THEME AS STRUCTURE IN
THREE NOVELS OF JOHN COWPER POWYS

by

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I first delineated the universe that John Cowper Powys envisioned and the ways he posited of living in that universe. The magician, the ichthyosaur-ego, the saint and the sadist are anthropomorphized facets of what Powys felt was his own composite nature. Each has his own way of coming to terms with his environment.

Then, I attempted to show that, in his novels at any rate, Powys's concern is artistic not philosophical or prophetic. He does not advocate one specific way of life such as that offered in In Defence of Sensuality. Only in the last few pages of A Glastonbury Romance does he eschew his personae for a personal statement about the ineradicable nature of a certain kind of response to the universe. However, in the greater part of A Glastonbury Romance, and in Wolf Solent and Maiden Castle, Powys is chiefly concerned with situating his characters, the autonomized fragments of his own character, in Glastonbury, Dorset and Dorchester. He explores the reactions of these characters to the milieu in which they are placed. My investigation of the themes of the three novels and their relationship to the novels' structures reinforces my contention that Powys's emphasis is not on the narrow formulation of a life-way.

A Glastonbury Romance probes the responses of the magician, ichthyosaur-ego, saint and sadist to that aspect of existence which the Grail represents—the unseen, the scientifically unverifiable. Wolf Solent examines the convoluted state of an ichthyosaur-ego who learns to simply accept the universe. Maiden Castle is a hybrid of Wolf Solent and A Glastonbury Romance. It combines the focus on the ichthyosaur-ego with the multiple perspectives of that aspect of existence represented by the powers of Maiden Castle.
Though both the magician and ichthyosaurus-ego display a partial inability to cope with quotidian events, they seem most aware of all the dimensions of Powys's universe. Consequently, the three novels dwell for the most part on the responses of the ichthyosaurus-ego and the magician. Powys does not resolve which of the two ways is most viable; however, he does espouse that facet of both of them which accepts a living cosmos, a non-mechanistic world redolent of the fourth dimension, that aspect of existence which cannot be rationally apprehended.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Wolf Solent</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>A Glastonbury Romance</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I. The Novel as Romance</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II. The Town and People as Characters</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Maiden Castle</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Angus Wilson writes that "a view of life, however unusual, does not make a worthwhile writer. It is only because Powys's view illuminates the world so extraordinarily in his novels that it merits consideration." Wilson would have been more accurate had he asserted that the novels merit consideration not only because of the life-view they reflect but also because of the skill with which that view is immersed in the novels. That is, Powys's idiosyncratic philosophy of life should be accorded consideration no matter how good the novel in which it is found. If the ideology, which is forcefully stated in his quasi-philosophical tracts such as A Philosophy of Solitude, The Art of Happiness and In Defence of Sensuality, provides a viable way of living for a great many people, then the precepts he formulates cannot be disparaged because of the medium he uses to convey them.

If, however, our concern is with John Cowper Powys, the novelist, we must shift our emphasis. Indeed, careful study of his novels does this for us. Wolf Solent, A Glastonbury Romance and Maiden Castle are not unmitigated tracts for the golden age or the rediscovery of the Welsh 'es-plumeoir' envisioned by Johnny Geard or Uryen Quirm; nor do they lionize

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that character in the novels whom we may call the Powys-figure because physically and temperamentally he reminds one of Powys, himself, the self-critical Powys of Autobiography. My contention is that, though the sentiment of the novels is directed against something specific-ratiocinative, materialistic modern man—and though the novels posit two different ways of fulfilling oneself in reaction to a technological society, their main concern is not philosophical. The novels do not define specific ways of living in the universe. They contain characters whose life-ways are tested by their physical environments and by the other characters who people the world Powys created. The focus in Wolf Solent and Maiden Castle is on the Powys-figure who lives simply in the universe, achieving solitary fulfillment; the focus in A Glastonbury Romance is on the magician figure who wishes to live a life beyond the one he lives, who is aware of and seeks to realize a different plane of existence. Nonetheless, the three novels contain a whole range of responses to what Powys feels is a variegated universe, one in which "the mystery of mysteries is Personality, a living Person; and there is that in Personality which is indetermined, unaccountable, changing every second!" (A Glastonbury Romance, ch. 21, p. 693). Also, though each novel ends with a celebration of anti-rational, anti-mechanistic values, each one has a theme of larger scope. Wolf Solent, for example, deals with the loss of the protagonist's self-righteousness. Concomitant with this is his acceptance of the universe and his Wordsworthian animistic relation to it. A Glastonbury Romance explores the diverse responses to that mystical element of life which people believe in in varying degrees. Maiden Castle combines the focus of the aforementioned two books, describing the reactions of a number of characters to what Powys calls the
fourth dimension, that aspect of existence which cannot be assessed tangibly. This novel is especially concerned with the stance of the Powys-figure and the extent to which he sympathizes with this facet of existence.

In this thesis, then, I propose to show that Powys is a conscious and conscientious craftsman, a writer of fiction whose primary impulse is to probe the views of life that the whole range of characters who people his novels have. The novels enhance Powys's stature not as a stoic or hedonist philosopher but as the creator of a world. In "The Creation of Romance" Powys poses the question "What is the main idea of A Glastonbury Romance?" He, himself, answers that "The main idea is a life, not a theory or a speculation, and in this case the life of a particular spot upon the earth's surface." The atmosphere, the milieu of Glastonbury is, in fact, richly captured. By examining the structure and theme of three novels, I hope to support the proposition that Powys has a broad scope as well as a central concern. In other words, I do not think that he is merely writing a fictional In Defence of Sensuality in which he formulates the precepts by which one is to live. Derek S. Savage is wildly wrong when, in an aside on Powys in his book The Withered Branch, he accuses him of presenting the cult of sensuality didactically.

This presentation, presupposing a settled basis of formulated experience, distinguishes him from those who are themselves spiritually involved in a process of turning towards nature as a release from the burdens and strains of the distinctively human life which is frustrated by the conditions of the modern world.3

In Autobiography, a spiritual autobiography not unlike The Prelude, Powys

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traces his own reaction against and release from the modern world. Moreover, one of his creations, Wolf Solent, has to find a Wordsworthian escape route into nature and another of his characters, Dud No-man, learns a great deal about a similar life-illusion that he holds onto throughout Maiden Castle. Powys's interest in A Glastonbury Romance as well as Wolf Solent and Maiden Castle is not restricted to a single kind of response to life. Powys achieves his range by presenting a variety of persons with distinct life-views. The emphasis on the nonrational response, either the magician's or the Powys-figure's, at the close of each of the novels to be discussed gives him the impact, the concentration of vision, of Lawrence.

Powys's conclusions about the art of Dostoievsksy's novel writing in Dostoievsky, his critical examination of the Russian's work, are valuable because Powys, in his published works at any rate, is rarely concerned with aesthetics, with novels as works of art. For Powys, Dostoievsky is the world's greatest novelist. What is surprising is that Powys accords him this honour partly because Dostoievsky is a conscious mystifier, one who distorts his life vision.

...since his first great purpose is to convince his readers that his invented world is a world of 'real reality', a world intimately, psychically and magnetically connected with the immediate actual world that these same readers know only too well in their own experience, he must deliberately as a good craftsman in the most subtle craft that exists, obscure and sidetrack his ideal thoughts, saw, hack, lop and disfigure the beautifully balanced branches of his long cherished metaphysical entelechies, and, above all, never allow his own passionate, mystical, secret, personal vision of life to sail prosperously with all its flags flying and its masts unbroken into the haven where it would be.⁴

⁴John Cowper Powys, Dostoievsky (London: John Lane, 1946), p. 100.
Any novelist who avers that "Everything a writer writes is of necessity propaganda; propaganda for his personal view of human values, his personal 'Philosophy of life'" seems to want to impart his own life-vision too urgently, too immediately to diffuse or obscure his message. Yet in Wolf Solent, A Glastonbury Romance and Maiden Castle, Powys does not permit his 'personal vision of life to sail prosperously with all its flags flying and its masts unbroken into the haven where it would be'. For example, the women of Powy's novels function as critics of the ways of life of the men of the novels: Gerda Torp and Christie Malakite rebuke Wolf Solent for his inadequacies as a man; Wizzie Ravelston and Thuella Wye mock Dud No-man for his masculine short-comings. The men's spiritual and cosmic impulses are always counterbalanced by the less ethereal concerns of the women:

the erotic emotions, when they brim over from the masculine spirit, extricate themselves, as women's feelings never do, from the bitter-sweet honeycomb of Nature, and shoot off, up, out, and away, into dimensions of non-natural existence, where the nerve-rays of women cannot follow. (A Glastonbury Romance, ch. 19, p. 637).

So, too, are the ideologies and mysticism of Johnny Geard and Uryen Quirm tempered by the scepticism of the Powys figures, John Crow and Dud No-man, and are rejected outright by most of the inhabitants of Geard's Glastonbury and Quirm's Dorchester. In Weymouth Sands Sylvanus Cobbold, the magician, and Magnus Muir, the scholarly Powys-figure, are even less successful in their attempts to realize their life-visions; the former is committed to Dr. Brush's asylum, the latter is jilted by a sensuous girl who reminds one of Wizzie and Gerda. In an unpublished paper read to the Powys Society

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Glen Cavaliero argues that *Wolf Solent* "is a critique as well as a defence of the individualistic life, and makes no glib or confident moral judgements. There is a beautifully held balance of values."\(^6\) Truly, Powys's concern, in the novels I will examine, is to explore the viability of the life-illusions his characters hold,\(^7\) not to propound his life illusion or to allow "his 'main idea', however deep, however original, however illuminating, to be triumphantly crowned in the midst of a final grand cosmogonic transformation Scene like the principal girl in a Christian Pantomime."\(^8\)

It is only at the end of *A Glastonbury Romance* that one gets Powys's vision distilled; only in that lyrical passage after the death of Johnny Geard does he not disguise 'the beautifully balanced branches of his long cherished metaphysical entelechies'. Yet the novel itself is not undermined. Though *A Glastonbury Romance* momentarily shifts its focus from the town and its effect on the inhabitants to Powys's affirmation that the unknown dimension of life will not be undermined by the forces of science and technology, primarily and magnificently it evokes Glastonbury's atmospheric presence.

Despite his disrespect for Tolstoi because the Russian is an artist of the normal, because he is seemingly impervious to the unknown dimension, Powys emulates Tolstoi in some important respects. An unhurried writer, he shifts his point of view fluidly from character to

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\(^7\) One's life-illusion is his individual way of coming to terms with his environment.

\(^8\) Dostoevsky, p. 100.
character, and is all of his fictional creations. Sympathetically enter­
ing them, he creates full characters as different as Rodney Loder and Mad
Bet and John Crow. He does not scorn Dog Cattistock or Dave Spear or
Jason Otter, allowing them their life-illusions. Indeed, Powys is indul­
gent towards anyone as long as that person's tao or life-way involves no
cruelty. Of a pathetically self-conscious aristocrat in Maiden Castle,
Powys writes:

Providence in depriving the poor man of every human gift but that of being
a gentleman had endowed this virtue with so much magic power of its own
that a palpable though imponderable circle of exclusiveness spread itself
over everything within his reach....Between his self-conscious boot-soles
and this particular carpet a feudal relation had already established it­
self which compelled all the other boots in the room to recognize the pre­
sence of some subtle privilege. (Maiden Castle ch. 5, p. 219).

Powys is as accommodating and considerate in describing this gentleman
as is the waiter in shielding that man from the intrusion of the members
of the Cumber party; "the waiter...without anything said, protected his
life-illusion with every wave of his discriminating napkin." (Maiden
Castle ch. 5, p. 225). Sensitive to the multiplicity of responses pos­
sible in a variegated universe, and to the contradictions inherent in them
all, Powys, especially in A Glastonbury Romance, achieves the range that
Tolstoi does in Anna Karenina.

To get the range of characterization I have credited him with,
Powys went for the most part to the different ways of living that in
varying degrees made up his own life-illusion. That is, Powys objectifies
each strand of his own nature, creating whole characters from these frag­
ments. In Autobiography, written immediately before Maiden Castle and a
few years after Wolf Solent and A Glastonbury Romance, Powys described the
components of his modus vivendi, his way of living in the universe.
Unless all my self-analysis is superficial, it (my life-illusion) assumes the shape of a compound, less self-contradictory than it used to be, but not even yet entirely harmonized, of five rather discordant elements. I will name them in the order in which, at the present moment, I feel them to be more or less dominant. They resolve themselves into a desire to enjoy the cosmos, a desire to appease my Conscience, a desire to play the part of a Magician, a desire to play the part of a Helper, and finally a desire to satisfy my Viciousness.9

To those familiar with Powys's novels, each element he names of his life-illusion is easily identifiable with specific characters. Wolf Solent, John Crow and Dud No-man live solely to enjoy the cosmos on their own terms though each has qualms about the validity of his approach to life; Johnny Geard, Sylvanus Cobboid and Uryen Quirm are magicians; Sam Dekker, Claudius Cask and Darnley Otter are helpers; Owen Evans is an unwilling sadist. Even the mundane communists, Red Robinson and Dave Spear, reflect that facet of Powys's nature which rejects private property. Of course, because of their wholehearted devotion to communism, their attempt to make it the essential part of their life-illusions, they are somewhat pitiable figures. Powys's individuals are not just vital cogs in a machine; moreover, his universe is not a machine. Paternally commenting on Dave Spear's inadequacy to deal with people, particularly his wife, Powys omnisciently writes that Spear "was free that night to read his Atlantis book till the candle in Dickery Cantle's third back bedroom burnt to the socket. But he read only three pages. It is hard to be impersonal in a cosmos that runs to personality." (A Glastonbury Romance ch. 26, p. 909).

The most important feature of Powys's life-illusion at the time he wrote Wolf Solent, A Glastonbury Romance and Maiden Castle was his

desire to enjoy the cosmos. It is despite an inherently manichean universe that Powys resolves to be happy. He entitles his philosophy one of "In-spite"; "for it is in spite of the blows dealt him by chance and fate that the individual resolves to be happy whatever may befall." Believing firmly in parthenogenesis, the ability of man to create his own world, Powys also recognized that man must utilize his power to forget and annihilate unpleasant memories.

Powys's happy man is essentially a pragmatist. In a chaotic universe, he must withdraw into his own consciousness shutting out what is alien to his nature and rejecting momentarily the 'merely human'. Though he has to fight to achieve the conditions necessary for happiness, his actual ecstatic sensation is passive rather than active. "By remaining absolutely still, and simply contemplating what is immediately around us, we fulfill the ultimate purpose of our living." Always the contemplative moments! These are sacred moments akin to Eliot's epiphanies in which is apprehended "the point of intersection of the timeless/with time," and Wordsworth's spots of time in which,

Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

11 Ibid., p. 72.
Powys, in *In Defence of Sensuality*, calls the man able to enjoy these moments, the ichthyosaurus-ego. He is that person who seeks happiness for himself. He does this by reverting to primitive life in his redemptive, contemplative moments. He "feels himself backward, down the long series of his avatars, into the earlier planetary life of animals, birds, and reptiles, and even into the cosmogonic life of rocks and stones." By giving himself up to primordial sensations, the ichthyosaurus-ego experiences a rapture "old as the world, a rapture ante-dating by aeons of time the sensations of beasts and birds."¹⁴

For Powys, the whole universe is alive. It is "simply a vast congeries of living Bodies and Souls, each one of whom is in contact with dimensions of existence transcending both Time and Space."¹⁵ The ichthyosaurus-ego's reaction to this universe is not to roll in the responsive vegetation that Birkin gives himself up to in *Women in Love*; his reaction is more cerebral. He enjoys that malleable body, the universe, contemplatively. In this way he merges with plants and allies himself with the so-called inanimate part of the earth. The self, employing its imaginative will, encounters the not-self in which everything is implicit; "it can unweave our whole human life tapestry. It can work back, down through all the aeons and all the avatars, into the original primum mobile..."¹⁶

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¹⁴ *In Defence of Sensuality*, p. 99.
¹⁵ Ibid., p. 208.
¹⁶ Ibid., p. 249.
¹⁷ Ibid., p. 292.
The ichthyosaurus-ego is selfish to the extent that the moments of fulfillment that he experiences are achieved only in solitude.

It is only by this feeling of loneliness that we can escape the gregarious warmth of the crowd, that murderous enemy of all deep joy, and detach ourselves from the fever of human ideals. It is only by this feeling of loneliness that we can annihilate the preposterous claims of a life of action, and return to the calm reservoirs of earth, air, water, and fire, from which, as our soul contemplates them, emerge those lovely essences, the constant enjoyment of which constitutes the only indestructible ecstasy of life.\(^{18}\)

The way of the saint, though it is antithetical to that of the ichthyosaurus-ego ideologically, is like it temperamentally. In both cases action is subordinate to contemplation. "For even while the saint acts, pursuing so obstinately the happiness of others, his mind is forever fixed upon that sadness of pity, that mental image of suffering Love which he has taken as his ideal."\(^{19}\) The apotheosis of the saint aligns himself with Christ not with God (or, the First Cause). He renounces happiness as the purpose in life. Subordinating personal desires, he lives "with the sole and single object of relieving the suffering of other beings, and of increasing the happiness of other beings."\(^{20}\)

Whereas the saint has eradicated all the evil inherent in his dualistic nature, the sadist has submerged all the good. Despite the voyeuristic quality of Powys's sadism (reading, for example, about inflicting pain), it alone seemed "to stir my erotic feelings to their depths."\(^{21}\) Also, Powys believed in the projection of creative or destructive psychic eidola. Consequently, though his most sadistic acts were to cut up some

\(^{18}\)Ibid., pp. 312-3.  
\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 231.  
\(^{20}\)Ibid., p. 275.  
\(^{21}\)Autobiography, p. 190.
worms and to kill some young birds, he felt that just thinking of more heinous crimes could influence the perverse thoughts of others. Just as horrifying to Powys were the acts of cruelty that others did actually perpetrate. Vivisection and those who practise that sadistic pursuit (for example, Dr. Brush and the other staff members of what the people of Weymouth called 'Hell's Museum') are the recipients of some of Powys's most denunciatory prose. Powys, however, most successfully objectified that sadistic aspect of himself in Owen Evans of *A Glastonbury Romance*. Powys treats him sympathetically because Evans genuinely struggles against the cruelty inherent in him. Only when he is confronted with a sadistic act is that yearning of his, to see someone hit with an iron bar, stilled.

Out of his desire to play the part of a Magician, Powys created some memorable magician-figures. Differentiating them from ichthyosaurus-egos, Powys wrote that "the desire to be a Magician, that is to say to exercise a certain super-natural control over my destiny and that of others, did not completely coincide with the pure, unadulterated enjoyment of sensuous feelings surrounded by an aura of obscure memories." The magician's contact with nature is ultimately a vehicle to some deeper reality; the contact of Powys's happy man with the earth, on the contrary, is more immediate and organic. Sylvanus Cobbõld shovels dung and Uryen Quirm presses his forehead to the earth in order to get closer to the paradisal underworld which, in Welsh terminology, is called ANNWN. Wolf Solent and Dud No-man dig their walking sticks into the earth to feel the mysterious rapport between themselves and inanimate objects. They receive rich

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22Ibid., p. 7.
history-laden emanations from this contact but they do not use them to try to break onto the different plane of existence that the magicians wish to embrace.

The magician figures, Quirm, Cobbold and Johnny Geard are united in their attempt to break through to, or realize, a civilization and an ideal greater than those found in their own age. At the end of *A Glastonbury Romance*, Powys reveals that this golden age is not rooted temporally or spatially; nor is it static. Indeed, that force which built Maiden Castle and Stonehenge will build other noble civilizations. It is the power of the golden age, "the creative principle, wronged by four thousand years of misguided progress."23

The great goddess Cybele, whose forehead is crowned with the Turrets of the Impossible, moves through the generations from one twilight to another; and of her long journeying from cult to cult, from shrine to shrine, from revelation to revelation, there is no end. (*A Glastonbury Romance*, ch. 30, p. 1172).

The prototype for these paradises, though, is that Celtic concept of the earthly Elysium, Annwn. "Annwn is a wonderful region--...it is a place where a bountiful nature provides food from the trees and music from the birds, and there is nothing but peace."24

Powys's magicians live or approach this Utopia inwardly as well as externally. Uryen Quirm, for example, had a 'Hiraeth', a Welsh word for Uryen's straining, "that longing, that yearning, that craving, that madness to break through." (*Maiden Castle*, ch. 9, p. 467). Uryen,


24Morine Smith, "The Magician Figure in the Novels of John Cowper Powys." M.A. Diss., Carleton U., May 1967.
because he wrote about this desire for money and was, consequently, allied with "the sly children of gold and of burning, turning the dew of darkness into evil," (Maiden Castle, ch. 9, p. 468) destroyed his chance of ever seeing 'it' (Annwn) "in my soul...where the only reality do bide." (Maiden Castle, ch. 9, p. 468). Thus, although cults such as those which formed around Stonehenge and Maiden Castle are spatio-temporal ideals, the magician can live the golden age internally. The drive with which he 'breaks through' is a sublimated sex-urge. Sylvanus Cobbold lies beside but does not cohabit with Marret Jones. By holding her, he generates energy which he uses to approach his ideal state. Uryen Quirm says:

Don't you see what force there is in sterile love? Why, my dear boy, it's the strongest force there is! Rampant desire unfulfilled--why, there is nothing it can't do. Stir up sex till it would put out the sun and then keep it sterile; that's the trick. That's the grand trick of all spiritual life. (Maiden Castle, ch. 6, p. 252).

Again, the magician and ichthyosaurus-ego put an idiosyncratic Powys experience to different uses. In Autobiography, Powys alludes to the sensations of impersonal lust which for him, were more gratifying sexually than actual sexual intercourse. Being disgusted with what to him were the grosser aspects of normal sexuality, he was stirred sensually by the contemplation of sylphs. Quite apart from the magician's occult transmutation of the sex drive, some of Powys's characters enjoy this kind of cerebral voyeurism to achieve moments of heightened sensations.

Powys recognized that we are all not magicians. It is important to realize that the mystics represent just one facet of Powys and one fragment, albeit an important one, of the novels. Maiden Castle and Weymouth Sands do not culminate in the installation of the prophet-king. Indeed, Sylvanus is judged insane by his townspeople as is Uryen, in some
senses, by his son. In *A Glastonbury Romance*, Johnny Geard does become a prophet-king, spiritual and titular leader of Glastonbury. Nonetheless, he loses interest in the town and haggling over technicalities of his disciples. Rejecting the mantle of prophet, (he never was interested in his mayoralty role) he seeks, in death, a fulfillment too burdensome in life. All the magicians, in fact, court death when their powers to pierce the crust of civilization atrophy.

The final aspect of himself that Powys recognized and that became another of the novels' centers is his desire to appease his conscience.

I cannot remember a time when Conscience was not a trouble to me, ordering me to do what I didn't want to do and to refrain from doing what I wanted to do. In fact it may be said at once that the grand struggle of my life has been between my Conscience and my impulse to live a life made up solely and entirely of sensual-mystical sensations.25

The intervention of his conscience greatly modifies the direction of his novels. Powys's awareness of the flaws in his selfish sensation-seekers provides him with the detachment with which he writes about even the Powys-figures. Wolf Solent, for example, is more than a mere fictive self-portrait of Powys. Wolf stands in relation to Powys the way Stephen Dudalus stands in relation to Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Powys is in control of his art—he is detached sufficiently from Wolf, and from Dud No-man, to view them ironically. He recognizes how inadequate their lives are in certain respects.

One final piece of background information which must be given in Powys's cosmic view of the universe. The kind of universe that Powys's characters respond to is less open to alternatives than the way in which they come to terms with it. His overview is a donné, deduced empirically

from ourselves. Because we contain both good and evil, we must take for
granted (these are Powys's words) that we, indeed all things, were made
in the image of the First Cause who smacks of Aquinas's unmoved mover.
As he will do over and over in the novels and essays, Powys asserts that
the First Cause is dualistic, being composed of both good and evil. As he
says in *In Defence of Sensuality*, because each man is a microcosm of the
First Cause, it is not to be worshipped—on the contrary, its good is to
be loved, its evil hated. "In the depths of our consciousness we are
forever fighting to overcome our own tendency to cruelty and to obliterate
the tendency to cruelty in the First Cause."²⁶ Only on an individual
plane is the cosmos an image of the First Cause. In its entirety it is
heterogeneous, a multiverse "made up of nothing else than the...struggling
together of endless conscious, semi-conscious, demi-semi-conscious entit­
ies."²⁷

Powys's cosmic view is a curious one. It is ultimately static
not kinetic. The universe or multiverse, is a fluctuating, dynamic organ­
ism whose motion is arrested by our consciousnesses and wills. Powys
dismisses the term stream-of-consciousness as inaccurate. Instead, he
argues that our wills constantly change the objects that our consciousnesses
hold momentarily in patterns. The fluctuating masses of sensation are
devoured by

²⁶In *Defence of Sensuality*, pp. 306-7.
²⁷Ibid., p. 247.
an unblinking Eye gazing into a mirror full of shapes that it has the power of transforming... But always behind this Eye... is a living and very magnetic thought-goblin whose will-power is continually deciding which of these retina-colours and retina-shadows shall be compelled to transfer themselves to the mirror or be removed from the mirror. 28

The objects devoured by the Eye have, in themselves, similar Eyes and similar wills which are, of course, dualistic. They are both good-evil and creative-destructive. This is important to Powys's philosophy. For him, "the course of every natural phenomenon is personal--the exertion of energy by a conscious, or at any rate a half-conscious will." 29 No less than any sentient or insentient thing, the First Cause is a personality who is capable of projecting waves of creative and destructive energy and whose vision and happiness depend on its free will. Powys's belief that all beings and all things have the power to create their own worlds sets him apart from those, like Wallace Stevens, whose vision is anthropomorphic.

This study of the theme and structure of *Wolf Solent, A Glastonbury Romance* and *Maiden Castle* will reveal how viable the autonomized fragments of Powys's own nature are. It will reveal the fullness and richness of these novels. I reiterate that these novels do not fictively echo the philosophy articulated in, for example, *In Defence of Sensuality*. The happy man Powys delineates there comes to terms in the novels with much more than his contemplative ecstasies. He is challenged by others attempting to lead lives different than but as meaningful as his own. Angus Wilson feels that Powys's thought is modified by a fundamental scepticism.


which is "quite peculiar in so far as its function is not the negative desire to reject but the positive unwillingness to exclude the innumerable facets of thought or feeling that attach to any person or event." Wilson realizes this quality helps determine the form and content of the novels. Powys's efforts, then, "to tone down his personal ideology and muffle the oars of his private metaphysical lifeboat," and to assess the shocks his ideal man suffers in incompatible surroundings preclude that ideology being the shaping force of the novels. And it is the shaping force I mean to explore when I use the terms theme and structure. For the most part I will use structure to mean framework or superstructure; however, I also wish to investigate Powys's internal ordering. Structure here includes "any pattern such as symmetry, recurrence, rhythm, similarity, contrast, progression-found within much or all of the novel." Recurring motifs such as the face on the steps of Waterloo Station in *Wolf Solent* and the stones of Stonehenge in *A Glastonbury Romance* are examples of such a pattern.

In her unpublished thesis entitled *John Cowper Powys, Novelist*, Margaret Going frequently states how Powys should have altered his novels to achieve unity. This violates the basic dictum that understanding a poem or novel means understanding the whole of it. Northrop Frye writes that the reader must surrender his mind and senses to the impact of the work of art as a whole. Given this kind of sympathetic reading, Powys's

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31 Dostoievsy, p. 140.

novels reveal their own unity. Even *A Glastonbury Romance* is a single work of art; the characters of that novel, though, are important only insofar as they relate to Glastonbury.
CHAPTER II

WOLF SOLENT

Structurally, the novel Wolf Solent presents no difficulties. It opens with Wolf travelling by train to Ramsgard in Dorset and ruminating on the events which led him to return to Dorset as well as the things he expects to encounter there. He also dwells on his 'mythology', "a device that supplied him with the secret substratum of his whole life,"¹ (I. 19). The question which he only hazily and inwardly articulates is whether the events that awaited him—these new scenes—these unknown people—would be able to do what no outward events had yet done—break up this mirror of half-reality and drop great stones of real reality—drop them and lodge them—hard, brutal material stones—down there among those dark waters and that mental foliage. (I. 21).

This question is really the starting point for what happens to Wolf—and what happens to Wolf is what happens in the novel as a whole. The people whom he encounters and the events he is involved in do alter his mythology. Indeed, they destroy it and nearly drive him to suicide. Although he does recover, his earlier feelings are not restored. With the recognition that his happiness will be a different happiness than that his mythology provided, the novel closes. Wolf Solent, then, is a bildungsroman; it traces the inner life of the hero through the vicissitudes of his Dorset encounters. The structure, homogeneous with the content, is linear. The action is not diffuse; the other characters are considered mostly in their immediate relation to Wolf.

¹All quotations from Wolf Solent are from the Penguin edition (England, 1961).
Wolf Solent should be the novel with the widest range of appeal for those readers not accustomed to Powys's artistic and philosophic idiosyncracies. It is structurally simple, not having the many centres of A Glastonbury Romance or Weymouth Sands. (These novels have no unifying plots and they do have characters representing each of the Powys fragments.) "The more direct impact of Wolf Solent owes much to the fact that the author's views are mainly concentrated in Wolf and not splintered off among a number of interacting characters, as in Jobber Skald (Weymouth Sands) for instance."² Wolf Solent contains none of the occultism of the later Powys obsessed by Welsh mysticism. (Nonetheless, it incipiently contains this fascination--Christie is attributed to be a descendant of Merlin.) The novel is, however, a difficult one. One would have to concur with Angus Wilson, one of those few who champion Powys, when he says that a writer receiving scant attention is wronged because the critics have lacked space to do more than indicate. Wolf Solent, no less than A Glastonbury Romance and Maiden Castle, is an enormously complex novel. Written out of Wolf's subjective center, it is concerned with the fluctuations of the man's conscious mind. And these are rather esoteric states of mind that are charted. Wolf's mythology is identifiable with the state of Powys's ichthyosaurus-ego. Wolf himself is "a megalomaniac of life-sensation. He is infinitely proud of being just what he is, a human-animal-vegetable biped, walking on the surface of the earth and staring up at the sun."³ Concomitant with this aspect of Wolf, however, is the idio-


³In Defence of Sensuality, p. 90.
syncratic view of the role he has to play in the cosmic struggle of good and evil. This is the magician's side of Wolf's nature. A protagonist in the battle against evil, he attempts to exercise supernatural control over his own and other's destiny. Defeated in this internal struggle, he loses his whole life-illusion. Wolf's recovery is only a partial one. "The supernatural itself had vanished from his mind." (631). Turning his back on the magician's way, he contents himself with an animistic relationship with nature, the state of the incipient ichthyosaurus-ego at home in the universe. Although his moments of contemplative ecstasy are destroyed, Wolf loses his self-righteousness. In addition, to comprehend the process that Wolf's mind undergoes from ichthyosaurus-ego with its offspring, internal participation in a struggle between good and evil, to a corporeal intimate of nature is not to accede to the relevancy of such a transition. Thought of as the destruction of a man's life-illusion which locked him too much in a diseased mental construct, though, the novel can be relevant to those outside of Powys's esoteric borders. Like Stephen Dedalus whom Joyce has to drag back to earth to stop from soaring, Wolf Solent needs to venture behind the pigsty, to plunge into the reality Powys eschewed, for his revelation. Assessing the broader implications of the novel's internal focus, Glen Cavaliero writes, "If it is taken as representative of the inner, most secretive fantasies, life-awareness of all men, the relevance of the novel as a human document will be seen to be profound."4

The danger of equating Wolf Solent with Powys should be evident.

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As I have already indicated ("Introduction", p. 17), Powys's life-illusion is not proffered untarnished in his novels. In _A Glastonbury Romance_ and _Maiden Castle_ it is fragmented. In _Wolf Solent_, it gives way to a less occult, less cerebral life-way. Given his later mystical, visionary novels, one cannot see in Powys the Wolf at the end of the novel who discovers, like Wordsworth discovered, "that certain 'Intimations of Immortality' had to take a narrower, a simpler form, as the years advanced!" (25.631). Like Dud No-man, Wolf rejects the supernatural: 'If I can't enjoy life,' he thought 'with absolute childish absorption in its simplest elements, I might as well never have been born!' (25,632). Unlike Uryen Quirm and Johnny Geard, he rejects death when his powers flag—he is not a mystic.

One of the last things Powys wrote before he died was a preface to _Wolf Solent_. It is a jerky, somewhat confused account of the nostalgia out of which the novel was written and of the purpose of the book.

What might be called the purpose and essence and inmost being of this book is the necessity of opposites. Life and Death, Good and Evil, Matter and Spirit, Body and Soul, Reality and Appearance have to be joined to-gether, have to be forced into one another, have to be proved dependent upon each other, while all solid entities have to dissolve, if they are to outlast their momentary appearance, into atmosphere.5

However, although the major conflict is the "supernatural struggle going in the abysses (of Wolf's consciousness), with the Good and the Evil so sharply opposed" (25.632), the resolution of the novel is not in terms of these opposites. Wolf learns that life is more complex than the polarization of Good and Evil first led him to believe. He learns to re-establish himself in his body, to immerse himself in nature, which he had hitherto been avoiding.

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Though his protagonist recognizes his mind has been diseased, Powys has written a novel exploring what for him is 'the mystery of consciousness.' Like Henry James before him, Powys was concerned not with outward action but with the internalization and assimilation of the external. Not objects, but the feelings that one associate with the objects are important. James captured the texture of the mind thusly in "The Art of Fiction":

Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chambers of the consciousness, and catching every air-born particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind.

Similarly, Virginia Woolf writes in "Modern Fiction" that life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged, it is a luminous halo. And the novelist must "record the atoms as they fall on the mind." Powys, aware that 'the secret of life is the secret of consciousness', has, nonetheless, a different conception of consciousness than either Henry James of Virginia Woolf. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Powys rejects 'stream of consciousness': "The modern novelist tends to crowd a great deal too much into his 'flowing waves' of consciousness." Our consciousnesses are creative-destructive Eyes regarding a world full of other creative-destructive Eyes. The pattern into which they arrange the myriad sensations which they receive depends on the philosophy which we have evolved to live by, (in other words, our life-illusions):

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8 In Defence of Sensuality, p. 195.
Our philosophy should have a certain overtone of awareness falling upon a mass of obscure, disorganized sensations, and giving them a compact and living continuity...Our vision must be a 'complex vision'. It must be a living organism, in the sense of being a cumulative wedge of light, made up of every awareness we possess, resolutely turned upon the ocean of the unknown.9

The characters in Virginia Woolf's The Waves try vainly to stay the flux of existence, to give their evanescent sensations some framework. Deep below the surface events, Bernard recognizes, is, even when we arrive punctually at the appointed time with our white waistcoats and polite formalities, a rushing stream of broken dreams...—that rise and sink even as we hand a lady down to dinner...there is nothing one can fish up in a spoon; nothing one can call an event—Yet it is alive too and deep, this stream... (emphasis mine).10

Wolf does not try to do this, to stop the flux of existence—it cannot be done in a chaotic, ever-changing universe. Nonetheless, he does have a way of enjoying the universe which orders his sensations. That way is the way of the ichthysaurus-ego which does give 'a living continuity' to the memories and stages of existence it passes. When he is unable to conjure up this contemplative enjoyment, the continuity is destroyed and Wolf almost kills himself—only the substitution of a simpler life-way saves him.

That Wolf Solent is an extraordinarily dense novel imagistically and thematically, a close examination of the first chapter, 'The Face on the Waterloo Steps,' will reveal. In a vacant compartment of the train taking him to Ramsgard, Wolf gives himself up to his mythology and to a consideration of his immediate past and future. He wonders whether that which awaited him would destroy his mythology, drop 'hard, brutal, material stones' into it. Oblivious to Wolf while he muses is a bluebottle fly which

9Ibid., pp. 199-200.

buzzed up and down above his head, every now and then settling on one of the coloured advertisements of seaside resorts—Weymouth, Swanage, Ulworth, and Poole—cleaning its front legs upon the masts of painted ships or upon the sands of impossibly cerulean waters. (I.13).

The bluebottle is Powys's symbol for those who have not succeeded in becoming detached. These people are over-human, part of the 'gregarious warmth of the crowd' which was anathema to Powys. They cannot find fulfillment in detachment, in solitude. To avoid becoming like them—caught up in the too-human—it is necessary to exercise the very magic of Detachment, that magic that makes it possible for you to be in one place—like the man seated on the naked stone by the flowing water—and yet to be in the heart of the flaming sun and at the circumference of the divine ether. For if you fail to exercise the magic of Detachment upon the bluebottle flies who infest your road they will really lay their eggs—the eggs of the maggots of civilization—in your soul. And then you will believe in the justifiability of vivisection..in slaughterhouses, in brothels, in slavery, and in the great, noble, scientific, gregarious, loving, human undetached art of—Advertisement.

Rousseau was right. It is only by detaching yourself from human civilization that you can live a life worthy of a living soul. 11

The appearance of the bluebottle fly foreshadows Wolf's loss of detachment and near self-destruction. At the end of the novel, though, Wolf Solent (lone wolf) finds the solitude, the aloneness, which fortifies his sanity and his identity.

Part of the bluebottle fly's infection is "a moving tower of instruments and appliances, the monstrous Apparition of Modern Invention" (I. 15). With a Laurentian flourish, Wolf (here, a mouthpiece of Powys) lacerates modern civilization which leaves the earth bleeding and victimized, like a smooth-bellied vivisected frog. He saw it scooped and gouged and scraped and harrowed. He saw it hawked at out of the humming air. He saw it netted in a quivering entaglement of vibrations, heaving and shuddering under the weight of iron and stone. (I.16).

Just as he hid his mythology from the mechanistic universe, he recognizes the need to do so with his less cerebral, but viable new way of life.

The despair-ridden face of the man on the steps outside Waterloo Station is an iterative image which is always hovering around Wolf's consciousness.

It was just the face of a man, of a mortal man, against whom Providence had grown as malignant as a mad dog. And the woe upon the face was of such a character that Wolf knew at once that no conceivable social readjustments or ameliorative revolutions could ever atone for it--could ever make up for the simple irremediable fact that it had been as it had been! (1.15).

The face is the albatross around Wolf's neck. Solent associates this face with the face of the waiter at the Lovelace Hotel; and it is through him, Stalbridge, that this persistent image is exorcised. He also finds "the fleshless head of William Solent buried in the earth" and "the despairing head of that son of perdition crouching at Waterloo Station", (4.85) antithetical. Whenever Wolf seeks to detach himself, to selfishly withdraw in order to achieve moments of heightened consciousness--indeed, at all moments of crisis--the image of the face on the Waterloo Steps nags at him, attempts to draw him back to the reality of human goings-on. Just as he and Christie are about to consummate their love the face appears to him.

All the sorrows in the world seemed incarnated in that face, all the oppressions that are done under the sun, all the outrages, all the wrongs! They seemed to cry shame upon him, these things; as if the indecision that tore at his vitals were a portion of whatever it was that caused such suffering. (20.459).

That face, of course, represents Wolf's conscience. It attempts to impose obligations on him, to deny him the selfish, contemplative moments in which he is truly happy. Wolf's consciousness of his debt to the face of despair is denied by Carfax who ministers to Stalbridge simply by giving him a job and money.
There was a scooped-out misery in the ex-waiter's eyes that reminded him of the man of the Waterloo Steps. He was evidently making some personal appeal to Carfax now. Perhaps he hoped to get employment from him. Perhaps he would get employment from him! What a thing it was to be possessed of the power that Carfax had! Carfax was now succouring the Waterloo-Steps man! (25.605).

Wolf's excitement seems out of keeping with the simple deed Carfax is performing. It is a revelation to him, though. He learns how wrong Jason Otter was when he told Wolf that as long as there was one miserable soul in the universe, he had no right to be happy. Unless you have the saint-ego (cf. "Introduction", p.11) and forego your happiness to alleviate the suffering of others, you do what Carfax did; you give the sufferer all the material things you can to mitigate his poverty or desperate condition, then you go your own way. You selfishly claim the prerogative to be alone and be happy. Wolf realizes that "The Cause up there could certainly at any minute make him howl like a mad dog. It could make him dance and skip and eat dung." (25.633). Until that happens and his potential for happiness is destroyed—according to Powys, poverty, cold, thirst, hunger, pain, ugliness, disgust, ill-health, can diminish it—he must seek happiness without pangs of guilt. He has just as much right to feel good as he has to do good. Wolf's father was never one to allow the First Cause to intrude upon his happiness nor did he have any qualms about being happy. Thus, Wolf opposed William Solent to the face on the Waterloo Steps. And, when he receives his final vision, when he discovers that the secret is 'to forget and to enjoy', he queries exultantly "Ha, old Truepenny, am I with you at last?" (25.631).

The first chapter also contains Wolf's internal articulation of his mythology. This philosophy which he has evolved is very close to that of the ichthyosaurus-ego which is described in In Defence of Sensuality.
"This abysmal happiness which we share with animals and birds and fishes and plants," and which gives a continuity to the disparate feelings and memories we assimilate is not the negative feature of Wolf's internal make-up. The life of sensation, the sinking into his soul, is not a pejorative kind of fulfillment in this novel. That his mythology resembles "the expanding of great vegetable leaves over a still pool-leaves nourished by hushed noons, by liquid, transparent nights, by all the movements of the elements" (1.20) is neither good nor bad. It is merely a symbol for what the ichthyosaurus-ego chooses to contemplate as the sum-total of the universe. Nonetheless, it is lost to Wolf because it was always accompanied by an arrogant mental idea—the idea, namely, that he was taking part in some occult cosmic struggle—some struggle between what he liked to think of as 'good' and what he liked to think of as 'evil' in those remote depths. (1.20)

Inventing the elaborate opposites of good and evil, he takes the side of the good only to give in to the evil and destroy his identity and his mythology with it. Only when he learns that evil does not suffuse Nature or people does he begin to be rehabilitated.

On his arrival in Dorset, his secret life is intact; so is his suspicion of Dorset's power to destroy it. He hears "insidious voices—voices that threatened unguessed at disturbances to that underground life of his which was like a cherished vice" (2.33); however, he remains confident that "this wonderful country must surely deepen, intensify, enrich his furtive inner life, rather than threaten or destroy it." (2.39). Until he submits to Gerda's demand for Urquhart's money, he often allows his mythology to possess him. Walking to Blacksod for the first time, for example,
He felt as if he enjoyed at that hour some primitive life-feeling that was identical with what these pollarded elms felt, against whose ribbed trunks the gusts of wind were blowing, or with what these shiny celandine-leaves felt, whose world was limited to tree-roots and fern-fronds and damp, dark mud! (4.67)

Despite these moments, Wolf gradually becomes enmeshed with Mr. Urquhart, Weevil, Gerda, Christie, and Jason and his idol Mukalog until his battle with evil is undermined and his identity shattered.

Wolf came to Dorset to assist Mr. Urquhart in writing a prurient history of that region. Immediately, Wolf attributes malignancy to him:

It presented itself to his mind as a clear issue, that he had now really come across a person who, in that mysterious mythopoeic world in which his own imagination insisted on moving, was a serious antagonist—an antagonist who embodied a depth of actual evil such as was a completely new experience in his life. (emphasis mine) (3.47-48).

Everything Mr. Urquhart does seems to be full of evil intent. Wolf feels that Urquhart hired Bob Weevil, who is already in love with Gerda, to seduce Wolf's wife. Thinking that the destruction of his marriage would provide Urquhart with sadistic enjoyment, Wolf reacts suspiciously to Urquhart's amiability with and interest in Weevil and young Torp. The aura of mystery surrounding Urquhart and Weevil is thick; Wolf has to learn what is reality and what is illusion. He chooses to believe that Weevil is out to exploit Gerda at Urquhart's bidding when, in fact, he is merely 'pining after her' as Lobbie Torp relates. He does, we are led to believe, make love to her but only because she permits him to, Wolf having let her down. Wolf chooses to believe that Urquhart is a truly sinister figure, that his love for Redfern drove the young man to attempt suicide and that it prompted Urquhart to dig up the boy's body and commit necrophilia. Because he had always "opposed, in his dialogues with himself, his own secret 'mythology' to some equally secret 'evil' in the world around him" (2.33), he regarded
Urquhart as an enemy. He had been so caught up battling the man, however, that he didn't bring his conscience to bear on the man's book until, reading the squire's notes, he recognizes the 'lewd preciosities' he is ghost writing.

Then, cold, frozen, eternal, malignant--this abominable doubt fell upon him like an accursed rain...drip-drop, drip-drop, drip-drop...each drop sinking out of sight into the dim unreasoning levels of his being, where it began poisoning the waters. (16.331)

By finishing the book and accepting Urquhart's money to propitiate Gerda, he compromises himself and totally shatters his life-illusion.

Lord Carfax pierces another of Wolf's beliefs, this time by revealing that Urquhart is far less in stature than the embodiment of evil. He assures Wolf that Redfern died of double pneumonia and that the voyeurism Wolf sold his soul to transfer into print was merely the idealization of "Urquhart's confounded peculiarities to quite such a tune you get dead sick of him! I'm all in favour of honest bawdry myself; but why sing such a song about it"? (25.610) These comments of Carfax make Wolf howl inwardly--

Ailinon! Ailinon! Was all the agitation, all the turmoil, all his consciousness of a supernatural struggle with some abysmal form of evil, reduced now to the paltry level of a feeble old bachelor's fantastic self-deception? (25.610)

His elaborate inner battle exposed to himself, Wolf, having lost his mythology, his ability to sink into his soul because of that battle, begins to recover. He begins to establish a simpler way of living in the universe.

Another threat to Wolf's mythology is Jason's Hindu rain-god, Mukalog. Wolf buys the idol from Jason with the thought of getting rid of it himself and, thus, destroying an incarnation of evil.
He came to the conclusion that although it is impossible for any living human being to obliterate all elements of good from itself, it is possible for an artist, or for a writer, or even for the anonymous creative energy of the race itself, to create an image of evil that should be entirely evil. (4.60)

Later, he shoves Urquhart's cheque under the rain-god which was hidden in his dresser drawer. After his mythology is dead and he is hopelessly enmeshed in his domestic affairs with Gerda, he seizes on Mukalog as the repository of all that is thwarting him and flings it "high over the pigsty into the darkening field beyond" (22.533). Powys does not then forget about the idol Wolf has hurled behind the pigsty. He is, as I have mentioned, a careful writer. The imagery he weaves through the book is consistent. To say, as Margaret Going does in her thesis, that Powys has not placed details properly is to deny him his artfulness. The Apparition of Modern Invention, the face on the steps of Waterloo Station and Mukalog are all recurrent images which are resolved or acquire a new perspective at the end of the novel. In the case of the rain-god, it is suffused with the goldenness of the field which Wolf enters to experience his epiphany. This enhances the conclusion to which Wolf comes—that the deep forces of evil which he was fighting have been eliminated.

The other prominent threats to Wolf's mythology are the two women he alternately desires—Gerda and Christie. Desiring a woman to make love to as well as the prolongation of his dominant sensations, Wolf quickly discovers Gerda whose physical beauty immediately attracts him. She is a nature-girl: "Her voluptuous throat resembled an arum lily before it has unsheathed its petals" (4.70). She can whistle like a blackbird in a manner reminiscent of another pure earth-goddess, Rima of Green Mansions:
It was, as he recalled its full effect upon him, the expression of just those mysterious silences in Nature which all his life he had, so to speak, waited upon and worshipped. That strange whistling was the voice of those green pastures and those blackthorn-hedges, not as they were when human beings were conscious of them, but as they were in that indescribable hour just before dawn, when they awoke in the darkness to hear the faint, faint stirrings--upon the air--of the departing of the non-human powers of the night. (5.113).

Wolf, later, expatiates more fully on his association of Gerda with non-human powers. This feature of her convinces him that she, no less than Urquhart, has evil powers. On an outing with her on Poll's Camp, he links Gerda to that hill, thinking she was "in league with whatever more remote and more heathen powers had dominated this embattled hill" (15.327). These dark gods of primal matter, Wolf feels, are hostile to him. Christie, on the contrary, is associated with the plains below Poll's Camp which, though they are mystical, are imbedded with the spirit of King Arthur, a known quantity, a beneficent soul. Only when he discovers that it is his mind and not nature which is diseased is Wolf's mistrust of Gerda dispelled. Before this, he doubts her claim to virginity and he thinks Weevil is cuckolding him long before Gerda, hurt by Wolf, gives in to Weevil.

Wolf made a mistake by succumbing to Gerda's loveliness, a physical beauty which "absorbs with a kind of absoluteness the whole aesthetic sense, paralyzing the erotic sensibility" (5.103). Although she does not suit him, Wolf is helpless before a beauty "so over-powering, so absolute in its flawlessness" (4.73); however, (and I wish to emphasize this point) just because she is the embodiment of woman, of 'the seductive quality of a woman's body to all men', she does not fulfill Wolf's ideal. He wants to take her sexually--he has an insatiable craving to do so; nonetheless, she does not activate his spirit. She paralyzes his 'erotic sensibility'.
After Wolf possesses Gerda she loses her magic for him. Not being a passionate, sexual person Wolf becomes uninterested in her. Correspondingly, she becomes a much simpler creature. The lustre of a classical nymph rubs off her when she becomes a housewife and her pursuits become mundane. She enjoys dancing with Bob Weevil, spending money, and looking attractive (in the more pejorative sense of the word). His evanescent desire for gratification stilled in the boredom of marriage, and feeling trapped in a dead-end existence, Wolf senses the atrophy of his mythology. Egoistically, he also becomes obsessed with jealousy which causes him to lose the detachment necessary for him to withdraw into himself. Nor is Gerda left unscathed by their diurnal monotony--she loses her ability to sing like a blackbird. It is Carfax, again, who is the restorative agent.

Christie is Wolf's rightful soul-mate. She is like those sylphs who evoked in Powys himself a pure impersonal lust while he watched them on Weymouth sands. Powys described them as being hardly of the feminine sex at all! It is as if I had been born into this world from another planet--certainly not Venus; Saturn possibly--where there was a different sex altogether from the masculine and feminine that we know. It is of this sex, of this Saturnian sex, that I must think when in the secret chambers of my mind I utter the syllable "girl". I suppose women are more like these elfin sylphs, these fleeting elementals, then most men are; but I am not perfectly sure even about this.¹³

Christie is one of these elementals. She appears to be neither masculine nor feminine--"the impression he received of her appearance was...of a figure so slight and sexless that it resembled those meagre, androgynous forms..." (4.83). Wolf's soul, like Powys's, needs a sylph to motivate it without causing it to lose its apartness. His relationship with Christie does not need physical consummation to be consolidated. Indeed, Christie

evokes in him an impersonal lust which withdraws for Wolf as it does for Powys "with shrinking of its whole nature from contact with ordinary, normal, natural sex-expression." Because it is only a contemplative-essence, it is open-ended. Christie, who is described as having an elfish humour and as being a changeling out of the purer elements, provokes his spirit whenever his meagre passion for Gerda is stilled. Thus, he can maintain a 'strange intensity' in his relations with Christie though he only infrequently sees her—"His sensual nature tranquillized, satisfied, appeased, permitted his spirit to wander off freely towards that other girlish form, more elusive, less tangible..." (12.276)

Christie not only shares in some ways Wolf's mythology, or at least his desire to have a philosophy which is more than abstract, but she also is able to perceive the folly of Wolf's mystical, internal struggle. Containing a good deal of what Hewitt calls "the unfastidious realism which all Powys's women have," Christie rebukes Wolf for his private dualistic battle. "What you never seem to realize, for all your talk about 'good' and 'evil', is that events are something outside any one person's mind." (20.466). Her assessment of Wolf is as accurate as Wizzie Ravelston's pronouncement that Dud No-man is truly not a man. Although Wolf escapes from Christie's bedroom with his life-illusion intact, he is censured again by her. Having been unable to make love to her, he still loves her. She is still his soul-mate. Christie, however, needed to be more than the catalyst of Wolf's spirit. She wanted to be loved physically. A virgin,

14 Ibid., p. 207.

she feels that "'I should have known...tonight...what...now...I...shall...never...know!'" (20.467). Taking to Olwen, the product of the incestuous coupling of her father and sister, Christie gradually draws away from Wolf. Finally, after her father dies, she and the child retire to Weymouth. Wolf's resolve, however, that she is his true love is only strengthened. Despite the loss of his life-illusion,

There hung about the idea of her still...yes! still, still, still!......a sweetness as exciting as the wildest fancies of his youth, as those dark, secret fancies where the syllables 'a girl' carried with them so yielding an essence that breasts and hips and thighs lost themselves in an unutterable mystery!' (25.616)

His final vision is suffused with thoughts of a Christie who will remain alluring to him.

I have traced the influence of those who most affected Wolf's life. It would be worthwhile now to delineate his story in the linear fashion it is told. Although in discussing the effect others had on him I have patched together some of the fluctuations of his soul, I have not traced in Wolf the history of the articulation of his mythology to the loss of it to the formulation of a new life way, culminating with an epiphany which I have only briefly alluded to. The structure of *Wolf Solent* follows this pattern, from loss to redemption.

During his first few weeks in Dorset, Wolf is a happy man. Though he does not trust Urquhart, he is not susceptible to the 'noeud de vipères' which later strangles his soul. Not burdened by his work and not having any responsibility, he frequently sinks into his soul, giving himself up to the ecstasy of his mythology. When his mythology is dormant, Wolf gives vent to his fetish-worship, a simple communion with nature. Fetish-worship is a term coined by Powys to represent that power by which all of nature comes alive. He describes it in *Wolf Solent* in the following
manner:

It was a worship of all the separate, mysterious, living souls he approached: 'souls' of grass, trees, stones, animals, birds, fish; 'souls' of planetary bodies and of the bodies of men and women; the 'souls' even, of all manner of inanimate little things; the 'souls' of all those strange, chemical groupings that give a living identity to houses, towns, places, countrysides....and between his soul and the 'soul', as it were, of whatever it was he happened to be regarding, there seemed to be established a tremulous and subtle reciprocity. (4.54-55).

This animism is evocative of the early mind in Wordsworth's *The Prelude* which delighted in a reciprocal relationship with nature.

I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart. (The Prelude, 2.399-405)

Wolf never loses this ability to enter into a symbiotic relationship with nature. Like Rupert Birkin who wanders into a field, rolls in the responsive vegetation and then becomes a part of nature, Wolf, when his inner life is most troubled, is able to give "himself up to a physical sensation of being an integral portion of this wide, somnolent landscape!" (22.522)

Like Rupert, he wants something more (in Wolf's case, his mythology); however, unlike Rupert, he has to settle for that early Wordsworthian absorption in nature--the vision "of that immortal sea, which brought us hither" having been denied him.

As his stay in Dorset is extended, his mythology becomes more and more endangered. His job makes demands on his struggle with evil; his marriage necessitates his taking on responsibilities. In addition, his

16"Ode: Intimations of Immortality."
mother "who stands for enterprise and responsibility"\footnote{Glen Cavaliero, "Wolf Solent", p. 5.} arrives in Ramsgard to claim some of his time and he is compelled to take up the case of his father's offspring, Mattie Smith, and Olwen Smith as well. The pressure builds until he gives Gerda Urquhart's blood money and destroys his mythology. Wolf becomes a shell, a death-in-life figure, bereft of "any definite personality, no longer \footnote{In Defence of Sensuality, p. 38.} any banked-up integral self: (23.543). "A light capable of linking his days in flowing continuity" (24.572) is lost. His mythology had given him the fluid identity which Powys thinks is so important in a world of disparate experiences:

\textit{Continuity is the whole secret!} To have smoothed out, by constant use, those psychic grooves in one's nature along which the Will hurries, like a polished machine along a steel incline, bringing back these moments of fleeting delight, this is a great achievement.\footnote{Glen Cavaliero, "Wolf Solent", p. 5.}

Without this ability Wolf is, like Rhoda in \textit{The Waves}, a person without some centre by which one relates experiences. Rhoda commits suicide.

Wolf, attempting to drown himself in Lenty Pond, is saved by his body which is instinctively repelled by the prospect of death by drowning.

The very bones within him began screaming—a low, thin, wire-drawn scream—before what his mind was contemplating. It was not that life—merely to be alive—had suddenly become so precious....What his flesh and his bones shrank from was not eternity. It was immersion in that localized, particular, cubic expanse of starlit oxygen-hydrogen! (23.560).

This marks the beginning of Wolf's recovery. Although he is still a shell, still without an identity and although he does not yet exult in merely being alive, he has confronted death and withstood its call.

The first clue to Wolf's recovery is provided by Gaffer Barge's
instinctive goodness. Barge's innocence and eagerness to convey a message to Mrs. Solent is not forgotten by Wolf. His final vision substitutes Gaffer's kind of goodness for Wolf's former combative good. The second clue comes from the dying Mr. Malakite who shrieks "Forget!" just before he dies. Wolf realizes that he must learn to forget the suffering and misdeeds of the past by an act of his will--"'There is no limit to the power of my will,' he thought, 'as long as I only use it for two uses only... to forget and to enjoy!'" (25.631).

Restoration to both body and soul come to Wolf at the end of the novel. First, his body comes

"to its own conclusions! It was as if his flesh were drinking in and soaking up this beauty, while his soul, cut into pieces by his recent humiliation like a worm by a bird's beak, wriggled and squirmed somewhere above his head.!'" (25.620)

He rejoices in merely being alive. Then his soul, still lacking a centre, heals itself in the scene behind the pigsty. Like Ursula Brangwen, his epiphanic moment comes when he finds the gap in a hedge and enters a new world. This world of Wolf's is suffused with Saturnian gold, representing an age in which good did not have to wage war with evil. "The sense of a supernatural struggle going on in the abysses, with the Good and the Evil so sharply opposed had vanished from his mind." (25.631). Given a new purpose in life, to forget and to enjoy, Wolf gains a new centre, a new 'I am I' from which to act. Stoically accepting the possibility that Chance might destroy him, he emulates another stoic, Clarissa Dalloway, who learns to pursue her own goals, to

Fear no more the heat o' the sun
Nor the furious winter's rages.19

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Until the First Cause overwhelmed him, Wolf "was going to endure...follow his 'road' through the ink-stains, and endure!" (25.633).
CHAPTER III

A GLASTONBURY ROMANCE

I

The Novel as Romance

A Glastonbury Romance can be easily criticized. Its length, apparent disunity and cosmic overview (an omniscience incorporating not only all the characters but also the sun, moon and First Cause), not to mention the obtrusive authorial presence of its creator, have been seized on by critics and reviewers, the most laudatory of whom call it a magnificent failure. Writing in the Saturday Review of Literature, Basil Davenport argues that the author has given us both too little and too much. Too little because the action does not after all seem to justify all the supernatural 'machinery' as Dr. Johnson would have called it....But we are also given too much, for it is hard to sustain our interest in the sordid threads, through the twelve hundred pages of his volume.

A Glastonbury Romance certainly has its stylistic faults. Powys's prolixity often overwhelms one. His penchant for all-inclusive lists causes his prose to be tiresome. Often Powys destroys the suspense he has built up by embellishing his material with classical comparisons or by attempting to people the scene of the conflict at the expense of the protagonists. Also, the aristocratic element of his writing and a remoteness of idiom, alluded to by H. P. Collins in John Cowper Powys: Old Earth Man (p. 7), provide some embarrassing passages for the reader.

1 March 26, 1932.
Powys, again somewhat misleading in the preface he wrote twenty-five years after the publication of the novel, intimates that *A Glastonbury Romance* was written in a 'somewhat tumultuous and chaotic manner'. Even if this was the case, it is not to say, as H. P. Collins has said, that "there is no form, no 'art', and there is abundance of vitality."² *A Glastonbury Romance* is not an undisciplined and amorphous work. It has an organizing force; it is a tone-poem on the Grail exploring how people react to a fragment of the Absolute; or, to clarify the theme of the novel, how they respond to the intersection of the timeless with time, the unseen with the seen, the miraculous with the mundane. The viewpoints considered range from Philip Crow's denial of these 'religious' values to Johnny Geard's embodiment of them. Moreover, the theme is enhanced by the way the physical setting is used to symbolize or realize this concern with the spiritual dimension of our existence. The action itself is centered in Glastonbury and is grouped around Glastonbury Tor, Chalice Hill and Wirral Hill, each of which are repositories of those mystical values which are Bloody Johnny's. In the atmospheric and terrestrial regions of Glastonbury resides the Grail which, tradition has it, was brought to Glastonbury by Joseph of Arimathea. Thus, though there may be several distinct 'human' plots, they are developed in and around Glastonbury whose religious emanations permeate those receptive to them and repel those who deny them. Powys treats Glastonbury as a protagonist. He writes that he treats the town psychologically,

²John Cowper Powys: Old Earth Man, p. 80.
by describing it and analyzing it under the moods of the weather and under various chemical and spiritual influences and in regard to its flora and fauna and geological strata; and in regard to the historic changes that have come to its human inhabitants in connection with these things; and to its whole being from zenith to nadir, and from circumference to centre.  

Much of the disparagement of *A Glastonbury Romance* has been directed toward its structure and genre. An examination of the novel as a tone-poem exploring a variety of responses to the Absolute should obviate claims of inadequate structuring. Indictments of *A Glastonbury Romance*'s failure as a novel can also be refuted. H. P. Collins writes that "this is a great novel if you seek out and accept what it gives; it is but a qualified masterpiece if you look for the rest of what makes novels."  

This in itself is not a very clear criticism of Powys's novel. What Collins is trying to convey, though, is that *A Glastonbury Romance* does not satisfy all the conditions that novels traditionally fulfill. In *Anatomy of Criticism* Northrop Frye provides a viable definition of the novel: 

The novelist deals with personality, the characters wearing their personae or social masks. He needs the framework of a stable society... The novel tends to be extroverted; its chief interest is in human character as it manifests itself in society. 

Admittedly, Powys is very much concerned with the interaction of humans in society. The commune which Dave Spear, Paul Trent and Red Robinson argue about and install in Glastonbury, the gatherings at Miss Drew's

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4*John Cowper Powys: Old Earth Man*, p. 79.

and Mother Legge's and the Pageant which Geard inaugurated are undeniably novelistic scenes. Furthermore, Powys relates that he has "the whole life of a community on my hands":

with housewives, lawyers, doctors, chemists, innkeepers, procuresses, clergymen, servants, old-maids, beggars, madmen, children, poets, landowners, labourers, shop-keepers, an anarchist, dogs, cats, fish, and an airplane pilot...There are no less than six major love affairs, one murder, three births, two deaths...  

However, Powys's scope is larger than that of the familiar, everyday world. He writes that "now as I hover round A Glastonbury Romance I can see that it is not the work in any sense of 'an observer of real life'". Three dimensional real life is only a small part of the novel; work, 'dead time', though pursued by Philip Crow and Dave Spear, is only scantily explored in it. Indeed, the first paragraph of this long novel emphatically takes us out of the realm of the purely human. Like Wolf Solent, John Crow is first seen at the end of a journey by train. Whereas in Wolf Solent, we were in the protagonist's consciousness and consequently circumscribed in our point of view; in A Glastonbury Romance, we share the view of an omniscient author. Never has omniscience been invoked so literally, the narrator has a cosmic view which allows him to relate the following:

Something passed at that moment, a wave, a notion, a vibration, too tenuous to be called magnetic, too subliminal to be called spiritual, between the soul of a particular human being who was emerging from a third-class carriage of the twelve-nineteen train from London and the divine-diabolic soul of the First Cause of all life. (I.1).

Thus, Collins' criticism of A Glastonbury Romance is unfair. Collins is not judging this work of art on its own grounds. He measures it accord-

6Modern Thinker (March, 1932), p. 76.

ing to arbitrary generic precepts; then he denigrates it because of the lack of those precepts. He does not realize that A Glastonbury Romance is more than (or, at least different from) a novel. A worthwhile comparison can be made with Wuthering Heights which, Virginia Woolf recognized, is not a novel in the strict sense in which Frye has empirically defined that term:

The gigantic ambition is to be felt throughout the novel—a struggle half thwarted but of superb convictions, to say something through the mouths of her characters which is not merely "I love" or "I hate" but "we, the whole human race" and "you, the eternal powers"...8

Similarly, Powys's concern transcends the interest generated by the strictly human, by the various plots.

Powys is interested in the effect of the Grail on those who are in the locale in which its force is strongest:

the Grail now that it has been accepted as an impenetrable mystery, has found its way into that Elysium realm of what we can only call the poetry of our race;...and indeed become a recognized 'resident alien' there, from the international sphere of universal metaphysical magic, it has not only stained, dyed, impregnated the atmosphere of this particular spot but has associated itself with every detail of its local history.9

The Grail, Powys says, is the heroine of A Glastonbury Romance. It is so insofar as it is the embodiment of the fourth dimension, of 'the super-lunary crack in the cause-and-effect logic that two and two make four.' Glastonbury is an important actor in the novel because it has been permeated with the mystery of the Grail for so long that it is especially receptive to that holy object. Likewise, the townspeople are susceptible to an epiphany of the Grail. J.R. Theobald, writing in The


9"Preface", pp. xi-xii.
Bookman in 1932, is the most sympathetic and perceptive reviewer of *A Glastonbury Romance*. He is aware that Powys tried to effect "a constant sense of the whole life of Glastonbury in progress, as distinct from an arbitrarily imagined plot of which the scene happens to be Glastonbury."\(^{10}\) Granting that the book has a strong spatio-temporal sense and vivid personal and social elements, he recognizes that Powys has a unique structuring principle which transcends the love-affairs and murder plots he has woven into the book. Somewhat too enthusiastically, Theobald ascribes to *A Glastonbury Romance* a more tremendous design than to *Ulysses*.

What is this principle which caused Theobald such transport and which is at the heart of this great book? Theobald asserts that "the airy web that holds together all the realism and philosophy and psychological subtlety of this book is the romance."\(^{11}\) Powys himself calls the book a romance both in the preface and in the title and links it to the Arthurian Legend by quoting from the *Black Book of Carmarthen* for his epigraph.\(^{12}\) Although Theobald does not relate romance to *A Glastonbury Romance* to the extent that all the facets of history and myth that Powys incorporates in the novel are seen to be an organic part of that novel, he does rightfully contend that miracles and the supernatural are justifiably a part of the book. Theobald, incipiently leading us towards a definition of romance which will reveal the unity and structural soundness of *A Glastonbury Romance*, writes that

\(^{10}\)October, 1932.

\(^{11}\)Ibid.

\(^{12}\)The excerpt from *The Black Book of Carmarthen* foreshadows the theme of the reoccurrence of societies which erect shrines such as Stonehenge and Maiden Castle. A tomb for Arthur would be foolish because he, or his values, will in some form reappear.
supervening over all human influences is that of the primordial powers that haunt the immemorial terrain of Glastonbury.... Like all the great romances of the past, this one is pervaded by unfathomable mysteries and is, in consequence, an exceedingly awe-inspiring book. From the moment when John Crow drinks the water from the Slaughtering Stone at Stonehenge until the closing invocation to the towers of Cybele, we are never allowed to forget that we are 'moving about in world half realized'.... It may be said that this peculiar seduction of the imagination is the inmost secret of romance.13

In linking A Glastonbury Romance to the great romances of the past which "have stood or fallen by their ability to create faith in miracles,"14 Theobald acknowledges that atmospherically it succeeds as a romance.

It is left to Ernest Rhys in a book entitled Romance to evolve a definition of romance which is similar to Powys's concept of the term as it is manifested in A Glastonbury Romance. In Rhys's book is found a theory which, in its emphasis on the fourth dimension, the links with the past and the potential for modern romancers, is astonishingly close to Powys's practise. In addition, Rhys's disquisition on romance uses the Welsh romances as its frame of reference. They are Powys's frame of reference as well. Powys felt that the ancient Cymric tribes held the key to living in the universe. In Maiden Castle, Powys explicitly links this mystery of the ancient Welsh with the creative force of the great goddess Cybele. In A Glastonbury Romance Owen Evans is the repository of Welsh mysticism. Both he and Megan Geard can trace their lineage to the Rhys family; Evans feels that this associates them with Welsh royalty.

For Ernest Rhys, the romancer is the one who has the power of seeing beyond the lamp. Unlike Philip Crow, who does not see beyond the

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14 Ibid.
electric flashlight and matches he uses to illuminate Wookey Hole and who disregards the mystery of that subterranean complex, the romancer is sensitive to the 'other life', "the life that is everything or nothing accordingly as you estimate your world, and as you care about penetrating the sensual zone and finding the supersensual plane."

More than this Rhys's romancer is conscious of the interpenetration of present and past. Rhys cites the example of a blind man discoursing on the life of a town.

He drew upon his memory, and through his personal vein of reminiscence, he associated the town events....So the town that had first grown up round a castle, and that had at last substituted the nearest railway-station for that castle as the focus and connecting link between itself and the outer world, had in his chronicling become matter of the everlasting tradition. He related them, whether willingly or no, to that reserve of memory, emotion, and imagination that knits up the present with the past, and breaks through into the circle, which is behind the apparently fast-sealed everyday ring of our lives.

This is essentially what John Cowper Powys does in A Glastonbury Romance. He relates the stories of the Crows and Geards and others who were a part of Glastonbury at this time to the town's past, imaginatively fusing them so that they reveal what Rhys calls a farther and larger reality.

That Glastonbury's past is associated with Arthur, the Grail and Avalon only makes the potential for the interplay of past and present that much richer. Although Arthurian scholars regard as specious these associations, citing them as "a part of the fraud which the monks of Glastonbury were then [in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century] engaged in foisting upon the world," they are, for Powys, a part

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16 Ibid., pp. 23-4.
of the psychic reality of the town. The belief that people have had in these mysteries, no less than the authenticity of them, have kept them alive, hovering about the concrete realities, the cause-and-effect logic of Glastonbury. Most aware of the living continuity of Glastonbury and, consequently, most able to use the magical properties it has stored up is Johnny Geard. Opening the Saxon Arch he oversaw the building of, Bloody Johnny, like Rhys's blind seer, childishly relates the history of Glastonbury. He tells of the Lake Village neolithic race, the Ancient Britons and the familiar aspects of the Grail story. He founds a new religion using all the talismanic properties that Glastonbury has assimilated in its rich history. So, too, when he cures Tittie Petherton of cancer he opens himself to the Grail Spring's psychic storehouse.

The truth is that this chalybeate fountain on this particular hillside had been the scene of such a continuous series of mystic rites, going back to the neolithic men of the Lake Village, if not to the still more mysterious race that preceded them, that there had come to hang about it a thick aura of magical vibrations. (23.738).

Attuned to these vibrations, Geard projects them onto the normal plane of reality. In other words, he assists at, or is a medium for, the penetration of the temporal by the eternal.

What Mr. Geard kept his mind steadily upon, all this while, was that crack, that cranny, that slip in Time through which the Timeless-known in these parts for five thousand years as a cauldron, a horn, a krater, a mwys, a well, a kernos, a platter, a cup and even a nameless stone—had broken the laws of Nature! (23.738)

Geard's role in A Glastonbury Romance, which will be taken up later in more detail, is only one example of the interdependence of purpose and structure in the novel. Most sensitive to the supernatural, Geard's reaction to it is not the only one Powys explores. Nor is it the consuming focus of the novel. All the characters, in their relation to the Grail, contribute to the syncretic wholeness of A Glastonbury Romance.
Powys is a modern romancer who is ultimately on the side of those sensitive to the fourth dimension. The novel begs the rhetorical question that Lady Rachel passionately asks Ned Athling: "What's Poetry if it isn't something that has to fight for the unseen against the seen, for the dead against the living, for the mysterious against the obvious? It fights for the...for the...for the Impossible!" (17.549). Indeed, the final pages of the novel contain a paean to Cybele, 'whose forehead is crowned with the Turrets of the Impossible.' It is a hymn to those who created at Stonehenge and at Glastonbury shrines which became repositories of the mystery of life, of the 'Unknown Dimension.' Though the cults around these places are eventually destroyed, the impulse which gave rise to them is imperishable. Cybele, the ancient Tower-Bearer, cannot be totally eradicated by the powers of science and reason:

evermore she rises again, moving from the mists of dawn to the mists of twi-light, passing through the noon-day like the shadow of an eclipse and through the mid-night like an unblown trumpet, until she finds the land that has called her and the people whose heart she alone can fill....Those "topless towers" of hers are the birth-cries of occult generation, raised up in defiance of Matter, in defiance of Fate, and in defiance of cruel knowledge and despairing wisdom. (30.1173-1174).

Here, Powys asserts the endurability and universality of romance. He focuses on the Grail because it is a fragment of the Absolute, part of the 'Timeless'. And anyone alive to-day who does not, like Philip Crow did, wilfully reject the 'beyond', is as susceptible to the intersection of the Timeless and Time as was medieval man. Rhys writes that

It may even be said that to-day we have widened the avenues of the imagination, instead of closing them as many people suppose; for we have learnt to find in the new areas, and in the more intimate regions of psychology, spiritual adventures which are more real than anything told in the romances of chivalry.18

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18 Romance, pp. 49-50.
Modern civilization has, however, brought with it the danger that "through the glut of the cities and the multiplication of petty and unrelated experiences, we have spoilt the innocence of our eyes and minds." That there are more Philip Crows now than there ever were is undeniable. Wolf Solent and Dud No-man do not succumb to the Apparition of Modern Invention. Nor does John Cowper Powys ever lose sight of the occult. He responded to the inanimate and the intangible with a religious awe, sometimes tempered by his streak of scepticism. For him the universe is not something to be de-mythologized and turned into an abstraction; it is not a great machine.

Out of his refusal to reduce experience solely to what can be measured or rationally proved came _A Glastonbury Romance_. Powys's tendency, if we accept the definition of Novalis, is to romanticize: "By giving the common a noble meaning, the ordinary a mysterious aspect, the known the dignity of the unknown, the finite the appearance of the infinite--I romanticize.""20

Thematically related to _Four Quartets_ in its exploration of the articulation of the response to those exquisite moments which are redolent of infinity, _A Glastonbury Romance_ combines the multiple perspectives of _The Ring and the Book_ and the intellectual lyricism of _Four Quartets_, itself. In addition, Powys's novel closes on a heightened lyrical cry, espousing the romantic way, the turrets of the Impossible.

The _Four Quartets_ provides an instructive comparison with _A Glastonbury Romance_. It explores, through the persona of the speaker, various stances with respect to the mystical experience in the rose-garden.

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19 Ibid., p. 51.

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For the speaker "The hint half guessed, the hint half understood, is Incarnation," the orthodox Incarnation, in which Christ (timeless) is made man (time). Eliot's impulse in *Four Quartets*, though not didactic, is to unify our mystical and religious experiences: a translation of the epigraph to "Burnt Norton" reads, "Although the Word (Logos) is common, yet most men live as if they had a private insight of their own." The ultimate focal point of Powys's mysticism-in *A Glastonbury Romance* is much more imprecise. Powys rhapsodically pleads only for the awareness of the fourth dimension. Bloody Johnny's new religion is not by any means a definitive religion; it is only a modern embodiment of the awareness of the cults around Stonehenge and early Glastonbury. What he advocates that the individual do is contained in his speech at the opening of his Saxon Arch:

> It matters not at all from what cups, or from what goblets we drink so long as without being cruel, we drink up Life. The sole meaning, purpose, intention, and secret of Christ, my dears, is not to understand Life, or mould it, or change it, or even to love it, but to drink of its undying essence! (30.1137).

In imaginative contemplation, one drinks of Life's undying essence.

Little Gidding is very much like Glastonbury. No less than Glastonbury, it is a holy place and can divulge meaning on a plane which transcends the sensual:

> If you came this way,
> ...It would always be the same: you would have
> Sense and notion. You are not here to verify, to put off
> Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
> Or carry report. You are here to kneel
> Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
> Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
> Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.

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And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
They can tell you, being dead: the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment /the living.

Published ten or so years before "Little Gidding", A Glastonbury Romance closes with the following lines: "Thus she abides; her Towers forever rising, forever vanishing. Never or Always." (30.1174). Both writers celebrate the immanence of the Absolute for those who permit themselves to receive its emanations. Everpresent, it nonetheless is only momentarily incarnate in individuals and societies. "Only through time, time is conquered". To those who deny its existence, however, it remains forever unexpressed.

That the true reality transcends tangible objects and outward action and that truths other than empirical truths are being offered in A Glastonbury Romance, Powys reveals in yet another way. Powys would echo the claim of Browning's subtle Don Juan in Fifine at the Fair that "The histrionic truth is in the natural lie." Indeed, one of the closing passages closely parallels this line--"For She whom the ancients named Cybele is in reality that beautiful and terrible Force by which the Lies of great creative Nature give birth to Truth that is to be." (1174).

There is no objective truth; consequently, the artist is not Aristotelian. He does not hold up a mirror to life or reflect the ideal which incipiently resides in nature. He is creator, a Cybele-figure, who provides the ideal pattern which the 'real' world can only imperfectly emulate.

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23 Stanza 85.
Johnny Geard and Powys, himself, are magicians who possess Cybele's ability to reveal truths which nature does not contain, which escape all those who do not penetrate to the super-sensual plane. When Powys wrote that *A Glastonbury Romance* is not the work in any sense 'of an observer of real life,' he meant that one does not find truth in quotidian events. Before Geard performs his Christ-like miracle of resuscitating a dead child, he shouts:

"Any lie...I tell you, any lie as long as a multitude of souls believes it and presses that belief to the cracking point, creates new life, while the slavery of what is called truth drags us down to death and to the dead! Lies, magic, illusion--these are names we give to the ripples on water of our experience when the Spirit of Life blows upon it. I have myself...I have myself cured a woman of cancer in that spring....Miracles are lies; and yet they are happening. Immortality is a lie; and yet we are attaining it. Christ is a lie; and yet I am living in him. It...is...given...unto...me...to tell you that if any man brought a dead body before me...in the power of what you people call a 'lie' I would even now, here and before you all, restore that dead one to life!" (27.931-932).
II

The Town and People as Characters

In the first part of this chapter I have attempted to clarify what kind of work Powys wrote and how it is structured on a grand scale as a romance. The characters are related only insofar as they are part of Glastonbury and as they respond to the town's ethereal potential. Powys himself writes that "this tale is so prolific in plots and denouements that the outcome, like that of life itself, will appear in different forms to different readers." That is, the various plots that are built around the Dekkers and the Crows and the Geards are resolved (or not resolved) in an unintegrated fashion. They are interesting stories that occur in the same town at the same time. Yet, because Powys's focus is Glastonbury and the spiritual force the town embodies, these separate stories, part of Glastonbury and a prey to the spiritual force, are essential to the novel's vast theme.

In the foregoing section, I also tried to elaborate on the romantic vision which is immersed in the novel. In A Glastonbury Romance Powys has written a romance that extols the romancer's way in two voices. One is that of the author himself, the other that of Johnny Geard. One is, as it were, outside commentary; the other is an amalgam of inner voice and events, the events being those visions and miracles which profoundly shake the lives of those characters who experience or believe in them.

I should now like to examine those characters whom Powys places in and around Glastonbury. The town in itself, of course, is the chief actor of the novel. Powys's scope and angle of vision are far greater
here than in Wolf Solent where the action was centered in and distilled through Wolf's consciousness. In *A Glastonbury Romance* Powys effects a total view which embraces literally everything that affects and compromises Glastonbury. Cosmic, human and inanimate forces are all perceived and related by the author as being part of that town. Powys makes a constant effort to keep the whole vista before the reader who is never left alone with the characters in the novel, and is made to share Powys's overview. The following description, for example, incorporates in the scene the First Cause and a minute parasite as well as Mr. Evans.

Thus it was fated for this particular turnip heap in Edmund Hill Land, halfway between Old Wells Road and the Brick-tile Works to be the occasion of the bringing together, at exactly three minutes to nine o'clock on the night of the twelfth of December, of three identical psychic aberrations, that of the infinitesimal, microscopic parasite, that of Mr. Owen Evans, and that of the ultimate First Cause. (25.849).

To become so engrossed in the separate plots, the love affairs, intrigues and spectacles, that you lose the overview and reject the novel as diffuse is to thwart the intention of Powys and misplace the emphasis of *A Glastonbury Romance*. The incident in which the ash tree eavesdrops on John and Mary's tryst is somewhat ludicrous in itself—"All this the ash tree noted; but its vegetative comment thereon would only have sounded in human ears like the gibberish: wuther-quotle-glug" (2.74); however, it is one of the many devices Powys uses to take the attention of the reader away from the strictly human. Indeed, humans appear diminutive in the novel, dwarfed by the constant presence of the ether, the sun and even the First Cause. For example, the first sentence of the novel directs the reader's attention not only to John Crow but also to the First
Cause. Consequently, one must step back from John Crow and see him as one of the many persons who activate the soul of the First Cause. Powys often effects this diminution by considering only the non-human aspects of a situation. In the chapter, "Nature Seems Dead", "one of the great turning points in the life of Glastonbury" is reached somewhere outside of the plane of existence on which John Crow, Philip Crow and all the others whom Powys alludes to in this chapter are to be found. The Grail-hate or Grail-love which these characters spiritually project keeps alive "the psychic war that was going on above the three hills of Glastonbury" (24.781)—in that war those who hate the Grail attempt to kill it. Though the contest is an interminable one, the Grail, a fragment of the Absolute, "that fragment of Beyond-Time fallen through a crack in the world-ceiling upon the Time-Floor" (24.789), is imperishable. This crucial night, however, the Grail force wins an ethereal victory:

The sturdy northeastern invaders—the ancestors of Philip and John—beat back more than Mr. Evans' people when they swept the Celts into South Wales....along with Mr. Evans' people, and their dark chthonian gods, these healthy-minded invaders had driven back the very dreams of these Cymric and Brythonic tribes.

....on this night of all nights, this night of the tenth of December, a date that always, every year...was a significant date for Glastonbury, what really came back upon this terrific wind, blowing up out of the western sea and the western isles, were the dreams of the conquered, those disordered, extravagant law-breaking dreams, out of which the Shrines of Glastonbury had originally been built. (24.788-789).

Powys's angle of vision, then, by de-emphasizing a strictly human view of the world is in harmony with the theme of A Glastonbury Romance. As difficult to accept as the supernatural machinery may be, it is, nonetheless, an integral part of what, for Powys, is Glastonbury.
One who has an overview in the novel itself is John Crow. Though not endowed with Powys's cosmic omniscience, he is one of those "who are able to slip out of their skins and share this super-mundane observation of themselves" (20.647). John Crow is a curiously full character who plays a unique role in *A Glastonbury Romance*. In some senses a sceptical observer and manipulator of what goes on in Glastonbury, he can never fully convince himself that Geard is wholly a charlatan. Able to detach himself and disclaiming any effect that Glastonbury might have had on him, he does, nonetheless, have a vision of Arthur's sword being hurled into the water from Pomparles Bridge.

Through John Crow, *A Glastonbury Romance* begins with the journey motif. John arrives in Glastonbury, as Wolf Solent does in Dorset, unaware of the impact this new locale will have on him. Whereas in *Wolf Solent* the focus is only on Wolf, in *A Glastonbury Romance* it is on many of Glastonbury's town folk. In addition, as spectator and observer, John Crow has the detachment to look down from above the surface of the aquarium; he has an overview. Wolf, detrimentally to his inner life, does not have this detachment during the course of *Wolf Solent*. Thus, whereas Wolf's identity is shattered, John's remains intact: "'I am a hard, round, glass ball, that is the mirror of everything, but that has a secret landscape of its own in the centre of it'". (13.381). He is much less impervious to the 'cause of the unseen' than he cynically lets on. However, he does not, as Wolf does, see himself at the centre of all the cosmic emanations of good and evil.

Like the redeemed Wolf, John lives simply or, rather, simply
lives in the universe. He cannot understand "what people mean when they talk of life having a purpose. Life to me is simply the experience of living things; and most things I meet seem to me to be living things." (3. 93). He lives somewhat selfishly for his sensations like the ichthyosaurus-egos of Wolf Solent and Maiden Castle do.

John Crow, though he does not give himself up to prolonged ecstatic contemplation, is very much the ichthyosaurus-ego in his worship of the stones of Stonehenge. Powys writes of Stonehenge:

Perhaps here-and here alone on the whole surface of the earth-could the lonely spirit I am concerned with, could this ichthyosaurus-ego praise and curse, in mysterious, rhythmic consentaneousness, the double-natured First Cause of its being! Here, and here alone, could it gather its whole nature together, a spiral waterspout of ecstatic contrariedade, and will to forget the evil in its Creator, while it weeps in gratitude for its life. 24

"I can defy [the whole universe], and get what I want out of it too!" says John Crow allying himself with the spirits of Stonehenge: he curses the First Cause for the misery of the world and fulfills himself with his wife Mary.

What conflict there is in him is in the ambivalence of his feeling toward the Grail and the residual Glastonbury magic. Uncommitted to Glastonbury, finding his gods and his woman outside of its territory, Crow, nonetheless, is too sensitive to 'the beyond' to leave the town without some hint of its magic. His vision of King Arthur's sword, though he regards it as a sign from the supernatural, does not precipitate in him wholehearted espousal of Geard's new religion. Crow never acquires the single-mindedness and devotion of Nancy Stickles. Nonetheless, he perseveres, not

24 In Defence of Sensuality, p. 265.
wholly hypocritically, in carrying out Geard's mystical and fetishistic spectaculars. John's doubt-faith conundrum is not solved by the mysteries of Glastonbury. Having seen Arthur's sword and Geard's miracles, he still cannot commit himself wholly to the mysterious. His repressed Grail-hate surfaces twice while he is employed by Geard: once, in a sleep-projection of destructive eidola, and later, in a frenzied fit of denial at the opening of the Saxon Arch. Yet, when Geard tells John of his approaching suicide, John had to struggle by the use of the most cynical considerations from his heathen Stone-worshipping nature, to cover up the primordial ice-crack, the glacier-crevasse among his sunlit earth-rocks, which the problem of Mr. Geard perhaps quite erroneously-had uncovered before his pessimistic imagination. (29.1091).

John and Mary (she embodies, as H. P. Collins points out, John's feminine self) almost see the Grail a number of times. Having rejected the magical properties of Glastonbury before she met John, she becomes more sensitive to them; however, like John she claims that her true home is in Norfolk. When they return there, they take with them the corpse not only of Tom Barter but also "of their stillborn never-returning opportunity of touching the Eternal in the enchanted soil where the Eternal once sank down into time!" (29.1113). They had come close to the Eternal when, before being permitted to live together, their unsatisfied desire, which is the strongest psychic force in the world,"was so caught up and so heightened by the frustrated desires of two thousand years, which in that valley had pulsed and jetted and spouted, that it did actually draw near to that Secret Thing." (4.113).

There are those, however, who shut themselves off completely from the power that is Glastonbury's. The communists, Dave Spear and Red Robin-
son, and the anarchist, Paul Trent, ignore that power so busy are they with effecting political, social and economic reform. They are slightly wooden figures because in their refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the Grail and what it symbolizes they are meant, by Powys, to be caricatures. By uttering solely doctrinal statements, they demean and ossify themselves. The revolutionaries see Glastonbury, not as a sacred repository of intimations of immortality, but as Anytown which could be communized. Ironically, they install a socialist factory which manufactures religious icons. Powys indicates by the dissatisfaction of the working class with the triumvirate that the substitution of communism for capitalism merely shifts the balance of economic power; it in no way satisfies the desire for real life which is on a plane transcending the material. Although Trent, Spear and Robinson regard him as a figure-head mayor, Geard, the placid visionary, sees Glastonbury restored to its condition as the Isle of Glastonbury--Avalon.

Philip Crow, too, rejects the sacred claims of the town. His vision of the universe being what it is, he is a much more dangerous adversary to the spirit of Glastonbury than the revolutionaries. Although Powys admires Philip's drive, just as he does that of Dog Cattistock, the capitalist of Weymouth Sands, he dislikes Philip's wilful blindness to the supernatural. Everything Philip does is antithetical to animism and mystery. After a flight in his airplane, he muses:

It had all passed only too quickly! It seemed only just a minute ago that he had scrambled into his seat on the back of this shining torpedo with dragon-fly wings. But what thoughts, what sensations! His brain whirled with the vision of an earth-life dominated absolutely by Science, of a human race that had shaken off its fearful childhood and looked at things with a clear, unfilmed, unperverted eye. He said to himself, as he walked out of the field with Barter...that this conquest of air had reduced those Glastonbury Ruins to nothing. (8.226).
Philip does not carry a stick, he is not close to nature, and is in fact, is interested only in exploiting it. He is very much like Gerald Crich of *Women in Love*, desiring only to conquer the land and harness its power. Thinking of Glastonbury as "this effeminate flower-garden of pretty-pretty superstitions and mediaeval abracadabra!" (8.225), he seeks to modernize it, to "plant factory upon factory in it, dynamo upon dynamo! He would have mines beneath it, railways across it, airlines above it!" (8.225). Though he exhibits a great deal of willpower in wanting to begin over again after his bridge is washed away, and his factory is flooded, he has a malignant will. Foregoing its use solely as an agent to "forget and enjoy" as Wolf and John Crow do, Philip uses his will to impose his vision on his wife and lover, employees and townsfolk:

'In the bowels of the Mendips,' his wild feelings ran, 'my girl...my pleasure...I, I, I,...taking my pleasure...conquering this land underneath the earth...as I conquer it in the air...I, I, I, stamping my will on life...on woman...on...on...on...the Future.' (8.238).

The weak-chinned Sam Dekker, with none of the assertiveness of Philip Crow, is the only important character whose life-vision undergoes change during the course of the novel. Sam, who, Red Robinson declares, has the look of a saint, passionately and confusedly loves Nell Zoyland until he gives in to the saint-ego in him and rejects her. His sight of the Grail, however, causes him to reassess himself; this results in his rejection of the saint-ego for the happiness which he realizes he should not have denied himself.

Long before his vision of the Grail, Sam believes in the intersection of the eternal with the temporal; however, mysticism for him is not personal but rather universal, without any direct relation to Glastonbury or, indeed, himself:
'It's the Incarnation that transforms Nature. It has been done once. Nothing can reverse it. Something has come into it from outside; from that Outside you talk about. But It's in it now! You can't get rid of it.... Something has taken up Matter into Itself. Two and two can now make five! It's the Thing Outside breaking into our closed circle. And every atom of Matter feels it. Matter is no longer separate from Spirit. It has become the living flesh of Spirit. **Verbum caro factum est!**' (9.265).

Nonetheless, Sam is not so burdened with principles or doctrines that he is unable to give himself to Nell and to feel the pantheistic responsiveness of nature. Though the incipient seeds of sainthood cause him to think of himself as a lover and a saint, Sam and Nell consummate their love fully. As the weeks go by, the impulse to sainthood becomes stronger and stronger in Sam. The ethereal presence of Christ, or rather, "the tormented body of his Redeemer Himself," (14.398) obsesses him more and more until it suffuses his vision and masters him. He hardens himself to Nell, rebuffs her in order to fulfill himself in the image of Christ.

His soul seemed to be saying to his natural senses and his natural will: "You must go through this because Christ went through it. I care not how you suffer; so long as you go on, day by day doing His will and not your own!" (17.558).

Oblivious to all but the poverty and suffering which he, the saint, wants to alleviate, he paradoxically becomes insensitive to those closest to him. As Holy Sam, he performs good deeds, befriending the friendless and administering to the sick. When he is deepest into his saint phase though, he is furthest away from the spontaneous acceptance and apprehension of life.

It's all poison. It's all one glittering, shining, seething tide of poisonous selfishness! We are all scales, scurf, scab, on the same twisting cresting dragon of the time. The tide of life itself is evil. That's the great secret of Christ. And what he's aiming at now--the tortured Anti-God that he is--is the freezing up of the life-stream! (25.856).

Sam cannot dam the life-force in him forever; because he has repressed it, it labours towards its own release, In the Grail scene, Sam is first stirred by the external world, just as he was at Whitelake Cottage:
something in the atomic nature of the inorganic substance of these things must have answered to an inarticulate craving of Sam's, until Matter itself, the old obstinate Protean mystery, moved and stirred to meet him. He could actually feel a magnetic power pouring forth into his fingers from this post against which he leaned. (28.979).

Slowly his area of consciousness widens. It dawns on him that his surplus of pity was wrong, that "there must be a limit to pity or the life-stream would stop....The first motive of every living creature must be to realize its own identity." (28.980). Recognizing the symbolism in the strangulation of the fish in the Dekker's aquarium, and the consequent danger to his own life urges, Same becomes aware of the aliveness and fecundity of nature. His body and soul come together. "Although his soul still felt independent of his body, and free of his body, it no longer felt contemptuous of his body. It had ceased to utter its mandates in the tone of a slavedriver." (28.998). Sam's epiphany, his vision of the Grail, however, cannot totally transform him. Though the appearance of the Grail, itself, reveals to Sam the presence of the eternal in the temporal, he has already been sure that this was the case. In his attempt to formulate a credo around the Grail, Sam is only frustrated. For Powys, the Grail's message is that no one Receptacle of Life and no one Fountain of Life poured into that Receptacle can contain or explain what the world offers us....the symbolism of the Grail represents a lapping up of one perfect drop of noonday happiness as Nietzsche in his poignant words would say, or as Nature herself, according to the hint given us by Goethe, whispers to us in more voices than at present we are able to hear, or to understand when we do hear.25

Thus, Sam's attempt to intellectualize the Grail vision is rebuffed by everyone he tries to convince, even the simplest of the townsfolk. His mystical experience does abolish his scruples about making love to Nell; however,

he is only incipiently liberated from the malaise which Johnny Geard does not succumb to:

Sam in his passion for the crucified, opposed himself to the First Cause, as Something so evil in It's cruelty that a man ought to resist It, curse It, defy It, and have no dealings with It. Thus in his loathing of the evil in God, Sam, the Saint, refused to make any use of the beneficence in God; and this refusal was constantly handicapping him in his present "all-or-nothing" existence. (23.739).

Bloody Johnny, aware of 'the Beyond', can harness its power, can, with an act of the will, bring the timeless into the temporal and perform miracles. Geard plays an insignificant part on the early chapters of A Glastonbury Romance. Content to let John Crow organize the Pageant and opening of the Saxon Arch, Geard lives that peculiarly unpurposeful existence which causes those sceptical of his powers to regard him as a charlatan. He is placidly confident of his ability to utilize charged atmosphere, stating that "There are only about half a dozen reservoirs on the Whole surface of the globe...and of these Glastonbury has the largest residue of unused power." (10.291). Geard's unkempt appearance, ambling gait and naive delight in his wife and other women divulge his unconcern with protocol and formality. Devoid of dogma and doctrine, he responds simply and wholly to life; he partakes of it the way he does his heretical Easter mass—on his knees in the garden, he "began with a sort of ravenous greed, tearing open the loaf and gobbling great lumps of crumb from the centre of it. These mouthfuls he washed down with repeated gulps of wine." (15.422). UnSophisticated and impractical, he only lives to realize and actualize the magic of the Grail, "a little nucleus of Eternity, dropped somehow from the outer spaces upon one particular spot." (15.473).

Whereas Sam Dekker imitates Christ, Geard imitates Merlin. He
refuses to allow Merlin to be acted in his pageant, 'creates' the new, religious town of Glastonbury and, lastly, dies into 'esplumeoir', the mysterious death greater than life. Geard's deeds are metaphorically a celebration of the powers of the human soul. Geard is not one to institutionalize his life vision. Tired of the definitions he has to formulate as head of a new cult, he seeks personal fulfillment in, or rather, through death. Granted the ultimate vision of the Grail in its final shape, Geard dies.

Owen Evans, though spiritually receptive to and intellectually aware of the Grail, refuses to see it. He knows that Glastonbury is sacred; he is passionately cognizant of the ideals of its early dwellers:

they sought for the knot of the opposites...for the copulation-cry of the Yes and No, for the amalgam of the Is and Is Not! What they sought...what the Fisher Kings of my people sought, and no other priests of no other race have ever sought it...was not only the cauldron and the Spear...but that which exists in the moment of timeless time when these two are one! (23. 772).

Yet Owen wilfully denies this vision for himself, so consumed is he with his unpardonable sin. The desire in him to experience, vicariously or not, the killing of a man with an iron bar is so strong that he is unredeemable. Though he tries to exorcise this demon by playing the part of the crucified Christ in the Pageant, the sadistic worm is stilled only when he sees the bloodied skull of Tom Barter and the iron bar beside it. The obsession which precludes Owen's immersion in Grail love is beyond his control. He is an unwilling, voyeuristic sadist. "Such abominable wickedness came straight out of the evil in the heart of the First Cause, travelled through the interlunar spaces, and entered the particular nerve in the erotic organism of Mr. Evans which was predestined to respond to it." (9.254-255).

Evans does not voluntarily give himself up to the contemplation of cruelty;
however, he is one of those whom the First Cause has capriciously made to howl and to eat dung. Exhibiting Hardian determinism, Powys, in *In Defence of Sensuality*, can sympathize with the sufferers at the hand of chance. Nonetheless, he dictates that we feel gratitude that it was someone else who was made to suffer. Mr. Evans, then, is one of those whose misery makes possible the happiness of John and Mary Crow and Johnny Geard.

The presence of all those facets of his life-illusion which Powys felt were dominant when he wrote *Autobiography* (c.f. "Introduction", p. 8.) are present as characters in *A Glastonbury Romance*. John Crow the ichthyosaurus-ego, Johnny Geard the magician, Sam Dekker the saint and Owen Evans the sadist live in a place charged with the spiritual force of the Gail. Each, according to his own nature, responds to this force which is the point of reference for everyone in this large novel. Glastonbury Tor, Wirral Hill and Chalice Hill stabilize the structure of this novel. They are the repositories of myth and history which Bloody Johnny does not relegate to a crustacean past. Whereas Stonehenge is John Crow's concretization of Cybele's Turrets of the Impossible, the three Glastonbury hills are the apotheosis of Bloody Johnny's occultism. It is on Glastonbury Tor that Geard's eyes are transfixed while the drowning man sees the Grail. It is Glastonbury Tor that we first see when John Crow and Evans ride towards Glastonbury. Rich in history, that hill was the scene of Michael's defeat of Gwyn-ap-Nud, the Welsh Fairy-Demon, god of death and darkness. It also was the place on which Abbot Whiting and Tom Barter were murdered.

Similarly, Chalice Hill is full of a past which foreshadows what occurs on it in the present. The enchanted castle of Carbonek, where the Grail was kept and where, if one sat in a particular chair, one need
not fear illness, was reputedly situated on Chalice Hill. In the chalybeate spring on this hill, Geard cures Tittie Petherton of cancer.

Powys's sense of the three hills is very strong. The characters' relation to the hills no less than their actions define their attitude to the Grail. Powys explicitly states that Sam faced the three hills at the moment "the earth and the water and the darkness cracked." (28.981).

One is always aware of the hills -- as setting for the action, as hills climbed by the characters. They exist as material phenomena and as images and symbols.

"A Glastonbury Romance is less a book than a Bible."26 Unlike the tin at Wookey Hole, the richness of this novel has not been exhausted. In exploring the responses of the main characters to the central theme, I have not touched on, for example, the theme of male versus female response to life which Powys develops at great length. I do hope, though, that the notion that A Glastonbury Romance is formless and, consequently, only brilliant because of the author's energy and, at times, rhapsodic prose has been dispelled.

CHAPTER IV

MAIDEN CASTLE

Maiden Castle is a hybrid of A Glastonbury Romance and Wolf Solent. It combines the focus on a locale with the focus on an individual's life-illusion. More detached than Wolf Solent and more concentrated than A Glastonbury Romance, it effectively synthesizes the intentions of the earlier novels. Yet Maiden Castle, the earthwork for which the novel is named, despite its imposing history, does not evoke the atmospheric presence of Glastonbury or Stonehenge. Though it represents a pre-technological paradise, and despite its being one of Cybele's 'Turrets of the Impossible' -- "those 'topless towers' of hers are the birth-cries of occult generation, raised up in defiance of Matter, in defiance of Fate, and in defiance of cruel knowledge and despairing wisdom"\(^1\) -- it neither permeates the characters of the novel nor the novel as a whole. Only Ury-en Quirm gets caught up in Maiden Castle's religious possibilities. Dud No-man, whose life-illusion is at the centre of this book, is largely unaffected by Maiden Castle; however, understanding his father's vision of it helps him to articulate his own response to the universe. Though he retains the cherished sensations which he lives for and rejects the challenges his father and Wizzie present to his idiosyncratic life-way and


\(^1\)A Glastonbury Romance, p. 1174.
isolationism, he comes to understand himself and his surroundings better because of his experiences in Dorchester and at Maiden Castle.

*Maiden Castle*, then, has all the ingredients of the first two novels discussed. It has a selfish Powys-figure, a Communist, a saint-ego, a magician and, in Maiden Castle, a primitive building erected in the spirit of Stonehenge. G. Wilson Knight in *The Saturnian Quest* writes that "*Maiden Castle* is a transition work. On it pivots Powys's shift of interest from Wessex to Wales".\(^2\) However, it seems to me that the novel is more an exploration of Dud No-Man's response, partly to Maiden Castle, but more important to Dorchester and the people he is intimately concerned with than it is an exploration of Maiden Castle's Welsh sources. It is true that pagan cult around Maiden Castle is related more specifically to Welsh mythology than the cult Johnny Geard tries to re-establish in Glastonbury; and that Uryen Quirm's roots are specifically of Welsh extract whereas Johnny Geard's though occult, are not traced to any particular race-consciousness. Nonetheless, Maiden Castle plays a relatively small part in the novel which bears its name as the title. The reader is not made aware of the earthwork's constant presence, though it is on the outskirts of Dorchester and can nearly always be seen from the town. Except for the two scenes at the ancient earthwork (the first being Dud's and Uryen's personally revealing trek there, the second being the foray to that part of the Castle where primitive statues were discovered), the novel focuses on the town and the relationship of the characters therein. In fact, in his final remarks to Nancy, Dud rejects the mysticism that

\(^2\) *The Saturnian Quest*, p. 49.
Uryen evolves from his definition of the Welsh powers which created Maiden Castle. Because *Maiden Castle* is more externalized than *Wolf Solent*, the indictments of Dud's nature are more severe than those of Wolf's. Yet Dud does not modify his idiosyncratic habits despite Wizzie's abandonment of him and his father's occultism.

Although it does not have the rich atmospheric presence of Glastonbury, Maiden Castle does serve as a point of reference for the spiritual natures of the novel's characters. Uryen, for example, lives the ancient values of the earthwork so fully that he sees himself as a reincarnation of one who was part of the early civilization which engendered it. In his whole-hearted embrace of the spirit of Maiden Castle, he is like John Geard, a magician. It is at Maiden Castle that Uryen is in closest contact with his vision because he believes that when the cult around Maiden Castle flourished, this vision was a reality. Once at Maiden Castle, he performs rituals which bring him into a communion with its gods. When the archeological discoveries are unearthed from Maiden Castle, Uryen tries to communicate with them by the use of Wizzie's unfulfilled love for him.

She felt sure that Uryen was not only conscious of her presence—had he not moved up to her the second they came in?—but was making various impatient movements to arrange matters according to some overpowering secret intention of his own. (8.370).

To the others, the Castle and its subterranean treasures represent less awesome things than they do to Uryen. Though Dud and his friends on the outing are inarticulately aware of the mystery of the idols, they are not responsive to the psychic energy unleashed by the idols which have been restored from the center of the earth. The malignancy of the party towards Dud which prompt them to want to throw him into his fire may have
been momentarily stirred by the idols; however, their presence and that of Maiden Castle are not nearly as pervasive as that of Glastonbury and the Grail. Furthermore, Uryen is not at all preoccupied with the character of Maiden Castle. He merely regards it as a symbol of the power he wants to possess. Dud's concern for Maiden Castle and its strange gods is minimal. Although he recognizes that life is not bound by cause and effect logic, he is too sceptical to commit himself fully to the religious quality of Uryen's response to Maiden Castle. Though not as tortured as John Crow who fluctuates violently between belief and disbelief in Geard's miracles, he does identify himself with Uryen's plane of existence--"We both live at a somewhat different level from most people. Mind you, I don't say at a higher level, but a different one" (9.495)--while rejecting Uryen's elaborate method of sustaining himself there. Dud is more mindful of the richness of Dorchester. Finally, there is Claudius Cask whose response to Maiden Castle is broadly similar to the responses of Philip Crow, Dave Spear and Red Robinson to Glastonbury; he is totally devoid of any sense of the supernatural quality of it.

Powys's intention in *Maiden Castle*, then, is not primarily to explore a region and the reactions to it. H. P. Collins writes:

*Maiden Castle* is wholly occupied with the *essence* of life; but especially, again, with the essence of memory, earth-memory, race-memory. Mai Dun, Uryen, the ideal of *Hiraeth* are race-memories. The author's possession with the idea of race survival and of our ancestors' being still alive in ourselves, part of ourselves, is evident everywhere. The impressiveness of *Maiden Castle* has in fact little to do with happening or expectation. There is no authentic present or futurity: Whatever happens, one feels, is already deeply in the past.³

Disagreeing with H. P. Collins, I think that, in concentrating on Dud Norman in the novel, Powys's ambition is not nearly as vast as the preceding

quote would have it. Certainly, race-consciousness is central to Dud and is one of the values he holds sacred throughout the novel. Uryen's ancestral ties, however, are not enshrined in Dud's final articulation of his relationship with Uryen. The impact of the novel arises out of Dud No-man's interaction with and partial immunity to Wizzie and Uryen and Maiden Castle. And our judgement is not channelled towards assessing the validity of Maiden Castle as a repository of the Welsh Golden Age; rather, it is channelled towards an evaluation Dud No-man and his decision to forfeit Wizzie and most of his father's values for his selfish life-way. As Kenneth Hopkins points out in The Powys Brothers the concluding passages of Wolf Solent and Maiden Castle are remarkably similar. Both extol the individual, more detached and sceptical than the magician, who derives his pleasure from those contemplative moments in which are received intimations of immortality.'

Once again, H. P. Collins denies the craftsmanship of John Cowper Powys when he writes that Maiden Castle is "curiously lacking in shape or planned development". This is not the case. Just as he does in Wolf Solent, Powys, in Maiden Castle, links all the motifs he introduces in the early parts of the novel. As with Wolf Solent and John Crow, Dud No-man is a newcomer to the locale in which the story takes place. As the hero (or, as in the case of most fumbling Powys figures, the anti-hero) gets to know the region and the people, he discovers more and more about himself and the way he is to live in and adapt to the universe. Wolf Solent's search begins when he asks himself "whether the events that a-

4Ibid., p. 136.
waited him...would be able to do what no outward events had yet done-break up this mirror of half-reality and drop great stones of real reality-down there among those dark waters" (1.21). He is almost destroyed when the new experiences crucially alter his inner make-up. The whole of Wolf Solent delineates these events. Dud No-man's life-illusion, the way of acting in the understanding the universe which gives each individual his separate identity, is not severely altered during the course of Maiden Castle; however, his somewhat selfish, passive acceptance of the universe undergoes many tests which cause him to reaffirm the life-way he has chosen for himself. Concomitant with this is the ease with which he accepts, if not resolves, those images and questions which troubled him when he is first described. For instance, in Chapter One, Dud, musing on the reason he chose to come to Dorchester, idealizes his motive into "a longing to solve...the ultimate meaning of death itself" (1.20). His agitation to, in a sense, break through, to discover how one becomes immortal takes the form of two alternate ways to live, the espousal of one of which, he thinks, will result in a life after death.

If our survival of death, he had come to feel, depended on the intensity with which we lived our individual life, the intensity with which we grasped life's most symbolic essences then it was "the Woman from Wales" (Dud's mother) who was more likely to dodge annihilation; whereas if our chance depended on the power we develop for sinking our individuality in others' lives, why then it was the dead Mona (Dud's wife) who had the better start. (1.21).

After being exposed to Uryen's longing to break through, Dud loses his desire to solve eschatological questions. At the end of the novel he is content merely to live in the universe. Instead of answering the question he had formulated about which way one should live to immortalize oneself, like his mother grasping life or like his wife helping others, he merely
ceases to pursue the question. "Which of those two--his mother, with her inhuman egoism or Mona, with her weird unselfishness--held the secret that prevailed? Well! He must go on as best he could in his own way." (9.496).

The heraldic heads, one of which is always fixed to Dud's bead-post and the other which Uryen gives him to substantiate Uryen's claim of paternity, recur as frequently in Maiden Castle as the image of the face on the steps of Waterloo Station recurs in Wolf Solent. Dud comes to terms with them, too, at the end of the book. What the heraldic head represented to Dud, "what most of all he seemed to detect in it was simply desire, that Faustian 'desire' to penetrate and enjoy--even in forbidden directions--the huge mystery of the Cosmos" (1.18). Yet as symbols of the Faustian desire to break through, which is given the name of Hiraeth by Uryen, the heraldic bed-posts are eschewed by Dud. He rejects the Welsh mythological significance Uryen ascribes to them. To him they are redolent of the spirit that life is not lived on a strictly material, rational level. Identifying himself in this respect with his father, Dud says that "It all comes from living, as he and I do, more in the great cosmic forces...than in ordinary human interests" (9.495). His father's mistake, Dud feels, is to take the bed-posts literally instead of historically as he, himself, takes them. Early in the novel, Dud relates the heads to Malory's Questing Beast which in turn is related to "Dor-Marth" which means the 'Door of Death'. The quest for this monster, Dud remembers, thumbing through his volume of Malory was "apparently confined to one particular family, of whom Malory only knew two, Pellenore and Palomides, who might have been father and son" (3.114). Although his father goes on the quest which involved the Hiraeth (which I shall return to later) Dud does not do so.
"He (Uryen) thought this 'groaning and travailing' of the longing in us could break through the barrier. But there is no barrier" (9.493). Dud comes to view the heraldic heads merely as repositories of history. As part of the whole alive, animistic universe, the heads represent "all the Inanimates on earth in which man's love-longing loses itself, and in which it finds itself. There's not a stick or stone in this place into which some lonely spirit hasn't poured the tragedy of his unsatisfied desire" (9.493). Because the heraldic heads overlook the bed on which Dud made cerebral love to Mona's wraith and on which he ached for Wizzie after she left him, they are suffused with his longings. Dud, however, does not try to use this storehouse of frustrated desire to find a higher level of reality. This is in keeping with his passive, non-defining acceptance of the universe. To lie back and receive sensations, to be the ichthyosaurus-ego is, for Dud, to live a full life. Uryen, on the contrary, seizes the beast heads as the repositories of stifled desire which will aid him to transcend this level of existence and live a sort of inner nirvana, an inner golden age. He becomes more and more attached to these symbols of a liberation from this life as his own inner vision atrophies. This maceration occurs because he writes about that vision for money and because Wizzie and Thuella prove to be unsatisfactory mediums for his epiphany. When Wizzie returns the heraldic head to him,

He kissed the grotesque thing, he hugged it, he mumbled incoherent gibberish over it, he examined it, he turned it first one way and then another, he scrabbled over it, he scraped at it, he slobbered over it, he tapped it, he smelt it, he held it to his eyes, to his mouth, to his forehead, and even to his ears. (9.448).

As Uryen becomes, so he feels, more and more ineffectual in his attempt to 'break through', he relates more and more strongly to that object which
embodies that Hiraeth, that Faustian desire which in him is thwarted.

Uryen Quirm is a fascinating character whom Powys explores beyond his relation to the bedposts. Like Johnny Geard his awareness of life on a supernatural plane sets him apart from other men. However, the method he invokes in his attempt to live his other reality is different from and less successful than Johnny's. Geard is a placid, sensual person, not the least bit averse to fulfilling himself sexually with his wife. Hedonistic, he is able in his lifetime to effect the intersection of the Timeless with the temporal. *A Glastonbury Romance* closes with a heightened lyrical cry espousing Geard's anti-rational, mystical but undefined values. Dud's statements at the end of *Maiden Castle* deny Uryen's assertions of the golden age, celebrating instead the Wordsworthian spots of time and ichthyosaurus-ego response to life which are the values *Wolf Solent* closes on. Uryen, though he is as ill-kempt as Johnny Geard and has a head of majestic proportions similar to Johnny's, does not have the zeal for life that Johnny, in addition to his mystical powers, has. Dud's first impression of Uryen is of "a half-vitalized corpse" (1.55).

Mr. Quirm's eyes were dull, lifeless, colourless, opaque. They were empty of every gleam of human response. They neither softened nor warmed; they neither lightened nor darkened—they were simply there, as if someone had found a great antique mask with empty eye-sockets, and had inserted a couple of glass marbles into the holes. (1.55).

Uryen's corpse-like smell also contributes to the description of a man whose terrestrial life is of little interest to him. Uryen wishes to live life entirely in his abnormally large head; he wishes to live on a different level than most people do. Whereas Wizzie berates Dud for not being a man, Nance calls Uryen more than a man. He, himself, believes he is an incarnation of the Uryen of Welsh myth of whom the following is believed:
"The mental pain that breaks against the barrier, the mental pain that loses itself in death-in-life is the key to Uryen's country...And it's Rhys and no one else who makes clear what this Power, this 'Uryen' in me really is. It is the old magic of the mind, when, driven to bay by the dogs of reality, it turns upon the mathematical life and tears it to bits! It's the old magic of the mind, the secret of which has been so often lost; till the Welsh, along among the races, hid it instead of squandering it." (6. 252-253).

And he, the present-day Uryen, believes that the 'secret' has been re-born in him. Although it is not enlarged on in the novel, he, like Johnny Geard, assumes the mantle of prophet and tries to instill the essence of his vision in all those he comes into contact with. Nance says that, to the people of Dorchester, Uryen is their greatest wonder after Maiden Castle and Poundberry and Maumbury Rings. "Haven't they assured you that in the future people will come to Glymes as if to a shrine?" (1.59). Nonetheless, Uryen does not succeed in gathering around him a cult as trusting as that around Bloody Johnny. Nor, does he succeed in breaking through to that plane of existence which Johnny Geard is in contact with when he performs his miracles.

What Uryen has is a longing, a Hiraeth, by means of which he plans to realize a Utopian society, a golden age. Maiden Castle is one of Cybele's monuments, one of those structures which is a fragment of a purer, more noble era. "'You must remember, lad,' (Uryen) said, we're talking of the civilization that built Stonehenge and Avebury.'" (6.239). This civilization that is Uryen's ideal flourished in an age in which "there were no wars, no vivisection, no money, no ten-thousand-times accursed nations!" (9.467-8). Uryen feels that he has the power to restore this way of living. His hiraeth is the power, much like that celebrated at the end of A Glastonbury Romance, 'that beautiful and terrible Force by which the Lies of great creative Nature give birth to Truth that
is to be.' Uryen defines it in the following manner:

It moves from the impossible to the impossible. It abolishes cause and effect. It strides from world to world creating new things out of nothing! It takes Nature between its fingers and Evolution in the palm of its hand. It's more than desire. It's all the defeated longing, all the baffled longing, all the forbidden longing, all the beating against the walls, that makes the wind howl and the rain cry! And it will break through....And when it breaks through, these four thousand years wherein the world has been deceived and has left the way will be redeemed, and what was intended to happen will be allowed to happen, and the superstition of science will be exploded forever!" (9.468).

The power to create, to actualize these ideals is solely a mental one. For Uryen, the imagination is this supreme creative force--"'All's vision, lad,....the truth of life's in the imagination, not in ashes and urns! I tell you we, I and others like me, are the gods of Mai-Dun'" (6.250).

Uryen's vision, however, is foiled. One reason Uryen fails is that in writing about his life-illusion for the Cumbers in order to restore financial stability, he articulates what is essentially a non-verbal vision, a mystical vision which rested a good deal on faith. Attempting to ratiocinate about an anti- or non-national concept, he, in Dud's words, "has shaken his own faith and got all confused, troubled, uncertain, exposed in some way, not knowing what he does believe or doesn't believe" (9.433). The other important reason for Uryen's failure is the method he employs for breaking through. Uryen's reasoning, an offshot of Powys's avowed enjoyment of cerebral, voyeuristic lovemaking, is that unrequited love evokes the most powerful psychic vibrations that one can emit. He seizes on Thuella's lesbian longing for Wizzie to carry him to his inner vision--"'It's nothing to you that I've taken your'--and he fixed his flaming eyes on Thuella--'feeling for you'--and he turned them on Wizzie --' to break through into the mystery that maddens me.'" (9.466). And
truly, the girls do not care whether Uryen realizes his desire. They
love him; indeed, Wizzie is quite prepared to give herself to him sex-
ually. However, Wizzie is remote from and unmoved by his occultism:
"It wasn't his demented Hiraeth that brought that lump (to her throat).
It was her own practical, definite, professional Hiraeth, her longing
to be whirling round the ring!" (9.467). Summing up Uryen's idiosyn-
cratic tendencies, Dud tells Nance,

"Enoch's idea was, I think, that frustrated love--unreturned love I mean
--was the strongest magnetic force in the world. Mephistopheles gives
Faust a key by which he 'breaks through....To Enoch this 'key' was frus-
trated love; and for some reasons he got into his head that 'Thel's' love
for Wizz was like that! Neither of them, of course, had the least idea
of what he was up to. (9.495).

Consequently, Uryen never achieves his inner golden age. He dies dis-
claiming the name Uryen and his ties with Maiden Castle.

Although Dud regards much of the elaborate ritual and mysti-
cism of his father as well as some aspects of his father's behaviour as
sham, a great deal of the scorn that Dud directs at his father is un-
leashed because that man is his father and not because Dud's own life-
illusion is so opposed to Uryen's. Both men, in fact, are alike in their
loathing of the pragmatic, progressivistic ideology Claudius Cask pro-
pounds. Though he is not caught up in the search for a golden age, and
though he is much more at home in the universe than Uryen, Dud believes
in that dimension of life which is not easily apprehensible from the
plane on which we live. He agrees with Uryen that

"you can't face life four-square....The back side of your square turns
away from life. Life never sees it. It cannot see life. It's like
the other side of the moon! And yet nobody has ever doubted that there
is another side to the moon." (6.233).

By the same token, Uryen is sympathetic to Dud's goals, to his aware-
ness of a region's impact. When his son tells him that he is writing a romance about Dorchester, championing Mary Channing, Uryen shouts "Bravo, lad! That's the game. Give it'em, the brutes, give it'em, hip and thigh!"

(4.173).

Claudius Cask plays a major role in the novel, despite Maiden Castle's lengthy consideration of the lives of Dud and his father. Claudius's materialism and altruism provide a necessary contrast with Uryen's occultism and Dud's sensation-seeking. Dud speaks of Claudius as being objective, he and his father subjective. Because of Claudius's faith in man's rational progress toward a communist state and an ideal future, he is regarded, by Dud, as being 'a mere objective bridge to the world's future'. Upholding all of Dave Spear's impersonal, passionless ideals for the perfectibility of man the social animal, Claudius is the counterbalance against which Dud measures his own life-illusion at the end of the novel. Hearing one of Claudius's airplanes, Dud resolves all the more firmly to reject the future for which Claudius holds so much hope.

Claudius is totally lacking in the awareness of that other dimension of life which Dud and Uryen are, to varying degrees, cognizant of. His attitude toward Maiden Castle echoes Dave Spear's toward Glastonbury. To retain a sense of its mystery is to retard progress. Its one of those cases when virtues are as bad for Progress as vices--Evolution means Scientific Excavation at one end and Scientific Experiment at the other. The more you know about what was, the faster you can create what will be. We must undermine all prejudices! (3.126).

Moreover, glorifying 'Scientific Experiment', Claudius sanctions that Frankenstein--like quality of progress that Powys despised. In the name of just such experimentation, vivisection, the dispassionate torturing
of animals, is condoned. (Weymouth Sands and Morwyn contain more explicit diatribes against this kind of detached exploration of the universe.) Claudius is a reformer. He is physically and spiritually akin to the pragmatic Romans, even adopting the sobriquet Claudius in place of his real name, Roger. Oblivious to prehistoric races and forces, he traces the lineage of Dorchester as well as Uryen's dark gods to Rome.

In his zeal for science and progress, Claudius is no more subtly delineated than the Communists of A Glastonbury Romance. About the wireless, Claudius exults "How they tower above our personal sensations! How they point to the great Future!" (3.138). Yet Claudius is not as plastic a figure as, say, Dave Spear. Jenny Dearth accuses him of wanting a world of robots rather than a world of men and women. However, Claudius has a conscience which compels him to take up manual labour when accused of being an ivory tower altruist. This alienates him from Jenny with whom he had performed those deeds which Powys would ascribe to, in his words, the saint-ego. Though Claudius still spouts his dogma about eradicating subjective, personal feelings and about the triumph of man over nature, his love for Jenny preys more heavily on his mind than the perfectibility of the human race does.

Dud No-man's search for a modus vivendi ends, as I have stated, with a commitment to the life-illusion he held at the beginning of the novel. His longing to plumb the ultimate meaning of death itself is mitigated. He advocates merely living in the universe and being sensitive to the richness of his environment. Though he rejects his father's desire to 'break through', he recognizes his response to the universe is as unscientific, as unmechanistic as Uryen's. Like Wolf who finds his spirit
akin to that of 'old Truepenny's', Dud, hostile to Uryen on their outing to Maiden Castle, reconciles himself to their common antipathy to modern, industrial civilization.

The surname No-man was chosen by Dud "in his sulky reaction against his parents, as an inspiration of pure misanthropy," (1.18), when he learned that his mother's husband was not his father. Bearing out this chosen apellation, he is told by Wizzie that, because he is abstracted and uninvolved with people, he is, indeed, not a man.

I mean you're not a man, D. That's the whole thing if you must have it.... You may be higher or lower, You may be an angel or you may be—that beast over there! But a girl when she's my age...wants someone she can fuss with, be silly and gay with, yes! and quarrel with. Do you realize, D., we've never once made it up? Why haven't we? Because you're not a man! (9.440).

Dud, like Wolf Solent, is simply not a passionate, physically responsive man. Wolf's misfortune is to marry an earthy, active woman whom he cannot fulfill. His spiritual union with Christie is more fulfilling because it is wholly cerebral. At least, it is more satisfying to him than to her, Christie wanting a man in the sensuous and passionate way Wizzie wanted Dud to respond. Dud is just as selfish as Wolf. He wants Wizzie on his own terms. He wants to make love to her only in a cerebral manner. His dead wife died a virgin and there is nothing in the novel to indicate that Dud brings his protracted love-making, his fondling of Wizzie, to actual coitus. Indeed, carnal contact seems to hold as little interest for Dud as it did for Powys, himself. In Autobiography, Powys writes that "I have a morbid fastidiousness, a super-refined, almost maidenly detestation of the grosser aspects of normal sexuality".  

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5Autobiography, p. 275.
Dud, though he is a Powys-figure, is drawn as objectively and with as much detached amusement by Powys as are John Crow and Magnus Muir. He is totally unaware of Wizzie's needs and, in his bumbling inability to understand her, he is a pathetic figure. Though Wizzie's sympathetic neighing for her horse is not as aesthetically pleasing as Gerda's blackbird whistle, it, nonetheless, provides an insight into that part of her character which Dud cannot fathom. She, "a natural daughter...of the earth-goddess Caridwen" (8.364), desires the physical and emotional contact with a man that Dud No-man cannot supply.

The type of love Dud prefers to indulge in is suited much more for his Mona-wraith than for Wizzie. Wizzie, in fact, though she loathes 'Old Funky' for having raped her and made her pregnant, muses about how she could possibly have fought Urgan off, but did not do so. Wanting a man less repulsive than Urgan, she, nonetheless, wants a man to take her as he did. Wizzie also admires Old Funky for having coached her and cared for her body until she performed flawlessly on her horse. Dud, indeed, denies her whole personality, seeing himself as "the Bronze-Age way-farer with his Stone Age paramour" (2.92). He refuses to allow her to break into his well-regulated existence except when he wants his lust to be stirred or when he wishes to relate incidents about his writing or his habitual walks. Dud is that type of person, a selfish sensation-seeker, who needs a woman and is aware of a woman only when she contributes to his mental life. In his prefatory note to Maiden Castle, Malcolm Elwin argues that the novel is a study of the destructive powers of feminine emotions.
The problems of man and woman living together being 'when the first love is gone...when the state of being in love is over.' Woman has to contend with her impulse to self assertion and that possessive instinct which may result in 'her devouring and swallowing up, like an insanely possessive python, both her offspring and her mate.' Man has to rationalize 'his impersonal masculine lust' and find refuge in a mental life.  

Elwin's theory is not valid for this novel. Wizzie is not a Lamia-figure. Nor is Dud involved in his mental construct to save his relationship with Wizzie. His apartness precedes his love-making which, in itself, is detached and unfulfilling for his mate.

Wizzie exposes many of the foibles that are offshoots of Dud's idiosyncratic nature. She is cold to the fondling which makes him so ecstatic; she mocks him for his adherence to his sensations:

He's got nothing on his mind, as 'Thel says, but his walks and his sensations. All the rest of us are unhappy--Uryen most of all. And there he stands, enjoying himself...I hate you. Do you understand that? Put that among your sensations! I hate you; and I hate your book and both your dead bitches! (8.388).

Despite her vitriolic nature, she perceives a great deal about Dud's character. She is not ignorant of Dud's race-consciousness or the degree to which he relies on his walking stick. About the stick, Wizzie thinks, "'With it he looks like a selfish old man; without it like a selfish child! But that's all his mind does when it gets out of itself. It goes into his stick!"' (8.386). At the end of Maiden Castle, after Dud utters what is to be his credo--"'Hold to the centre...as you move on. The future's not everything.'" (9.496)--he digs his stick into the earth and fixes his eyes on the ground. His communion with the earth finished, he goes to meet Nance and the novel ends. At the close of Wolf Solent, Wolf swings his stick in the field in which he receives his final illumination.

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and resumes his life. Both men espouse simply living in the universe, receiving 'intimations of immortality'. Both reject that urge of man to progress which is represented in Wolf Solent by the 'Apparition of Modern Invention' and in Maiden Castle by one of Claudius's airplanes from which Dud averts his eyes to assert his own way of life.

Dud's race-consciousness together with his cerebral sensuality, which I shall explore more fully when I examine his lovemaking with Mona and Thuella, are the two most important facets of his inner life. Of his race-consciousness, it is said:

After all it was the stream of human existence down the centuries that swept him out of himself more constantly than any immediate contact. It was in this, with its magical overtones, that he sought to immerse himself. This was the impersonal element in his subjective life, this was the reverse side of his cerebral sensuality. It was to this winnowed reality, a reality caught under a purged light falling on the less transient gestures of our race, that his soul responded with a feeling that broke up the limitations of his grosser nature. (5.196).

Enlarging on a specific example in which he senses the richness of the strata of human civilizations, Dud says:

'It isn't just sensation that I live for....It's something that has behind it more than you think--the feelings of our race for thousands of years. For instance, this morning, warm though it was, I lit a fire in the grate to celebrate Mid-summer's Eve. What are all your electrical appliances compared with a fire that I light with my own hands? It isn't only a sensual pleasure; it's a religion, it's an ecstasy of life.' (8.338).

Voicing a Lawrentian concern for modern man's detachment from the sources of his life, Dud celebrates that facet of the ichthyosaurus-ego, that contemplative ecstasy, which unravels the whole human life-tapestry. He responds to Dorchester, the town in which the action of Maiden Castle takes place, as "a region charged with so many layers of suggestive antiquity" (1.19). "And he thought of how he had felt the roots of this ancient mellow place sinking down to the very nadir of the earth-full of the magic of
the generations" (9.492). In Durnovaria Dud can best contemplate the layers of man's life, feeling 'himself backward, down the long series of his avatars' and beyond. As an ichthyosaurus-ego, he is sensitive to 'a return to the centre from which we spring.' Dud's sense of the town, of all the layers of its history, is much like the sense of Glastonbury Powys evokes. Keenly aware of Dorchester's history, Dud writes a novel about the cruel burning of Mary Channing in that town's Amphitheatre to focus on the forms of cruelty which have been perpetuated there and elsewhere. Again, though Dud's awareness of the past is not as climactic as Uryen's. He does not try to live wholly in another civilization; he is only conscious of the other civilizations. His race consciousness is immediately gratifying; it provides him with the sense of the continuity of existence which was so essential to Wolf Solent.

Dud's love-making is similarly pleasurable. It is cerebral not because he wishes to use it to break through into a life behind this one but because it, in itself, fills him with ecstasy. What makes him rapturous is the contemplation of what Powys in his Autobiography calls his sylphid ideal. Powys, finding maternal love too cloying, was attracted to girls who actually bore little resemblance to the female sex.

The very word "girl"...conveyed to my mind a sort of fleeting, floating, fluttering fantasy of femininity, a kind of Platonic essence of sylph- hood, not exactly virginial sylphidness, but the state of being-a-Sylph carried to such a limit of tenuity as almost to cease to have any of the ordinary female attributes....(See also Chapter Two, p. 34).7

7 Autobiography, p. 205.
Powys's emphasis on ethereal figures adumbrates Dud's propensity for his Mona-wraith. In his mind, he creates a girl not in the image of Mona; rather Mona becomes a sylph-like creature who absorbs every amorous instinct he possessed. He regards his ethereal necrophilia as 'an affair with an Elemental'. In addition, one is prepared for his attraction to Thuella, a name that means storm-cloud. She is described as being thin and having a frail, androgynous being. Very much like Christie of *Wolf Solent*, she seems to be one of those whose sex is Saturnian, who is neither male nor female but who has that girlish attribute over which Powys gloats. Her dalliance with Dud beside the scummy pond involves "their magnetic advances and retreats, while the absence of actual contact between them evoked, in place of any twinge of tantalization, an intensity of imaginative lust that was transporting". (5.212). This kind of response, which Dud calls impersonal lust, provides Thuella and him with an immutable bond that actual physical contact just could not sustain.

Dud's values, then, though they render him unable to compromise with Wizzie, are preserved at the end of the novel. Recognizing that he had used Wizzie the way he used his dead wife, Dud is nonetheless puzzled that Wizzie does not accept his kind of loving. "It meant nothing to her that there was in this a proof of the intensity of his feeling, a proof of its etherealized sensuality, of its all pervasiveness and absorbing diffusion" (9.486). Dud remains faithful in his life-way. Like the ichthyosaurus-ego Powys describes in *In Defence of Sensuality*, Dud refuses to become too involved with other people. He knows that his precious sensations occur when he is alone and free from cloying human relationships. Alone, he can receive his 'intimations of immortality'. 
We need no unusual cleverness, no particular gift of taste, no especial luck in our chance-given abode, no favour from the gods in our fate-chosen companions, no exceptional power of mind or spirit, to saturate ourselves in Wordsworth's way of life. Surrounded by dulness we can touch the eternal. Surrounded by the commonplace we can feel the infinite. All that we need is a certain stoical self-centredness, a certain aloofness from the world, a certain sacred stupidity, a certain consecrated and crafty detachment from the lively interests of the hour, and a tendency, I might almost say, to share the subhumanity of rocks and stone and trees, to watch the grass growing till we grow with it, the way-side stones waiting till we wait with them, to walk with the morning as with a companion, with the night as with a friend, to catch the pathos of the human generations from the rain on the roof, and the burden of the mystery that rounds it all from the wind that voyages past the threshold.  

Maiden Castle ends where it begins, at the graveyard where Dud first met Nancy Quirm. The novel is cyclical with respect to time as well; the action takes place over exactly one year.

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

Dud does not adopt a new stance toward experience during Maiden Castle. In the face of what happens to him in Dorchester, he reaffirms his life-illusion.

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My purpose in examining the themes and structures of *Wolf Solent*, *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Maiden Castle* has been to show that Powys's primary concern is artistic not prophetic. His focus is not on the formulation of a way of living in the universe; rather, he presents a multiplicity of responses to the universe and probes the viability of those responses. His intention is to place his characters in an environment, both physical and human, which they explore and react to. Only in the closing pages of *A Glastonbury Romance* does he forego the characters he created and the locales he described to assert the indomitable quality of that force which had been incarnated momentarily in Johnny Geard.

The very nature of the universe that Powys envisioned, though, does lead him to create a world in which rational and mechanistic values are condemned and non-rational and mystical values celebrated. Powys roots his characters in a living, vibrant universe which is totally unlike the materialistic urban milieu that seems to be for many the essence of modern experience. For Powys, the cosmos is alive. It is "a place where lob-worms and newts have souls, and where the Inanimate has a disturbing porousness and transparency."¹ In *Autobiography*, he relates that inanimate

¹*Autobiography*, p. 61.
objects, such as the laurel-axe made him by his father and his father's thick boot-soles, always evoked in him "a feeling that I could flow through every material object I look at in a rapture of identification."²

Powys's universe is not merely animistic, though. It is redolent of that intangible but irrefutable aspect of existence which Powys calls the fourth dimension. This element, which infuses the regions in which the novels are set, is symbolized by the Grail in A Glastonbury Romance and is described by Uryen Quirm as being 'like the other side of the moon.' Sensitive to the supernatural, Powys includes in his world those mysterious forces which operate outside of human society. Also, he is sympathetic to those writers who recognize this elusive dimension. Dostoievsky is lauded because he is attuned to the 'real' reality which "implies a world of four dimensions, in other words a world with a super-lunar crack in the cause-and-effect logic that two and two make four."³ Dickens is revered by Powys because he attacks "the same worldly and false reality that Jesus attacked ... the world of 'efficient work,' the world whose hard self-made gods are the gods of knowledge and power."⁴

The environment in which Powys situates his characters is charged with layers of history, and with psychic eidola and emanations. Consequently, he is unable to write a three-dimensional novel, that is, a novel which contains "characters that are convincingly real, playing their part

²Ibid., p. 61
³Dostoievsky, p. 19.
against a background that is convincingly real, in a series of events that are of absorbing interest." Assuredly one of Powys's aims in *A Glastonbury Romance* is to create "a convincing world...in which it is possible to fancy yourself moving about freely and recognizing houses, streets, gardens..." So, too, does he write *Wolf Solent* to rekindle his memory of those places in which he grew up. ("*Wolf Solent* is a book of Nostalgia, written in a foreign country with the pen of a traveller and the ink-blood of his home." Nonetheless, although he is extremely conscious of the formal realism which Ian Watt relates is at the heart of the novel, Powys is more preoccupied with that realm of existence which transcends surface realism.

Driven as we are by the urge of economic necessity, hemmed in as we are by fatality of our material environment, there is a margin in all our lives when, whether we like it or not, our thoughts and emotions wander from the matter in hand, and our imagination finds itself confronted by mysteries beyond the improvement of any human society.

Like D. H. Lawrence, Powys refuses to accept the dichotomy, hostility and irreconcilability of nature and man which have been part of the whole tradition of western man. He is dismayed by modern man's negation of the earth,

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5*Dostoievsky*, p. 19.


7"Preface" to *Wolf Solent*, p. 11.

8In *The Rise of the Novel*, Watt gives the following definition of formal realism: the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions... p. 33.

by his assumption that man is distinct from his natural environment. However, despite his rejection of the mechanistic, ratiocinative view of the cosmos, Powys does not espouse the simple, sensuous primitivism which the Brangwen males embrace in *The Rainbow*:

So much warmth and generating and pain and death did they know in their blood, earth and sky and beast and green plants, so much exchange and interchange they had with those, that they lived full and surcharged, their senses full fed, their faces always turned to the heat of the blood, staring into the sun, dazed with looking towards the source of generation, unable to turn around.¹⁰

Powys does not advocate, as Lawrence does in *Apocalypse*, a life attuned to the rhythm of the seasons. He opts for a more conscious apprehension of the universe than that offered by blood-consciousness. Consequently, none of the characters Powys creates respond to the universe in that mute, solely physical manner which characterizes Tom Brangwen's life-way.

Some of the characters in the novels do, of course, ignore the living quality of Powys's universe. The communists, Dave Spear and Claudius Cask, are too caught up in their mundane, social selves to seek a meaningful relationship with the supernatural and the inanimate. Powys loathed their values of progress and social usefulness. To be an ameliorist, to try to change society is to miss completely the purpose of life. Powys defined work as 'dead time' around which is reality or in other words, the fourth dimension. He was sympathetic to communism, to the liquidation of private property but, as he himself queried, after that what? He describes Dostoievsky as having had

'no truck' with politics, ancient or modern. Not only is he not concerned with them or interested in them but in a very profound sense he is hostile to them—one and all! What we draw from his whole attitude to life, is a tone, a mood, a temper that refuses to take politics seriously.\textsuperscript{11}

The capitalist-figures in Powys's novels, such as Philip Crow and Dog Cattistock, are also blind to the breathing, stirring universe. In fact, they attempt to exploit their environments, "to turn upon the inanimate Matter of the underground and reduce it to (their) will."\textsuperscript{12}

In \textit{Wolf Solent}, \textit{A Glastonbury Romance} and \textit{Maiden Castle}, Powys delineates principally two ways in which one can live most fully in the universe. One mode of fulfillment is that of the ichthyosaurus-ego, the other that of the magician. (\textit{Wolf Solent} and \textit{Maiden Castle} emphasize the former mode, \textit{A Glastonbury Romance} emphasizes the latter.) Powys does not commit himself fully to either way. Nor need he do so to emphasize the values which are sacred to him. Both the ichthyosaurus-ego and the magician are aware of that plane of existence to which most people are oblivious. Both deny the Apparition of Modern Invention, the ideal of progress and other aspects of modern life which obliterate the 'ecstasy of the unbounded. Finally, both live according to the maxim,

\begin{quote}
Not on the vulgar mass  
Called "work," must sentence pass.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Thus, although no one facet of his life-illusion prevails in the three novels, Powys does exhibit a strong bias with respect to his material.

\textsuperscript{11}Dostoievsky, p. 107.


\textsuperscript{13}Robert Browning, "Rabbi Ben Ezra".
He does not present his vision homogeneously in his novels; however, his central characters, ichthyosaurus-egos and magicians, integrate in their own ways animate and inanimate, seen and unseen, temporal and eternal. They are sensitive to the fourth dimension which ultimately is Powys's shibboleth. Without being dogmatic Powys's novels inveigh against the following:

the disappearance of the simple and natural from most people's lives altogether; the rapid mechanization, organization, levelling-out and levelling-down of existence, the elimination of distance, grandeur; the loss of contact with those mysterious processes which are outside and before and after human society.\(^{14}\)

Despite his refusal to acknowledge Powys's concern for the art and method of his novels, H. P. Collins concludes *John Cowper Powys: Old Earth Man* with an eloquent plea for the enhancement of Powys's stature as a novelist. Collins writes that because Powys incorporates the supernatural and the inanimate and because he describes psychic and physical terrains that are untouched by other modern novelists, Powys has increased the range of the novel.

It may be fairly claimed that John Cowper has gone back and refounded the novel of to-day at a deeper level, building on a more vital sense of all life, importing more of the poet's imagination, greater reverence, and more mysterious awareness of the ultra-natural.\(^{15}\)

\(^{14}\) *John Cowper Powys: Old Earth Man*, p. 208.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 211.
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