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A QUEST FOR 'FEMININE CONSCIOUSNESS' IN JOHN COWPER POWYS'S *PORIUS*

Robin Wood

Abstract

John Cowper Powys's last major novel *Porius* (1951) is a complex polyphonic narrative. However, its main concern is the spiritual growth of the eponymous protagonist. Porius matures through an increasing understanding of 'feminine consciousness', which Powys suggests is 'deeper' than that of men and 'contains a clue to the most basic understanding of reality'. The novel is set in Wales in AD 499, just prior to the end of the Roman occupation, with a Saxon invasion impending. Powys began writing *Porius* in 1942, when Britain again faced an invasion,and he sees the twentieth century as a second Dark Age with Christianity being replaced by the worship of science and materialism. *Porius* explores the idea that evil originates from 'some obscure struggle between men and women' and Powys suggests that a bias toward 'masculine consciousness' leads to war, sadism, and violence. The patriarchal aspects of Christianity are condemned by Powys, and he prophesises its replacement with the worship of the Mother Goddess. Mythology is a major element, and the characters include King Arthur's magician Myrddin (Merlin), his lover Nineue, Tennyson's Vivien, and survivors of a race of giants. Powys's ideas about 'feminine consciousness',were particularly influenced by C. G. Jung, various women in his life, and the novelist Dorothy Richardson, who represents for him an ideal of this consciousness.

Keywords: Historical novel, Wales, Mythology, Feminism, Dorothy Richardson, C. G. Jung, John Cowper Powys

John Cowper Powys's last major novel, *Porius* (1951), is set in Wales in AD 499, just prior to the end of the Roman occupation, with the mythic King Arthur ruling Britain, and a Saxon invasion impending.[1] He began writing *Porius* in 1942, when Britain faced an invasion from northern Europe, just as it had in 499,[2] and in his introduction to the novel, Powys suggests twentieth-century parallels: 'as the old gods were departing then, so the old gods are departing now. And as the future was dark with the terrifying possibilities of human disaster then, so, today, are we confronted by the possibility of catastrophic world events' (p. 18). Powys sees the twentieth century as a second Dark Age. The earlier Saxon invasion provides him with the framework within which to explore ideas about war and violence, and especially such evil's possible origin in sexuality, including notions about masculinity and the relationship between the sexes.

While this essay focuses on the spiritual education of the novel's eponymous protagonist in relation to these themes, *Porius* is not exactly a *bildungsroman,* because the novel also explores the lives of other characters. Michael Ballin points out that Powys's 'two Welsh historical novels seem to combine a polyphonic narrative structure with the presence of two powerfully introspective consciousnesses, Owen Glendower and Porius'.[3] The first nine chapters are from Porius's point of view; a major episode involves his encounter with the aboriginal giants, and he has a central role in the novel's conclusion.

In AD 499, Christianity was competing for dominance with other religions. In the twentieth century's Dark Age, Powys sees the spiritual values of Christianity being replaced by the worship of science and materialism, with totalitarian governments – particularly Hitler's Germany – reflecting this trend in the extreme. In *Porius*, Powys prophecies the eventual end of Christianity – along with its emphasis on masculine values – two thousand years in the future (*c.*AD 2500). He claims it will be replaced with the worship of the Earth or Mother Goddess, of whom Myrddin is the prophet: that is, a return of the classical Golden Age, of Cronos,[4] who will replace the patriarchal values of Zeus/Yahweh (Myrddin believes himself to be a reincarnation of Cronos). Powys rejects Christianity's doctrine of the Fall and dualistic thinking about God and the Devil, suggesting instead that 'the whole difference between good and evil' arose from 'some obscure struggle between men and women' (p. 60).

In addition to the novel's hero, Porius, major characters include Arthur's prophet Myrddin (Merlin), 'the enchantress loved by Merlin' Nineue (p. 19), and the giantess 'called Creiddylad by Porius' (p. 20), all three of whom have a mythological dimension associating them with the Mother Goddess. However, at the novel's centre is the idea that 'feminine consciousness is … deeper' than that of men and 'contains a clue to the most basic understanding of reality'.[5]

The idea that women experience life entirely differently from men is very old, but Powys's idea is that if men can acquire an understanding of how women think and feel, then they can escape their propensity for violence and war. In *Maiden Castle* (1935), he had suggested that a peaceful matriarchal civilisation had existed in Britain: that the Neolithic encampment Maiden Castle had been the site, ten thousand years ago, 'of a great, peaceful city of a far nobler civilization than ours, where war and torture and vivisection were unknown'.[6] Earlier in *A Glastonbury Romance* (1932), Powys had already suggested 'the superiority of women to men or of the feminine to the masculine', with a 'critique' of Christianity's traditional bias 'toward the patriarchal'.[7] Christine Bilodeau argues that 'images of the "Divine Feminine" pervade' this novel.[8]

In *Dorothy Richardson*, Powys's short monograph on the novelist, he argues, that 'all authentic, human genius is, to some degree bisexual'.[9] Richardson represents for Powys an ideal of feminine consciousness: 'an intensity of entranced, receptive contemplation' (p. 20). However, Richardson's success is the result of 'a hard, cold, clear, analytical core of the most ferocious masculine reason existing at the heart of her being' (p. 8). Powys contrasts Richardson with George Eliot and Virginia Woolf, whom he describes as betraying 'their deepest instincts by using, as their medium of research … the rationalistic methods of men' (p. 7). Thus, for 'a man critic' to appreciate such writing, he must, amongst other things, 'get as much as possible of his inherent "heavy rationalism" out of the way' (p. 8).

Invaluable insight into Powys's ideas about this 'struggle' is found in *The Art of Happiness* (1935). In this work of popular philosophy, he links impersonal masculine lust with a masculine psychological archetype (associated by Powys with the mythological Cerne Giant, a fertility figure carved on a Dorset hillside), which he suggests is present in all men:

> Now there is a 'Cerne Giant' in every man … who wants to make love to his woman *as if to a strange woman*, as if to *any* woman, as if to *womanhood in the abstract,* as if to the depersonalized essence of femininity.[10]

G. Wilson Knight sees more than lust involved and links this Cerne Giant with Evans's sadism in *A Glastonbury Romance*: 'His is the root-evil of Powys's universe: sadism. It wields Cerne Giant powers'.[11] However, in *The Art of Happiness*, Powys suggests that this Cerne Giant in men is an archetype that lies beyond good and evil. He explores this idea in *Porius*, where there are two surviving giants (called Cewri), whom he identifies with the Cerne Giant. An important part of Porius's identity is the blood of these aboriginal giants that he has in his veins. *Porius* is largely about how its eponymous hero integrates the dangerous Cerne Giant side of his identity into his understanding of feminine consciousness.

The feminine equivalent of the Cerne Giant is what Powys, in *The Art of Happiness*, calls the 'all-swallowing Python', or 'Lamia-Demon[12] in every woman,'[13] the devouring or engulfing aspect of women, their impersonal, destructive, and emasculating part. Powys presents this cannibalistic side of the Mother Goddess in both the Cewri giantess Creiddylad and Myrddin's lover, Nineue. The Jungian Edward C. Whitmont comments on the darker side of men and women:

> The lover who is motivated only by his need to conquer and satisfy erotic appetites … the over-mothering or over-protective female likewise acts primarily for the satisfaction of her own needs, regardless of her partner. She is experienced by the man as suffocating and devouring.[14]

The foundation for Porius's insights into feminine consciousness and spiritual growth comes from the teachings of the Irish Christian heretic Pelagius (AD *c*.360–418), as interpreted by Powys. Amongst these teachings are Pelagius's belief in the inherent goodness of humankind, his assertion of the doctrine of free will and his consequent opposition to St Augustine's idea of predestination. Supposedly from these teachings, Porius also learnt the essentially Powysian idea of the importance of the imagination:

> It was the great Pelagius who had liberated him … It was the idea that each solitary individual man had the power, from the very start of his conscious life, not so much by his will, for *that* was coerced by other wills, but by his free imagination, by the stories he told himself, to create his future. (p. 55)

This implies the rejection of the Genesis story of the temptation by Eve, and the misogynist side of traditional patriarchal Christianity. The emphasis on the importance of the imagination is significant to the stories Porius tells himself about the aboriginal giants.

Equally important is Porius's personal meditative practice, 'cavoseniargizing', developed with the supposed help of Pelagius's teachings.[15] In fact various similar forms of contemplative practice are found throughout the fiction and non-fiction of John Cowper Powys, which he claims to be, in *In Defence of Sensuality* (1930), analogous to Christian prayer, meditation, and the experiences of mystics throughout the ages.[16] Cavoseniargizing is a major gateway to Porius's expanding awareness of feminine consciousness, which is not surprising, given Powys's association of cavoseniargizing with both the physicality of the Earth – 'his own secretive psycho-sensuous trick of ravishing the four elements with the five senses' (p. 466) – and his claim that it is 'like making love to the earth-mother herself' (p. 466). This elemental philosophy requires the focussing of the meditating mind on the material, natural world, not just the separate elements of earth, air, fire, and water, so that

> The 'you' … the ego, the self … has actually become the sound of the wood-pigeon's murmuring … become the scent of the smoke from that burning rubbish, become the taste of the first blackberry.[17]

The aim of this is to provide a new form of spirituality that offers a substitute for those supernatural, spiritual, and miraculous beliefs that Christianity once offered, but which have lost their magic for many with the rising faith in rationalistic science and materialism.[18]

The changes in Porius that come with his expanded understanding of feminine consciousness resemble the spiritual journey of a mystic and in *Mortal Strife* (1942) Powys describes his elemental philosophy, as 'probably identical, as a sensation, with what many mystics have

described when they speak of ecstatic unity with God'.[19] Porius moves from the patriarchal values of Christianity, in which he was raised, to those of the Earth Mother Goddess. This process begins with his initiation in the Cave of Mithras and is followed by several visionary experiences, first with Myrddin, and then with Creiddylad and Nineue. Pelagius's philosophy had already led Porius to reject traditional Christianity as preached by Minnawc Gorsant: 'I must escape once and for all from the religion of this man!' (p. 27).

A major early influence on Powys's ideas about the feminine consciousness was Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*. In *Dorothy M. Richardson*, he describes Richardson as 'our first pioneer in a completely new direction' because 'she has drawn her inspiration … *from the abyss of the feminine subconscious*' (p. 8). He contrasts Hamlet and Faust, who 'are essentially projections of the *male* quest for the essence of human experience,' with Dorothy Richardson's Miriam, the protagonist of *Pilgrimage,* who 'is the projection of the *female* quest for this essence' (p. 6). Michael Ballin suggests that the narrative voice in *Porius* 'is often that of a feminist narrator dedicated to the rendition of inward consciousness and sensitive to interior moods and feelings at the expense of outer action'.[20]

Mythology provides Powys with the tools to depict Porius's inner psyche and the psychological changes that lead to his spiritual growth. Powys makes use of 'a dramatic, mythological way of thinking' (C. G. Jung's words), because it 'is not only more expressive but also more exact than an abstract scientific terminology'.[21] The magician Myrddin – King Arthur's prophet – is linked with the Greek god Cronos (son of the Mother Goddess Gaia, the Earth), while Nineue and the aboriginal giantess (whom Porius calls Creiddylad) are both identified with the Mother Goddess. Powys makes frequent allusions to Porius as the Roman hero and god Hercules. This is in part because of his immense strength, which he inherits from his giantess grandmother, Creiddylad. Jungians' association of Hercules/Heracles with a man's struggle for independence from the mother is worth noting given Powys's emphasis on conflict between the men and women.[22]

'Feminine consciousness'

Powys's awareness of the feminine side of his own personality, as his *Autobiography* (1932) reveals, is important: 'I feel as if my emotions were exactly like those of a young girl' and 'deep in my nature lies the vice of a sadistic woman'.[23] He also describes his neurotic fear of the feminine after he was given the bitch Thora: 'the realization that until the dog's death all my walks … were to be … "feminized" caused me an epoch of extraordinary suffering!'.[24]

Powys's ideas on how women experience life differently were also influenced by various women, including his sisters, especially Marian, who joined him in New York,[25] and lovers Frances Gregg and Phyllis Playter.[26] Powys and Playter both read Dorothy Richardson's novel sequence *Pilgrimage* and this 'further strengthened the bond between them [and enabled] Powys to reach a greater understanding of Phyllis, and through her of the feminine'.[27]

In 'Modern Fiction' (1932), Powys refers to 'the masculine "soul" in women, and the 'feminine "soul" in men' and to 'the appalling undersea battle that goes on between these "dark" souls … in the half conscious if not in the subconscious'.[28] 'Appalling' because for Powys the source of all the evil in the world is this psychological 'battle' between the sexes. He had lectured on Freud, Jung, Adler, and the psychoanalytic movement in the early 1920s and published *Psychoanalysis and Morality* in 1923.[29]

There are parallels between Porius's and Powys's own education into an understanding of the importance of 'feminine consciousness'. Both men move from a fear to an insight into the importance of such understanding for men's spiritual wholeness. In Powys's case, this fear is connected to his obsession with sadistic thoughts and pornography. He described *Porius* as 'a true *Picture of my Family*!'[30] and his biographer Morine Krissdottir suggests that 'it can be argued that *Porius* is the biography that [Powys] couldn't write in 1934' when *Autobiography* was published.[31] Powys excluded the important women in his life from *Autobiography* – mainly because he did not wish to acknowledge that, while still married, he had been living with Phyllis Playter for many years.

The cave of Mithras

Porius's understanding of 'feminine consciousness' expands in Chapter Two, when he enters the cave temple of Rhun (his cousin) to be initiated into the polytheistic cult of Mithras, god of light. A rival to Christianity, Mithraism was a Roman mystery religion that was popular among the Imperial Roman army from about the first to the fourth centuries.[32]

Chapter Two emphasises the differences between the beliefs of Porius and those of Rhun, especially the ideas about good and evil as taught by Mithraism on the one hand and by Pelagius's heretical form of Christianity on the other. Pelagius saw the idea that God had created anything or anyone who was evil by nature as Manichean.[33] Porius wonders why Rhun wants him to 'partake of the Mithraic Sacrament'; does Rhun want him to 'become a believer in the Mithraic gulf between good and evil?' (p. 53). As a follower of Pelagius, Porius rejects such dualism. Furthermore, a central theme of the novel is that the difference between good and evil is somehow connected to both the relationship between the sexes and the inner struggle between their male and female side at the subconscious (or unconscious) level. According to Powys, Mithraism was a cult of an anti-feminist 'fraternity of warriors' prevalent in the Roman army (pp. 61, 30), and Chapter Two reveals Mithraism's attitude toward women: '[Rhun] doesn't like [Morfydd] knowing Greek and Latin. That's the religion of Mithras – to keep them ignorant!' (p. 50).

Although Porius does not believe in the power of this god, the sacrament is 'a covenant between' Porius and Rhun (p. 58): 'they were brother-in-arms henceforth' (p. 62). All the same, he makes it clear to Rhun, before he takes the sacrament, that 'Pelagius … is our only real druid today. He alone liberates us' (p. 58). Tasting the sacramental honey of initiation, Porius is surprised, given the masculine bias of this religion, that 'the mere impact of that cup … had the long-descended power of taking the deliciousness of sex sweetness from the soft limbs of women and transferring it to the inhuman but immortal elements' (p. 60). Though this initiation only involves the one sense of taste, the ceremony resembles Porius's elemental philosophy, because cavoseniargizing entails 'ravishing the four elements with the five senses' and is 'like making love to the earth-mother herself' (p. 466). It is puzzling, given the puritanical, anti-feminine nature of Rhun's soldier's religion

that there should be any affinity between Mithraism and Porius's elementalism, but, according to Franz Cumont, Mithraism was a polytheistic religion that 'deified the whole of physical and tangible reality':

> The gods were everywhere, and they mingled in every act of life; the fire that cooked the food and warmed the bodies of the faithful, the water that allayed their thirst and cleansed their persons, the very air that they breathed, and the light that illuminated their path, were the objects of their adoration.[34]

There is also a surprising connection between Rhun's Mithraic temple and the aboriginal giants, because 'this Cave was once an aboriginal dwelling,' and Porius wonders, if 'perhaps, it was here that Edeyrn ap Cunedda found the woman he wedded, some infant girl left to perish by the giant brood of the Cader!' – that is, Creiddylad, Porius's grandmother (p. 62).

Powys would also have known that that some scholars believed the religion of Mithras was an important means whereby the ancient grail mysteries, involving the worship of the Great Mother and the Dying God, were transmitted to Britain.[35] However, although Porius takes the mystic honey from a 'cup or chalice', it is not the Grail but a lesser mystery, and according to Orphic tradition, 'honey is a symbol of wisdom'.[36] What Porius tastes is 'not *ordinary* honey' and it has a drug-like effect on Porius's mind – probably because it was mead, fermented honey. Significantly, tasting the honey has not only 'a queerly startling effect upon [Porius's] sex feelings', but also leads him to 'feeling that the whole difference between good and evil is connected with some obscure struggle between man and woman' (p. 60). This points to how Powys rejects the dualism taught by the followers of both Mithras and by traditional Christianity, which have concepts like God and the Devil, Heaven, and Hell. So, despite the misogyny of Mithraism, Porius's education into feminine consciousness is advanced.

Powys also suggests a link between Mithraism and the worship of Gaia (the Great Mother) and her son Cronos. A statue of Cronos is in Rhun's cave temple, and according to Franz Cumont, Mithra was not the 'Supreme God' because 'at the pinnacle of the divine hierarchy and at the origin of things, the Mithraic theology … placed boundless Time' (Cronos/Chronos was god of Time).[37] In the next chapter, the prophet Myrddin – who believes himself to be the reincarnation of Cronos

– appears.[38] The worship of elemental deities is further emphasised, because Rhun's temple cave is on the banks of the river Dyfrdwy and, as they approach it, Porius's mind is full of thoughts about past times when the river was worshipped '*as a Divine Being*' (p. 45).

Porius's education in Rhun's temple involves the rejection of the masculine stereotype represented by the religion of Mithras – and the militarism, puritanism, and anti-feminism of the Roman Empire. And though Porius's elemental philosophy, cavoseniargizing, has not yet been mentioned in the novel, the Mithraic initiation links cavoseniargizing with 'feminine consciousness', with his discovery of the relationship between 'sex sweetness from the soft limbs of women' and the 'immortal elements' (p. 60).

The prophet Myrddin

Powys's Myrddin Wyllt is both the legendary mad Welsh prophet of the woods and the Greek god Cronos. He is associated with the elemental world and is a worshipper of the Earth Goddess, his mother Gaia (though at times Myrddin doubts that he really is Cronos). In his first encounter with Myrddin, Porius has a mind-altering experience that resembles Jung's 'collective unconscious':[39]

> The impressions of multiplicity for which he became a medium at this moment were as far-flung and telescopic as they were concentrated and microscopic.
>
> He grew aware of vast continents and countries and cities. He grew aware of the unrolling of world-shaking events; of famines and plagues, of battles and migrations, of the births and deaths of whole civilizations. (p. 74)

This makes him aware of the possibility of expanding his elemental philosophy, cavoseniargizing, so that it becomes a gateway to a direct experience of 'feminine consciousness'. Porius's earlier education, under Brother John, which emphasised free will and the imagination, contributes to his openness to such new experiences. This continues: 'It was as if what he held … became a multiple entity composed of many separate lives, the lives of beasts and birds and reptiles and plants and trees, and even rocks and stones!' (p. 74). Such an experience, where

'time and space appear to be transcended', is 'one of the commonplaces of practically every type of mystical experience':[40]

> I feel so close to God, so inspired by His spirit that in a sense I am God. I see the future, plan the Universe, save mankind; I am utterly and completely immortal; I am even male and female. The whole Universe, animate and inanimate, past, present, and future, is within me.[41]

Similar experiences have also been recorded by people who were mad, or under the influence of drugs.[42]

Erich Fromm, writing about the unconscious in relation to Zen in a passage that suggests the influence of Jung's ideas about the collective unconscious, proposes that

> Unconsciousness represents universal man, the whole man, rooted in the Cosmos; it represents the plant in him, the animal in him, the spirit in him; it represents his past down to the dawn of human existence, and it represents his future to the day when man will have become fully human.[43]

A similar idea is found in Powys's *In Defence of Sensuality*:

> Every individual personality is like a vast cavern with endless avenues and stairways, leading up and down, leading north, south, east, and west. All have *that* in them which belongs to the vegetable world. All have *that* in them which belongs to a still earlier world of organic stellar nebulae. And we also have moods of strange prophetic premonition in which we anticipate in our feelings the feelings of those mysterious super-human beings who in the process of time will take the place of humanity.[44]

Just before this first meeting with Myrddin, Porius was filled with a fear 'lest his human soul should suddenly lose its separate existence and merge itself into the souls of these agitated birds and beasts' (p. 66). This, however, does not happen, because he remains conscious that he has Myrddin in his arms and that he can crush this 'god' with his giant strength. Powys's elementalism involves identification with the past

and the non-human that is similar to what Porius experiences here. Powys explains in *In Defence of Sensuality* that

> Loneliness is at once the soul's supreme achievement and its strongest link with all the earlier stages of its evolution. In loneliness a human being *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.[45]

Porius's mystical experience entails breaking down the boundaries of the ego and identifying with everything outside the self, so that 'it was possible to enlarge a person's identity till it embraced other identities' (p. 75). Porius had already learnt how to do this with the elements when cavoseniargizing. Now through Myrddin and this experience of the collective unconscious, he recognises that men can *directly experience* feminine consciousness.

The Mother Goddess

The encounter with the collective unconscious reveals to Porius the possibility of getting beyond his masculine ego and seeing the differences between how men and women perceive the world. This prepares him for his subsequent encounters with Nineue and Creiddylad, women associated with the Earth Mother. Given that Porius's cavoseniargizing is 'like making love to the earth-mother herself' (p. 466), it is significant that he actually makes love with two women who are identified with the Earth Mother. Powys dramatises the experience of a man's encounter with his feminine side: through his relationships with Creiddylad and Nineue, Porius discovers the woman within, Jung's *anima*. This is a potentially dangerous encounter because the unconscious may overwhelm the rational, conscious mind. However, though Porius's encounters with both women bring danger, these women/goddesses give him a fuller understanding of the feminine dimension of life, and so offer a life-enhancing pathway to maturity. In *The Art of Happiness* Powys suggests that the core opposing instincts of men and women form 'the roots of every individual's happiness' and are 'below the level of life where what we call good and evil begin to differentiate themselves'.[46]

Danger threatens Porius both from the conflict between Porius and Creiddylad's father, and from Nineue's sexual power: the possibility that he may, in terms of Jung's *anima*, 'be caught, sucked in, enveloped, and devoured … the condition of the infant released from every care', so that 'the real world vanishes from sight!'[47] Both Creiddylad and Nineue are linked to Powys's 'Lamia-Demon' and 'all-swallowing Python'. The Cewri are cannibals, but Creiddylad also represents the positive side of this impulse: a woman's, especially a mother's, capacity to accept even the worst in someone; the desire of a woman 'to absorb those she loves into the substance of her flesh'.[48] Nineue is identified with the child-devouring Lamia and other terrifying mythological beings.

In Porius's relationship with Creiddylad, Powys emphasises male power and violence: the phallic aspect, the 'impersonal masculine lust' of male sexuality, which he identifies with the mythological Cerne Giant.[49] Significantly, Creiddylad accepts Porius's darkest sexual impulse because as Mother Goddess she embodies a mother's capacity to accept the worst in someone. However, with Nineue the emphasis is on feminine power, and the idea of woman as seductress, 'with the power of using every kind of mirage, illusion, phantasmagoria, and enchantment' (p. 745). One needs to remember the importance for Porius of his 'life illusion' about Creiddylad, as well as the high value Powys himself placed on the imagination. In *Autobiography* he states:

> I have always believed that the imagination and the will have a creative power. What a person wills and what a person imagines become a mysterious part of *what is* … I have always known … that the most vain and treacherous of all pursuits was the pursuit of truth.[50]

The giantess Creiddylad

In *Autobiography* Powys argues that 'any imaginative illusion by which a person half lives, any mythology in which a person half believes, is truer … than the most authenticated scientific facts'.[51] The idea that there might be survivors of the aboriginal giants in Wales is fundamental to Porius's imaginative life. This 'imaginative' or 'life illusion' is connected for Porius to the aboriginal blood that he inherited from his

giantess grandmother, Creiddylad, and to 'the secret stories he told himself about imitating his [grandfather] Edeyrn ap Cunedda, and carrying off a daughter of the Cewri', or a 'second Creiddylad' (p. 469). This life illusion from Porius's inner psyche links his subconscious, inner world with the outer world of his lived-in reality. His encounter with the two surviving aboriginal giants constitutes a major episode, from which Porius learns the profound interrelationship between life and death. His pursuit of the young giantess leads to a violent conflict with her father, but it is Creiddylad who dies saving him. Mythologically, Creiddylad is the Mother Goddess who frees Porius from fear of patriarchal authority. Because Porius follows this 'dream' – listens to the inner voice of his unconscious – and actually encounters a young giantess, he gains knowledge about the relationship between men and women; he has moved from cavoseniargizing – which involves 'ravishing the four elements … like making love to the earth-mother' (p. 466) – to actually making love to a woman who is identified with the Earth Mother. In his union with Creiddylad, Porius not only experiences sexual ecstasy but also gains important knowledge about the impersonal nature of masculine lust. The way she embodies a mother's capacity to accept even the worst in someone, in permitting Porius to act out his darkest Cerne Giant sexual impulses, provides him with a profound insight into feminine consciousness that frees him from these spiritually crippling impulses. The 'rape' of Creiddylad unleashes that hitherto repressed Cerne Giant aspect of Porius's masculine identity, further developing his understanding of the interrelationship between human sexuality, feminine consciousness, and good and evil.

Powys chose the word *rape,* though Creiddylad freely consents to the sexual union, to underline the violently phallic, impersonal, Cerne Giant emotions that are present in Porius. Furthermore, cavoseniargizing is a 'ravishing' of the elements. The union of Porius and Creiddylad is not a normal human sexual encounter, but one between the Cerne Giant and Lamia-Demon that belongs to the archetypal world of Eros (beyond good and evil). Creiddylad represents that archetypal aspect of the Earth Mother Goddess that enables Porius to directly experience the Cerne Giant side of his personality, free from the destructive form that this impulse would involve in a normal human relationship. In the human world, such unsublimated instinct is rape, or something similarly violent and evil like war or sadism.[52] This is illustrated just prior to this scene, when Rhun became overwhelmed

with 'predatory lust' for Morfydd, and 'gave himself up to all the brutality of the primeval male' (p. 413).

This lovemaking with Creiddylad drains Porius, but

> She who had drained him of his strength … was restoring it to him, restoring it out of those elemental depths of planetary substance, substance of air, substance of water, substance of fire, substance of earth, into which, beyond and beneath the living substance of flesh, extended the great paradisic division of male and female. (p. 479)

The life-affirming celebration of Eros, however, ends abruptly, when Creiddylad's father attempts to kill Porius, which then leads to the accidental deaths of Creiddylad and her father. That this happens so closely following sexual ecstasy leads Porius to a profoundly new understanding of the interrelationship between life and death. It is an understanding that begins with another visionary experience resembling his earlier experience of the collective unconscious when he held Myrddin in his arms:

> And the river of Time carried him away up the centuries, up thousands upon thousands of centuries, till he was permitted to behold in his own person the terrestrial catastrophe which caused this almost bottomless mountain lake to be formed, and this prison of submerged rock to make captive these two corpses. (p. 483)

A little later in the novel, Porius again experiences the precise sensation that he had when looking down on the corpses of the two giants:

> But suddenly, clean through the blood and hair and the staring eyes, a chasm opened into something deeper yet, an ecstasy of life worship indescribable in words. He felt indeed an extraordinary sensation … It was nothing less than an ecstasy of enjoyment, of exactly the same nature as his familiar 'cavoseniargizing'. (p. 494)

The shock of witnessing Creiddylad's death, directly after making love, 'had aroused forces within him which … were enlarging if not altering the whole nature of his consciousness' (pp. 495–6). He sees that the ecstasy he has experienced arose because 'one of those forces seemed to

be the power … of including in the sweep of his cavoseniargizing both the idea of death as the end of all and the whole array of [his] secret nervous afflictions' (p. 496). Powys describes a similar experience from his life with Phyllis Playter ('the T. T.'): 'It is wonderful that I have the power of forgetting the loathsome and the terrifying and the horrible. It is since I have known the T. T. that I have acquired that power'.[53] Phyllis Playter, it would seem, helped Powys overcome the disturbing distraction of sadistic thoughts: 'It was a lack of having these limbs to hold that made me a sadist'.[54] She provided both the sylph that he had dreamed of in his imagination and insight into feminine consciousness in her acceptance of the disturbing sadistic elements, including fear of the feminine, in his personality.

The profound change that the lovemaking with Creiddylad has made in Porius is illustrated when he returns to make love with Morfydd, because now she has 'her first experience of the real feminine ecstasy of yielding, for on her bridal night she had blindly, resolutely, and almost heroically forced herself to submit to him' (p. 651). Morfydd's experience is now different because Porius is carrying her in a way that he has never carried her before and 'precisely in the manner in which in her earliest and vaguest young-girl reveries her imaginary lovers had always embraced her', and she wonders if Porius is acting under the influence of Eros (p. 651). Similarly, for Porius, Morfydd now became 'much more than a desirable girlish body' (p. 654).

The mythological Cerne Giant represents the basic, primitive sexual impulse: an instinct and an essential life drive. Porius learns the destructive power of this masculine instinct, which Powys believes is essential to male identity and happiness, from his mating with Creiddylad – an instinct, which, unless it is integrated into the male personality, will lead to violence, or the sadism that Powys himself struggled with throughout his life. Thus, Creiddylad enables Porius to experience the dark, destructive side of masculine sexuality without guilt or harm to anyone: an understanding that permits him to sublimate the violent energy of lust to become a fuller human being. This union with an embodiment of the goddess of both life and death especially shapes how Porius handles his fear of death, and various nervous manias, horrors, terrors, and morbid fears (p. 495).

The enchantress Nineue

In Nineue, Porius encounters the feminine possessive instinct. She is an 'enchantress' based on Tennyson's 'Vivien'.[55] In Tennyson's poem, Vivien seduces Merlin and then uses his magic against him. However, Powys's Nineue is 'much more' because, as the daughter of Avallach, she is also identified as various lake goddesses.[56] An ambiguous figure, she is also identified with Morgan le Fay, the sorceress of Arthurian legend, and the Welsh goddess Ceridwen.[57] Her negative aspect – the wielding of power over men – is emphasised when she is described as a witch, 'vampire,' 'succubus' and 'she-devil' (p. 84), and allusions are also made to the mythological female demons and monsters, Lilith, Lamia and the Hydra (pp. 83, 84, 90, 93).[58] These allusions suggest that Powys identifies Nineue with the 'all-swallowing Python', or 'Lamia-Demon in every woman', the feminine equivalent of the Cerne Giant archetype in men, which 'has to do with her devouring and swallowing up, like an insanely possessive python, both her offspring and her mate'.[59] However, Nineue does not actually harm anyone – unlike the 'Medusa-like', sadist Lowri in Powys's *Owen Glendower*.[60]

Nineue's seductive power draws Porius to her early in the novel. When holding her he experiences *'a sensation of the unfathomable and the infinite'*:

> It was as if he were pressing against himself … a yielding image of femininity in the abstract, the … Platonic idea of all the evasive allurements in the world that are the objects of impersonal desire. (p. 105)

Later, near the end of the novel, Porius connects Nineue's powers with the Mother Goddess:

> He didn't feel that Nineue shared with the planetary earth the teeming maternity of that Mother of all. What she shared with the earth – with Nature, with the great Her of this present visible world – was a quite special sort of pitiless craft and cunning, with the power of using every kind of mirage, illusion, phantasmagoria, and enchantment. (p. 745)

It is worth recalling Porius's reaction, at the end of Chapter Six, 'against all the femininity that had so long enslaved him', which is so extreme that 'he hated the very curves of the brazier because they reminded him of soft despotic bodies' (p. 116). Because of his upbringing, Porius is especially vulnerable to Nineue's dangerously engulfing sexual power – which resembles the negative side of the Jungian *anima*. She could overwhelm his rational mind by leading him into an unreal world of sexual fantasy. But Porius can also gain insight through her, if he accepts the unconscious feminine side of himself – and can (paradoxically) become more male than the masculine stereotype represented by Rhun's Mithraism.

Porius is deeply physically attracted to Nineue when he first meets her; however, he is able to resist her attempted seduction because he starts cavoseniargizing, meditating on some nearby ash keys that, by chance, he sees (p. 105). Significantly Porius later comments: 'sex is a side issue with both of us' (p. 612). Cavoseniargizing 'gave [Porius] such intense pleasure that he was unable to imagine any pleasure that was more intense' (p. 367). This elemental, meditative act of the mind, as has been seen, can be achieved by focussing on such seemingly insignificant objects. In addition, because of his giant strength, he physically extricates himself from her embrace.

Later, when Nineue invites a willing Porius to her bed, he is in no danger from her magic, because

> He got the impression that his caresses were only a minor element in a long-drawn-out, quietly muted ecstasy to which she had begun to abandon herself before he appeared on the scene at all, a sub-sexual sensuous ecstasy, practically identical with his self-centred 'cavoseniargizing'. (pp. 610–11)

Despite the numerous allusions to 'enchantresses', demons, and devouring females from mythology, and despite the possibility that Porius might succumb to Nineue's attempts at seduction, there is little sense that Powys's hero is in danger.

Porius's relationship with Nineue furthers his understanding of how feminine consciousness differs from that of men and conquers his neurotic fear of the feminine. Jung argued that '*anima* and *animus* cannot be experienced until they have been projected onto the opposite sex'.[61] Through Nineue Porius comes to understand the destructive,

engulfing aspect of feminine sexuality, while Creiddylad enables him to come to terms with the violent Cerne Giant aspect of his masculine identity. Both archetypes, according to Powys, are forces of nature, necessary for the continuation of life, and therefore beyond good and evil. Creiddylad enables Porius to fully experience the dangerous and destructive Cerne Giant side of his masculinity without causing harm. Similarly, Creiddylad, who is both a giant and a cannibal, comes to terms with her destructive, unconscious masculine side, or *animus*, when she mates with Porius. Nineue safely reveals to Porius the dark, devouring, Lamia-Demon side of the feminine. Although Powys recognizes that evil may result from the possessive instinct of the female, as with the Cerne Giant aspect of the male psyche, he comments in the *Art of Happiness*:

> The roots of every individual's happiness descends below the level of life where what we call good and evil begin to differentiate themselves. So that to say that a woman *ought not* to have these possessive feelings is as absurd as to say that water ought not to flow, or fire burn, or ice freeze.[62]

Nineue's 'seduction' of Myrddin

> Then, in one moment, she put forth the charm
> Of woven paces and of waving hands,
> And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
> And lost to life and use and name and fame.
> (Tennyson, 'Vivien', ll. 966–9)

The final stage in Porius's initiation into an understanding of feminine consciousness, and the novel's climax, takes place on Snowdon, Wales's highest mountain. Here Powys presents his own version of the Arthurian story of Myrddin's entrapment by Nineue, one that involves Porius's apparent rescue of Myrddin from Nineue's magic; the episode begins with her attempting to seduce Porius. And the powers of this goddess of illusion are so great that, despite his experience with Creiddylad, Porius would not be able to resist her but for the intervention of chance – because Nineue has 'an unusually large nipple in the midst of an unusually small breast' (p. 745), whereas 'Porius was

attracted to fully and largely developed breasts in women only when their nipples were abnormally small, as indeed had been the case with [Creiddylad]' (p. 744). While this seduction scene might suggest that Porius is in genuine danger, there is the suspicion that Nineue is in collusion with Myrddin. Indeed, she is not at all put out by Porius's rescue of Myrddin – who himself is excellent at illusion, enchantment, and play-acting. Cavaliero notes, 'Merlin's stature by the end of the novel is such as to preclude any sense that his is not in fact the ultimate power'.[63] Rather, the novel's ending resembles an initiation ceremony, analogous to the 'testing' of Sir Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, when Gawain is tempted by Morgan le Fay.[64] Morgan in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* is both Merlin's apprentice and 'the most ardent and most lecherous woman in all Britain', and Sir John Rhys, who was a major source for Powys, suggests that she can be identified with Nineue.[65] Krissdottir likewise sees 'this piece of business, which seems quintessentially Powysian' as having 'an alchemical background'.[66] Porius himself recognizes, after his earlier episode of lovemaking with Nineue, that she is no threat to Myrddin: 'Nineue herself – ah! She must have known *that* all along! – couldn't really hurt her titanic lover against his own will' (p. 614). Powys's Nineue is quite different from Tennyson's Vivien because Nineue's magical powers do not entrap either Porius or Myrddin. The ambiguity of Powys's Nineue is confusing, but she represents a force of nature beyond good and evil, and hence a potential threat to normal men; however, Porius is identified with the mythological hero Hercules and Myrddin with a supreme deity rather than a normal man.

Powys incorporated into his Nineue the three mystical Queens who, at the end of Tennyson's 'Morte d'Arthur' carry King Arthur on their barge to 'the island-valley of Avilion;/Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow/Nor ever wind blows loudly' to heal his 'grievous wound' (ll. 259–264). He also incorporates the myth of Arthur's return in the future: 'and all the people cried, / "Arthur is come again: he cannot die"' (ll 346–7). In addition to the obvious Christian parallels, there are also parallels with Powys's previous novel, *Owen Glendower*, where Glendower's disappearance at the end is linked with the idea of a distant future return.[67] There is a further thematic connection between these two Welsh novels because, in Powys's version of Welsh history, Owen Glendower accepts defeat rather than feed his sadistic nerve with war.[68] Thus Powys's Nineue helps prepare Myrddin's two thousand year sleep,

which will eventually lead to the return of the Golden Age and the reign of the Mother Goddess. She also enables Porius to further overcome his fear of the feminine and complete his quest. Powys's reshaping of Arthurian myth recognizes the importance of the dark side of feminine consciousness and the need for a shift from the dominance of the narrow form of masculine consciousness prevalent in the mid-twentieth century, with its associated violence, to a new male consciousness that is fully aware of its subconscious femininity. This also involves a similar growth in women's awareness of their inner masculinity. Powys explores this in *Dorothy Richardson*, and in his essay 'Emily Brontë', from *Suspended Judgments:* 'It needed the imagination of one who had both Heathcliff and Cathy in her'.[69] Morfydd, Porius's future wife, is an obvious example from the novel.

The lifting of the stone that imprisons Myrddin by Porius, on the summit of Snowdon, implies that the patriarchal power of Zeus – Christianity's Yahweh – is on the wane, and that the Golden Age of Cronos and the Mother Goddess will one day be restored. It also marks the end of Porius's quest for his true identity – or what Jung calls the 'Self', the fully integrated individual – because this is frequently symbolised as a stone.[70] Krissdottir comments that, 'given their immersion in the same philosophic and religious/spiritual currents of the age, it is not surprising that Jung and Powys came up with strikingly similar ideas'.[71] She also persuasively argues for the influence of Paracelsus and alchemical writings on Powys.[72] Yet ultimately Porius's philosophy, though shaped by Powys's wide reading and obsession with mythology, has its most direct roots in Powys's daily experiences of the natural world and the basic four elements – earth, air, water, fire – along with his relationship with Phyllis Playter. While psychoanalysts such as Jung and Freud make use of myth in their endeavours to chart the mind's geography, John Cowper Powys actually creates myth. Jung writes of his abstraction, the *anima*; Powys creates his fictions: Myrddin, Creiddylad and Nineue.

Feminist novel?

The ideas Powys explores in *Porius* are feminist, and Michael Ballin suggests that the novel often has 'a feminist narrator'.[73] However, Powys's biographer Morine Krissdottir and others have been highly

critical of Powys's attitude toward women.[74] Frances Gregg, in 1935, after reading *The Art of Happiness*, told Powys that he knew nothing about women, and Phyllis Playter was enraged when she read a draft of the same work.[75] Morine Krissdottir, while finding 'remarkable insight', also describes parts of *The Art of Happiness* as 'at other times [verging] on the preposterous, even the outrageous'.[76] Katherine Saunders Lewis took an especially strong position in 2014: "Powys is no feminist. Nothing in his biography, personal papers, or novels suggests any investment in women's civic advancement, quite the contrary".[77] Saunders Lewis seems not only unaware of *Porius*, but equally of Powys's constant emphasis in his writings on the limitations of rationalism and of science, and therefore, likewise, of 'masculine consciousness'. She is similarly ignorant of what Powys says in *Dorothy Richardson*. It is not surprising, given the fear of the feminine that John Cowper Powys expressed in *Autobiography*, as well as his late-nineteenth century upbringing, that there were anti-feminist elements in his makeup. However, he, like his hero Porius, eventually largely conquered his earlier neurotic fears of the feminine – along with sadistic thoughts – through his relationship with Phyllis Playter. That is, in the fantasy world associated with his sexual relations with Phyllis, Powys was able to integrate the violent, sadistic Cerne Giant side of his personality, as Porius does during his 'ravishing' of Creiddylad. Just as Porius found in Creiddylad a real being corresponding to something that he first encountered in his imagination, so Powys found this in Phyllis Playter: "I have never seen anyone even remotely like you except in my imagination".[78] In Phyllis, this is a 'fantasy of femininity, a kind of Platonic essence of sylph-hood' that he had been seeking throughout his life.[79] Equally important is that she – like Creiddylad with Porius – accepts the dark side Cerne Giant side of Powys and frees him from his disabling sadistic thoughts and obsession with sadistic pornography.

Conclusion

Porius is a complex novel that is a *bildungsroman* to the extent that its main focus is on the spiritual growth of the eponymous protagonist. It explores a psychological process in which Porius gains knowledge about feminine consciousness in a series of steps, with his elemental

meditative practice, cavoseniargizing, and the philosophy of the early Christian heretic Pelagius as cornerstones.

The spiritual, religious dimension of *Porius* is intertwined with political concern about individual liberty that has roots in the teachings of the Christian heretic Pelagius but evolves with Myrddin/Cronos's prophecy of a return of the Golden Age and the defeat of the patriarchal god Zeus (and his Christian incarnation).

Early in the novel, after Porius tastes the honey in Rhun's temple to Mithras, he has the 'feeling that the whole difference between good and evil was connected with some obscure struggle between man and woman' (p. 60). Porius's quest leads him to understand this struggle as one between the masculine Cerne Giant instinct and the feminine Lamia-Demon or Python instinct and to his finding a balance, both within himself and in his relationship with the women in his life, most notably his bride, Morfydd. The maturing processes Porius undergoes involve psychological elements that exist beyond rational understanding. Powys sees the irrational as directly available through the imagination: through a person's 'imaginative ideas' or 'life illusions'. Porius's fantastic dream of meeting with another Creiddylad is an important example of this. In Jungian psychology, Powys's 'imaginative idea' is 'the symbolic language through which the unconscious speaks'.[80]

Porius's quest reflects Powys's own struggles to come to terms with his feminine inner self and the important role that Phyllis Playter and other women played in this growing acceptance. Beginning his novel in 1942, during the Second World War, Powys is also concerned with what he sees as the spiritual malaise of the modern world, following the decline of Christianity. Myrddin's elementalism (and the anarchistic political ideas[81] associated with it) is Powys's response to these circumstances. Porius's psychological and spiritual quest is based on the psychological insights of the much older Powys and his struggle with his own feminine side, as well as with his spiritually debilitating sadistic fantasies.

Porius is a major but neglected twentieth-century novel that has been compared with Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* and Proust's *A Remembrance of Things Past*.[82] The main underlying themes involve twentieth-century religion, politics, and psychology, especially questions relating to the relationship between the sexes and between masculinity, sexuality, and violence. Powys sees the twentieth century as a second Dark Age, with the decline of spiritual values

accompanying the rise of science, and in response to this, *Porius* celebrates the irrational, myth, and the elemental world of nature and the senses: 'Powys creates a picture of a society in close contact with the earth and elements'.[83] Begun in 1942, when Britain was once again threatened with an invasion, *Porius* celebrates the feminine above all, along with ideas of hope and rebirth.

Notes

1 *Porius* [1951] (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2007). Subsequent references are in parenthesis in the text.

2 *Owen Glendower* (1941*)* also has direct relevance to the years 1937–42, during which it was written and published. See Robin Wood, 'Owen Glendower: Powys's Faustian Prince'**,** *The Powys Journal,* V (1995), 92–107 (94).

3 Michael Ballin, '*Porius* and the Feminine', *Powys Notes*, 6/2 (Fall, 1990), 4–20 (5).

4 Also spelled Kronos and Cronus.

5 Ballin, '*Porius* and the Feminine', 5. I am indebted to the work of Michael Ballin and to Denis Lane's 'Elementalism in John Cowper Powys, *Porius*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 17/ 4 (1981), 381–404. See also, Glen Cavaliero, *John Cowper Powys: Novelist* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973): 'The wisdom of Merlin [Myrddin] is associated with the feminine principle', p. 122.

6 John Cowper Powys, *Maiden Castle* [1937] (London: Macdonald, 1966), p. 231.

7 Peter G, Christensen, 'The Idea of the Feminine in John Cowper Powys's *A Glastonbury Romance*', *Powys Notes*, 6/ 1 (Spring 1990), 17–32 (19, 18).

8 Christine Bilodeau, 'The Great Mother: The "Divine Feminine" in Powys's *A Glastonbury Romance*', *Powys Notes*, 11/ 1 (Spring 1997), 18–29 (18).

9 John Cowper Powys, *Dorothy M. Richardson,* [1931] (London: Village Press, 1974), p. 8. Subsequent references are in parenthesis in the text.

10 John Cowper Powys, *The Art of Happiness* [1935] (London: John Lane, 1946), p.111.

11 G. Wilson Knight, *The Saturnian Quest* (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 39.

12 These are 'similar to sirens': see J. E. Cirlot, 'Lamia', *A Dictionary of Symbols* [1962], translated Jack Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, 1971), p. 176.

13 Powys, *Art of Happiness*, p.111.

14 Edward C. Whitmont, *The Return of the Goddess* [1983] (London: Arkana, 1987), p. 132.

15 See Robin Wood, 'This Ridiculous Word "Cavoseniargizing"', *The Powys Journal,* XXV, (2015), 186–9.

16 John Cowper Powys, *In Defence of Sensuality* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1930).

17 John Cowper Powys, *In Spite of: A Philosophy for Everyone* [1953] (London: Village Press, 1974), p. 66.

18 Wood, 'This Ridiculous Word "Cavoseniargizing"', 188–9.

19 John Cowper Powys, *Mortal Strife* [1942] (London: Village Press, 1974), p. 70.

20 Ballin, '*Porius* and the Feminine', 4.

21 C. G. Jung, *Psyche and Symbol*: *A Selection from the writings of C. G. Jung*, ed. Violet de Laszlo (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), p. 12.

22 June Singer, *Boundaries of the Soul: The Practice of Jungian Psychology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1977), p. 239; Whitmont, in *The Return of the Goddess*, refers

to various 'hero figures' who are 'all slayers of dragons, serpents or swamp monsters, representing the now repressed swamp unconscious of the Feminine' (p. 65).

[23] John Cowper Powys, *Autobiography* [1934] (London: Macdonald, 1967), p. 426. Dorothy Richardson refers to the 'essential femininity' of Powys and Henry Miller: *Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson*, ed. Gloria G. Fromm (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. 661.

[24] Powys, *Autobiography*, p. 222.

[25] Jacqueline Peltier, 'Marian Powys (1882–1972)'. *www.powys-lannion.net/Powys/America/MarianP.htm*.

[26] In a letter dated 13 January 1920, Powys tells Frances Gregg that he is reading *The Tunnel*, the fourth volume of *Pilgrimage*. Significantly he suggests to Gregg, that '*The Tunnel*, in its opening chapters follows *your* method so very closely – the same hesitant scrupulous obscurity': *Jack and Frances: The Letters of John Cowper Powys to Frances Gregg*, vol. 1, ed. Oliver Marlow Wilkinson (London: Cecil Woolf, 1994), p. 107. In 1923 he wrote to Phyllis Playter recommending *Revolving Lights* (1923), though it appears that she had read Richardson earlier: Letter 72, *The Letters of John Cowper Powys and Dorothy Richardson*, ed. Janet Fouli (London: Cecil Woolf, 2008), p. 232.

[27] Janet Fouli, 'Reading Women', *The Powys Journal*, XX (2010), 27–48 (44).

[28] John Cowper Powys, 'Modern Fiction', in F. McDermott and K. B. Taft (eds), *Sex in the Arts: A Symposium* (New York and London: Harper, 1932), Chapter Three, pp. 61–2.

[29] John Cowper Powys, *Psychoanalysis and Morality* (San Francisco: Jessica Colbert, 1923). Powys lectured on 'Psychoanalysis, Its Use and Abuse' in San Diego, California on 27 April 1922: (Katherine Saunders Nash and Charles Lock (eds), 'John Cowper Powys at the Wednesday Club', *The Powys Journal*, XXV (2015), 45–50.

[30] Powys's MS Diary, 2 December 1948, quoted in Morine Krissdottir, *Descents of Memory: The Life of John Cowper Powys* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2007), p. 372.

[31] Krissdottir, *Descents of Memory*, p. 373.

[32] A. S. Geden, *Selected Passages Illustrating Mithraism* [1925] (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), p. 51.

[33] C. Harrison, 'Truth in a Heresy?: 1. Pelagianism'. *The Expository Times*, 112/3 (2000), 78–82.

[34] Franz Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, trans. Thomas J. McCormack (New York: Dover, 1956), p. 149.

[35] For example, Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge: University Press, 1920), pp. 145–6; Powys, *Autobiography*, p. 285.

[36] Cirlot, 'Honey', *A Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 150.

[37] Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, p. 107. Powys conflates Cronos/Chronos, 'Time', with the father of Zeus, Cronus (Roman Saturn), following an ancient tradition. See *Encyclopedia of Time: Science, Philosophy, Theology, & Culture*, ed. H. James Birx (Sage Publications, 2009), pp. 249–50. This identification was widespread during the Renaissance, giving rise to the allegory of 'Father Time' with his scythe. See Samuel L. Macey, *Encyclopedia of Time* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 209.

[38] Powys noted in his 'The Characters of the Book' that 'all the best Welsh scholars seem to be agreed' that Merlin is the representative of, 'in different regions and epochs … the supreme deity … of Britain, whom of course it might be more correct to "equate" with the Homeric Zeus … but whom, for various reasons that seem weighty to me, I prefer to "equate" with Cronos or Saturn, the father of Zeus'. John Cowper Powys, 'The Characters of the Book', *The Powys Newsletter*, IV (1974–5), 14–21 (17).

[39] Defined as follows: 'The collective unconscious comprises in itself the psychic life of our ancestors right back to the earliest beginnings'. C. G. Jung, 'The Significance of Constitution and Heredity in Psychology' (1929), in *Collected Works*, vol. 8, *The Structure*

and Dynamics of the Psyche, trans. R. F. C. Hull, Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, and Gerhard Adler (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), ¶230, p. 112. Other possible, similar terms are 'racial memory' and 'genetic memory'; Powys, however, suggests that these memories can link us with even the inanimate in this experience of Porius.

40 R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (Oxford: University Press, 1961), p. 6.

41 Zaehner, *Mysticism*, p. 91.

42 Zaehner, *Mysticism*, p. 99.

43 E. Fromm, D. T. Suzuki, and R. Martino, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (London: Souvenir Press, 1974), p. 106.

44 Powys, *Defence of Sensuality*, pp. 101–2.

45 Powys, *Defence of Sensuality*, p. 99.

46 Powys, *Art of Happiness*, p. 110.

47 C. G. Jung, *Psyche and Symbol*, p. 10.

48 Powys, *Art of Happiness*, p. 110.

49 Powys, *Art of Happiness*, p. 110.

50 Powys, *Autobiography*, p. 360.

51 Powys, *Autobiography*, p. 66.

52 G. Wilson Knight's essay 'Mysticism and Masturbation' is relevant here, in G. Wilson Knight, *Neglected Powers: Essays on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 156–96.

53 John Cowper Powys, *The Diary of John Cowper Powys 1930*, ed. Frederick Davies (London: Grey Mitre Books, 1987), p. 138.

54 John Cowper Powys, *The Diary of John Cowper Powys 1931* (London: Jeffrey Kwinter, 1990), p. 127.

55 See Powys, 'Characters of the Book', 21.

56 Powys, 'Characters of the Book', 21. Her name is also spelt: 'Nimue', 'Viviane', 'Elaine', etc. See S. E. Holbrook, 'Nymue, the Chief Lady of the Lake, in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*', *Speculum*, 53/4 (October 1978), 761–77.

57 Sir John Rhys, *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891), p. 348.

58 Lilith 'in Hebrew legend … the first wife of Adam' and 'in Israelite tradition, she corresponds to the Greek and Roman Lamia': Cirlot, 'Lilith', *Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 188; The Hydra of Lerna was a monstrous water serpent with many heads that Hercules (Heracles) defeated; Michael Grant and John Hazel, 'Heracles', *Gods and Mortals in Classical Mythology* (New York: Dorset Press, 1979), p. 171.

59 Powys, *Art of Happiness*, pp. 110–11. There is snake imagery in Tennyson's 'Vivien': 'Vivien … /Writhed toward [Merlin], slided up his knee … /Clung like a snake' (ll. 237–40).

60 Powys, *Owen Glendower*, vol.1 (New York: Simon and Schuster, [1941]), pp. 335–6.

61 Singer, *Boundaries of the Soul*, p. 252.

62 Powys, *Art of Happiness*, p. 110.

63 Cavaliero, *John Cowper Powys: Novelist*, p. 127.

64 George Lyman Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 76.

65 Jean Markale, *Merlin: Priest of Nature* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), Chapter Five, p. 348.

66 Krissdottir, *Descents of Memory*, p. 387.

67 Powys, *Owen Glendower*, p. ix.

68 Wood, 'Owen Glendower: Powys's Faustian Prince', 103. There are also parallels between Rhisiart and Porius: see Robin Wood, 'Romance and Realism in John Cowper Powys's *Owen Glendower*', *Powys Notes*, 12/ 1 (1998), 14–26.

[69] John Cowper Powys, 'Emily Brontë', in *Suspended Judgments: Essays on Books and Sensations* (New York: Arnold Shaw, 1916), p. 328
[70] M.-L. von Franz. 'The Process of Individuation' in *Man and his Symbols* [1968], ed. C. G. Jung et al. (New York: Dell, 1971), p. 221.
[71] Krissdottir, *Descents of Memory*, p. 268.
[72] Krissdottir, *Descents of Memory*, pp. 374–86.
[73] Ballin, '*Porius* and the Feminine', p. 7.
[74] Krissdottir, *Descents of Memory,* p. 310; Oliver Marlow and Christopher Wilkinson (eds), *Jack and Frances: The Love Letters of John Cowper Powys and Frances Gregg*, vol. 2 (London: Cecil Woolf, 1994), p. 26.
[75] *Jack and Frances*, vol. 1, p. 26; Krissdottir, *Descents of Memory*, p. 309.
[76] Krissdottir, *Descents of Memory*, pp. 308–9.
[77] Katherine Saunders Lewis, *Feminist Narrative Ethics: Tacit Persuasion in Modernist Form* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2014), p. 119.
[78] Krissdottir, *Descents of Memory*, p. 170.
[79] Powys, *Autobiography*, p. 262.
[80] Phyllis Kenevan, 'The Jungian Interpretation of the Feminine', *Frontier: A Journal of Women Studies*, 1/1 (Autumn, 1975), 23.
[81] See David Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p. 165.
[82] Jerome McGann, 'Marvels and Wonders'. *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 December 1995, 6.
[83] Lane, 'Elementalism in John Cowper Powys' *Porius*', 390.