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From the Secretary’s Desk

It’s taken a year and there have been a few hiccups along the way, but at long last the redesigned Anthony Powell website is live.

OK, that’s surely no big deal, is it? Well, yes and no. From the outside I would agree that little has apparently changed apart from the design of the front page and the contents navigator. These are important in their own right as the website is one of the Society’s most important shop windows and we now have a new, clean shopfront.

Behind the scenes this is an equally important change. Firstly, the whole site has been updated to use current web techniques (which have enabled the new shopfront design); the design has been given the once-over by a professional; and the new site is intended to be easier & simpler to maintain so the webmaster role can more easily be passed on when the time comes. Hidden from view there is also a secure area for use by the Society’s trustees to share draft reports, discussion papers etc.

However the update is important for more than this. It also now gives us an improved platform on which we can build. And there are plans for future developments, beyond the additional content which has always been intended. We hope the first of these enhancements will be an online shop offering members and non-members alike Society merchandise, membership and membership renewals online, thus we hope opening up a large untapped market.

I should though reassure those of you without internet access that we are not going 100% online. This Newsletter, the Journal and publications will continue to be in printed form. No business can afford, especially in these “Credit Crunch” times, to disenfranchise a whole market sector, whether traditionally based or online.

Our thanks to Gordon Kirk who has undertaken the website refresh on a largely pro bono basis. ■

The Anthony Powell Society

Registered Charity No. 1096873

The Anthony Powell Society is a charitable literary society devoted to the life and works of the English author Anthony Dymoke Powell, 1905-2000.

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Anthony Powell and Sport

A letter from John Powell

My father’s attitude to sport is inaccurately analysed and discussed by Michael Barber in *Anthony Powell: A Life*. He also questions why if he “loathed” cricket (this is a gross exaggeration) my father was a member of the MCC from the mid-1930s. Barber suggests erroneously that Anthony Powell was a member purely for snobbish reasons. Apart from anything else Powell was always interested in clubs and their inhabitants. Also, the witnesses who Barber cites, Alan Ross and Simon Raven, only knew my father well after WWII; expert cricketers may be, but not party to every detail of my father’s movements and habits in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s.

Coincidentally attitudes to sport are discussed in a volume – *Frances Cruso: A Portrait* – by Hugh Cecil, the distinguished WWI literary expert and critic, that has just been privately published for former pupils and friends of Francis who was a housemaster and classical scholar teaching at Eton between 1932 and 1966. His connection with Anthony Powell began at Eton when Cruso, a scholar in sixth form a year or two ahead of my father, declaimed an extract from Jane Austen at Speeches on 4 June which greatly impressed Anthony Powell. The favourable impression remained with my father; both Tristram and later myself were his pupils in FJA Cruso’s at Eton, as were other sons of relations and friends.

Although my father only knew Cruso by sight at school, the process of educating two sons over eleven years involving his reports in the form of formidable but witty letters made Francis a close friend of both my parents. A former pupil, Hugh Cecil has brilliantly evoked Francis’s character as “the least schoolmasterly of schoolmasters.” The quotation that follows is a small part of what is an amusing, moving and scholarly portrait, a beautifully produced advertisement for brevity, giving an accurate view of an enlightened tutor at a public school in the 20th century.

In a passage describing Cruso’s take over in 1946 of his house from Claude Beasley-Robinson, which had been remarkably successful athletically, Cecil writes,

> Francis did not go in for perspiring up and down the towpath with a megaphone or leading his boys on a chilly cross country run to ‘Athens’ (a feature some distance up the river); to his amusement he was once introduced at a gathering in France as “Anglais mais pas sportif”; he had
nothing against games so long as he did not have to play them himself and was perfectly prepared to take an interest in his pupils’ athletic efforts; ‘run, you little fool’ he was once heard to shout on the touch line of a junior game, carried away by the excitement of the moment, to everyone, including his own surprise.

To revert to Anthony Powell’s interest in cricket, Chester Gate was within walking distance of Lord’s. It wasn’t a habit but I think that for a change he watched games both before and just after WWII. He may well have very occasionally gone to Lord’s more for the fresh air rather than in a combative sense before he joined the MCC. He certainly appreciated the comic side of the game as is borne out by No 4 (Budd), No 14 (Sunny Farebrother), No 16 (Charles Stringham) and No 17 (Capt Biggs) illustrated in the “Top Twenty Sportsmen” in *Dance* by Mike Jay in *Newsletter*, Issue 33, Winter 2008.

Like Francis Cruso, Anthony Powell was prepared to take a concentrated interest in sport when the need arose. His sporting references are accurate and usually funny. He actively liked reading Alan Ross’s cricket reporting in *The Observer*, but disliked the cricket culture which Bernard Hollowood introduced to *Punch*. It was my mother who had some rather flashy cricket connections in the early 1930s being quite a friend of GO (Gubby) Allen; the family of Douglas Jardine, both England cricket captains; and the Hill-Wood family, Eton cricketers and later controllers of Arsenal FC.

In the 1990 catalogue of Henry Mee’s portraits entitled *English Eminences* my father wrote an introduction and extended captions to the thirty-two portraits.

Describing Alec Douglas-Home, Lord Home of the Hirsel, he says, a former Prime Minister, has held other offices of state. Here, however, more the façade of a cricketer (sometime President of the MCC) rather than an elder statesman is presented. True the line of the mouth is firm, as he stares ahead prepared for anything. That might equally well be caused by satisfactory solution with matches of an all but unassailable economic situation, or a man walking back to the crease after hitting a boundary …

A description which shows an appreciation of the finer points of the game and even respect for cricket’s headquarters. Finally as I remember he bowled to me slow left arm on the lawn.
In 1992 Powell noted in his *Journals* that Marlene Dietrich had died:

She (with Stroheim) was the only film star for whom I ever felt the least fascination.

In *The Strangers All Are Gone* Powell notes

The actor-director Erich von Stroheim had long interested me, and while I was on *Punch* Stroheim came to London in 1954 to launch a showing of his own pictures at the National Film Theatre.

Powell then goes on to muse on Stroheim’s life.

Stroheim was born in Vienna in 1885, and claimed to be Count Erich Oswald Hans Carl Maria von Stroheim und Nordenwall, the son of Austrian nobility like the characters he played in his films; but both Billy Wilder and Stroheim’s agent Paul Kohner claimed that he spoke with a decidedly lower-class Austrian accent.

Powell noted that Stroheim was certainly Jewish, his father the owner of a straw-hat factory

and rich enough possibly to have bought a “von” and put his son into the Imperial and Royal cavalry.

Powell ponders that Stroheim was possibly educated at Weisskirchen, that “socially smart, otherwise somewhat gruesome” military school, so hated by Rilke, and vividly written of by Robert Musil in *Young Torless*. Stroheim left the Austrian army under a cloud (his army discharge describes him as “unsuitable for military service, unable to bear arms”). The date he arrived in America is in dispute (traditionally 1909 but perhaps as early as 1906 or late as 1913). He earned a living in America variously as a dish-washer, selling fly papers, as a riding master, and then ended up in Hollywood.

In Hollywood he acted in bit parts, before getting larger roles, usually as the “Evil Hun” (he was sometimes billed as “The Man You Love to Hate”). Stroheim’s standard “Evil Hun” persona had a perfect close-cropped military haircut and wore an immaculate and form-fitting officer’s uniform, a monocle, white gloves (usually with the cuffs turned down), a heavy gold chain bracelet (a gift from the third Mrs Stroheim), and a black mourning band. He often carried a cane, and invariably smoked cigarettes, often with a holder. He had graceful and very European manners (complete with heel-clicking, hand-kissing, and bowing) when in polite company or when trying to seduce a woman, but could quite easily turn vicious.
and cruel when appropriate situations arose (such as an unwilling woman).

Stroheim often encouraged the public to mingle his persona with the one he took on for the parts. Anita Loos recalled that during the filming of For France in 1917:

Von used to leave the studio to prowl Fifth Avenue in full make-up, flashing his monocle at every pretty woman who crossed his path. Such behaviour mystified passers-by, who wondered how a German officer had been allowed to invade the USA in the midst of war.

Stroheim then turned to directing after the war. Probably his best remembered work as a director is Greed (1924), a detailed filming of the novel McTeague by Frank Norris. Stroheim filmed and originally edited a nine-hour version of the story, shot mostly at the locations described in the book in San Francisco and Death Valley. After his attempts to cut it to less than three hours were rejected by the studio, MGM cut the film to a little over two hours, and, in what is considered one of the greatest losses in cinema history, destroyed the cut footage. The shortened release version was a box-office failure, and was angrily disowned by Stroheim.

Powell describes Stroheim’s art as

a striking offshoot on the far side of the Atlantic of Vienna’s belle époque, which lasted until 1914: the Secession painters; the Viennese school of architecture; the coming age of psychoanalysis. The Oedipus complex was after all as much Vienna’s gift to the world as Strauss Waltzes or Sachertorte ... In Stroheim’s version of The Merry Widow (1925) both elements are combined, so to speak, in the elderly millionaire who has a stroke on his wedding night (thereby leaving the heroine a lustige Witwe), and is also a shoe fetishist.

Powell also says,

Stroheim’s gifts as an actor make one wish he had tried his hand in those Shakespearean parts (Macbeth, Othello, Antony) which gave scope for that mixture of domineering brutality combined with inner weakness at which he excels.

Just as there are many roles one would have liked to see Stroheim play, there are certain novels (Les Liaisons Dangereuses, A Hero of Our Time, Ulysses, for instance) which he ought to have adapted for the screen.

Powell mentions also books by fellow Austrians, Musil and Alexander Lernet-Holenia. In the Journals Powell notes he watched a film called The Flag (1977), an adaptation of Lernet-Hollenia’s novel The Standard, and is disappointed.

I suggested in my Memoirs [it] would have provided a marvellous job for Stroheim: especially the firing on the mutinous regiment, and the escape through the rat-infested sewers of the Castle at Belgrade.

Of Stroheim’s directing, Powell notes that he had

something of Toulouse-Lautrec’s power to impart, by wit, flourish, a sense of design, beauty and universality to themes in themselves sinister and tawdry ...

The colossal sums Stroheim spent on directing his films, plus the overtly sexual content of many of them, led to his banishment from Hollywood, and then to France. Stroheim returned to working principally as an actor, in both American
and French films. He is perhaps best known as an actor for his rôles as von Rauffenstein in Jean Renoir’s La Grande Illusion (1937) and as Max von Mayerling in Billy Wilder’s Sunset Boulevard (1950).

Stroheim also wrote a few novels. Powell says,

Not long before I left Duckworth’s the American edition of Stroheim’s novel Paprika (1935) came in on offer. The novel was essentially not his medium. I could not recommend its publication, though I believe the book, much bowdlerised, did eventually appear in England. So far as I can remember the seventeen-year-old heroine was raped at least six times in as many opening pages describing her journey from Budapest to Vienna to seek her fortune.

Powell describes his brief 1954 meeting with Stroheim at The Savoy at a party for the Press. Introduced in the queue, he notes that Stroheim is smaller than expected, “trim, unsmiling, even sad”. Powell disconcerts him with the name of his paper, Punch, and a request for a dry sherry. Powell then says he takes the initiative.

‘At the close of the Monteblancan manoeuvres in The Merry Widow I was much impressed by your very individual touch in showing a group of foreign military attachés talking together. They gave absolute authenticity to the scene.’

I chose The Merry Widow on impulse, though Stroheim himself was said to be not at all proud of his version of Lehar’s operetta, which, a box-office success, had been as usual savagely cut. This time he nodded vigorously. The observation had got home. I told him that I had myself served as liaison office with the Allied military attachés during the second war. He took the point at once. The situation was saved.

‘In those sequences,’ said Stroheim, ‘I also arranged for two military chaplains to appear, Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox, because both religions were officially recognised in the Montenegrin army. I was considered quite crazy on account of those two chaplains.’ …

… We talked for a minute or two about disregard shown by most film directors for correctness in detail, especially military detail.

‘For them it is just Horse Opera,’ Stroheim said.

I tried to explain how long I had admired his art, both as director and actor. Regarding the last he sighed.

‘I no longer look like the Oberleutnant I once was.’

The journalists behind in the queue began to get restless for a drink and Powell had to move on.

Stroheim died in 1957.
When Maurice Bowra died his obituary in the *Times* was headed, ‘A Brilliant Oxford Figure’. That was in 1971, shortly before, to quote Noel Annan, “the grave complacency of the older universities was jolted”. In Bowra’s heyday they were seminaries for young gentlemen (and a few young ladies). After the war their intake was broadened, as were their syllabuses, but they retained their primacy. But by the seventies the humane learning that Bowra and his colleagues had embraced was discredited. And to cap it all, Margaret Thatcher decreed that universities must become cost-effective. Little wonder, then, that Leslie Mitchell should describe this long promised biography as “a work of history”, which probably explains why Peter Wilby, reviewing it in the *New Statesman*, had to remind his readers that Kenneth Clark, who described Bowra as “the strongest influence in my life”, was “an art historian”.

Bowra, born in 1898, was lucky to survive the Great War, in which he served as a Gunner officer. He was buried alive at Cambrai and wounded in the knee during the German offensive of March 1918. Powell thought he was always mindful of the friends he had lost, but Mitchell says he was appalled by the “incompetence, snobbery and philistinism” of his brother officers. His lifelong loathing for the Establishment began in the officers’ mess.

But surely Sir Maurice Bowra, CH, Warden of Wadham College from 1938 to 1970 and sometime Vice Chancellor of Oxford University, was an *ex officio* member of the Establishment himself? Well, yes. He was full of contradictions. Woe betide anyone who “trod on his corns”, even by accident. Yet as Powell noted, Bowra himself did not merely tread on corns, “he deliberately stamped on them”. Again, he deplored the “good form” morality inculcated by public schools, yet for twenty years served as a governor of his old school, Cheltenham.

Bowra’s reputation as a great wit has to be taken largely on trust, not least because it owes nothing to his writing, which lacks the dash and sparkle of his conversation. His speciality was repartee, a gift that needs a live audience. But it is also worth remembering that he had what Osbert Lancaster called the power to stimulate the brilliant response even among those whose reactions were not normally lightning-quick.

Another quality of his that people today can appreciate is the breadth of his knowledge, which was not confined to the Classics. Even John Carey, one of his most trenchant critics, acknowledged this:

> World literature was not a set of linguistic cupboards, mostly closed, but a warm and welcoming ocean in which he splashed about freely.

Though Bowra expected his protégés to work hard – how else could they acquire merit? – he encouraged them to play hard too. A thoroughgoing pagan, he believed...
that a lot of what you fancy does you good. At the time Powell encountered him he preferred boys to girls; later, according to Lady Longford, he would “dash over to Paris now and again for a French tart.” He characterised bisexuals as “people who played strokes all around the wicket”, but his own strokeplay, like his prose, was inhibited. He lived in fear of blackmail and must have envied his beloved Dadie Rylands, a don at King’s College, Cambridge, where consenting adults could do pretty much as they pleased, always provided that they did not offend the porters or bedmakers. Apropos, I cannot resist repeating a tale about Bowra told me by another Kingsman, Simon Raven. Bent on pleasure one dark night, he discovered at daybreak that he had mistaken a tin of black boot polish for “the more appropriate sanitary colloid.”

Lest I be accused of salacity I should emphasise that Mitchell devotes a substantial chapter to Bowra’s sex life. He offers a possible explanation for Bowra’s failure to find a soulmate. In 1916, en route to England from China, where his father was a Commissioner in the Customs Service, he had a brief but rapturous interlude in Petrograd with a Russian girl. Afterwards they wrote to each other until, in the Spring of 1918, her letters ceased. She apparently died in the Russian Revolution. Bowra said he never got over her. No doubt his tireless efforts on behalf of Boris Pasternak owed something to this tragedy.

Mitchell devotes only a few lines to Powell’s disastrous faux pas at dinner with Bowra during the vac. I still find astonishing the lengths to which Bowra went in order to invite him to stay, but am persuaded that it was not because he fancied Powell but because, like Dr Johnson, he could not bear to be alone in the evenings. Mitchell endorses Powell’s belief that young writers should not have drunk too deep at Bowra’s well. He thinks that in Cyril Connolly’s case this was certainly an enemy of promise. But Mitchell makes no mention of the doles which Powell thought Cyril Connolly extracted from Bowra.

Leslie Mitchell, a historian who was an undergraduate at Wadham in the 1960s, took over this book from Michael Davie (editor of the Waugh Diaries) when the latter’s health failed. I think he has done a good job in bringing to life a man who shared Powell’s view that nothing was ever the same again after 1939. Bowra’s generation, said his friend Noel Annan, thought that people were the most important thing and all their literary criticism is coloured by this fact. Indeed what is literature for but to tell us how peculiar, dotty and idiosyncratic people are?

That sounds like an endorsement of Dance. I wonder if Bowra read any of it.
Collages from the London Collage Event

By (from top to bottom): Elwin Taylor, Victor Spouge and Prue Raper

Report, page 19
ADVANCE NOTICE

Full of Money

by James Tucker

In June 2004 John Gould wrote an interesting article in the Boston Sunday Globe skilfully tracing a connection between my crime novels, published mostly as by Bill James, and my critical work, The Novels of Anthony Powell (Macmillan and Columbia, 1976). John’s analysis gave me an idea, though any subsequent blame should fall exclusively on myself. I wondered if I could do a novel that combined both sides of things. Now, it’s finished, and will come out in the UK in late summer, and in the United States pre-Christmas. It’s called Full of Money (Severn House) as by Bill James: Daisy Buchanan’s voice in The Great Gatsby is said to be “full of money”.

The book is set in the late 1990s and deals with the constant, ferocious territorial warfare between drugs gangs on two adjoining London municipal estates. The leaders of one gang, Adrian Pellotte and his sidekick, Dean Feston, are fervent Powell fans and, in fact, attend an Anthony Powell Society conference together, where Dean gives a keynote address. Feston has done a lot of prison and needed a long novel to fill the celled days and nights. Something of twelve volumes was very suitable. Feston refers fondly to it as A Dance to the Music of Doing Time. En route to the conference Pellotte and he have made a call on one of their dealers who has been trying to skim off the top. Pellotte and Feston reclaim this loot and arrive at the conference with their pockets over-stuffed with cash — full of money, in fact — making Feston unsteady on his feet at the lectern. Dean’s paper to the conference is entitled “Lady Widmerpool’s Schoolboy Chum”, and deals with that scene in Books Do Furnish a Room, when Pamela has tea in his rooms with a senior “Eton” pupil while Widmerpool frets outside, wondering what’s going on; whereas the reader, knowing Pamela’s form as a grande horizontale, doesn’t.

I’m not sure what Powell’s reaction to Full of Money would be. The Thesaurus gives quite a list of synonyms for “glacial”. Some members of the Anthony Powell Society might feel the same. I thought I’d attempt an early warning.

Amazon.co.uk Description

Full of Money by Bill James
Severn House Publishers Ltd (1 Sep 2009)
Hardback, £18.99

Part social satire, part gripping police procedural, Bill James returns with the stunning prequel to “Tip Top”. In Bill James’ London, everything seems to lead back to the drug-ridden housing estates of Whitsun Festival and Temperate Park Acres, where a connection, once made, is only ever one thing: trouble. Trouble for journalist Gervaise Maniciple Tasker, whose investigation into the drug firms at the heart of the estates leads to his murder; trouble for Esther Davidson, Detective Chief Superintendent of the Metropolitan Police, whose job it is to arrest the killer; and trouble for Larry Edgehill, a TV producer who, by the most tenuous of links, becomes more involved with the Romeo and Juliet-esque romance between a Temperate-based TV presenter and the daughter of the Whitsun gang leader than he ever would have wanted ... Blackly humorous, at times disturbing, and always gripping, Full of Money is a cynical but engaging look at culture, class and crime, through the eyes of a collection of deeply flawed but fascinating characters.

You can pre-order the book now from amazon.co.uk and amazon.com ... but please remember to use the links from the AP website.
From an interview with Alan Moore on Forbidden Planet’s website, about his novel The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen: Century 1910:

And then there’s also a lot about the sixties occult scene, which is the thread that really ties all three of the chapters together. In the 1910 chapter we’re talking about, well, we start this thread of the character Oliver Haddo, who was referred to in the Black Dossier as a way of preparing people for some of the stuff that we’ve got coming up in the future, and what we’ve done with Haddo, who is from Somerset Maugham’s The Magician, and was based upon Crowley, is to tie him in with all of the other surrogate Crowleys that appeared in the literature of the time and also in the films and books that have appeared since.

So we’ve got our essential Oliver Haddo character, who was supposedly dead at the end of The Magician, which I think happened in 1908, or something, or at least was published around that time, but we’ve also explained that, just as the real Crowley took on lots of assumed identities, that Oliver Haddo was also a character called Doctor Carswell Trelawney, which combines MR James’s Carswell, who was based upon Crowley, from Casting the Runes, with Dr Trelawney from Anthony Powell’s A Dance to the Music of Time, who was based upon Crowley, and we’ve also included the bizarre architect from The Black Cat, played by Boris Karloff, whose name was, I think, Hjalmar Poelzig...

From Tom Ricks’ weblog “The Best Defense” on US foreign policy, 8 May 2009:

This is what happens when someone writes about an area about which they know absolutely freaking nothing. This is one reason, for example, I try to avoid writing about, among other things, basketball, golf, cats, oboes, scuba diving, physics, Maxwell’s demon, electric cars, farming, abstract sculpture, the works of Anthony Powell, South America, or Buddhism.

From The Times, 8 May 2009 by Simon Barnes, from an article on Chelsea Football Club’s reaction to a Norwegian referee:

Anthony Powell writes of a former housemaster, considering him in thoughtful and considered terms. He then adds that during his schooldays, such ideas never occurred to him. Then, he saw the teacher as “a dangerous lunatic, to be outwitted and humoured”. This sense of complete moral separateness is fundamental to football.
From *The Independent*, 26 April 2009 from an article by Katy Guest:

The first edition of *The Independent on Sunday Review*, on 28 January 1990, was a generous launching pad for keen young book reviewers. Alongside Anita Brookner and Germaine Greer the books pages carried an essay by Alan Bennett (“Anthony Powell’s *Books Do Furnish a Room* was not my mother’s way of thinking,” he wrote. “‘Books untidy a room’ more like or, as she would have said, ‘Books upset’”) and a column by some chap called Sebastian Faulks.

An email from Pablo Ortega:

I have just visited the Anthony Powell Trivia page and think I can contribute a piece of completely irrelevant information:

At the beginning of At Lady Molly’s, we learn that Erridge has been living as a tramp, doing some social research. The Spanish writer Benito Pérez Galdós (1843-1920) created the character of an English aristocrat, Lord Gray, who also wandered as a tramp. It is very interesting to read the passage, as Lord Gray seems to be doing his own social research in backward nineteenth century Spain. It can be found in Chapter XXII of a novel called Cádiz, finished in 1874 and included in the first series of his National Episodes.

From *The Times*, 23 May 2009, from an interview with Simon Russell Beale:

He hadn’t read Anthony Powell before he played the awful Widmerpool, but so definitive was his performance that he was asked to speak at Powell’s memorial service. He read from *A Dance to the Music of Time* about “new news every day ... of war, plagues, fires, inundations, thefts, murders, massacres” and so pleased the Powellites that he was invited to be president of the Anthony Powell Society.

[...]

The bore of being an actor is you’re invited to so many dinners and can never go. I missed the Anthony Powell Society and have had to turn down the Royal Academy dinner, with its white tie and medals. Why is it always dinner, never morning coffee?

[OK, we’ve taken the hint, Simon! We’ll see what we can fix. – Hon. Secretary]
Society News

**Annual General Meeting 2009**

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of The Anthony Powell Society will be held on Saturday 24 October 2009 at 1400 hrs at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London, W1.

Nominations for the three Executive Officers (Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer) and up to six Executive Committee Members must reach the Hon. Secretary by Monday 3 August 2009. Candidates must be proposed by two members, indicate their willingness to stand and provide a short biographical statement. Nominations will be accepted by email, post or fax.

Motions for discussion at the AGM must also reach the Hon. Secretary by Monday 3 August 2009. 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 AGM agenda and voting papers will be included with the Autumn Newsletter in early September. Proxy votes must reach the Hon. Secretary by Friday 16 October 2009.

The AGM will be followed at 1500hrs by a talk

*The Quest for Varda*  
by Patric Dickinson

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

**Subscriptions**

Members are reminded that subscription renewals were due on 1 April, and that regrettably subscription rates were increased at the start of this year (see back page for new rates). Prompt renewal is appreciated as this obviates the expense of sending reminders.

Sadly most of those UK members with Standing Orders failed to update their instructions to their bank, despite a reminder. Please adjust your Standing Order to reflect the new rates.

Members are also reminded that subscriptions and membership enquiries should now be addressed to Graham & Dorothy Davie at:

**Anthony Powell Society Memberships**  
Beckhouse Cottage  
Hellifield  
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UK

Email: membership@anthonypowell.org
Phone: +44 (0) 1729 851 836
Fax: +44 (0) 20 8864 6109

**Bath Conference Proceedings**

In view of the delays publishing the 2007 Bath Conference Proceedings, and to reduce the Hon. Secretary’s workload, the trustees have agreed that the available papers from the Bath Conference, together with the talks from the “Dance for Readers” sessions at The Wallace Collection in 2005-6, should form the basis of the 2009 issue of *Secret Harmonies*, due for publication this autumn.

**2008 Secret Harmonies Delayed**

It is very much regretted that publication of the 2008 issue of *Secret Harmonies* has been significantly delayed. It is hoped to have this issue available within the next few weeks.
Local Groups

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

NY & NE USA Group
Area: New York & NE USA
Contact: Leatrice Fountain
Email: leatrice.fountain@gmail.com

Great Lakes Group
Area: Chicago area, USA
Contact: tba
Email: tba

Baltic Group
Area: Sweden & Finland
Contact: Regina Rehbinder
Email: reginarehbinder@hotmail.com

Toronto Group
Area: Toronto, Canada
Contact: Joan Williams
Email: jwilliamsto@hotmail.com

Please contact the Hon. Secretary if you wish to make contact with a group and don’t have email. If you wish to start a local group the Hon. Secretary can advise on the number of members in your area.

More from the London Collage Event

Top by Stephen Holden;
bottom by Keith Marshall

Report page 19

But anyway, it takes a bit of time to realize that all of the odds and ends milling about round one are the process of living.

[Anthony Powell; Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant]
Dates for Your Diary

**Tour of Bodleian Library, Oxford and Pub Lunch**

**Saturday 27 June 2009**

Meet: 1015 hrs prompt

Bodleian Library Main Entrance

Cost: £12 per person for the tour.

The Bodleian is one of the great libraries of the world and was an essential research resource for Powell’s biography of John Aubrey. The tour, which will last about 1½ hours, will include the basement and reading rooms.

Following the tour we will adjourn to the King’s Arms for lunch. Even if you can’t come on the tour you will be welcome to join us at the King’s Arms for drink, food, good company and Powell chat. All welcome. Advanced booking (with payment) essential for the tour as places are strictly limited.

Contact Hon. Secretary.

**NY & NE USA Group Meeting**

**Saturday 15 August**

See page 18

**London Group Pub Meets**

**Saturday 8 August 2009**

**Saturday 14 November 2009**

The Audley, Mount Street, London, W1

1230 to 1530 hrs

Good beer, good food and informal conversation in a Victorian pub AP would have known. Why not bring something AP-related to interest us? Members & non-members welcome. Further details from the Hon. Secretary.

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**10% DISCOUNT**

on bookings received and paid 1 June to 14 July

**BOOK NOW!**

**5th Biennial Anthony Powell Conference 2009**

**Thursday 10 to Saturday 12 September 2009**

Georgetown University

Washington, DC, USA

Nick Birns has put together a sparkling array of speakers including Alison Lurie, Rick Rylance, Mark Facknitz and Alan Furst.

Also included: a gala buffet dinner, visit to the Powell-related materials in the John Monagan archive of Georgetown University Library and a literary sightseeing tour of Washington, DC.

Full details in enclosed booking leaflet.

Alternatively please contact Nick Birns or the Hon. Secretary.

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**Speakers include:**

Prof. Alison Lurie

Alan Furst

Prof. Rick Rylance
Dates for Your Diary

AGM 2009
Saturday 24 October 2009
Details on page 14

Whitechapel Bell Foundry Tour
Saturday 5 December 2009
Whitechapel Bell Foundry
32/34 Whitechapel Road, London, E1
Time: 0930 hrs prompt

The Guinness Book of Records lists the Whitechapel Bell Foundry as Britain’s oldest manufacturing company, having been established in 1570 (during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I) and being in continuous business since that date.

This is a rare opportunity to visit this working foundry which is a genuine part of Britain’s cultural heritage. Although not directly Powell related the tour provides a very interesting look at the quintessentially English art of bell-ringing.

Unfortunately the foundry tours get booked up a very long way in advance so we have been able to obtain only a small number of tickets which are already allocated. However it is hoped to arrange another tour in 2010, so if you are interested in joining a future tour please contact the Hon. Secretary.

*** FULLY BOOKED ***

Copy Deadlines

Newsletter #36, Autumn 2009
Copy Deadline: 10 August 2009
Publication Date: 4 September 2009

Newsletter #37, Winter 2009
Copy Deadline: 9 November 2009
Publication Date: 4 December 2009

Secret Harmonies #4, 2009
Copy Deadline: 7 September 2009
Publication Date: 23 October 2009

Contributions to the Newsletter and Journal are always welcome and should be sent to:

Newsletter & Journal Editor,
Anthony Powell Society
76 Ennismore Avenue
Greenford, Middlesex, UB6 0JW, UK
Fax: +44 (0)20 8864 6109
Email: editor@anthonypowell.org

London Group
Powell Birthday Lunch
Saturday 5 December 2009
London Group’s annual Powell Birthday Lunch. Central London venue to be arranged. All welcome. Details when available from the Hon. Secretary.
Local Group News

NY & NE USA Group
by Ed Bock

Something injected extra enthusiasm into the regular Spring East Coast Powell luncheon in Manhattan on 2 May. Was it the Indian food? Or Nick Birns’ stimulating comparison of key characters in Dance and Brideshead? Or Jeff Manley’s authentic performance of the title role in Waiting for Belkin? Or Bill Warren’s smashing success understudying the role of the Fire Warden? Or the exotic coffee served during the rehearsal in Eileen Kaufman’s elegant sixth floor conference room next door to the restaurant?

Whatever the cause, the diner-actors agreed to repeat the experience, making exactly the same progression, from restaurant discussion to upstairs play rehearsal & coffee, at the group’s Summer luncheon on Saturday 15 August. That will include the last New York rehearsal of Waiting for Belkin before the group puts on its play-reading at the Georgetown Conference in September. The 15 August location: Jewel of India, 15 West 44th St. All Powellites welcome.

London Pub Meet
by Noreen Marshall

Eleven of us gathered in The Audley on a not particularly spring-like 10 May and started by concentrating on refreshments.

We had with us a copy of the scarce Barnard Letters 1778-1824 (1928), which several people took the opportunity to peruse. Inevitably there was discussion of how it came to be Powell’s first published work: apparently Duckworth’s accepted it, and AP felt it simplest to do the editing himself. This led us on to the non-Dance novels, notably The Fisher King, Oh! How the Wheel Becomes It and Afternoon Men. We talked about Powell’s publishers, and the economy of re-using characters in a series of novels, which is perhaps more satisfying for the reader too. And then should you have everything by a writer you admire? Probably not, although there was some feeling that this may be more important with music.

We talked of the lunch group’s recent first outing – to Elena’s L’Etoile in Charlotte Street, established in 1896 and still serving classic French restaurant dishes – and of trying more pubs and restaurants which AP knew, notably the Chester Arms in Albany Street. The discussion turned to food in general and French accusations that the British remain only superficially interested.

Other literary and non-literary subjects included Will Self’s invoking of AP in his article on WG Sebald (Guardian, 7 February 2009); EF Benson and the Tilling Society; the ‘Carry On’ films and ‘Up Pompeii’; John Aubrey; the eccentric London district of Clerkenwell with its Italian community; Led Zeppelin; architects; AP Society merchandise; advertising slogans; banking, unemployment and MP’s expenses; also Tony Benn and Enoch Powell. Lastly there was talk of Powell’s great enthusiasm for collage and the event planned for 30 May (report, page 19).

Local Group News

London Collage Event

by Stephen Holden

Collage was one of Anthony Powell’s hobbies (or passions) as evidenced not only by his scrapbooks (shown at the 2005 Wallace Collection exhibition), but also by his years spent covering the walls of the boiler room at The Chantry with an enormous collage. On Saturday 30 May 2009 nine of us gathered in the upstairs room of The Wheatsheaf pub to spend an afternoon, led by artist Laura Miller, doing a bit of practical collage.

Laura started with an illustrated mini-lecture on the history of collage. Her first picture, a section of Powell’s boiler room, actually included a cut-out picture of Julian Maclaren-Ross, the Wheatsheaf pub’s famous habitué. Collage really began with the invention of mass printing in the 15th century, ie. as soon as people were given ready access to printed papers. Indeed, in later centuries poorer people would decorate their walls with the cheapest coverings possible, often old newspapers, playbills, and advertisement posters. The vogue for lacquered oriental chests in the 17th century led to cheap local versions where the “lacquer” was actually a collage glued to chests and trunks. This also caused a vogue for decorating one’s own furniture with stuck-on pictures and objects.

Laura then took us through the 19th and 20th centuries, with the middle and upper-middle class hobbies of collage (screens, scrapbooks), and the montage techniques of artists such as John Heartfield, George Grosz, the Russian Constructivists and Max Ernst. Powell’s friend Edward Burra was also an ardent collagist, as are the Pop artists Peter Blake and Richard Hamilton. Laura ended her talk with a few tips on practical collage and how to achieve the best effects.

After the talk, we pushed the pub’s tables together and laid out a stack of magazines, coloured paper and comics, together with the requisite glue, scissors, colouring pens etc. The pub then fell strangely silent for two hours apart from the snip of scissors – not even the arrival of coffee and chocolate biscuits could disrupt the diligent silence! The resulting collages showed an interesting breadth of point-of-view and effect, with many striking works of art produced. Keith took photographs of them all, as many of us wanted to take our creations home with us.

Many thanks to Laura Miller for leading this event.

Present were: Stephen Holden, Keith & Noreen Marshall, Laura Miller, Prue Raper, Victor Spouge, Elwin & Susan Taylor and Robert Tresman.

Photographs of some of the afternoon’s work appear below and on pages 10 and 15.
From John Gould
At our Powell meeting in New York last weekend, Nick Birns read a paper comparing Flavia Stringham Wisebite to Julia Flyte Mottram. I have to confess I was decades away from *Brideshead Revisited* so I came home to reread Waugh’s wonderful book. I first read it back in the preliterate days when I had not discovered *Dance*; thus I was unprepared, despite Nick’s essay, for the parallels between Sebastian Flyte and Charles Stringham. This is old news for lots of you out there, but if you haven’t thought much about them, let me recapitulate.

Stringham’s Braddock-alias-Thorne moment recalls Sebastian’s many naughty escapades at Oxford. Both narrators visit their friends’ homes and recognize the difference between their less exalted backgrounds and the friends’. Tuffy Weedon and Mrs Foxe’s foray to persuade Stringham not to come down echoes Lady Marchmain’s visit to yank Sebastian from Oxford. Then after Oxford, both men fall deliriously into depression and alcohol, and both are beset by “keepers”, the more successful Tuffy, the duplicitous and unsuccessful Samgrass.

What struck me on this reading was how the two characters fare over their entire novels. Sebastian is eventually reduced to utter pathos, never freed from alcohol, physically ruined. He never returns to the stage; we hear about his pathetic end second hand, from his younger sister, Cordelia. But Stringham of course does recover, in a most unexpected way, gaining a measure of self-acceptance and indeed heroism. He “behaved very well” in the prison camp.

So I’m left with an unanswerable question: was Powell thinking about Sebastian when he created Stringham? Did he see all the way to Stringham’s end? (I’m pretty sure he did.) Did he consciously use Sebastian as a kind of model, or anti-model, saying I can make a subtler, more realistic character using the same basic materials?

One final thing struck me. As a novelist, I know that I feel deeply about my characters. I admire some, even if they aren’t perfect, and I dislike others, even if they might look pretty good on the surface. So how did Waugh feel about Sebastian? Sorry for him? But did he like him? And how did Powell feel about Stringham? Proud of him? I do.

From Nick Booth
I think Powell made a big mistake with Stringham. I don’t say he shouldn’t have killed him off but he was such a great character and the thing I find with *Dance* is that there are certain characters I think we have too much of and others we don’t have enough of; and Stringham’s one of those. Amis Senior observed of *Dance* – paraphrasing – He doesn’t seem to make anything up, just dressed up his memories
in style. And this is why we never got into that prison camp with Stringham, which I think would have been a remarkable episode. Out of all the Dance volumes I found The Military Philosophers a bit of a chore, though the last third picked up a great deal. It would have been much improved by some Stringham.

——

**From Elizabeth Babcock**

Couldn’t disagree more. Stringham is my favourite character in the series, so that every appearance is precious, but that doesn’t mean that the books would be improved by Powell manufacturing more appearances. I think of Stringham as being the opposite of Widmerpool in every way. Throughout the books, Widmerpool moves from strength to strength in spite of all the ludicrous missteps, as in the world those who seek power spread their oppression on all that is beautiful. Of course, he does get his comeuppance but dies in the belief that he is in fact “winning”. Stringham, in contrast, never seeks power and dies obscurely in the camp where all we learn is that he “behaved well”. As an epitaph it would do any of us credit.

I do agree that there are characters who work better than others, some come to life and others refuse to do so. But to ask for more of the charming and less of the tiresome is to ask that the art of the novel be distorted – like asking that a meal be dominated by dessert.

——

**From Jeanne Reed**

On paper there are many parallels between Sebastian and Charles, but in my heart they are completely different men and not at all comparable! Why is that? How does a character come by qualities that are so appealing as to allow him to become the most favourite character (in a 12 volume sequence) of many readers? To begin with, Charles has a kind of maturity that Sebastian always lacks, a kind of authority that doesn’t entirely come from his exalted social position. And he is kind, and witty, and a very good friend. Is that just my subjective appraisal? Do authors make use of subtle devices to add weight for or against a character, many things being equal, or am I trying to define love?!

——

**From Nick Booth**

Manufacturing, as you put it, is what creative writers do as a means to whatever their ends are. I don’t ask that the novelist’s ends be distorted “just” for my entertainment. Stringham’s a bit of an enigma – I would have liked to have learned more. For that reason I don’t think Powell giving more of Stringham’s dog days would have been gratuitous or novelettish in any way.

It may be the case that Powell was uncomfortable writing about something he had not directly experienced. Fair enough, but it makes you glad Shakespeare didn’t have the same scruples. In any case there would have been various fictional techniques to obviate the problem.

**From James Doyle**
John writes: *thus I was unprepared, despite Nick’s essay, for the parallels between Sebastian Flyte and Charles Stringham.*

I guess can agree to “parallels” but I don’t think the two characters have much in common. (I haven’t read *Brideshead* in 20 years, and may be completely wrong about this.)

As I remember Sebastian, although he was an unsatisfactory student (to some extent like Waugh), he flowered socially in an odd, hothouse atmosphere at Oxford; Stringham hated the place from the beginning. Stringham’s mother is rich, but he isn’t staggering under the weight of an impossibly aristocratic RC “first family.” And (memory, again, may be misleading me) Stringham seems to have some latent talent which he might have put to use one way or another if he had mustered the energy or the will. Sebastian never had a chance; nothing but fey charm. In Powell the contrast between Stringham and Widmerpool is interesting, but the contrasts between either of those two and Jenkins (or to some degree Templer) have interest too.

**From Nick Booth**
I agree. My first vague thought about the Sebastian/Stringham question was: ‘Well, Sebastian isn’t very interesting, is he? And a bit of a pain in the arse.’

**From Michael Henle**
As a reader, not author, I have become more and more aware that authors do dislike some of their characters. And when that happens it causes me to distrust the author in regard to that character – to the extent that the dislike shines through. I suspect, then, that the author is using the character to grind an axe of some kind, that the character is a puppet for a point of view, and no longer a shade of a potentially real person.

One of the things I particularly admire about Powell is that this happens so rarely. In fact, at the moment the one character that I believe Powell dislikes (not entirely, but to a certain extent) is (of course) Widmerpool. Towards the end of the series, I believe Powell is definitely somewhat self-indulgent in plotting more and more hideous ways to humiliate Kenneth, and to the extent that I see this, I’m disturbed and distrust the book.

One author, besides Powell, that seems to me to be quite admirable in this respect is the sainted Jane Austen. In fact, her exemplary regard for each of her creations is in no small measure the foundation of my regard for her books.

**From Jeff Manley**
James writes: *Stringham’s mother is rich, but he isn’t staggering under the weight of an impossibly aristocratic RC “first family”.*

You make the same (or a similar) point as Christine Berberich of this parish in a paper given at the Oxford Powell conference and included in its proceedings. She sees Stringham as suffering social insecurity that does not affect the aristocratic Sebastian. Indeed, she thinks Stringham sees the Widmerpools of the new social order as a threat to his class status which is based on his mother’s rather tenuous economic connections with South African mining and her previous marriage to Lord Warrington and life estate in Glimber.

Sebastian is not worried about retaining his status (altho’ perhaps he should be, since his father has to sell Marchmain
House to pay his own debts) and is oppressed more by his mother’s religion than by his father’s aristocratic connections. Stringham’s mother has some expectations of Charles’ achieving success in life; perhaps because she knows he will not inherit anything from her or his father. Teresa Flyte seems more concerned about Sebastian’s keeping the family’s faith (which in her case may be associated with social status thru’ her family’s Roman Catholic recusant connections) than its money. Not sure they were aristocrats exactly, as the title and property seem to come from her husband’s family, who were not Roman Catholics before his conversion when he married.

That Old Etonians and Oxford undergraduates Charles and Sebastian both turn to drink to escape their oppressive mothers is their common link (along with offering their narrators access to the upper class world). Charles seems to have found an escape from his oppression in the Army whereas Sebastian, in becoming the carer of Kurt. Sebastian remains an alcoholic to the end (perhaps due to Kurt’s desertion and death) altho’ Charles seems to have kicked the habit in the Army. I don’t recall any backsliding by Charles once he joins the Army.

I’ve greatly oversimplified this but recommend those who are interested in the parallelism between Charles and Sebastian to read Christine’s paper.

_____

From John Gould
I’m delighted by the fine distinctions between Stringham and Sebastian various people have adumbrated (now there’s a Powell word!), most of which I agree with totally. What still intrigues me is the possibility that Powell read Brideshead (we know he did) and said to himself, I can create a character like Sebastian but make him more complex and more admirable. It seems to me that the distinctions people are making – removing the RC stuff, making Stringham’s class position more ambiguous (related to title only through mother’s first marriage, for example), Sebastian’s selfishness, and so on – show that he did exactly that, although how conscious he was is impossible to say. As I said before, the question is unanswerable, but the consideration of it is intriguing, especially as I think about the relationship between the two writers.

_____

From James Doyle
John writes: As I said before, the question is unanswerable, but the consideration of it is intriguing, especially as I think about the relationship between the two writers.

I’d be surprised if Powell didn’t think of Sebastian when writing of Stringham, but
more surprised if rivalry played much part. As I remember *Brideshead*, Waugh was preoccupied with burnishing the final days of a lost (and in large part imagined) past and meditating on its disappearance. Powell, for all of his interest in pedigrees and antiquity, is fascinated by what will happen next, and that fascination I think communicates itself to readers, propelling them at surprising speed through a book in which it would be easy to feel nothing much happens. Sebastian, *Brideshead etc.* have lost the battle for the future when the novel begins. The contest between Stringham and Widmerpool is still plausible in *A Question of Upbringing* although its result may already be settled. In the end I think Powell’s position is that both have lost and Modigliani has won.

In bouncing Waugh/Powell characters around with all that in mind I thought that *Sword of Honour* might be rich territory: Trimmer/Widmerpool, Claire/Stringham, Virginia/Pamela ... To me they illustrate that the two authors were so fundamentally different that I’d be surprised if Powell thought they were in any artistic rivalry, although certainly he was capable of casting an eye over the celebrity and sales outcomes.

From Mark Hall
Wouldn’t Hooper be the matching character for Trimmer (rather than Widmerpool)?

From Julian Allason
Just to pick up on a minor point of John Gould’s in this fascinating exchange: *It seems to me that the distinctions people are making – removing the RC stuff, making Stringham’s class position more ambiguous (related to title only through mother’s first marriage, for example), Sebastian’s selfishness, and so on ...*

By the period in question, and for some decades before, aristocracy had come to be but one component of the ‘upper classes’ (note the plural). Nobility in England and Scotland was then – and would still be today to the extent it is considered – defined by the right to bear arms. The armigerous were as likely to be landowners or members of ancient families (*eg.* Waugh’s Crouchbacks) as titled, and would also have included families with a military tradition. To this day the recusant Catholic families retain their identity even though many of them lost their lands in penal times.

In this sense it is Stringham’s status as a gentleman rather than indirect aristocratic connection that I believe Powell had in mind. Waugh also seems to have understood this distinction, though perhaps living up to the ideal less successfully in his own life. There is even a Latin tag which survives in Italian translating as “a lord but not a gentleman”.

From Terry Empson
In comparing Sebastian Flyte with Charles Stringham it seems important to recognise the difference in attitude of each narrator. Charles Ryder falls head-over-heels for Sebastian and has a physically active affair with him. Waugh discreetly makes this crystal clear. There is nothing of that sort afoot between Nick and Charles Stringham.

Love of Sebastian romanticizes Charles Ryder’s perception of the Brideshead ménage, which, even by County standards, seems to have its share of dullards and prigs. Ryder finds his way to the Catholic Church by following his affair with Sebastian with an affair with Sebastian’s
sister. This is not a customary or credible route to grace.

Nick and Stringham by contrast live in a recognisable world, taking their pleasures and their lumps as they come. Stringham lacks whatever it takes to be a success, but he is devoid of self-pity and bears up well, still making jokes, until his death in a Japanese prison camp.

From John Gilks
Isn’t this illustrative of a pervasive difference between Waugh and Powell (at least the Powell of Dance)? Almost all Waugh’s major characters are to some extent caricatures. Ludovic, Trimmer, Boot and Lord Copper all come to mind. By contrast, Powell’s characters seem more fully developed, more human, where Waugh’s seem more like constructs to paint his prejudices across in primary colours.

From Nick Booth
I agree. The way “ordinary” soldiers are handled in the Dance mid section compared with the neurasthenically snobbish way Waugh handles other ranks in Sword of Honour and Brideshead is a lesson in mature literary art. On the other hand, in terms of narrative and plot Powell wasn’t fit to shine Waugh’s shoes.

From Ed Bock
Michael Henle says he distrusts Dance to the extent that he sees Powell being self-indulgent in plotting more and more hideous ways to humiliate Kenneth. He invites Powell posters to express their views.

I expressed my view in a limerick submitted for the Christmas competition some years ago:

A Widmerpool Limerick
Learning from Milton
AP, to make perfectly sure
That his villain would have no allure,
Made Ken fish-eyed and fat
And concerned always that
He’d de-scented from liquid manure

From Julian Allason
Having read the memoirs of the putative character models for Boot (Bill Deedes) and skimmed those of Lord Copper (Beaverbrook) I remain unconvinced that Waugh exaggerated greatly.

My one interview with Deedes could have been scripted by Waugh: it was hard to say which of us was the less comfortable as a butler shuttled the sugarlumps from one end of the Telegraph’s conference table to the other.

Has no one encountered a real life Trimmer?

From Jim Scott
John Gould said Sebastian is eventually reduced to utter pathos, never freed from alcohol, physically ruined. He never returns to the stage; we hear about his pathetic end second hand, from his younger sister, Cordelia.

In the same message, John asked the following questions: So how did Waugh feel about Sebastian? Sorry for him? But did he like him?

I have no idea what the answer to the second question might be. So far as the first is concerned … Far from feeling sorry for Sebastian, I imagine that Waugh would have felt somewhat envious.

In the preface to the revised edition, Waugh said that the theme of Brideshead was “the operation of divine grace on a
group of diverse but closely connected characters” (p7 of the 1973 reprint of the 1962 Penguin edition – which seems to be based on the 1960 revised Chapman and Hall edition). And, near the end of Brideshead, Cordelia provides the following answer when Ryder asks “How will it end?”:

I think I can tell you exactly, Charles. I’ve seen others like him, and I believe they are very near and dear to God. He’ll live on, half in, half out of the community [of monks. When Cordelia visited him, he was laid up in the infirmary of a monastery in Morocco], a familiar figure pottering round with his broom and his bunch of keys ... Then one morning, after one of his drinking bouts, he’ll be picked up at the gate dying, and show by a mere flicker of the eyelid that he was conscious when they gave him the last sacraments. It’s not such a bad way of getting through one’s life. (pp293-294)

It seems to me highly unlikely that an author who writes a novel attempting to illustrate “the operation of divine grace” is going to feel sorry for someone who appears likely to end his life in the manner predicted by Cordelia.

From Ellen Jordan
We have been talking about Brideshead’s possible literary progeny, but what about its progenitors? I’ve just seen the film Easy Virtue and have been struck by the many Brideshead echoes. Of course most of these echoes probably come from the film-makers’ memories of the Brideshead TV series, but the original Noel Coward play of 1924 apparently has within it the basic Brideshead situation of domineering mother and dissolute father who has abdicated his position. If we are going to accuse Powell of recycling Waugh material, perhaps we should also accuse Waugh of recycling Coward.

Actually I’m not convinced that Stringham owes very much to Sebastian. Sebastian doesn’t have Stringham’s sharp mind and literary leanings and Stringham is free of Sebastian’s religious yearnings. Powell himself suggests that the two Duggan brothers contributed most to the creation of Stringham. Personally, I think that if Stringham has any literary inspiration it is Dickens’s Steerforth, even to the Tuffy/Rosa Dartle parallels. Powell’s couple of references to Steerforth suggest that he was something of an iconic figure for him.

Anthony Powell Resides Here
CRAWFORD DOYLE BOOKSELLERS seeks and sells early editions of Anthony Powell’s works together with those of other distinguished British authors such as Evelyn Waugh, PG Wodehouse, Virginia Woolf, Henry Green and James Lees-Milne. In addition to rare books, we offer a complete collection of new books in our store near the Metropolitan Museum. Catalogs issued upon request.

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Unconditional Surrender

From Jeff Manley

At the recent New York meeting, the question was raised by Nick Birns about Waugh’s alternative ending to Unconditional Surrender and Powell’s rôle. I could only remember that it had something to do with the number of children Crouchback fathered. In the conclusion of the novel he claimed the child of his ex-wife Virginia as his own despite its having been fathered by Trimmer. That had something to do with his having learned from a Roman Catholic genealogist that since Guy and Virginia were still married in the eyes of the Roman church (which didn’t recognize their civil divorce), their wartime resumption of sexual relations was not a sin in the eyes of the church. Powell made rather a meal of this in his review of the first volume of Waugh’s war trilogy. While their resumed relationship didn’t result in any offspring, her wartime affair with Trimmer did, and after she died in a bombing raid in volume three Crouchback took over responsibility for that child as if it were his own. In the original version Waugh allows him two additional children from a subsequent marriage to Domenica Plessington.

Powell apparently questioned this “happy ending” in a letter to Waugh. In a response to Powell dated 31 October 1961 Waugh said that he originally thought it would “be more ironical if there should be real heirs of the Blessed Gervase Crouchback dispossessed by Trimmer” whose child would have been the oldest and was claimed by Guy as his legitimate heir. However, he concedes that he failed to make the irony clear and “so no nippers for Guy & Domenica in Penguin.”

However, the two younger Crouchbacks are still there in the Penguin first edition issued in 1964. In the 1965 recension of the war trilogy, however, Guy and Domenica have no children of their own.

Has anyone read the letter of Powell which may have caused this change in the ending of Waugh’s war trilogy? I wonder what he says. He doesn’t seem to have reviewed the final volume although he did review the first two, so maybe he gave Waugh the reservations he would have included in a review of the final volume. Powell also seems to have raised questions re the law of sepulture regarding burial and the location of the fictional Crouchback estate in a place called Broome. Waugh’s response is one of his more interesting letters regarding the texts of his books so it would certainly be interesting to know what Powell said about the younger Crouchbacks and whether that was the source of Waugh’s decision to make the change in the text.

I forgot to mention an important fact without which the first paragraph makes little sense. In Waugh’s novel Guy Crouchback remarries his wife Virginia in early 1944 after he knows she is pregnant with Trimmer’s child. She dies in the bombing after the child’s birth. Guy simply treats the child as his own. So, I have probably overstated the relevance of Powell’s discussion in the review of the first volume of Guy’s post-divorce sex with Virginia (which would have taken place much earlier, probably 1940 or so). However, Powell states his feeling in that review that there will “be more to come in that quarter” which indeed turns out to be the case in volume 3.
Bowra vs Sillery

From Jeff Manley

Good job on new website. I just gave it a test surf. In doing so I looked up the entry on Sillery because I was just reading the bio of Maurice Bowra. The website says that Powell did not intend Bowra as the model for Sillery, which is of course what Powell himself insisted. But Powell does say in his Journals at the page cited on the website that on rereading the novels he had to admit that perhaps inadvertently Sillery shares some traits with Bowra.

I can only agree with that after reading the bio. There are far more differences than there are similarities but one of the similarities is that both collected undergraduates into a select group based on their promise of success in postgraduate life which could be of use to Sillery/Bowra. Sillery looked for those who he thought would succeed in government and business. Bowra thought such pursuits a waste of time but looked for those likely to succeed in academic life or literature. Bowra also strongly supported the pursuit of successful university careers and would never have agreed to Stringham going down to work with Donners-Brebner after one term (or was it two?). On the other hand, he would have behaved quite like Sillery at the luncheon for Mrs Foxe and Buster at which Sillery’s advice was given, except Bowra would have more likely advised staying on. However, it seems to me Stringham is unlikely to have been admitted to Bowra’s select group, at least not at that point and not into the inner circle, because of his ambivalence towards doing well at university.

A bit complicated but I think the website might consider making a brief mention of Bowra as an unintended model in the Sillery entry based on Powell’s own reassessment. I should point in this regard that the biography does not mention any connection between Sillery and Bowra although it makes rather a meal out of the character of Mr Samgrass in Brideshead Revisited and whether he was intended to be modelled on Bowra. Thinks that was Waugh’s intention but that he failed to deliver.

Bowra’s biographer seems to think that Powell himself as well as Evelyn Waugh were not members of Bowra’s inner circle but enjoyed a kind of “country membership”. That was certainly true of Waugh whose relationship with Bowra was always a bit prickly, if only because of Bowra’s friendship with Cyril Connolly. Powell says he fell out with Bowra after he graduated because he confessed that he had found his undergraduate life, and Oxford in general, boring. But Powell in his memoirs and Journals seems to have genuinely admired Bowra while Waugh remained prickly to the end.
Publications of Interest

From John Powell
Two bits of news of publications:

1. The Pessimist’s and Optimist’s Handbook is an ingenious double volume from Doubleday. The Pessimist’s part contains this quotation from Hearing Secret Harmonies in the “Human Kind” chapter:

   One of the worst things about life is not how nasty the nasty people are. You know that already. It’s how nasty the nice people can be.

2. Faber Finds have just republished The Military Orchid and Other Novels by Jocelyn Brooke in a single paperback; this contains a long introduction by Anthony Powell about Brooke and his writing together with a short additional introduction (in 2008) by Tristram Hunt.

War Service

From Raymond Delaunay
I was discussing Powell’s war time service with a friend recently. She claimed that because he was an Old Etonian etc. he had a “cushy war”. I explained about his serving in the Welch Regiment (hardly a chic regiment), but she insisted his background meant he would never have seen action. Is she right? Would Powell have served on the front line or would his connections always have got him out of the messy fighting?
Society Merchandise

Centenary Conference Proceedings
Collected papers from the 2005 centenary conference at The Wallace Collection, London.
UK Price: £10  Overseas Price: £14

Secret Harmonies: Journal of the Anthony Powell Society
UK Price: £4  Overseas Price: £5 each

Centenary Newsletter
Bumper 120-page celebratory Centenary Newsletter (issue 21; December 2005).
UK Price: £6  Overseas Price: £7

Oxford Conference Proceedings
Collected papers from the 2003 conference at Balliol College, Oxford.
UK Price: £8  Overseas Price: £9

Eton Conference Proceedings
Papers from the 2001 conference; limited edition of 250 numbered copies signed by the Society’s Patron.
UK Price: £9  Overseas Price: £10

Writing about Anthony Powell
The talks given at the 2004 AGM by George Lilley, Michael Barber and Nick Birns; introduced by Christine Berberich.
UK Price: £4  Overseas Price: £5

The Master and The Congressman
A 40-page monograph by John Monagan describing his meetings with Powell.
UK Price: £4  Overseas Price: £5

Wallace Collection Poussin Poster
The Wallace Collection’s 48.5 x 67.5 cm (half life-size) poster of Poussin’s A Dance to the Music of Time. Mailed in a poster tube. Picture, page 29.
UK Price: £6  Overseas Price: £7.50

Society Bookmarks; pack of 10.
UK Price: £1  Overseas Price: £1.50

BBC Radio Dramatisation of Dance
Originally broadcast on BBC Radio 4 between 1979-82. 26 one-hour episodes. For copyright reasons, available to Society members only.
Single CD of 26 MP3 files. Price: £11 (£3 + minimum £8 Donation)
26 Audio CDs. Price: £70 (£26 + minimum £44 Donation)
(CD prices apply to both UK & overseas)

Audio Tapes of Dance
Copies of the following audio tapes of Simon Callow reading (abridged) volumes of Dance:
A Question of Upbringing
The Kindly Ones
The Valley of Bones
The Soldier’s Art
UK price: £3 each
Overseas Price: £4 each

Fitzrovia: London’s Bohemia
Written by Michael Bakewell and published in the National Portrait Gallery “Character Sketches” series this small volume contains snapshot biographies of Fitzrovian characters including Powell and many of his friends.
UK price: £4.50  Overseas Price: £7

Society Postcard
UK Price: £2  Overseas Price: £3

Wallace Collection Poussin Postcard
UK Price: £2  Overseas Price: £3

Newsletter Back Numbers
Back numbers of Newsletter issues 9 to 19, 22 to 29 and 31 onwards are available.
UK price: £1 each
Overseas Price: £2 each
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