁷⁴ Peate (1974) Following his thesis and the publication of *Cymru a'i Phobl*, Peate had concentrated on the folk history of Wales and became the co-founder, with Cyril Fox, of St Fagan's Museum in 1936, so was recognised as an expert on medieval Welsh costume.

¹⁷⁵ Powys (1941) p. 433. Both Morg and Broch are 'unmentioned in history', fictional characters created for a particular purpose in the novel.

¹⁷⁶ Mathias (1985) p. 23.

¹⁷⁷ Williams (1997) p. 123.

ideas, costume, ritual, but he fails to enter imaginatively into the self-consciousness of the past. He imposes his own consciousness upon it'.¹⁷⁸ Whilst the first part of this criticism may or may not be valid, the second is perceptive, because that is exactly what Powys was trying to do, to provide an explanation for the success and failure of Glyndŵr's revolt which he had not found elsewhere, one that was dependent upon the new understanding of Welsh history and identity that he had developed since his move to Wales in 1935.

Owen Glendower is therefore Powys's version of Owain Glyndŵr, one that enfolds into the character of the novel Powys's understanding and enthusiasm for magic, mythology and 'race memories'. In doing so he doesn't play 'fast and loose' with the known past, for as Meirion Pennar puts it, 'what is uncanny about *Owen Glendower*... is the "instinctive" correctness of the straight historical facts about Glyndŵr and the well placed assumptions ... it certainly adds to the intrinsic nature of *Owen Glendower* as a revelation of Welsh history'.¹⁷⁹ The characters 'known to history' are clearly distinguished from those 'not known to history' and the broad chronology within the novel is sound; 'We find, moreover, that Powys had a very good grasp of the history of the period, and his "Argument" at the very end is certainly a contribution to the revaluation of Glyndŵr'.¹⁸⁰ However, Pennar also insists that 'we must differentiate between the outer and the inner Owen in the novel',¹⁸¹ because otherwise we can be taken into problematic areas. 'It is beyond doubt that the supernatural played an integral part in the consciousness of Owain and of others' he accepts, 'but when we see the author making Glendower equate Catherine and Tegolin with supernatural persons like Branwen and Aranrhod (929), and identifying Owen with the Prince of Annwn, where is the real Glyndwr? Here he is more than the Man of destiny and the prophesised saviour, the magician who could speak the language of magicians, as he appears on page 389. He is a god, incarnate, the King of the Otherworld. (934)'.¹⁸² It is in these latter scenes and references that we can see the unfolding of Powys's intended schema

¹⁷⁸ Hooker (1973) pp. 77-78.

¹⁷⁹ Meirion Pennar (1986) 'In Search of the Real Glendower' in *The Powys Review* Number 18 Vol vii p. 23.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid* p. 21.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid* p. 23.

¹⁸² *Ibid* p. 23 and p. 21.

underlying the novel.

Firstly, there are numerous references to *The Mabinogion* throughout the book, primarily, but not exclusively to *The Four Branches*. So, for example, when Glendower first appears in the novel, Rhisiart, Owen's 'half Norman, half Welsh' cousin, who effectively acts as the narrator of the first part of the story, thinks "' I'll be damned if he doesn't look like Modry's Pryderi'".¹⁸³ This comparison (although somewhat premature at this point in the novel) remains 'the predominant mythological identification' for Glendower'.¹⁸⁴ Rhisiart himself is compared to a figure in the *First Branch* by Tegolin on meeting him for the first time; "' I saw you drawing your sword... How beautiful it looked as you held it up, and you sitting so lovely in front of them all. You looked like Pwyll, Prince of Dyved, riding against Hafgan, crowned king of Annwn'".¹⁸⁵ As noted above, Tegolin herself and Catharine, Owen's daughter, are in turn compared to Branwen and Aranrhod by Owen.¹⁸⁶ Another reference point is Bran the Blessed, the Bendigeidfran of the *Second Branch*. Dinas Bran, the Castle or City of Bran the Blessed¹⁸⁷ is a dominant geographical presence throughout the book, as is Bran as a spiritual one. Three of the characters 'un-mentioned in history' are identified with both the place and the cult of Bran (Ffraid ferch Gloyw, "The Prophetess of Dinas Bran", Lowri ferch Ffraid, "her illegitimate daughter" and Tegolin ferch Lowri, "Lowri's illegitimate daughter")¹⁸⁸ and Owen's youngest son, Meredith, is described as 'a true follower of Bran'. Rhisiart recalls his nurse, Modry, telling him the story of Bran who, 'as the only way of crossing a dangerous river' laid his body across it, giving an aphorism to the Welsh people of "' A vo pen bit pont ... He who is the head, he will be the bridge'",¹⁸⁹ and later Owen himself later muses that "' My life ... is like crossing the Eel Bridge – every

¹⁸³ Powys (1941) p. 146. Pryderi is a reference to the reference to First Branch of *The Mabinogi*. Modry was Rhisiart's Welsh nurse, who told him stories as an infant from *The Mabinogion*.

¹⁸⁴ Wood (1995) p. 93.

¹⁸⁵ Powys (1941) p. 53.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid* p. 929, spelt Arianrod in the book and see note 180 above.

¹⁸⁷ Both characterisations are used in the novel – the full term for the monument is Castell Dinas Bran, though it is often referred to in English as Crow Castle.

¹⁸⁸ The descriptions are all from Powys's list of the Characters of the Novel.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid* p. 57/58 and from the *Second Branch* story, see Sioned Davies (trans.) (2007) *The Mabinogion* (Oxford University Press, Oxford) p. 30.

step's between fatal alternatives"". ¹⁹⁰ Indeed, throughout 'there is an extraordinary consonance between the physical and mythological environments in *Owen Glendower*. Myth appears to spring from the landscape of Wales, to be as much a part of its natural texture as the external features of moors and mountains, forests and rivers'. ¹⁹¹

The importance of these references, however, is not just to show Powys's knowledge of or fascination with ancient Welsh literature, ¹⁹² but to indicate, in his view, the forces at work in the story of Glendower, and therefore explain the success, both in the 15th Century and later, of the 'real' Glyndŵr - to explain, in effect, why he still remained a force in the 20th century. This is because, for Powys, *The Mabinogion* was a place in which 'is recorded, in the form of myth, the history of an even remoter Welsh past ... a record of the conquest of the essentially pacific Neolithic Welsh aboriginals by the Celts'. ¹⁹³ In other words, it is an encoding of the central tenets of *Welsh Aborigines*, 'the idea of a civilization that preceded the arrival of the Celts, "some great, long-lost peaceful civilization that had been destroyed by force and enchantment"'. ¹⁹⁴ Pwyll, Pryderi and Bran therefore represent the 'southern gods defeated by the Celts, the 'cruel "magicians" of the Age of Bronze'', ¹⁹⁵ and their identification with many of the characters 'un-mentioned in history' is overt. The women of Dinas Bran mentioned above are one example of this; Broch-o'-Meifod and his wife Morg ferch Lug are others: all are central to the plot of *Owen Glendower*. Broch-o'-Meifod, as Raymond Mathias notes, can be seen as 'a symbol... the exponent of a divergent philosophy'. ¹⁹⁶ He is described in the novel as 'gigantic', ¹⁹⁷ 'the biggest and strongest man Rhisiart had ever seen... enormous'. ¹⁹⁸ Lane suggests that Broch 'is a figure out of

¹⁹⁰ Powys (1941) p. 718.

¹⁹¹ Denis Lane (1997) "' The Circuitous Outward": Natural Mythology in Powys's *Owen Glendower*' in *Powys Notes* Vol 11, No 1 Spring 1997 p. 9.

¹⁹² Though both are true, and he transfers these to Glendower; see the incident in 'the magician's chamber' below.

¹⁹³ Wood (1995) p. 93.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid* Wood himself is quoting from Powys (1941) pp. 563-4.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid* Wood is again quoting from Powys (1941) p. 563.

¹⁹⁶ Mathias (1972) p. 251.

¹⁹⁷ Powys (1941) p. 418.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid* p. 420.

prehistory'¹⁹⁹ and Mathias notes that 'he is physically like Bran'.²⁰⁰ Mathias goes on to suggest that Broch 'is increasingly identified with his wife's people'²⁰¹ though he cannot understand the link between the two as 'there is no explanation of how the Celtic Bran can be so identified'.²⁰² Broch's wife, Morg ferch Lug, is even more overtly a representative of the 'ancient people'. Owen compares her to Morgan le Fay²⁰³, a 'despotic little fairy'.²⁰⁴ She emerges as a sorceress who is able to place a curse on the enemies of her people by turning the mill wheel and calling upon "'the oldest curse in the world, the curse that is stronger than iron or brass; the curse of the water and the wind!'".²⁰⁵ Speaking in 'Welsh words; but they were old Welsh words, many of them words that Owen had only met in that ancient folio of his',²⁰⁶ Morg curses Owen as "'New-comer you are to the land, Brython the Accurst, with your spear or iron and sword of brass... you conquered *us* by your force and your cunning and your talk of the good and the evil; and so shall the English conquer *you*!'". She goes on, in a central paragraph of the novel to declaim that:

"'Evil is the King in London, evil and cunning; and he talks of the good while he burns and tortures. And as you fight against him, Owen ap Griffith, you grow like him! As long as you *destroy* you'll succeed; but try building up again, Owen ap Griffith, try building up these homes and these lives you've laid waste, and you'll see what you've done! For this land, Owen the Accurst, Owen, the pure-blooded Brython, belongs *not* to you, to your evil strength and your weapons of steel, belongs *not* to your talk of the good and the evil. It belongs to us, to us who have been here from the beginning, to us old people!'".²⁰⁷

The contrast with 'other races [that] love and hate, conquer and are conquered' and Morg's 'race [which] avoids and evades, pursues and is pursued. Its soul is forever making a double flight. It flees into a circuitous *Inward*. It retreats into a circuitous *Outward*... to what might

¹⁹⁹ Lane (1997) p. 9.

²⁰⁰ Mathias (1972) p. 251.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* He is undoubtedly referring to Broch's outburst on the eve of the Battle of Bryn Glas, concerning the battle-cry they should use: "'For myself I have no cry. But if I had, 'twould be some Gaer-and-Gorsedd cry of the ancient people, the people of Mynydd-yr-Gaer-yng-Nghorwen, and of the Gorsedd at Mathrafal, and of the Dragon-Mound at Meifod'" Powys (1941) p. 538. It is, of course to Mynydd y Gaer in Corwen that Glendower makes his last journey and is cremated.

²⁰² Mathias (1972) p. 252. In the light of Powys's own understanding of the mythology of *The Mabinogion*, the answer to that is clear; Bran is not a Celtic creation, he is a remnant of the mythology of the aboriginals that the Celts appropriated to themselves.

²⁰³ Powys (1941) p. 422

²⁰⁴ *Ibid* p 421.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid* p. 433.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid* p. 432.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid* p. 433.

be called the *mythology of escape*²⁰⁸ is a strong one, perhaps too strong a contrast at this point in the novel, for Glendower is already ‘moving in a direction which will finally lead him to the pacific wisdom of the aboriginal Welsh, the ‘old people’’.²⁰⁹

The second central element of *Owen Glendower*, therefore, is that Glendower is on a psychological journey, or quest, as much as a physical one through the Revolt. Powys is offering an explanation of how Glyndŵr achieved his legendary status which involves presenting him ‘not as the heroic leader of an oppressed people – the traditional historical view- but rather as a man who eventually turns from the battlefield, to free himself of the cruel, war-like, Celtic side of his nature, and so discover his true self; that is, his pacific aboriginal Welsh Self’.²¹⁰ Glendower, therefore, throughout the novel, is in two minds, struggling between the influences of the Celtic side of his nature (such as the spirit of ‘Saint’ Derfel, the magician of Eliseg, and his own prophet and bard Crach Ffinnant) and those of his aboriginal side, influenced by the spirit of Bran, Pwyll and Pryderi and the characters of Broch-o’-Meifod and Morg ferch Lug. As Denis Lane puts it, ‘the novel traces his torment as he is caught between the impulse to act and to escape that have characterised the history of his people’,²¹¹ or, as it is characterised in the novel, the difference between “‘*meddling with the future!*’”²¹² and accepting that “‘*The Past is the Eternal!*’”.²¹³

This is illustrated at several points in the novel, in different ways. Whilst in ‘the room that his jesting family had long nick-named “the magician’s chamber”’ he is reading ‘the most precious of all his books ...[which]... contained poems and prophecies reputed to have been uttered by Taliesin, Llywarch Hen, and others – one or two claiming to be from the actual mouth of Merlin himself!’ when he falls into a trance: ‘he suddenly felt like someone who has been dragged back from levels of life far more satisfying than any outward events, levels where he could lose himself in the unlabouring flow of the tides of Being’.²¹⁴ On

²⁰⁸ *Ibid* p. 889.

²⁰⁹ Wood (1995) p. 98.

²¹⁰ *Ibid* p. 94.

²¹¹ Lane (1997) p. 10.

²¹² Powys (1941) p. 393.

²¹³ *Ibid* p. 415.

²¹⁴ *Ibid* p. 390.

returning from this trance he utters a prayer to the ‘Unknown Spirit of the Universe’, and smashes one of the tools by which ‘priests and druids and magicians and fortune tellers go to work, by meddling with the future’, a magic crystal globe, with ‘a mighty battle-axe of antique design’,²¹⁵ only to lapse into another ‘queer coma’²¹⁶ thereafter. This internal conflict within Glendower, between the ‘Celtic’ and ‘aboriginal’ elements of his identity, rages through the novel, only being finally resolved in the last chapter, *Difancoll*, through the nature of his death:

‘Broch-o’-Meifod’s disconcerting wife had upbraided Owen as a “pure-blooded Brython,” and this may have been a legitimate accusation as far as his paternal ancestry was concerned; but as Catharine had instinctively felt in the Forests of Tywyn there was another strain in his blood, a strain that went back to those prehistoric “Lords of Annwn” beyond whose rumoured presence at the beginning the boldest speculation cannot pass’.²¹⁷

The third key element of the novel is the mechanism by which this unification with the Welsh people is achieved and the reputation of Glyndŵr secured to ‘*perhaps even live after you’re dead*’,²¹⁸ that is, magic, either of place or trance. Glendower’s visit to Mathrafal in Chapter XII and his meeting with Broch and Morg and their family in nearby Meifod are the central pivot of the novel, and have as much impact on him as they did on Powys, when he visited Mathrafal in June 1937:

‘The culmination of our pilgrimage was MATHRAFAL the palace of the Princes, built by none other than King ELISEG [double underlined]. I cannot describe to you the romance of the place. It was more than magic, more than mystery – like a thousand years of high reveries of an intense imagination, of lonely thoughts separated from everything – alone- an airy castle above tree-tops’.²¹⁹

In the novel Mathrafal appears as a mystical place, like Avebury or Stonehenge, which the castle was then built upon, so that ‘there’s no name in this land of mystical names, no! not Caer-Dathyl, or Caerleon, or Narberth, or Dynefor, or Harlech, that can compare with Mathrafal. Those of our fathers’ fathers who before both Christ and Caesar journeyed towards the setting sun and paused in this place must have mingled with the Caer-builders and the Mound-builders and the Circle-builders who possessed this land from the

²¹⁵ *Ibid* p. 393.

²¹⁶ *Ibid* p. 394.

²¹⁷ *Ibid* p. 889.

²¹⁸ *Ibid* p. 393.

²¹⁹ Krissdóttir (1995) Friday 25 June pp. 247-8.

beginning'.²²⁰ Mathrafal becomes, in other words, a cult centre for Powys's 'Welsh
 Aboriginals'. Mathrafal is just one of the places in which Glendower falls into a trance,
 during which (it emerges as the novel proceeds) he is in touch with Wales's aboriginal past
 in various guises. At Mathrafal 'his face was blurred to his hearers in that dim light, but he
 felt as if its features were melting, and as if his whole torso were melting and turning into a
 dissolving tower of mist. He felt as if he had sat on the spot on his grey horse for a thousand
 years, while the rains and dews and the days and the nights passed over him, telling to all
 who came what was the secret of the place'.²²¹ This secret was that the spirit of Mathrafal
 is "'*indestructible*.... Let them burn Mathrafal into cinders; let them grind Mathrafal into
 dust ... as long as this name lasts on the lips of the people of this land there will be one beat,
 one pulse, one motion left in our blood that neither the good nor the bad nor the worst nor
 the best of our crafty conquerors can ever blot out or destroy!'"'.²²²

Owen later explains (to Broch) not only what is going on during these episodes, but also what
 the results are; "'our souls from the beginning have been'", he says, "' ... able to escape into
 Annwn, ... into the world outside the world!'".²²³ Consequently, he tells Broch to "'Tell
 Morg... that I've got the - the blood- of the ancient people -in my veins- the people we
 conquered, as the Saxons did us, and the Normans them. It's the voice of the ancient people
 that spoke through me just now'"'.²²⁴ Glendower's 'queer attacks and fits'²²⁵ are a way not
 only of communicating with that 'long-lost peaceful civilization',²²⁶ but also a way of
 strengthening its hold within his own consciousness and personality, leading him to take the
 path that would lead away from 'Blood and Ashes'.²²⁷ Hence, 'this growth in self-awareness,
 an awareness of the wisdom of the 'oldest of all races', leads to Glendower's decision, during
 his campaign against the English, not to storm Worcester, and so effectively end the

²²⁰ Powys (1941) p. 413.

²²¹ *Ibid* p. 414.

²²² *Ibid*.

²²³ *Ibid* pp. 916-7.

²²⁴ *Ibid* p. 917.

²²⁵ Robin Wood (1997) 'Queer Attacks and Fits: Epilepsy and Ecstatic Experiences in the Novels of J.C. Powys'
 in *The Powys Journal* Numbers 31 and 32 Volume VIII iii & iv.

²²⁶ Powys (1941) p. 563.

²²⁷ *Ibid* p. 419.

rebellion'.²²⁸ It also meant that 'in his acceptance of death, Glendower, the 'life worshipper', accepts the way of that 'death-worshipper', his friend Broch. Glendower's death, however, is not associated with final annihilation, but rather with the symbolism and mythology of rebirth'.²²⁹ Thus, having warned Broch to "'Trust nobody, Broch- do you understand? - who isn't *entire Welsh!*'", ²³⁰ Glendower declared himself with his final breath as "'Prince of Powys – Prince of Gwynedd – Prince of Wales"' – and then in a tone that made the boy stop crying and made even Lord Talbot cross himself, "Prince of Annwn!".²³¹

For Powys, then, the novel argues that Glendower's appeal, both in the 15th Century and the 20th, is that he embodies, by magical means, both aspects of the supposedly dual nature of Welsh identity, the Celtic and the aboriginal. Additionally, through its use of the imagery of Welsh mythology and the magical presence of 'the old people', the novel acts as a vehicle to reflect Powys's changing concepts of Wales and Welsh identity.

Porius

Owen Glendower was profoundly influenced by the concepts of Wales and Welsh identity that Powys had developed since coming to the country in 1935; the same can also be said for his next novel, *Porius*, published in 1951, though the underlying concepts had, by then, changed again. After 'two separate false starts' at writing a contemporary novel,²³² Powys began his historical romance based on 'a disconcertingly specific chronology',²³³ of 18th- 25th October, AD 499. This was a period covering 'a key event in [the] essentialist construction of Welsh identity',²³⁴ that of the much written-about resistance of Arthur, 'the formation of the Welsh people and the development of a Welsh consciousness against the Anglo-Saxon

²²⁸ Wood (1995) p. 102.

²²⁹ *Ibid* p. 104.

²³⁰ Powys (1941) p. 919.

²³¹ *Ibid* p. 925.

²³² Richard Graves (1984) *The Brothers Powys* Oxford University Press, Oxford) p. 307. The 'false starts' were contemporary novels with the prospective title *Edeyrnion*; see Peter Foss (1991) 'John Cowper Powys's Unfinished Welsh Novel: An Introduction to "Edeyrnion"' in *The Powys Journal* Vol I. Transcriptions were also published in Vols I, II & III of *The Powys Journal*.

²³³ Ian Duncan (1995) 'The Art of Sinking' in *Powys Notes* Vol 10 no 1 Fall and Winter 1995 p. 9.

²³⁴ Boulter (1997) p. 9.

invader'.²³⁵ However, as in *Owen Glendower*, Powys does not follow the 'norms' of historians, but instead uses the novel to provide 'a critique of the traditional history, disputing its central assumptions and showing instead a Welshness, like Robert Young's "Englishness", which has "always been riven by its own alterity"'.²³⁶ As Powys himself notes, compared to the early 15th century, 'there appears to be an absolute blank, as far as documentary evidence goes, with regard to the history of Britain itself from the middle of the fifth century... to the middle of the sixth century',²³⁷ adding, typically, 'for my private enjoyment as a story-teller nothing but a beautiful, a heavenly blank!'.²³⁸ As in *Owen Glendower*, Powys's own ideas and conceptions of Welsh mythology and Welsh identity and the continuing influence of the Welsh landscape and people²³⁹ are as important as the known history, but because he is dealing with the 'Dark' Ages, Powys allows himself in *Porius* full rein to deal with the underlying issues of race, culture and identity with which he had been engaging since 1935.

In *Porius* Arthur himself, described as *Amherawdr* or Emperor of Britain, is almost a peripheral figure²⁴⁰ and the Arthurian heroes of Powys's youth like Galahad (*Galahaut*) are

²³⁵ Peter Christensen (1990) 'The Marriage of Myth and History in John Cowper Powys's *Porius*' in *The Powys Review* 25 Vol VI iii p. 18.

²³⁶ Boulter (1997) p. 9. Boulter is quoting from Robert J. C. Young (1995) *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (Routledge, London) p. xii. In *Porius* this is aired in a critique on the nature of historical writing between The Henog (described as a chronicler from Dyfed in South Wales) and Myrddin Wyllt (the Merlin of Arthurian literature).

²³⁷ John Cowper Powys (2007) *Porius* (Overlook Duckworth, New York) 'Historic Background to the Year of Grace A.D. 499' p. 17.

²³⁸ Powys quoted in Christensen (1990) p.16.

²³⁹ Krissdóttir (2007) pp. 375-6 suggests that this may have been achieved, in a way similar to that suggested earlier for *Maiden Castle* (see notes 98, 99 & 100): "Early in 1941, he and Phyllis had begun discussing the different racial characteristics of the people they saw around them. Eventually he peopled the novel with Celtic Brythons who are partly Romanized; with the "anarchical and peaceful" race of the forest people, descended from the Iberians of North Africa; with the even earlier, mysterious Ffichtaid (Picts) and the savage Gwyddylaid (Scots); even with members of an ancient giant race, the Cewri. With the (possible) exception of the giants, he believed he could see these races in the faces and actions of his neighbours and passersby. He hails the "rough wild fierce dark mad black-mustached Cymro on a bicycle" who responds with "that mysterious unequalled Mabinogi Welsh smile" – and lo! He is Afagddu, the old retainer of the princes of the Gaer. The "Roman Brython" from nearby Cynwyd who has an accident to his tractor wheel, becomes "the Horse Breeder in my Chapter 27"; the three sisters at Dee Bank turn into the three aged Princesses, the Mordrybedd. The eldest (who in reality is a reporter on the Daily Mail) is "an Aboriginal Matriarchal Witch of the true Iberians". Teleri, a young girl he sees in the village, becomes a half-witted girl who is raped by Medrawd; Mrs Hughes next door has "the Temperament of a Pure-blooded Brython & I confess we as a family have inherited from my dad a few drops of the same blood! A troublesome blood a wilful blood a dangerous blood!". The quotations are from the Unpublished Diaries.

²⁴⁰ This is consistent with much Medieval Arthurian literature – see, for example, Helen Fulton (2012), Oliver Padel (2000) *Arthur in Medieval Literature* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) and Rachel Bromwich et al (1995) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff).

portrayed as ‘a set of effeminate young men out-of-place in their grim setting’.²⁴¹ Indeed, so out-of-place is Galahaut that he squeals when he thinks he may have been poisoned by an arrow and is even unable to stay on his horse.²⁴² In general, the Arthurian cavalry and their supporters are effectively dismissed as ‘Romanized upstarts’ or ‘Romanized Celts’.²⁴³ Instead, Chapter I of the novel places Powys’s conceptions of Welsh identity front and centre, with the eponymous hero surveying the lands ruled by his father, Einion, Prince of Edeyrnion, from the top of the royal stronghold, Mynydd-y-Gaer hill fort (where Powys had placed Glendower’s *Difancoll*), describing both the geographical and ethnic differences around the town of Corwen (or The Ford of Mithras – both language and religion are also important themes in the novel). Immediately, therefore, ‘The reader is confronted with Brythons, Romans, Gwyddylaid, Ffichtiad, Gwyddyl-Ffichti, forest people, [and] Giants ... all living in the same region and preserving their ethnic difference, and yet intermarrying as well as creating further variants’,²⁴⁴ with the result that ‘it is extremely difficult to get clear the various racial identities that inhabit the misted forest marches of *Porius*’.²⁴⁵

What is clear, however, is that the rulers of the Caer are the descendants of ‘the warlike Brythonic Celts ... led by the great Brythonic chieftain Cunedda’,²⁴⁶ who had been brought to the area (probably from the ‘Old North’) by the Romans to protect the forest people from the Gwyddyl-Ffichti. The forest people are described as ‘Iberian wanderers from Africa’²⁴⁷ (appearing to represent some of the earliest settlers in the area, perhaps equating historically to the late Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, or early Neolithic periods, who have managed ‘in their own mysterious fashion to survive the onslaughts of the Ffichtiad’).²⁴⁸ The Ffichtiad or Ffichti are described as Picts, and the Gwyddylaid as Scots. However, the ‘sheer complexity of the ethnic groups’²⁴⁹ is not only confusing for the reader, but also appeared to confuse

²⁴¹ Knight (1964) p. 77.

²⁴² Powys (2007) p. 435.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Boulter (1997) p. 10.

²⁴⁵ Timothy Hyman (1995) ‘*Porius*: “Tired Thoughts Like Stones” ... in *Powys Notes* Vol 10 no 1 Fall and Winter 1995 p. 6.

²⁴⁶ Powys (2007) p. 21.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Boulter (1997) p. 10.

Powys himself at times.²⁵⁰ For example, later in the novel, Porius is told by Myrddin Wyllt that Neneue ferch Avallach ‘is afraid of the Cewri ... And the truth of the matter is her fear is racial. It’s in her blood. She comes from the original Ffichti. Not the Gwyddyl-Ffichti, you understand, but the pure-blooded Ffichti; those whose feud with the forest people is implacable. Did you know, Prince, that some old Henog writes that the Ffichti were here in the beginning – before the forest people- and that they were the slaves of the Cewri?’,²⁵¹ suggesting that the Ffichti, previously described as Picts, whom we have seen were on Powys’ ‘black list’ of invaders, were now ‘here from the beginning’.²⁵² Boulter adds another example of ‘Powys’s own unreliability in the “Background” ... in his identification of the Gwyddylaid as Scots, which G. Wilson Knight and Morine Krissdóttir accept [whereas] studies by Rhys and Lloyd used by Powys suggest they are the Goidels, who were from Ireland if they were invaders at all’.²⁵³

The forest people (who had a ‘genius for thriving in inaccessible places and under lamentable conditions, and the art of emerging in secret and retreating in secret amid the impenetrable woods and mountains’)²⁵⁴ certainly sound like the ‘Welsh Aborigines’ of both the *Obstinate Cymric* essays and *Owen Glendower*, but it soon becomes clear that it is not them, but rather the legendary giants or Cewri, who are both the *real* Aborigines of the novel and central to the plotline of the novel concerning Porius himself.²⁵⁵ Porius is the great-great- grandson of Cunedda, and part of the dynasty of Brythonic Celts ‘who rarely married with either the Gwyddyl-Ffichti or the forest peoples’.²⁵⁶ However, Powys introduces

²⁵⁰ Krissdóttir (2007) notes that Powys was by this time 75+ and was in poor health throughout most of its writing; ‘with the extreme weakness, the tormenting ulcers, the constant dyspepsia, nausea, and constipation’ p. 368. She also notes Powys saying in his diary how ‘he had difficulty remembering the names of all the characters in this latest book’ p. 364. Bond and Krissdóttir add further in their Notes to *Porius*; ‘The spelling of characters’ names changed in a disconcerting manner; a sword in one chapter mysteriously became a spear in the next; north would turn into south and liveries change colour; the Welsh and Latin words and phrases he liked to use were scattered about with a certain flamboyant imprecision’ in Powys (2007) p. 13.

²⁵¹ Powys (2007) p. 124.

²⁵² This maybe reflects Powys’s confusion of the role of the Picts between his readings of Rhys and Peate; it may also be an example of the different interpretations employed by historians, illustrated in the debate between the Henog and Myrddin (see note 236), but it could also be a deliberate confusing of these ‘race memories’, so as to prepare the reader for his new conception of Welsh identity, which emerges through the novel.

²⁵³ Boulter (1997) p. 12.

²⁵⁴ Powys (2007) p. 22.

²⁵⁵ Most obviously in Chapter XXI ‘The Aborigines’ and Chapter XXIII ‘The Cewri’ *Ibid*.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid* p. 21.

not one, but two exceptions to this general rule; Porius's paternal great-grandfather, Ederyn, who 'had married an aboriginal giantess' (named Creiddylad), and his son, Iddawc (known as 'The Apostate'), who 'had married a forest princess named Ideg who was descended from the Iberian royal house that receded into antiquity and had once ruled all the western lands from Marrakesh to Mona'.²⁵⁷ Porius therefore emerges as 'a Brythonic Prince... with a Roman name and an ancestry which is part-Iberian and part-giant, who marries a half-Ffichtiad, half-Brythonic girl',²⁵⁸ embodying all the different aspects of the Welsh people as Glendower did, but much earlier in the novel and much more prominently from the outset.²⁵⁹ Krissdóttir laments in her foreword that 'The introduction of a giantess and a magic child gives the hint that the novel, which began as an account of a clash of cultures, religions, and philosophies, in a certain place, at a certain period, has shifted into a different plane',²⁶⁰ but most of this is in the first two pages and is inherent to the character and motivation of Porius himself. So much so that whilst the rest of the Brythons and the Arthurian supporters are trying to push back the encroaching Saxons, Porius is chasing the giantess he refers to as 'this second Creiddylad, this imaginary Creiddylad of the secret craving of his youth', the subject of 'the secret stories he told himself about imitating his ancestor, Ederyn ap Cunedda, and carrying off a daughter of the Cewri'.²⁶¹ Throughout the novel Porius's 'uneasy life' is said to be due to 'his blood with its divided loyalties and contradictory traditions ... the contradictory stains in his blood that had worried and teased him from childhood'.²⁶² So Porius is 'plunged from infancy into the criss-cross eddies of racial and religious divergence, surrounded by mysterious treacheries, conceded hostilities [and] obscure conspiracies',²⁶³ and subject to the 'cry of his giants' blood', to 'something in his blood ... something that had remained un-Aryanized and un-Christianized'.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁷ *Ibid* p. 22.

²⁵⁸ Boulter (1997) p. 9. Porius marries Morfydd, who is then later described as 'a child of the forest she was for all her proud Brythonic blood' Powys (2007) pp. 420-1.

²⁵⁹ It will be recalled that for Glendower this complicated identity was latent, rather than manifest at the beginning; indeed the whole book is about its prompting and emergence, through the fits and visions, the curses of Morg Ferch Lug and the quiet example and philosophy of Broch-o'-Meifod

²⁶⁰ Morine Krissdóttir 'Foreword: *Telling Porius*' to Powys (2007) p. 9.

²⁶¹ Powys (2007) p. 469.

²⁶² *Ibid* p. 25.

²⁶³ *Ibid* p. 28.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid* p. 29.

‘It is almost impossible’, suggests Krissdóttir, ‘to summarise this huge “Dark Ages” novel of nine hundred typeset pages with its forty-nine characters and its chaotic events. Even more difficult to convey in a few pages is its multifarious levels of meaning’,²⁶⁵ so highlighting three aspects which seem of direct importance for this study (Powys’s use of Welsh mythology, the role of the Cewri and the concept of the *Cymry*) will have to suffice.

Firstly, Wales remains for Powys a land of myth and legend; it may arguably not be the central element driving the plot as in *Owen Glendower*, but it is ever present.²⁶⁶ The Henog, for example, appears to be writing *The Mabinogi*; Porius recalls the words “with a clap of thunder, a fall of mist, and the appearance of a wonder” (a phrase from the Third Branch which Powys also used in *Owen Glendower*) as being ‘that favourite phrase of the Henog’s’²⁶⁷ and Tegvan recalls hearing the Henog recount the tales he has collected to Brother John, involving *Mabinogi* characters such as Gwydion, Pryderi and Rhiannon.²⁶⁸ In the penultimate chapter, Myrddin Wyllt successfully reverses Gwydion’s spell of turning Blodeuwedd from a woman to an owl in the *Fourth Branch*,²⁶⁹ constituting ‘a magical act [which] can be interpreted as a rebirth miracle created in the twilight – time that fuses creative light and death-bearing darkness’.²⁷⁰ Taliesin, the Chief Bard of Ynys Prydein in the novel, chants long poems steeped in the characters and concepts of *The Mabinogion*, such as Gwydion, Math and Arawn, the King of Annwn.²⁷¹ It is in this sense that *Porius* was the book

²⁶⁵ Krissdóttir (2007) p. 371. Krissdóttir sees the most important level of meaning of Porius as being an alchemical quest, a thesis she first outlined in Morine Krissdóttir (1980) *John Cowper Powys and the Magical Quest* (Macdonald General Books, London), an approach pursued by Clarke, L (2017) ‘Beyond the Literary: Porius as a Romance of the Prophetic Imagination’ in *The Powys Journal* Volume XXVII.

²⁶⁶ Though Ballin (1990) suggests that it is a central element, as the novel is constructed around the image and process of the Cauldron of Rebirth, drawn especially from the *Second Branch of the Mabinogi*, but also from *How Culhwch Won Olwen* and the poems of Taliesin – see p. 215.

²⁶⁷ Powys (2007) p. 457.

²⁶⁸ . ““ It was wonderful; they were the wickedest magicians in the world, and Gwydion the son of Don joined in their plot and they all swore they would drink no wine and eat no meat till Pryderi had the knockers of the gate of Llwyd’s *llys* about his neck, and until Pryderi’s mother, Rhiannon, had the collars of Llwyd’s asses, after they had been carrying hay, about her neck”” *Ibid* p. 453.

²⁶⁹ Admittedly, a woman who had initially been conjured out of flowers by the magician Gwydion for Lleu Llaw Gyffes. See Davies (2007) p. 58.

²⁷⁰ Ballin (1990) p. 230.

²⁷¹ Powys (2007) pp. 489- 492.

that Powys had been ‘writing... in his mind for much of [his] life’.²⁷²

Secondly, however, it is the Cewri who are Powys’s mania in this novel, no less than Porius’s. Both Glendower and Broch-o’-Meifod had been described as having the appearance or qualities of giants and, as previously noted, the giant Bendigeidfran (Bran the Blessed) was a towering presence in *Owen Glendower*. The appearance of Porius (often referred to as Herculean or Samson-like himself) and the cawr blood within his veins might appear to be a continuation of this motif, especially since Porius is assured by Myrddin Wyllt that “‘ the Cewri are of course all gone. Nobody at Arthur’s court believes in them. Your father used to send messages to Caerleon about them, but the emperor never believed such survivals were possible; and as for myself, my dear Prince, to tell you the truth, I take no interest in bones and cinders and fossils and ruins”’.²⁷³ However, the Cawr and his daughter, the Cawres, appear as ‘real’ figures in scenes surely influenced by the *Mabinogion* story ‘How Culhwch Won Olwen’, even down to the description of the daughter having ‘twisted her heavy straw-coloured hair into great massive yellow braids, braids that gleamed and glittered when the sun shone upon them with a metallic lustre, braids which waved and tossed around her neck as she moved, falling sometimes between her shoulders and sometimes between her breasts’.²⁷⁴ The name of Creiddylad is also found twice in ‘How Culhwch Won Olwen’ as the daughter of Lludd Llaw Eirant, ‘the most majestic maiden there ever was in the Three Islands of Britain and her Three Adjacent Islands’.²⁷⁵ Krissdóttir locates Powys’s stories of giants in ‘his father’s “interminable story about two mythic personages called Giant Grumble and Fairy Sprightly”’,²⁷⁶ and it could be claimed that there was some influence from H.J. Massingham’s *Fee Fi Fo Fum or The Giants of England*, which Powys noted that he read in

²⁷² Morine Krissdóttir, Foreword to Powys (2007) p. 8. She also attributes all references to ‘writing something with all those Welsh gods & traditions & magic behind me’ to *Porius* – see Krissdóttir (1995) p. 340 (Index). The example quoted is the first referenced, from 27 August 1933 p. 133.

²⁷³ Powys (2007) p. 124.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid* p. 472. This can be compared with the description of Olwen in Davies (2007) p. 192, a passage whose ‘careful structuring sets it apart from any other description of female beauty in the *Mabinogion*’. *Ibid* p. 268. She is not alone in that assessment (see, for example, Proinsias Mac Cana (1992) *The Mabinogi* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff). Given Powys’s knowledge of and regard for the *Mabinogion* stories, it is virtually impossible to conceive that he would not be knowingly employing this comparison.

²⁷⁵ Davies (2007) p. 189 & p. 207 Lludd Llaw Eirant (Lludd Silver Hand) is also mentioned in the sub-tale in Culhwch, the search for Mabon, son of Modron pp.202-205.

²⁷⁶ Krissdóttir (2007) p. 372.

April 1935;²⁷⁷ but these are surely the Cewri memorialised in the names of Tre'r Ceiri and Cadair Idris in Snowdonia²⁷⁸, who constitute primarily *Welsh* aboriginals in Powys's conception. Indeed, so fascinated is Powys with the Cewri, that he invents a haunting language for them, rather like Tolkien did with Elvish (though with neither the depth, breadth nor linguistic discipline that the latter brought).²⁷⁹ Whether Powys believed that this had any more or less validity than his ideas about the Romanized (and subsequently Normanized and then Anglicised) Brythonic Celts, or had, in Krissdóttir's phrase, 'shifted [the story] into a different plane', is obviously open to question, but he does seem to have considered the Cewri to be important enough to vigorously protect them against the numerous cuts he was forced to make in the novel, alongside the Blodeuwedd story:

'Nothing wd... make me leave out the Cewri, or make them a Dream, or tamper with them as they are here in any way. Nothing wd induce me, persuade me, or make me, leave out or turn into anybody's dream, the miracle of the Owl-Girl Blodeuwedd...'.²⁸⁰

Thirdly, and finally, we come to the key concept that is said to be the organising one in terms of the emergence of Welsh identity in this period; that of the *Cymry*. This was 'the name adopted by the native population in the former Roman diocese, after Britain ceased to be Roman. Their descendants were called Welshmen by the English'.²⁸¹ Crucially, this term identified them as 'a coherent ethnic group, as people who recognise each other and can

²⁷⁷ Krissdóttir (1995) p.184.

²⁷⁸ Cadair Idris – or Chair of Idris- is said to have derived its name from the giant warrior poet of Welsh legend who is said to have created his seat to view the heavens from this lofty point. Another legend associated with the mountain is that Cadair Idris is the hunting ground of Gwyn ap Nudd, lord of the Celtic Underworld 'Annwn', who is escorted by a pack of supernatural red-eared hounds that herd a person's soul into the underworld. Tre'r Ceiri – Town of the Giants – is an iron age hillfort, but its name (Ceiri is related to Cewri) is related to the mythology of giants in Snowdonia. Apart from the Cawr and Cawres in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and Bran in the *Second Branch* the most significant influence on Powys may have been the story of Ricca or Rhita Mawr said to have been buried on the summit of Snowdon in Carnedd y Cawr after being defeated by Arthur in single combat – see, for example, Jennifer Westwood (1987) *Albion: A Guide to Legendary Britain* (Paladin, London) p. 359-60

²⁷⁹ Although there is no evidence that Powys and J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973) met, their interests and influences in relation to Wales were significantly in parallel. 'I love Wales (what is left of it, when mines, and the even more ghastly sea-side resorts, have done their worst), and especially the Welsh language' Tolkien wrote in a letter in 1958. He possessed a very similar library to Powys, such as Lady Charlotte Guest's and Sir John Rhys's translations of *The Mabinogion* and Morris-Jones' *Welsh Grammar*, and developed a friendship with Gwyn Jones, the editor of *The Welsh Review*, which published Tolkien's *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* in December 1945. Tolkien was also an external examiner for the University of Wales between 1944-45, visiting Aberystwyth in that capacity at least once in 1945. *The Lord of the Rings* (published in 1954 & 1955) is also arguably as much influenced by Arthurian and Welsh mythology as Powys's works. See especially Carl Phelpstead (2011) *Tolkien and Wales: language, literature and identity* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff).

²⁸⁰ Krissdóttir (2007) p. 389, quoting Unpublished Diary.

²⁸¹ John Morris (1993) *The Age of Arthur: A History of the British Isles from 350 to 650* (Weidenfeld) p. 98.

be recognised as *a* people'.²⁸² There is no doubt that the arrival of the Saxons, and of the Arthurian cohorts, 'only serve to crystallize into two armed camps all the submerged and frustrated hatred of the various "systems" swirling about the kingdom'.²⁸³ This led Princess Eysyllt to think that 'with the Saxons so near and the emperor so far, and her traditional subjects, the forest people, so entirely under the influence of her friend the Derwydd, the Brythonic domination of Edeyrnion by Mynydd-y-Gaer was now at last destined to collapse and the ancient glory of Ogof-y-Gawr destined to take its place',²⁸⁴ and that the best way of achieving that would be for the forest people to throw in their lot with the Saxons. However, the impact of the conflict on the wider population of Edeyrnion is more complex, and throughout the novel Powys puts different iterations of the meaning of *Cymry* into different characters' mouths, indicating that the concept is contested terrain.

Prince Einion defines the *Cymry* essentially in opposition to the Cewri, emphasising how he "spent an uncomfortable five minutes going from our *Cymry*, who were itching to shoot their arrows into [the Cewri], to the emperor's young nobles who were burning to cut off their heads and carry them to Arthur!". This frames the Cewri almost as more of an enemy than the Saxons:

"The man-eating giants squatted down behind a rock to crack the bones of a few dead men; while we heroic *Cymry*, as the counsellor tells us we must all consider ourselves in future, looked anxiously, patiently, sternly, eagerly hopefully, intently – in the opposite direction! Yes, that's the truth, noble son. While the Cewri crunched our brothers' bones in the west, we ran – crying out, 'we're all brothers today! – to the east'".²⁸⁵

Einion's brother, Brochvael, has a rather negative view of the concept, as 'a sort of slang word for the unclassified ordinary men and women of Ynys Prydein, such as were neither Romanized rulers nor privileged Brythonic princes of Castell or Cantref, of Dinas or Gaer,

²⁸² Boulter (1997) p. 12.

²⁸³ Krissdóttir, Foreword to Powys (2007) p. 6.

²⁸⁴ Powys (2007) p. 417.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid* pp. 458-9 The antipathy of Arthur and his knights to giants is one of the key themes from the folk tradition that was incorporated into the stories associated with Arthur, not least by Geoffrey of Monmouth. See especially Juliette Wood (2012) 'The Arthurian Legend in Scotland and Cornwall' in Helen Fulton (ed.) (2012) p. 106 and Padel (2000). This tradition is somewhat complicated by the tradition that Arthur was a giant, able to move gigantic stones, such as Arthur's Stone in West Glamorgan (see, for example, Neil Fairbairn & Michael Cyprien (1983) *A Traveller's Guide to the Kingdoms of Arthur* (Evans Brothers Limited, London) p. 22).

nor yet unscrupulous invaders from the North Sea, nor yet uncivilized marauders of Gwyddyl-Ffichti descent'²⁸⁶ (which would therefore presumably exclude both himself and his brother). The old Brythonic warrior Afagddu puts forward a similar view, but with a more positive perspective, based on 'his patriotism for the cause of the forest people and for the cause, along with the forest people, of all those of Ynys Prydein who were neither Romans, nor Brythonic princes and nobles in league with the Romans'.²⁸⁷ Morfydd, by this time Porius's wife, detects 'the special new feeling, revolutionary and popular, and yet, in a strange sense, religious and mythical, that was beginning to cling, like a cloud of pungent incense, round the word "Cymry"',²⁸⁸ and the Henog had also noted the 'mystical' aspect of the concept, suggesting that it 'came into existence by a very curious magic that carried a *tynged*, or "special destiny", with it, the *tynged*, namely, that the unity it evoked could only be used for things that belonged to peace and never for things that belonged to war'.²⁸⁹

However, it is Gwythyr²⁹⁰ who outlines the most radical interpretation of the concept and the nearest, we might speculate, to where Powys's thinking had evolved by this time. "I tell you", he says, "if the whole lot of them, and all Arthur's court too, battled with the Saeson till there was one left, we *Cymry* would be no worse off!", continuing:

"We *Cymry* all over the land, whether we're Brythons or forest people or Gwyddyl-Ffichti, if we had any spirit would get rid of all these lords and ladies, these *twysogion* and *twysogesau*, and have the earth and its fruits for ourselves! God gave the earth to us all, not to them only! ... Who started all this quarrelling and plotting and threatening, all these horsemen with lances, all these forest people with bows and arrows? We *Cymry* didn't. You know *that*, my sweet. Some of us are forest people, some Brythons, some Gwyddyl-Ffichti, and we're all comrades; but they- keep- us- *down*." ... "And they do it", he went on, "by dividing us, by making us hate one another. That's their great trick. They turn blood against blood. The three Princesses and their Derwydd make us hate the Brythons. Iscovan y Bychan made his Gwyddyl-Ffichti hate the Romans. Our Cunedda princes join with the emperor ... to keep the forest people in subjection and prevent them from following the three Princesses and the Derwydd or making *Cymry* of the Saeson instead of driving them out!"'.²⁹¹

²⁸⁶ Powys (2007) pp. 444-5.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid* p. 475.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid* p. 709.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid* p. 710.

²⁹⁰ Another name, as Gwythyr son of Greidol, repeatedly present in 'How Culhwch Won Olwen'.

²⁹¹ Powys (2007) p. 331.

Nationalism based on race, Gwythyr (and by extension Powys) suggests, is a false conception; in effect it is a ruling class tactic to keep ordinary people, the *real* Welsh, irrespective of their ethnic inheritance, in their place. In a speech that might have been extracted from those of the Second International against the First World War, Gwythyr goes on to put together a denunciation of nationalism and war, which perhaps explains why Powys never attempted to deal with issues of Welsh identity in any of his novels post-*Porius*.²⁹²

“I tell you we *all* came here in the beginning like these Saeson – all foreigners and invaders, every tribe of us! And yet even among us Cymry – and don’t think I don’t feel it myself! - there’s the same blood-hate ready to explode! And the emperor plays upon it. He doesn’t bother about us enough yet to cry out to us: ‘Cymry of Ynys Prydein! Let all comrades join hands to keep out the foreigner!’ But mark me well my girl, he soon will... And why? So that he and his courtiers may rule the country undisturbed!”²⁹³

In *Porius*, therefore, Powys introduces very different concepts about Wales and Welsh identity, even compared to those proposed ten years earlier in *Owen Glendower*, and markedly different from his earlier, Celtic conceptions. Instead of any concept of Welsh identity based on race or ethnicity, *Porius* not only ‘shows a commitment to multiplicity that defies those stereotypes of sentiment and melodrama that people might associate with naïve ‘Celt versus Saxon dichotomy’²⁹⁴ but also ‘deconstructs Welsh identity ... to the extent that we begin to see Welshness in general as we see Powys’s own Welshness: as a name’.²⁹⁵

²⁹² The novels that followed *Porius* are characterized by an even more pronounced, and de-historicized element of fantasy. *The Inmates* (1952) is set in a madhouse and explores Powys's interest in mental illness, *Atlantis* (1954) is set in the Homeric world, *Up and Out* (1957) and *All or Nothing* (1960) "use the mode of science fiction, although science has no part in them" Coates, C.A. (1982) *John Cowper Powys in Search of a Landscape*. (Barnes and Noble, Totowa, NJ).

²⁹³ Powys (2007) p. 332.

²⁹⁴ Birns (2016) p. 48. This also, perhaps, links to one of Powys’s other concepts, that of the multiverse. Hodgson, for instance, sees *Porius* as ‘the multiversal novel’ John Hodgson (1981) ‘On Reading *Porius*’ in *The Powys Review* 8 Vol II iv p. 30.

²⁹⁵ Boulter (1997) p. 18. This also has much in common with Benedict Anderson’s ‘definition of the nation: [that] it is an imagined political community... [which] regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’ Benedict Anderson (2016) *Imagined Communities* (Verso, London) pp. 6-7.

Section 4: Conclusions

In *Porius*, Powys had been in the final stage of a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* in his quest for Welsh identity, which had, in a way, been going on all his life; who *were* the *real* Welsh?

In his youth and through to the 1930s his answer, whilst living outside Wales, was a Romantic and theoretical one. Influenced by the passion of his father for his own heritage and his own reading of texts such as Aytoun, Yeats and Arnold, Powys emphasised his own Cymric roots as part of the Celtic world, Wales being his personal connection with the ‘Celtic Fringe’. Unaffected by meeting actual Welsh people, Powys could be guided by his fascination with Welsh mythology and hail Bernie O’Neill and James Hanley, for example, as ‘fellow Celts’. For Welsh, read Celtic, and *vice versa*. This Celtic conception of Wales and Welsh identity was reflected in his early works and most significantly in *A Glastonbury Romance*, elements of *Maiden Castle* and his *Autobiography*.

On moving to Wales and absorbing, as Emyr Humphreys suggested, the reality of the Welsh people, landscape and culture, as well as his reading of anthropologists of Welshness such as Peate and Fleure, his conception of Wales and Welsh identity changed quite rapidly. He came to believe that Celticity was an overlay on the culture, language and ethnicity of the Aboriginal Welsh, the pre-Celtic people who had supposedly maintained their peculiar presence in the nation by retreating, both geographically and culturally, allowing themselves and their culture, such as the tales of *The Mabinogion*, to be assimilated and represented as Celtic forms: ‘Cymric’ he remained, but its meaning, for him, was changed utterly. Powys interpreted these concepts through the prism of race and ethnicity, a not uncommon approach in a period when “‘race” was used generally and often very loosely... as a synonym for national, cultural and linguistic groups, which were assumed to be essentially coincidental in extent’: in many ways essentially the same approach that underlay his initial, Celtic, conception of Welsh identity.²⁹⁶ It is easy to dismiss these ideas, as Thomas does, as

²⁹⁶ James, Simon (1999) *The Atlantic Celts: Ancient People or Modern Invention?* (British Museum Press, London) p. 54. James was articulating in a more ‘popular’ way ideas that had been advanced by Michael

‘ludicrous’ and ‘a kind of lunacy’,²⁹⁷ because at first glance Powys does seem to be very cavalier in his use of ethnic and racial terms. It is, therefore, perhaps understandable that commentators on Powys have failed to engage with his changing conceptions of Wales and Welsh identity from 1935 onwards. However, this study suggests that to do so would be to disregard ideas that significantly influenced parts of *Maiden Castle* and *Morwyn*, flowering decisively in *Owen Glendower*.

However, as Jeremy Hooker notes, ‘Powys was hostile to all nationalisms; the spirit he found in Wales represented a possibility of universal liberation, not an idea of Welsh nationhood’.²⁹⁸ So, in researching and thinking about these premises, especially in the light of the conflict and genocide – the *racial* war, one might suggest- of the Second World War, he saw, perhaps, the absurdity and the danger of the positions concerning race that he had been adopting. Thus, even by the time of its publication, Powys was describing *Obstinate Cymric* as a ‘rather tiresome & dull & superficial book I mean this rather popular & shallow & academic book’.²⁹⁹ The reason for this perhaps being best represented in Gwythyr’s conclusion to his discussion with Nesta ferch Aulus in *Porius*:

“‘ Foreigners? We were all foreigners once! Who are the true possessors of these woods and mountains, Nesta? You know as well as I do. *The Cewri*! And, if you go further back still, the wild beasts or the old gods! Nobody knows because nobody was there!’ ”.³⁰⁰

Powys did not spell out his concept of Welsh identity in *Porius* in the same way he had his Aboriginal theories in *Obstinate Cymric*, so we have to piece together his final conceptions of Wales and Welsh identity from the fragments and suggestions in the novel. He describes the poetry of Taliesin (which he tries to reproduce in *Porius*) as having ‘a weirdly original character unlike that of any known poet except, perhaps, Walt Whitman’,³⁰¹ and it is, perhaps, towards a sort of ‘Whitmanesque amplitude where Jew, African, American, white

Chapman (1992) *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth* (Macmillan Press, Basingstoke) and John Collis (2003) *The Celts: Origins, Myths & Inventions* (Tempus Publishing, Stroud).

²⁹⁷ Thomas (1979) p. 76.

²⁹⁸ Jeremy Hooker (2001) *Imagining Wales. A View of Modern Welsh Writing in English* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) p. 96.

²⁹⁹ Krissdóttir (2007) p. 371. Unattributed quote.

³⁰⁰ Powys (2007) p. 332.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.* Footnote to ‘The Characters of the Novel’ p. 20. Though Powys also claimed that Whitman himself possessed ‘Welsh blood’, Powys (1938) p. 469.

manual labourer, native American could all proliferate, contributing to the multiple worlds [Powys] saw not only in New York City but in upstate New York, with its Dutch and Indian elements, and in the Great Plains and prairies where immigrants from various lands combined in a new sense of territoriality'³⁰² that he ultimately aspired. Perhaps the lesson of *Porius*, and the ultimate destination of his search for an understanding of Wales and Welsh identity is that 'Powys sees this American multiculturalism being brought home to the western half of Britain... and giving a more perceptual plurality to the temporal layering of Neolithic, Celt, Saxon, and Norman that is manifest in the British historical and archaeological record... In other words, we see the historical plurality of Britain understood through the demographic plurality and federalism of the United States'.³⁰³

Powys's search for a Welsh identity was therefore restless, involving a Wales of mythology, landscape and people and, because he was not a systematic thinker or one who believed it necessary to become entrenched in any particular position, his concept of both the country and the identity of its people changed significantly over time in response to his personal experience of Wales, as well as what he was reading. Hooker sees 'the transition from Powys's 'Wessex Romances' to his 'Welsh Romances' as necessitated by the exhaustion of nostalgic childhood memories on which the former draw',³⁰⁴ and perhaps *Porius* represents a similar exhaustion (even, perhaps, a dead end) in terms of his excavation of Welsh identity, for, if anything, *Porius* 'rejoices in the sheer plurality and plenty of its material in a way at once imaginatively ingratiating and cognitively overwhelming'.³⁰⁵ It is the acceptance of that multiplicity – of multiculturalism in modern parlance - that appears to be the central message of the book, leading Powys in this final phase to perhaps agree with Gwyn Alf Williams that: 'The Welsh as a people have lived by making and remaking themselves in generation after generation, usually against the odds. In that making and remaking of themselves, a sense of history has been central. The Welsh or their effective movers and shapers have repeatedly employed history to make a usable past... it was once done in terms of myth, it has been

³⁰² Birns (2016) p. 53.

³⁰³ *Ibid.* Powys also allies Whitman with the concept of the multiverse (see note 294): 'The implication is that the secret of the System of things is to be found altogether in the *Many* rather than the *One*. It is a Sovietization of the Absolute. [Whitman's] universe is, in fact, not a universe at all, but a *multiverse*... A multiverse, if we can speak in such terms, lends itself much better to the magical and the miraculous, and to all the vagaries of chance and accident and free will than a world made of one piece' Powys (1938) p. 441.

³⁰⁴ Hooker (2001) p. 96.

³⁰⁵ Birns (2016) p. 49.

recently and can be again done in terms of history...Wales is an artefact which the Welsh produce. If they want to. It requires an act of choice'.³⁰⁶

16,108 words

³⁰⁶ Gwyn A. Williams (1985) *When Was Wales?* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth) p. 304.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Stephen 'The Real Mynydd-y-Gaer' in *The Powys Review* 2, Winter 1977.
- Anderson, Benedict *Imagined Communities* (Verso, London) 2016
- Ballin, Michael 'Porius and the Cauldron of Rebirth' in Lane, Denis (ed.) *In the Spirit of Powys: New Essays* (Bucknell University Press, Lewisburg) 1990.
- Ballin, Michael 'In defence of Morwyn' in *la lettre powysienne* no. 28, Autumn 2014.
- Birns, Nicholas 'Porius and Owen Glendower: John Cowper Powys's Radical Medievalism' in *The Powys Journal*, Volume XXVI, 2016.
- Blaen, Angela 'Maiden Castle and the Celtic Calendar' in *The Powys Review* 15, Volume IV, iii, 1984/85.
- Boulter, Joe 'John Cowper Powys's [De]construction of Welsh Identity in Porius' in *The Powys Journal*, Numbers 31 and 32, Volume VIII, iii & iv, 1997.
- Boulter, Joe *Postmodern Powys: Essays on John Cowper Powys* (Crescent Moon Publishing, Maidstone) 2008.
- Brebner, John A. *The Demon Within: A Study of John Cowper Powys's Novels* (Macdonald, London) 1973.
- Bromwich, Rachel et al *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 1995.
- Cavaliero, Glen *John Cowper Powys: Novelist* (Clarendon Press, Oxford) 1973.
- Cavaliero, Glen 'Maiden Castle Revisited' in *The Powys Journal*, Volume IX, 1999.
- Chapman, Malcolm *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth* (Macmillan, Basingstoke) 1992.
- Christensen, Peter 'The Marriage of Myth and History in John Cowper Powys's Porius' in *The Powys Review*, Vol VIII, I, 1990.
- Christensen, Peter 'The Role of Fate in History: Owen Glendower as Epic Historical Novel' in *The Powys Review*, 29 & 30, Vol VIII, i & ii, 1991.
- Clarke, Lindsay 'Beyond the Literary: Porius as a Romance of the Prophetic Imagination' in *The Powys Journal*, Volume XXVII, 2017.
- Collins, H.P. *John Cowper Powys: Old Earth Man* (Barrie and Rockcliff, London) 1966.
- Collis, John *The Celts: Origins, Myths & Inventions* (Tempus Publishing, Stroud) 2003.
- Coates, C.A. *John Cowper Powys in Search of a Landscape* (Barnes and Noble, Totowa, NJ) 1982.
- Davies, Sioned (trans. & intro.) *The Mabinogion* (Oxford University Press, Oxford) 2007.

- Duncan, Ian 'The Mythology of Escape: Owen Glendower and the Failure of Historical Romance' in *Powys Notes*, Vol 8, numbers 1 & 2, 1992.
- Duncan, Ian 'The Art of Sinking' in *Powys Notes*, Vol 10, no 1, Fall and Winter 1995.
- Elwin, Malcolm (selected and ed.) *Letters of John Cowper Powys to his brother Llewelyn Vol II 1925-1939* (Village Press, London) 1975.
- Evans, Geraint 'Modernist Arthur: The Welsh Revival' in Fulton, H. *A Companion to Arthurian Literature* (Wiley-Blackwell, London) 2012.
- Evans, Geraint & Fulton, Helen (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge) 2019.
- Fairbairn, Neil & Cyprien, Michael *A Traveller's Guide to the Kingdoms of Arthur* (Evans Brothers Limited, London) 1983.
- Fawcner, H.W. *Amorous Life: John Cowper Powys and the Manifestation of Affectivity* (Crescent Moon, Kidderminster) 1998.
- Foss, Peter 'John Cowper Powys's Unfinished Welsh Novel: An Introduction to "Edeyrnion"' in *The Powys Journal*, Vol I, 1991.
- Fulton, Helen (ed.) *A Companion to Arthurian Literature* (Wiley-Blackwell, London) 2012.
- Gostick, Chris *Lord Jim, Lady Tim and the Powys Circle* (Cecil Woolf, London) 2000.
- Gostick, Chris (ed.) *Powys and Lord Jim – the correspondence between James Hanley and John Cowper Powys 1929-1965* (The Powys Press, Mappowder) 2018.
- Hodgson, John 'On Reading Porius' in *The Powys Review*, 8, Vol II, iv, 1980/81.
- Hooker, Jeremy *Writers of Wales: John Cowper Powys* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 1973.
- Hooker, Jeremy *John Cowper Powys and David Jones: A Comparative Study* (Enitharmon Press, London) 1979.
- Hooker, Jeremy *Imagining Wales. A view of modern Welsh writing in English*, (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 2001.
- Humphrey, Belinda (ed.) *Essays on John Cowper Powys* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 1972.
- Humphrey, Belinda (ed.) *Recollections of the Powys Brothers – Llewelyn, Theodore and John Cowper* (Peter Owen, London) 1980.
- Humphrey, Belinda (ed.) *John Cowper Powys's Wolf Solent: Critical Studies* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 1990.
- Humphreys, Emyr 'Arnold in Wonderland' in *The Powys Review*, 3, Summer, 1978.
- Humphreys, Emyr *The Taliesin Tradition: A Quest for the Welsh Identity* (Black Raven Press, London) 1983.

- Hyman, Timothy 'Porius: "Tired Thoughts Like Stones" ...' in *Powys Notes*, Vol 10, no 1, Fall and Winter, 1995.
- James, Simon *The Atlantic Celts: Ancient People or Modern Invention?* (British Museum Press, London) 1999.
- Jaworski, Philippe 'John Cowper Powys: an Obstinate Welshman' in *la lettre powysienne*, no. 4, Autumn, 2002.
- Johnes, Martin 'History and the Making and Remaking of Wales' in *History*, Volume 100, Issue 343, 2016.
- Jones, Gwyn Editorial in *The Welsh Review*, Vol I, No 6, August, 1939.
- Keith, W. J. 'The Archaeological Background to *Maiden Castle*', in *The Powys Review*, Number 22, Volume VI, ii, 1988.
- Keith, W.J. 'Owen Glendower: Historical Novel or Romance?' in *la lettre powysienne*, no. 13, Spring 2007.
- Keith, W.J. *Aspects of John Cowper Powys's Owen Glendower* (The Powys Society, London) 2008.
- Keith, W.J. *A Glastonbury Romance Revisited* (The Powys Society, London) 2010.
- Knight, G. Wilson *The Saturnalian Quest: A Study of the Prose Work of John Cowper Powys* (Methuen & Co Ltd, London) 1964.
- Krissdóttir, Morine *John Cowper Powys and the Magical Quest* (Macdonald General Books, London) 1980.
- Krissdóttir, Morine (selected & ed.) *Petrushka and the Dancer: The Diaries of John Cowper Powys 1929-1939* (Carcanet Press, Manchester) 1995.
- Krissdóttir, Morine *Descents of Memory: The Life of John Cowper Powys* (Overlook Duckworth, New York) 2007.
- Kushner, Tony 'H.J. Fleure: a paradigm for inter-war race thinking in Britain' in *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol 42, No. 2, 2008
- Lane, Denis (ed.) *In the Spirit of Powys: New Essays* (Bucknell University Press, London and Toronto) 1990.
- Lane, Denis "'The Circuitous Outward": Natural Mythology in Powys's *Owen Glendower*' in *Powys Notes*, Vol 11, No 1, Spring, 1997.
- Lewis, Saunders *Is there an Anglo-Welsh Literature?* Urdd Graddedigion (Prifysgol Cymru, Cangen Caerdydd, Cardiff) 1938.
- Lock, Charles '*The Dorset Year: The Diary of John Cowper Powys June 1934-July 1935* edited by Morine Krissdóttir and Roger Peers' in *The Powys Journal*, Volume IX, 1999.
- Mac Cana, Proinsias *The Mabinogi* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 1992.

- Marlow, Louis *Welsh Ambassadors (Powys Lives and Letters)* (Chapman and Hall Ltd, London) 1936.
- Mathias, Roland 'The Sacrificial Prince: A Study of *Owen Glendower*' in Humphrey, Belinda (ed.) *Essays on John Cowper Powys* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 1972.
- Mathias, Roland *The Hollowed-Out Elder Stalk: John Cowper Powys as Poet* (Enitharmon Press, London) 1979.
- Mathias, Roland 'John Cowper Powys and 'Wales'. A limited study' in *The Powys Review*, 17, Vol V, i, 1985.
- Morris, John *The Age of Arthur – A History of the British Isles from 350 to 650* (Weidenfeld, London) 1993.
- Mulder, Ian 'Inner truth: *Owen Glendower*' in *la lettre powysienne*, no. 4, Autumn, 2002.
- Osborne, Huw Edwin *Writers of Wales: Rhys Davies* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 2009.
- Padel, Oliver *Arthur in Medieval Literature* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 2000.
- Peate, Iorwerth C. (Ed. & Intro.) *John Cowper Powys: Letters 1937-54* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 1974.
- Peltier, Jacqueline 'Owen Glendower & Owain Glyn Dwr (1359? - 1416?)' in *la lettre powysienne*, no. 4, Autumn, 2002.
- Pennar, Meirion 'In Search of the Real Glendower' in *The Powys Review*, Number 18, Volume vii, 1986.
- Phelpstead, Carl *Tolkien and Wales: Language, Literature and Identity* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 2011.
- Powys, John Cowper 'Mordaunt Ap Gryfith. A tale' (intro. by Belinda Humphrey) in *The Powys Review*, Number 18, volume vii, 1986.
- Powys, John Cowper *Wood and Stone: A Romance* (The Village Press, London) 1974.
- Powys, John Cowper *Autobiography* (John Lane, The Bodley Head, London) 1934.
- Powys, John Cowper *A Glastonbury Romance* (The Overlook Press, New York) 1996.
- Powys, John Cowper *Maiden Castle – The First Full Authoritative Text* (The Overlook Press, New York) 2009.
- Powys, John Cowper *Morwyn The Vengeance of God* (Sphere Books Ltd, London) 1977.
- Powys, John Cowper 'Welsh Culture' in *The Welsh Review*, Vol I, No 5, June, 1939.
- Powys, John Cowper *The Pleasures of Literature* (Cassel and Company Ltd, London) 1946.
- Powys, John Cowper *Owen Glendower: A historical novel* (John Lane, The Bodley Head, London) 1941.

Powys, John Cowper (intro. by Krissdóttir, Morine) *Owen Glendower: A historical novel* (The Overlook Press, New York) 2003.

Powys, John Cowper *Obstinate Cymric* (The Druid Press Limited, Carmarthen) 1947.

Powys, John Cowper (ed. Bond, Judith & Krissdóttir, Morine, foreword by Krissdóttir, Morine) *Porius* (Overlook Duckworth, New York) 2007.

Powys, Llewelyn 'Welsh and English' in *The Welsh Review*. Vol 1. no. 3. April. 1939.

Pryce, Huw J. E. *Lloyd and the Creation of Welsh History: Renewing a Nation's Past* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 2011.

Rhys, John & Brynmor-Jones, David *The Welsh People. Chapters on their Origin, History, Laws, Language, Literature and Characteristics* (The Macmillan Co., New York) 1900.

Robinson, Jeremy Mark (ed.) *Rethinking Powys: Critical Essays on John Cowper Powys* (Crescent Moon, Maidstone) 2014.

Stevens, Catrin *Writers of Wales: Iorwerth C. Peate* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 1986.

Thomas, M. Wynn (ed.) *Emyr Humphreys: Conversations and Reflections* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 2002.

Thomas, Ned 'Obstinate Cymric' in *The Powys Review*, 4, Winter/Spring, 1978/79.

Westwood, Jennifer *Albion: A Guide to Legendary Britain* (Paladin, London) 1987.

Wilkinson, Louis (ed.) *Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson 1935 – 1956* (Macdonald, London) 1958.

Williams, Daniel G. *Wales Unchained: Literature, Politics and Identity in the American Century* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff) 2015.

Williams, Gwyn A. *When Was Wales?* (Penguin, Harmondsworth) 1985.

Williams, Herbert *Border Lines: John Cowper Powys* (Seren, Bridgend) 1997.

Wood, Juliette 'The Arthurian Legend in Scotland and Cornwall' in Fulton, H. *A Companion to Arthurian Literature* (Wiley-Blackwell, London) 2012.

Wood, Robin L. 'John Cowper Powys's Welsh Mythology: Gods and Manias', in *The Powys Review*, Number 22, Volume VI, ii, 1988.

Wood, Robin 'Owen Glendower: Powys's Faustian Prince' in *The Powys Journal*, Volume V, 1995.

Wood, Robin 'Queer Attacks and Fits: Epilepsy and Ecstatic Experiences in the Novels of J.C. Powys' in *The Powys Journal*, Numbers 31 and 32, Volume VIII, iii & iv, 1997.

Wood, Robin 'Romance and Realism in John Cowper Powys's *Owen Glendower*' in *Powys Notes*, Volume 12, Number 1, Summer, 1998.

Wood, Robin 'Resident Foreigners and Bards! John Cowper Powys & James Hanley in Wales' in *The Powys Journal*, Volume XIII, 2003.