A Dance to the Music of AP

A Review of
Anthony Powell: A Life
By Michael Barber

by Christine Berberich

The long wait is over. Or at least very nearly so. July will see the publication of Michael Barber’s eagerly anticipated biography of Anthony Powell, “publisher, journalist, man-about-town, and author of the Dance to the Music of Time sequence,” as the blurb of the book proudly proclaims. Barber comes with excellent credentials for the job in hand. His previous biography, The Captain, on the life and times of Simon Raven1, was highly acclaimed by AN Wilson and Frederic Raphael, to name but two. But more importantly even than that he can claim personal acquaintance with the subject of his study, having interviewed Powell for the BBC World Series and the Paris Review, both in 1975. All the more reason for readers to wait with bated breath for the publication of the biography.

Writing a biography is always a tricky business. As an author, one has to be painfully aware of a variety of different pressures. If the biography is of a famous person, one ought to be careful not to unnecessarily feed and further the myth surrounding the person already. Saying that, it might not be useful to destroy that myth, either. After all, there is the family/the descendants/the estate of the subject to consider; in some cases, there is the subject him- or herself. There is also the community of admirers, especially if the subject of the study is a celebrated author/actor/politician etc. Then there is the world of academia. A biography is perforce always a work of reference, and as such one that will automatically be used for scholarly research. The biographer has to pretend to be aware of but uninfluenced by all these and, I am sure, many other pressures and, above all, to always preserve his or her objectivity to present

his biography as appealing to a circle of dedicated Powell aficionados only. All the more praiseworthy that Michael Barber has undertaken the task.

“But has he done so successfully?” readers will ask. “Is it a good book? Will I get my money’s worth?” The answers to these questions are certainly “yes”, “yes” and “yes” respectively. But of course it always depends on what readers, again, expect. If one expects a hugely readable account of a writer’s life, then yes, that is what one gets. Barber’s biography presents Powell as an active member of a circle of writers and society figures which included Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, Cyril Connolly, Harold Acton and many more. In fact, this is one of the strengths of Barber’s book. He not only provides a wealth of detail on Powell’s own life but also introduces us to his contemporaries in a detailed and very informative but at the same time entertaining manner. Lengthy sections acquaint readers with figures such as Alan Pryce-Jones, John Heygate, Jocelyn Brooke or Constant Lambert, to name but a few. It is this that infinitely widens the scope of Barber’s book, painting a similar picture of a generation of talented and dedicated artists that reminds one of Martin Green’s influential Children of the Sun2 or Humphrey Carpenter’s The Brideshead Generation.3 As such, Anthony Powell: A Life is a perfect introduction to the life and work of Anthony Powell, writer and man-about-town, ideal especially for readers who have only just encountered Powell’s work and who wish to learn more about its background and its author. It clearly and chronologically informs the readers about Powell’s origins, his family background, upbringing and education and his writing career, from tentative beginnings in the publishing offices of Duckworth’s to the award of literary prizes for individual instalments of Dance. It also, in detail, compares and contrasts Powell to his own literary creation Nicholas Jenkins.

And this is, possibly, where the problem lies for the dedicated admirer of Dance who is not only intimately familiar with the novel sequence itself but also devoured Powell’s autobiography and his journals. For those readers, Barber’s biography might offer a new angle – but not necessarily new material. Readers who approach Anthony Powell: A Life expecting new, more intimate insights into Powell’s life will be disappointed as Powell is painted throughout as another Nick Jenkins: the bystander who quietly observes rather than boisterously hogs the limelight himself.

This also poses a problem for the academic reader who might be hoping to use Barber’s biography for further research. Although Barber provides many interesting and personal insights, he also leaves many gaps and blanks in Powell’s story. There are too many vague expressions such as “Unfortunately I have forgotten who told me”, “I think”, “I do not know the exact figure” or “I couldn’t possibly comment”4 that severely limit the use of the book for scholarly reference. And given that Barber spends a not inconsiderable amount of pages discussing and analysing Dance it is rather astonishing that he should have chosen to omit consulting the academic studies of Powell’s work as he himself acknowledges at the beginning of his bibliography.

It is only apt to finish this review with an anecdote of Powell’s in which he reacted against the “neither-nor-attitude” of reviewers. In 1962, Powell complained to Jocelyn Brooke about “the sheer incompetence of reviewers … in the way that they never give a thought to the technical problems that any [writer] has to face. It is like someone saying, ‘This is a nice plum-pudding, but there is no taste of salmon’ and never pausing to think that if there were a taste of salmon, it would not be the same dish, indeed the plum-pudding aspect might be seriously prejudiced.”5

I fear that I have done precisely that in this review – praised it for some aspects but condemned it for the lack of others. Michael Barber’s biography is a beautifully written and highly readable account of Powell’s life and, to some extent, his times. The author’s passion for his subject is evident throughout. It is, in fact, a very nice plum-pudding. But it would have benefited from some additional tastes. But then – shouldn’t it rather be the prerogative of the reviewer to expect, to keep it in Powellian terminology, a perfect blend of tastes at all times?

Anthony Powell: A Life by Michael Barber is published on 1 July 2004 by Duckworth, at £20.

3 See Barber, p. 163. Taken from a letter, AP to Brooke, 30 July 1962, Austin. Copyright 2004, The Estate of Violet Powell.

4 See, for example, Barber, pp. 117, 174, 185, 248.

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2 Martin Green, Children of the Sun: A Narrative of Decadence in England after 1918 (London: Constable, 1977)

Annual General Meeting 2004

Notice is hereby given that this year’s Annual General Meeting of the Anthony Powell Society will be held on Saturday 23 October 2004 at the New Cavendish Club, 44 Great Cumberland Place, London, W1H 7BS commencing at 1400 hrs.

Nominations for the three Executive Officers (Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer) and up to six Executive Committee Members must be received in writing by the Hon. Secretary no later than Friday 6 August 2004.

All nominations must bear the name & signature of two proposers, the signature of the candidate and a short biographical statement about the candidate. Electronic signatures will be accepted in the form of e-mail(s) from the proposer(s)/candidate. Normal mail and faxes (preferably using the form overleaf) will also be accepted.

Please note: The members of the Executive Committee (three officers and six committee members) are the Society’s legal trustees. Thus those elected must not be barred from being trustees under English law and a majority of the Executive Committee must be ordinarily resident in England and Wales.

Motions for discussion at the AGM must also be submitted to the Hon. Secretary no later than Friday 6 August 2004. They must be clearly worded, proposed by at least two members and contain a statement in support of the motion which will be published to members.

The formal business of the AGM will be followed at 1500 hrs by …

Writing about Anthony Powell
Perspectives on Writing about a Writer

with contributions by recent authors on Anthony Powell including …

   Michael Barber
   Dr Nicholas Birns
   Dr George Lilley

and followed by an open discussion.

This will be a golden opportunity to hear and discuss the experiences of those who have recently written about Powell.

While the formal AGM is open only to Society members, all are welcome to Writing about Anthony Powell.

The Anthony Powell Society – Officer/Committee Proposal Form

We the undersigned nominate _______________________________ for the post of ______________________________.

Proposer:______________________ Signed:_________________ Date:_______

Seconder:______________________ Signed:_________________ Date:_______

Candidate’s Declaration: If elected I agree to serve as ______________________________ and to act at all times in the best interests of the Society. I am not barred from acting as the trustee of a charity under the laws of England & Wales. I am/am not (please delete as appropriate) resident in England or Wales.

Name: ________________________ Signed:_________________ Date:_______

Candidate’s Biographical Statement:

Anthony Powell Jazz Band?
Recently the APLIST tangentially mentioned the jazz band The Temperance Seven. This prompted member Andrew Clarke to suggest the following line-up:

   Anthony Powell Eight
   Charles Satchmo Stringham (cornet)
   Hot Lips Larry Le Bas (clarinet & alto sax)
   Jimmy Klein (bass sax)
   Dicky Umfraville (banjo, ukulele & phono-fiddle)
   Bob Duport (sousaphone)
   Max Fingers Pilgrim (piano)
   Buster Foxe (drums)
   Whispering Paul Fenneau (vocals)

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The London Geography of Dance

by Julian Allason

“Change, all change,” cried the conductor, shooing uncomprehending Japanese tourists off the number eight bus at Victoria Station. “Too true,” I muttered. In a matter of weeks the old double-decker buses taken by Nicholas from the terminus to his digs in Shepherd Market would be scrapped. One more landmark of Dance would disappear from the streets of the capital, victim not of obsolescence, but of compulsive Brussels regulation and a mayor’s broken promise.

Cutting through the Belgravia evening I passed stuccoed terraces, outwardly unchanged. At which of these had sugar cascaded over Widmerpool’s oily locks? A closer look disclosed multiple doorbells, indicating division of the houses into flats. Only the embassies retained structural and social integrity, Beethoven issuing from the residence of the German Ambassador, a hint of flamenco from that of his Spanish confrère. It raised the question of how much of the London geography of Dance had survived thirty years and more of change.

Outwardly Shepherd Market remains little altered, and the cards of strict mistresses and adventurous au pairs posted in telephone kiosks suggest that Uncle Giles’s successors might still lunch out of their clubs for a “good time, dearie”. For although the In & Out is now shuttered, the Cavalry & Guards continues to serve latter-day Conyers with mess food washed down by smartly turned out second growths. A little further along Picadilly the Ritz stands, a 19th century Burgundian chateau marooned upon the shores of Green Park. True, the manager has just been eased out following the illumination of an hairdressing bill of £46,000 charged by his wife. It is a sum that would hardly have troubled Prince Theodoric or his character model, who kept his country’s gold reserves in an antechamber of his suite. Rumour has it that the Ritz Club, a casino favoured by expatriate Islamists, will soon return to the hotel the subterranean chamber in which Le Bas held his reunions.

To the south St James Street falls away to the low gothic of the eponymous palace, whence the Prince of Wales is occasionally to be seen to scurry from his office. Perhaps on a mission to meet and greet first growths in the 18th century cellars of Messrs Berry Bros & Rudd, wine merchants by appointment to the princely. Further up St James’s, Whites Club, where Randolph Churchill and Waugh tormented each other, remains as Powell knew it. When the Queen expressed interest in attending its 250th birthday celebration a motion was suggested that she be elected an honorary man for the day.

Self-discipline requires the bypassing of Powell’s other haunts – even Brooks’s where Denis Capel-Dunn, model for Widmerpool, was club bore. Instead we continue towards Piccadilly Circus, resisting an incursion into Fortnum & Mason for gulls’ eggs due to the press of yet more Japanese tourists. Ahead lie the sinful alleys of Soho. Somewhere in their maze is the Coach & Horses, an inn that must more than once have been silenced by a Trapnell homeric. It is still a gathering place of gossip columnists.

Chips Lovell, I fancy, ran a tab here. Nearby are several drinking clubs, low dives for low lifers. About them wafts an air of impropriety as thick as a Dickensian smog. Admission is still gained following inspection through a spyhole. Mention the name Maclintick. It may help.

But do not count on hopping aboard the Fitzrovia-bound number eight as it dawdles its way past the emptying theatres of Shaftesbury Avenue. Brussels, Health & Safety, and the London Mayor have all decreed its open platform unsafe.

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Review

London 1945: Life in the Debris of War

by Maureen Waller

London at the outset of war in 1939 was the greatest city in the world, the heart of the British Empire. By 1945, it was drab and exhausted, beginning the long haul back to recovery. This book is of particular interest to Powell readers because it fleshes out so much of the background to those sections of the military trilogy set in London. For example, it details the level of bombing that was unleashed on London in the last months of the war, particularly from Hitler’s new vengeance weapons, the V1s and V2s. The sheer scale of the bombing reminds one of Alan Judd’s comment (in his speech at the Balliol conference) that although Powell didn’t see direct military action, he certainly experienced the horror and destruction caused by the vast tonnage of bombs dropped on London. The less savoury aspects of living through the war are examined, such as the amount of looting that went on during the Blitz. One is reminded of General Conyers’ death when, as an air-raid warden, he dies of a heart attack pursuing looters. Prostitution was also rife, with the most common method of solicitation being the tart shining a torch on her own face as she stood in a dark doorway.

“Lots of pretty little pieces in the blackout,” as Widmerpool says gleefully.

The great thanksgiving victory service at St Paul’s (such a set piece in The Military Philosophers) is described, with a quote from ‘Chips’ Channon about “tripping over several Field Marshals” as he leaves the service en route for the Savoy.

Maureen Waller draws on a rich array of primary sources for this book, letting the Londoners tell their own story, and packs the book with fascinating glimpses of daily wartime life among the wider panorama of the city.

A relative of Powell’s by marriage, the playwright Harold Pinter, features briefly in this history. On VE Day, when he was 15, he was standing in the crowd outside Buckingham Palace waiting for the King and Queen to appear. Pinter pinched the bottom of the girl in front of him and was promptly knocked unconscious by her soldier boyfriend.

London 1945: Life in the Debris of War

by Maureen Waller is published by John Murray, price £20.
Local Group News

London Group Meeting
6 March 2004

Several of us met at the Anchor pub by the Thames on Saturday 6 March: Katharine Barrett, Patric Dickinson, Stephen Holden, Chris Hoskins, Keith Marshall, Noreen Marshall, Prue Raper, and Victor Spouge. As usual the chat ranged over several topics, not all of them Powell-related. Some of us were reading, or had read, Simon Raven’s *Alms for Oblivion* sequence of novels, and we discussed these in comparison to *Dance*. We also talked a little about American “novels of manners” by the likes of John P Marquand and Louis Auchincloss; while at the other end of the table others were looking through a book of Edward Gorey drawings. Someone mentioned how Powell had got wrong the sequence of Edward Gorey drawings. We also discussed the experience of *South of the Border* in *Journals*.

The keynote speakers for the Centenary Conference are still not finally confirmed. We will publish details here as soon as possible but in the meantime let’s just say we have managed to sign up at least a couple of big names!

The recordings are being made available to members at cost (CDs, packing and postage), plus a donation to the Society, as follows:

**Option A**
- All 28 episodes on a single CD encoded as MP3 files (you will need an MP3 player or equivalent PC software to play the files). Cost £2.50 plus **minimum £7.50** donation to the Society; total £10.

**Option B**
- 28 CDs each containing one episode in audio CD format. Cost £20 plus **£40 minimum** donation to the Society; total £60.

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Please do not request Option B unless really necessary. All CDs will be individually crafted to order and the time to cut 28 audio CDs is about 100 times longer than to produce the one CD of

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Please Note. For legal reasons we are able to make these recordings available to Society members only. We regret that we cannot offer a Gold/Founder member discount on these CDs as we are aiming to only just recover our costs. Overseas members are also responsible for any taxes and duties levied on the import of these CDs.

Ordering. Post, phone or fax your order to the Hon. Secretary at the address on page 2. Payment by cheque (UK funds drawn on a UK bank), credit card (Visa or Mastercard) or cash.

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Many thanks to Bobb, Gareth and Rosemary for their help with the recording.
**Society News & Notices**

**Membership Renewal**

At the time of writing some 50 members whose subscriptions expired in March have not yet renewed their membership. This is a significant proportion of the Society’s membership and mailing second reminders takes both time and money the Society does not have.

If you are one of those who have not yet renewed your subscription for this year, please send your payment to the Hon. Secretary (address on page 2) as soon as possible.

Remember that you can pay by credit card as well as sterling cheque or cash. Additionally UK members can GiftAid their subscriptions thus increasing their value to the Society. Please contact the Hon. Secretary if you need a GiftAid declaration form (or use the form on the back page). Sadly we cannot set up direct debit or standing order payment for UK members because the volume of transactions does not meet the bank’s minimum requirements. However we continue to seek ways to make payment easier for members.

**London Group Meeting**

The Society’s London group are holding an extra summer meeting to welcome any member visiting London (as well as our resident members) on Monday 9 August from 1830hrs at The Anchor Bankside, 34 Park Street, London, SE1 9EF.

We hope to spend some time during the evening discussing Hugh Moreland and Constant Lambert.

Come along for a drink (or several!), food, Powell-related chat and the usual camaraderie. All are welcome.

For additional details, please contact the Hon. Secretary.

**Understanding Anthony Powell**

*by Dr Nicholas Birns*

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August 2004
ISBN 1570035490

Now available for pre-order on amazon.com and amazon.co.uk
or directly from the publisher on +1-800-768-2500

**Dates for Your Diary**

**Saturday 3 July 2004**
London Group Pub Meet
Venue: The Anchor Bankside
34 Park Street, London, SE1 9EF
Time: 1230 to 1530 hrs
Regular 4-monthly informal meet at this historic riverside hostelry

**Monday 9 August 2004**
London Group Meeting
Venue: The Anchor Bankside
34 Park Street, London, SE1 9EF
Time: from 1830 hrs
Details elsewhere in this issue

**Saturday 23 October 2004**
Society AGM
Time: 1400 hrs
Venue: New Cavendish Club
44 Great Cumberland Place, London W1

to be followed at 1500 hrs by
**Writing about Anthony Powell**
Details elsewhere in this issue

**Friday 2 & Saturday 3 December 2005**
Anthony Powell Centenary Conference
Venue: The Wallace Collection
Manchester Square, London, W1
Details to follow

**Contributions to the Newsletter**

are always welcome and should be sent to:

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**Local Groups**

**NE USA Group**
Area: NY & CT area, USA
Organiser: Leatrice Fountain
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**Great Lakes Group**
Area: Chicago area, USA
Organiser: Stephen Pyskoty-Olle
Email: widmerpool@hotmail.com

**Swedish Group**
Area: Sweden
Organiser: Regina Rehbinder
Email: reginarehbinder@hotmail.com

**London Group**
Area: London & SE England
Organiser: Keith Marshall
Email: kcm@cix.co.uk

Please contact the Hon. Secretary if you wish to make contact with a group and don’t have email.

**Newsletter Copy Deadlines**

**Issue 16, Autumn 2004**
Copy Deadline: 21 August 2004
Publication Date: 10 September 2004

**Issue 17, Winter 2004**
Copy Deadline: 12 November 2004
Publication Date: 3 December 2004
From the APLIST
Recent Discussions on the Society's Email Discussion Group

From David Christie
Enjoyed the other night that marvellous old film, *Oh What a Lovely War* and certainly Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig gets a lot of stick. Naturally I looked up *A Buyer's Market* for information, as one does, and was fascinated by the discussion at the Walpole-Wilson's dinner party about an appropriate statue for Haig.

Not surprisingly Widmerpool thought that Haig, as a fellow man of will, deserved an heroic commemoration of some sort. Eleanor proved a fierce planchette of course, for some advice on her probable reasons. Sir Gavin was clearly bored by discussions of other famous men, and suggested that he could be seated at a desk; Pardoe joked that seated in a staff car might be just the thing; Archie Gilbert and Margaret Budd were uninterested in the topic.

Now it is extremely unlikely that anybody present had not lost friend, colleague, relative, or lover in that war (about a million dead or seriously wounded), yet nobody suggested that, for his statue, Haig could be represented upside down with his head in a bucket of Widmerpool père's product. How come?

At a similar dinner party in Australia, the topic of the Iraq war would bring the Heavy Brigade from the right galloping to the attack, only to be met by massed artillery of the left. There would be no ironic jokes or uninterested parties. The hostess would be horrified at the wreck of her party and the host equally so at his rapidly depleting cellar.

The dinner party was held about 7 years after the war and written about some 30 years after it. I find the reactions of the Walpole-Wilson guests quite odd and wonder what others think.

From Alexander Kinmont
Officer casualties were sustained at 7 times the frequency of other ranks on the Western Front. WW1 was the last war in which the officer class actually did lead from the front, despite the later caricatures of lions led by donkeys. The circles described by Powell would have been split between those who identified themselves with the staff officers who had avoided service at the front and those who identified themselves with those who had died at the front. Every officer class family would have embodied these splits, as most would have had members in each camp.

Sir Gavin failed to involve himself in the fighting – he helped refugees. Pardoe was too young to fight – but “did rather well” in Burma in the next global punch up. Widmerpool was adept at sending others to the front. Jenkins' father did fight (BEF); Uncle Giles did not – allegedly unfit for service.

I think it is clear that Powell meant the Haig reference to be a pointer to the split in the officer class, as well as prefiguring the cleverness with which Widmerpool sent others to their deaths in 1939-45. The light touch he shows in introducing this controversial topic in the form of a question of a sculpture in no way diminishes its significance – indeed, one rather feels that it heightens the colour of the point being made.

At the same time Powell accurately rendered a social setting in which good manners prevented too open a disagreement and in which the topology of the split within the officer class prevented any one individual from taking too simplistic a view. Everyone would have felt some sympathy for everyone else's position given that everyone would have been – to a degree – in the same position somewhere in their family. Only the poorly brought-up would think of casting the issue in unequivocal terms.

Whether Haig's strategy was correct or incorrect from a military perspective, it remains unforgivable from a social perspective. The ruling class embraced industrial attitudes towards the prosecution of the war, with both officers and men seen as mere inputs in a process. The contrast with the manner in which manpower was so sparingly committed in the Napoleonic Wars would not be clearer. From this fatal mistake the decline of that ruling class inevitably followed – and is beautifully charted by Powell.

From John Gilks
Some situations are more appropriate to the vigorous exchange of points of view than others. A boozy dinner at Casanova's with close friends requires somewhat less decorum than a formal, pre-ball (and largely alcohol free) dinner party where the guests span two generations and in some cases hardly know each other. Not much mystery there surely?

From Jeanne Reed
Sorry, but it's not clear at all. Can't any opinion no matter how extreme or strongly held be expressed "politely" according to the requirements of the particular social situation? I'm puzzled by the extreme difference in cultures – our tradition holds that at that specific pre-Huntercombe ball dinner party it would have been a duty and a mark of one's character to express a strong opinion or a deeply held feeling.
From David Christie
With regard to Jeanne's query, I think that in the *Dance* the problem is that we are dealing with a society that no longer exists. Those of us in sort of similar social circumstances, read of people remarkably like ourselves and we unconsciously assume (at least I do) that the mores and social rules of these people are also much the same as ours; a mistake we never make with non-English derived societies, like that of Proust, nor with clearly “long ago”, like Austen.

To John, in general I agree completely but not I think in all cases. The exception are causes *etc.* in which we feel very strongly and I guess that in Australia today the two topics guaranteed to start a fight in church are the Iraq War and our treatment of refugees. At a dinner party like the Wapole-Wilson's it would be a bit rude to open one of these topics but we could count on a Widmerpool to do so. Once the fox was off and running it would be on for young and old; but not necessarily so if the parties all agreed to a certain line. I suspect that was the case at the dinner in question, a sort of “the Coming Young Man's lateness, Walpole-Wilson's perpetual nervousness, Sir Gavin's botched career, Lady Anne's dissection of the dinner party and Jeanne's request for a clue to something!”

From Andrew Clarke
Nearly everybody at that dinner would have lost someone, but nobody would have had the discourtesy to have used the occasion as a tub-thumping exercise. Nor were they in thrall to that modern ideology that claims not only that all wars are wrong but that all wars won by Britain and America should be treated as crimes against humanity.

From Jeanne Reed
Do you think we could/should draw any conclusions from the behavior at the Walpole-Wilson's dinner party, based on the examples of similar “appropriate” behavior sent in response to my query? What if Widmerpool represents the future, then is the reticence of the other dinner guests inappropriate, or is he shown to be impolite and thus odious rather than … ?

That thought makes me wonder whether any other character stretches him/herself the way Kenneth does, if we accept that taking risks and coping with the ensuing anxiety is the way to move beyond one's parents/background, *etc.*

Am I attaching too much importance to what to others seems simple good/bad manners? I guess I'm angling to hear it's the clue to something!

From Andrew Clarke
There is plenty to discuss about the Walpole-Wilson's dinner:
- It's another step along the path taken by Nick only to discover that Widmerpool is there before him.
- It's an example of how Widmerpool's social gaucherie is established prior to his extraordinary rise to positions of influence during the 1940s.
- It's an occasion whereby a perceptible, but otherwise not entirely definable, unease might suggest a deeper malaise. It's a compound of various ingredients – Sir Gavin's botched career, Lady Walpole-Wilson's perpetual nervousness, the Coming Young Man's lateness, Widmerpool's unfortunate conversational gambit, Margaret Budd's sterile beauty, and perhaps even Johnny Pardoe's slightly too gardée manners (later to be dashed by melancholia).
- At a more personal level, there's the noisy little Goring girl upon whom Nick (and Ken) have set their hearts, but who is going to turn out to be in sexual terms a rather posher version of Gypsy Jones …

From James Doyle
Andrew's dissection of the dinner party seems to me brilliant, and the unspoken unease he illuminates strikes me as something Powell conveyed more effectively in a way than Proust ever did, although I expect controversy about that.

From Andrew Clarke
Reflecting on the Walpole-Wilson's dinner party and Jeanne's request for a little more discussion of the “spirituality” of *Dance*:

A sense of social unease suggests that there is something called social ease which this occasion – and others – are lacking. Let us assume that “social ease” requires:
- A certain warmth, a sense of comfort, generated by the presence of agreeable people.
- A reasonable commonality of values and manners.
- A certain generosity of spirit as people exercise consciously or (preferably) unconsciously the appropriate courtesies towards each other.
- A flow of what the 17th and 18th centuries identified as “wit”, that is, an elegant and unaffected degree of intelligence and humour combined.
- A sense of natural spontaneity, an absence of the pompous and contrived. In *Dance* we find social unease marked by:
  - A sense of coldness and discomfort.
  - The presence of one or more individuals from outside the predominant social sphere trying not quite successfully to “blend in” (Widmerpool, Truscott, even the Walpole-Wilsons themselves to a lesser extent) “together with” members of the predominant social sphere who are wilfully identifying with people outside it and antithetical to it (Lady Anne Stepney).
- A certain asperity of manner, absence of tact and indifference to what is expected of them in that particular social context (Widmerpool, Eleanor Walpole-Wilson).
- For a moment, Johnny Pardoe gets the doll-like Margaret Budd to laugh at a golfing story. The rest is poor stuff.
- Margaret Pardoe is too beautiful a beauty, Johnny Pardoe is too damn regimental a gardée, and Archie Gilbert is too beautifully dressed and too wonderfully agreeable to be true (cf. Nancy Mitford's Lord Montdore “made of wonderfully old cardboard”).
- Can easily be identified with social snobbery or its inversion, but the underlying element is probably our old friend Living By The Will. These are people who have chosen to move up or to move down and have thereby detached themselves from the mainstream, as it were, if indeed they were ever part of it. They cannot let go of their own egotism, which acts as a kind of grit within the well-oiled cogs of social life.
Letters to the Editor

Sir Henry and Powell Murders

From John Powell

In answer to Tom Miller in issue 14 of the Newsletter (p18), my father did meet Enoch Powell briefly in the late 1960s when he and my mother were staying with their great friends Sir Henry and Rosie d’Avigdor Goldsmid at Somerhill.

In connection with Dominick Harrod’s piece, “Powell Murders”, in issue 10 of the Newsletter (p15), “one of the two or three people” from Anthony Powell’s earlier life who had been murdered was called Tony Bower. A photograph we have dated September 1956 (taken in Venice) includes Tony Bower almost off camera. The words “subsequently murdered in NYC” have been added to the caption at a later date. Bower was a friend of my parents when they first married before the war.

Sweden vs. Norway

From Malin Siddiqi

[following a member’s query about Powell’s portrayal of Örn and Lundquist]

After having re-read parts of A Question of Upbringing yesterday and discussed it with a colleague of mine whose parents are Norwegians, I came up with this ...

Firstly, I think that in order to understand the enmity between Örn and Lundquist, one must consider that at that time the Norwegian-Swedish union, which had been forced upon the Norwegians some hundred years before, had fairly recently been dissolved (in 1905, to be more precise). This union made the

Norwegians subjects to the Swedish king, although they kept their own constitution, and was the cause of a growing dissatisfaction during the 19th century. I therefore venture to guess that Örn's hostility towards Lundquist was rooted in this unwanted patronage that had so recently been dispensed with. This would also explain the ridiculous pretence from Mr Örn that he could not understand Mr Lundquist when he spoke Swedish – something that is truly absurd, since Swedish and Norwegian are very similar indeed and, although some words differ, we understand each other without much effort!

As for these two characters taking each other as representatives of their respective country, I do not know enough history to say if there was any truth in it then but given the circumstances it doesn’t seem all that unlikely to me. Nowadays, however, I do not think that Norwegians consider Swedes proud (and my Norwegian colleague agrees with me on this) and we certainly don’t consider the Norwegians lacking in "chic" (whatever that means these days) – the only stereotypic characteristic I could think of that we usually assign to Norwegians is that they are sporty, which is hardly a negative thing! I think that Swedes and Norwegians have a relationship similar to a childhood sibling relationship: we have very much in common, we understand each other quite well and we enjoy teasing each other every once in a while.

Finally, I would like to add that I don’t see Mr Lundquist as a “typical” Swede, since I believe that Swedes in general are perceived as rather quiet, shy and perhaps a bit socially awkward.

Kalamazoo

From Keith Marshall, Hon. Secretary

If I may I would like to add just a little to James Tucker’s comments on the Anthony Powell Society of Kalamazoo.

In the early days of the Society, I made several attempts to contact Prof. Nancy Cutbirth and like James Tucker I too met with no success despite Prof. Cutbirth, at that time, still being listed as a member of staff on the Western Michigan University website. Letters and email alike went unanswered and, again like James Tucker, I chickened out from picking up the telephone or hiring the services of Virgin Atlantic to take me on an exploration to Kalamazoo.

Nonetheless, thanks to another Society member I have in my private collection of Powell’s works, I was able to contact Prof. Nancy Cutbirth and ask her to verify this information for me. She kindly agreed to do so, after which I wrote a small letter to Mr. Tom Miller (in response to his query) as well as a follow-up question to Keith Marshall (about the last ever issue of the Anthony Powell Society Newsletter).

During our short existence the Society has (or has had) several former members of the Kalamazoo society amongst its members, including the late Prof. Bill Stone, who James mentions in his article. Prof. Fred Warner (also mentioned by James), although never a member, did give me permission to reproduce his quiz on Dance on the Society’s website. Prof. Warner set this quiz for his students in the early-80s, so he was presumably at that time teaching Dance to his undergraduate students at the University of New Mexico. Oh, and just for the record we also have amongst our members at least one former member of the erstwhile Anthony Powell Society of Toronto.

Schools

From John Mitchum

I was reading Cyril Connolly’s Enemies of Promise (published in 1938, and revised in 1948) and came across the following passage. Although Connolly was at Eton with Powell, this passage refers to Connolly’s prep school where a fellow pupil was Eric Blair, aka. George Orwell. The school, St Cyprian’s, is fictionalised as St Wulfric’s.

“Muscle-bound with character the alumni of St Wulfric’s would pass on to the best schools, reporting their best friends for homosexuality and seeing them expelled, winning athletic distinctions – for the house rather than themselves … and then find their vocation in India, Burma, Nigeria and the Sudan, administering with Roman justice those natives for whom the final profligate overflow of Wulfrician character was all the time predestined.”

I wonder if this passage influenced Powell at all, consciously or unconsciously, in his depiction of Widmerpool. Certainly Widmerpool reports a boy (Akworth) for homosexuality, who is then expelled; he strives to win his house colours; and his immediate post-war ambition is to govern “black men”.

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