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From the Secretary’s Desk

The Christmas and New Year festivities have been and gone. So too have “the worries”: Janu-worry and Febru-worry, and with them hopefully the worst of winter’s snow and ice. Having had a break for the festivities work here has started again in earnest.

The next event on the agenda is Nick Birns’s visit to London to lead Borage and Hellebore on 17 March. This is an opportunity for everyone to spend an afternoon discovering and discussing Powell’s non-Dance works with a world expert – and partake of tea/coffee and cake! There is still time to book tickets, so if you would like to come along please get in touch as soon as possible.

After Borage and Hellebore there are no set events in London apart from the quarterly pub meets. Members will have seen in the last Newsletter, and will see in the AGM minutes, that we have asked for a volunteer to take on organising a small number of London-ish based events each year. So far no-one has come forward. I cannot continue to do everything, so events may be taking a back seat. If the Society is to flourish and prosper long-term we need you to volunteer to help!

The Annual Lecture, AGM, London pub meets and biennial conference are, at least for now, excluded from this and will continue (although 2013 is the last conference I will organise).

The Trustees have started to make arrangements with the Wallace Collection for this year’s Annual Lecture. We are also negotiating dates and a venue for the 2013 conference and hope to make an announcement before the next Newsletter appears.
Anthony Powell Society Newsletter #46

Anthony Powell’s Afternoon Men

by Nick Birns

I feel I have come to a more ‘lyrical’ view of what Powell himself thought was his most “lyrical” novel – one which gets to the heart of what’s afoot in the book rather than skips and starts in response to the many distractions that a book so short surprisingly offers. Does the author approve of “afternoon men” or not? And is he an “afternoon man”? We know what an afternoon man is, someone (as indicated in the quote from Robert Burton, a seventeenth-century author just, in the early 1930s, beginning to be noticed again in the wake of the new, post-Eliotic interest in that century) who is lazy (but not deliberately so), hedonistic (but not foolishly so), and aimless, although, as Powell himself said of his Third at Oxford, without the reassurance of having worked hard to have an aim. Roughly, it is a synonym for “Bright Young Things”. It is one of four of Powell’s novels – Agents and Patients, The Military Philosophers, Temporary Kings being the others, about a “set” of people. (The Kindly Ones does not qualify, as Furies are presumably not “people”.) In all four cases, I would argue, Powell’s stance towards that set is observant, not judgmental, neither propagandizing for nor against the set, merely registering it as a part of life. Yet part of the book’s tacit mission is “generational”: the young first novelist recently down from Oxford and living a bohemian life in Shepherd Market, taking stock of his own generation, as with most accused by its elders of being slack and having thrown out too many of the previous cohorts’ absolutes.

Most times it is fairly clear, when a novel has a title denoting a set of people, whether the author is or is not included in the set. Jack Kerouac’s The Subterraneans is obvious; Kerouac was a subterranean. So is CP Snow’s The New Men: Snow was a new man. On the other hand, Dostoyevsky was certainly not one of the possessed (or the devils), although insightful enough to know their psychology. Nor was Balzac one of the Chouans, although there is historical distance involved. Throughout his career, Powell seems to want to avoid the sort of novel that delves into the depths of a single character. But how to create a point of view and also describe a set of people? Dance proffers the ultimate Powellian solution to this, but the experimentation towards this goal begins in Afternoon Men.

It is unclear whether the novel means to celebrate afternoon men, excoriate them, rib them, or something in-between. The novel clearly shows the influence of Hemingway and a generally stripped-down, austere syntax. Whereas John Galsworthy, Hugh Walpole and Somerset Maugham were clearly the next step on from the Victorian novel, as in a different, and less admitted, way were EM Forster and Virginia Woolf. Powell’s style, though, is not just a further step, another generation down, of the sort that can be seen in the work of Snow and Sir Angus Wilson, who remain in recognizable, continuous touch with Victorian modes. With this novel, there is deliberate severance. The social tableau has been atomized into shards and fragments, and at the end of the book is still not remotely put together. When Powell does re-stitch the fabric in Dance, it has been totally disassembled and reassembled. This is
how and why *Dance* is not just a slightly later *Forsyte Saga* and why Jenkins cannot share General Liddament’s love of Trollope.

There is no nineteenth-century omniscience in *Afternoon Men*, no general assertions about society or life. In a sense, the book is reportage, not opinion or summation, and none of the other pre-war novels have quite this quality of reporting on a “scene”. In a sense there is more naturalism here than elsewhere in Powell’s 1930s oeuvre, although comic and/or metafictive elements, such as Pringle’s reappearance after his presumed death, the Wodehousian quality of names like Nosworth, militate against this.

Two longstanding critical questions can now be seen as conclusively settled: the book is not anti-Semitic; just because Verelst is said to be a Jew does not mean the author who created him is anti-Semitic. Indeed, Atwater – not any overarching narrator, but Atwater, the man who did not get the girl, concludes that Verelst deserves Susan, at least to an extent. The only mildly anti-Semitic remark is made by Mr Nunnery, an older man of a stodgier generation, not particularly thrilled to see his daughter go off with a Jew, and Atwater’s even milder assent to that may just be to get through the conversation with this difficult old chap. In the first printing, “jew”, along with all other adjectives, was not capitalized in ee cummings style, but that does not make it anti-Semitic either. Similarly, when Fotheringham speaks of wanting to find “something that brings me into touch with people who really mattered, authors and so on” this is clearly the final form of the line in the *A Writer’s Notebook* to the effect that “I want to meet Chesterton, Belloc, writers who count” – exempting Powell from the conclusion of having had Roman Catholic tendencies otherwise unevidenced (which some reviewers of *A Writer’s Notebook* thought he was actually professing). In other words, this phrase was meant to be dialogue (given to a minor character, Fotheringham), not avowed utterance. In general, *Afternoon Men* is ideologically uncommitted – in a way that *Dance* is not – and books and ideas do not play a large role in the character’s lives, even though several are involved in publishing or the arts. We are far from the elevated, intellectually plugged-in world of Powell’s post-war sequence.

The most important difference between *Afternoon Men* and *Dance*, though, is that *Dance* is a first-person retrospective narrative by someone who has “gotten the girl”, *Afternoon Men* a limited, third-person account of someone who has not
“gotten the girl”. The book is an intense chronicle of unrequited and futile love from the point of view of a character who experiences little but futility in his life.

And so she was gone, ridiculous, lovely creature, absurdly hopeless and impossible love who was and always had been so far away. Absurdly lovely, hopeless creature who was gone away so that he would never see her again and would only remember her as an absurdly hopeless love.

The repetition here captures both clinical distance (as in the manner of Hemingway and even Gertrude Stein) and melancholy abandonment, as this is just how someone suddenly desolated in love would muse and mourn. Susan Nunnery is comparable to Barbara Goring in *Dance*; but as compared to the portrait of Barbara there is far more of a wistfulness, even at times a passion, about how Susan is evoked.

For all the book’s stoic detachment, and all its complete eschewal of melodrama or self-pity, these emotions are vividly present, and, for all the Cubist or Art Deco style of the characters – surface-oriented, parodic, mordant, well captured by, sixty years apart, both the Misha Black and Susan Macartney-Snape covers – there is real feeling here. Some of this feeling is redolent of the book’s immediate precursor, Michael Arlen’s *The Green Hat*, whose finest quality is a delicate, bittersweet lyricism. But Powell’s more severe style makes it different here. The lyricism, though, is in sharp contrast to the acrid, bitter tone of Powell’s great contemporary, Evelyn Waugh, who in books like the brilliant *Vile Bodies* and *Decline and Fall* mounted one of the few twentieth-century satiric efforts to truly merit the Swiftian tag of *saeva indignatio*.

Waugh’s fiery, early books, it must be said, are far more laugh-out-loud funny than Powell’s reserved ironies, although *Afternoon Men* does have the hilarious set-piece of Pringle’s “death”.

*Afternoon Men* has a great many characters for such a short novel. Scheigan, Verelst, Atwater, Pringle, Dr Crutch, Nosworth, Lola, Trimble, Susan Nunnery, George Nunnery, Barlow, Waucop, Spurgeon, Brisket, Naomi Race, not to mention the nameless Welshman and Czech. This is a far broader set of characters than the other pre-war novels have, especially since there is no real distinguishing, Atwater and perhaps Pringle and Susan aside, between “major” and “minor”, background and foreground. In the breadth of characters, Powell was gesturing to the wide social canvas eventually achieved in *Dance*, and indeed Powell’s comment in the *Journals* that *Afternoon Men* (presumably more than the other four pre-war novels) was the germ of *Dance* must take its bearing from this aspect. In general, *Afternoon Men* seems to have been an important book for Powell, as much so as any of the subsequent 1930s novels; it was not simply a novice’s first effort, but an indicative formulation of Powell’s early
idiom, as analyzed by Powell’s first, highly percipient critic, Geoffrey Uther Ellis (in *Twilight on Parnassus*). Even in his late *Journals*, Powell was still thinking and musing about this book written in his mid-twenties.

Here is a photo (previous page) of my more than slightly foxed original 1970s paperback; I can say I have been reading this book for well over three decades. It is in very much a mass-market format; on the back pages, many other novelists are advertised (including my mother’s romance-writing college classmate, Susan Hufford) but of these Anne Tyler is the only one that can be considered at all high-literary, the rest romance or gothic or adventure writers. This shows that the early Powell books were, in the 1970s, thought to have potential to sell well and to please a wide audience in the United States, though I am not sure on what basis (perhaps people who liked *Upstairs, Downstairs* or *The Forsyte Saga* on TV – but the bohemian London of *Afternoon Men* is a far cry, and not only temporally, from the core Edwardian milieu of both of these). I doubt this 1970s reprint of *Afternoon Men* sold more than moderately well at best. Again we are back to the most salient feature of early Powell – that it is not Galsworthy, and in fact eschews the Galsworthian social canvas even more than *Dance* did. This is perhaps why some readers of Powell’s generation or the subsequent one, such as the late Sir Frank Kermode, preferred the pre-war novels, in their austerity and irony, to *Dance*.


Nick will be discussing, *inter alia*, Powell’s pre-war novels at Borage & Hellebore – see page 17.

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**The genius of Powell is comic ... there is high comedy at every turn but it is Widmerpool who provides the custard pie element. It is a sad commentary on our times that success rides on an ability to triumph over the custard pie.**

*Minerva Tracey; Presentation to Saskatoon Literary Society, mid-1960s*

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Anthony Powell and CP Snow  
_by Keith Marshall_

At Prof. Vernon Bogdanor’s Anthony Powell Lecture on 18 November 2011 I was asked if Powell ever mentioned or commented on CP Snow. I had to confess I had no idea, so I set to work to find out.

The only references I can find in Powell’s books are to two meetings, both documented in _The Strangers All Are Gone_, although there were clearly others.

The first is in 1959 when Powell and Snow both attend functions in honour of Mikhail Sholokhov, the Soviet author of _And Quiet Flows the Don_. The invitation to Powell arrived at The Chantry on 24 April 1959 in the form of a telegram; the dinner itself was on 28 April. (Incidentally Powell implies in _Strangers_ that this was in 1958, but the telegram is very clearly date-stamped “24 AP 59”.)

When he arrived in London the British Council arranged a dinner party for Sholokhov at the Savoy Hotel. At this CP Snow, novelist, scientist, subsequently Life Peer, was to act as host. Snow, it appeared, was a personal friend of Sholokhov, and accustomed with his novelist wife, Pamela Hansford Johnson, to stay from time to time at the Sholokhov country house in South Russia. I had just met both the Snows, but knew neither at all well.

I was invited to the Savoy dinner party, also to a luncheon given the following day at the Soviet Union’s Embassy in Kensington Palace Gardens.

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Towards the end of the dinner party, at which Powell converses with Sholokhov’s KGB minder,

Toasts were drunk. Snow made a speech. He drew attention to the fact that 1905 had been a Vintage Year for writers, having produced Sholokhov, Powell, and Snow himself. This tribute was translated sentence by sentence. Sholokhov, whose sullen features had not for a moment relaxed under what I don’t doubt had been a cascade of wit from [Isaiah] Berlin, showed no particular pleasure on learning of this auspicious nativity. _[Strangers, 174]_

Then almost 20 years later, in 1977, Powell is invited to a conference in Sofia. Initially he declines, but the Bulgarians
won’t take no for an answer and send a representative to persuade Powell:

A Bulgarian diplomat arrived. Over coffee I asked who were likely to be present from the United Kingdom. The answer was: CP Snow certainly; Iris Murdoch perhaps (when I rang her up she had heard nothing, and did not appear in the event); two or three other writers of varying note. [Strangers, 177]

Powell subsequently attends the conference, travelling in both directions on the plane with Snow. On the outward journey they discuss literature:

CP Snow, whom I had hardly seen since the Sholokhov jollifications, was the only person on the plane (a Bulgarian one) known to me. We sat next to each other for three and a half hours in rather cramped conditions, the aircraft being a Spartan model, Snow a big man. He told me that he quite often visited Bulgaria, and gave some account of what lay ahead.

Snow even more than most novelists conveyed the impression of having emerged from the pages of one of his own works. He was serious, not in the least afraid of being thought pompous, essentially good-natured and obliging. This acceptance of himself within his own literary terms of reference made him in some respects easier as a companion in circumstances like these than certain writers with a lighter touch. He did not himself deal much in jokes, but had no objection to them.

We talked chiefly about books, a subject by no means all English writers find agreeable. I asked if he were a Dickensian. Snow replied that he was not; but if required to nominate the writer in English next in stature to Shakespeare he would find difficulty in thinking of any other than Dickens. That struck me as a sound appreciation; one that well defined my own feelings. [Strangers, 178]

On the return journey there is the inevitable muddle over flights. Once on the plane Powell and Snow dissect the conference and return to discussing Sholokhov.

Snow – sometimes addressed as Lord Charles by the Bulgarians – had been very helpful through the Conference, having no doubt attended many such gatherings and knowing les detours.

On the day of departure I was
instructed to be ready at 7.15 am, and understood Snow was taking the same flight. I descended about ten minutes before time. No one from the Conference was about in the hall of the hotel.

I waited alone for about half an hour. Then a young man arrived in a car and asked for me. We drove off together at great speed. On reaching the gates of the airport all formalities were ignored, and we dashed straight on to the tarmac among the waiting aircraft. A man appeared. Some sort of altercation with my driver took place. This seemed to be on the question of whether or not sufficient time remained for me to be embarked on a given plane. Finally the official turned to me.

‘Do you want to go to London, please?’
‘Yes’.
The answer at once caused relief.
‘In that case get back into the car, please’.
I wondered where I should have been taken had he not bothered to ask about my preferred destination.

We returned and I was shown into what was evidently the VIP lounge of the airport. There drinking coffee were the Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister (stated also to be a poet), a Bulgarian writer (who later kindly presented me with a bottle of mastic ...), Snow, our respective interpreters. Snow, whose train fever must have been even more acute than my own, had risen an hour earlier than instructed, and been whisked off immediately to the airport.

We had a lot of strong black coffee and two double brandies, an admirable petit déjeuner in the circumstances …

In the plane Snow and I once more crowded in with each other. After we had dished up the Conference he remarked on Sholokhov not having turned up at Sofia as billed. I asked about Snow’s visits to the Sholokhov stately home in the Don country. Snow said that by Russian standards it was all very luxurious.

‘Sholokhov is in Soviet terms a rich man?’
‘Sholokhov’s son once remarked to me,’ said Snow. ‘You know when my old man dies I shall be very well off’.
‘But won’t it all be taken away from him’.
‘No’.
‘What does the son do?’
‘He’s a meteorologist’.
The idea of a Cossack meteorologist was engaging.
‘Could he just live on the income he inherited?’
‘That would arouse social disapproval’.

Snow returned to the subject of the Conference.

‘You know,’ he said, ‘you were a great success. They had never seen anybody like you before. There was an argument as to whether you looked like a professor or a soldier’.

He fell into silence, seeming to ponder the strangeness of the personality with which I had lived so long, and was still illusive to Bulgarians. I had often wondered about it myself.

[Strangers, 184-6]
General Conyers’s beliefs about one’s personal myth surface again!

Checking George Lilley’s *Anthony Powell – A Bibliography* reveals just two reviews by Powell of works by CP Snow, both prior to that 1959 meeting and neither reprinted in the three volumes of Powell’s selected criticism.


In these two reviews (in *TLS* tradition, neither was credited at the time) Powell is at pains to point out that these two novels in Snow’s Cambridge-based *Strangers and Brothers* sequence are perfectly reasonable and realistically depict the environment they describe. Powell is however somewhat reserved in his judgement. Of *The Light and the Dark* he says:

*The Light and the Dark* is a painstaking and readable account of university life seen from high table, it would give a foreigner a fair idea of the types he might meet and the opinions that he might hear expressed in such circles. With personal relationships the author is less at home. Rosalind and Joan never come to life, and the Bostocks, after hopeful beginnings, become stylized and more than a little improbable. [*TLS*, 8 November 1947]

And here he is on *The Masters*:

The author has gone to great pains to reproduce all the circumstances and atmosphere of the society he depicts. In this he has been extremely successful. He is a writer who recalls Hugh Walpole in his general approach, though Mr Snow is more determined to keep his story at a realistic level. Indeed, his realism is so insistent that there are times when some of the unexciting preoccupations of his characters begin to infect the reader with a suggestion of their own tedium. He is at his least happy with female characters …

Mr Snow’s combination room is certainly not an engaging community; and in some ways his own fairness of description makes the Fellows of the college perhaps even less congenial than they might be in real life; for a touch of satire would relieve the picture … His treatment seems, as it were, to damn with faint praise on a huge scale …

*The Masters* gives an excellent account of at least one side of university life, upon which Mr Snow is to be warmly congratulated. [*TLS*, 20 July 1951]

There clearly were other meetings between Powell and Snow. Powell’s correspondence contains a letter, in an almost illegible hand and dated 23 June 1958, from Snow inviting the Powells to a London party in honour of the American writer and critic Norman Podhoretz on 29 June. There is no indication whether the Powells attended the party although given that Powell nowhere mentions Podhoretz it seems to me unlikely. However Powell had clearly met Snow prior to the Sholokhov dinner.
Following Snow’s death in 1980 his younger brother Philip completed a memoir, *Stranger and Brother: A Portrait of CP Snow*. Philip Snow writes to Powell on 26 March 1982 seeking permission (which was granted) to reproduce in this memoir a letter from Powell to Snow on the occasion of the latter’s introduction as a Life Peer in November 1964. Powell writes with typical teasing heraldic possibilities:

> Do let me add my congratulations to the flood you must be receiving. I like to think that, prophetically, the subject of Supporters came up at some stage in the course of the evening when we last met. Your case offers all sorts of alternative possibilities to the herald. Do not rule out a stranger or a brother, which would tax the artist’s invention and have enigmatic charm as that part of the achievement.

Snow replied in a similarly teasing vein:

> It was like you to write so generously. I only wish that I had your ingenious idea about Supporters. It would have made Anthony Wagner more than usually thoughtful. In fact I got weakened by the atmosphere of punning facetiousness which pervades the College of Heralds and settled for two Siamese cats; and the initials CAT stand for Colleges of Advanced Technology – which I am supposed, quite wrongly as usual – to be a passionate advocate of. By the way, wouldn’t Leavis be proud of the construction of that sentence?

[Philip Snow, *Stranger and Brother: A Portrait of CP Snow*, 163]

Snow clearly appreciated Powell’s work and is quoted in *Stranger and Brother* as saying

> I don’t envy Anthony Powell’s work or that of any writer alive – just some of their gifts. This isn’t because I think I’m all that good but because, as the Russians say, each man has his own word and all one has to do is to say it. [139-40]

I have been unable to find further references by Powell to CP Snow, but in conclusion there is an interesting little aside in Michael Barber’s biography *Anthony Powell – A Life*:

> CP Snow called such people [the post-WW2 breed of Russophils] ‘New Men’, and reading some of Widmerpool’s more turgid pronouncements I’ve sometimes wondered if by chance he had escaped from one of Snow’s novels.

[Barber, 175]

Indeed so! ■

The author is indebted to John Powell for access to, and copies of, the Powell-Snow letters.
At least 50,000 pages stood between Connie Winjum and her goal of reading all 100 of the best novels of the 20th century.

One book on Modern Library’s list – the four-volume, 12-novel *A Dance to the Music of Time* by Anthony Powell – was 3,000 pages. Several on the list topped 800 pages. “I may not have read the thick ones if they hadn’t been on the 100 best”, she said. “I got used to thick books and decided I would read them all, no matter what”.

For 12 years, Winjum has chipped away at the list, while reading lighter fare for fun, too. Now she’s read all 100 books and can recommend 99 of them. “These books are good”, she said. “I learned a lot about what happened in my lifetime that I had no idea about”. *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce, one of the most difficult-to-read novels ever published in English, was the only one she really disliked. “I couldn’t tell you what it was about”, she said. “I did not get that at all. It was the only book I had a really hard time with”. Joyce’s famous – or infamous – *Ulysses* was “not near as bad as I thought it would be”, Winjum said. If nothing else, *Ulysses* was better than *Finnegans Wake* and not as unreadable as its reputation. *Ulysses* was ranked the best book of the bunch by the list compilers. “Now I know how the Irish lived”, she said. “And, how lucky I am I lived in good times”.

Winjum found the novels by English authors such as Henry James to be wordy. “His are real ... well, you could read two or three sentences and it’s one page”, she said. But, through all the British novels, she “learned a lot about England”, slices of life of the rich aristocrats or the downtrodden. “Books draw me in, and it’s like I’m there”, she said. “England was slower. They have tea, they stop and visit, while we’re running here and there”.

Amazingly to Winjum, Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* did not make the list, but William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* was a good selection.

Winjum is not a Joseph Conrad fan, and he has four novels on the list, more than any other author. William Faulkner, EM Forester, James Joyce, Henry James,
Evelyn Waugh and DH Lawrence each had three.

“Before this I didn’t know anything about authors”, she said. “I couldn’t have talked books for anything”. After retirement, Winjum walked into a downtown bookstore and said, “I want to read. What should I read?” She was handed a bookmark with the 100 novels list, but advised that the most anyone at the bookstore had managed was 33. Winjum had read only John Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath in her school days and F Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby, but she decided she would read every book on the list. Sometimes she would have three books going at a time, one classic and two pleasure books like those by James Patterson or Luanne Rice.

Today the bookmark that started it all is tattered and taped together. Checkmarks are next to every title.

Winjum reads only at night, sitting at the kitchen table to stay awake. She finished the 100th book at 2:10am on a Sunday morning. “I thought, I’m going to finish”, she said. So she kept going, reaching the end of the epic A Dance to the Music of Time.

Winjum’s granddaughter Rachael Kelley said Winjum uses all the reading strategies that Kelley teaches her fourth-graders at Lewis and Clark Elementary. “I use her as an example in my classroom”, Kelley said. Kelley’s students learn to create mental images as they read, to ask questions and to make connections with their own lives and with what they already know about the subject. Winjum kept a log of the books she read in a diary, with her thoughts and a synopsis.

Winjum said she knows it’s important to keep her mind active. “They say if you keep your brain going, you’ll be able to do more for yourself”, she said. So, she does crossword puzzles instead of watching television and reads. She learns about history and memorized all the presidents. “Why don’t people want to learn these things?” she said. “I don’t get it”.

Winjum “has a lot of diligence”, Kelley said. “If everyone had as much diligence and curiosity as she has, the world would be a better place. She’s a pretty amazing lady”.

Winjum’s next goal, inspired by the Steinbeck novels she read from the list, is to read all the American author’s work. “I’m glad I didn’t live in those years”, she said.

This article first appeared in the Great Falls Tribune on 4 November 2011. It is also available on the Great Falls Tribune archive website but behind a paywall.

My admirations are not necessarily my influences. My favourite living novelist is Anthony Powell. If I ever took an influence from him it would destroy me because he writes such a controlled but leisurely way that if I put anything of that into my stuff, it would break the springs. I love those books.

Magical Chairs at New York Birthday Luncheon

The novel seating arrangement for the 29 guests who attended the Powell Birthday Luncheon in New York on 16 December was determined by the name of the *Dance* character-card drawn from the “male” or “female” urns proffered by hostesses Arete Warren and Cheryl Hurley at the entrance to the Grolier Club’s handsome Council Room. If, for example, a guest drew a card labelled “Erridge”, he would find his seat at the “Erridge” place-setting on the long table. To his left he would find the guest who had drawn the “Mona” card. To his right would be sitting the person who had picked the “Quiggin” card. Making this oval 29-place interlocking system compatible with the texts of *Dance* was the inspired work of Arete Warren.

Initial liveliness churned into excitement when the guests learned from their ornate Noel-Poël Players programs that all of the Powell Birthday celebrants were participating, as *Dance* characters, in the *Occupation of the Grolier Club*, and that Eric Holzenberg, director of the club, was their hostage. Shortly thereafter, Mr Holzenberg, pleading for an orderly and limited occupation, won the sympathy of his captors with a fervent appreciation of Powell and with his declaration that the club hoped that its Council Room would be the site of Powell Birthday luncheons for decades to come. It was noted that the founders of the Manhattan Powell luncheons were the late William B Warren and temporarily invalided Leatrice Fountain.

During the traditional “round the table” introduction, each guest explained how he or she had first come to read a Powell novel and pick a favorite *Dance* character. Two guests, Lisa Chase and Tom Wallace, briefly recalled their personal conversations with Anthony Powell. Five guests were attending their first luncheon.

During the main course, Jonathan Kooperstein, co-editor of the Powell-Vanderbilt letters in *The Acceptance of Absurdity*, distributed copies of one page of the original text of a letter and invited the guests to share in a piece of delicate editorial decision-making.

The Noel-Poël dessert production was titled *Free At Last to Imagine: Three Female Characters from Dance Tell Us What They Really Thought of Nick Jenkins*.

Writer and critic Brooke Allen led off, imagining what Jean Templer thought of Nick Jenkins after their final meeting in the art gallery in *Hearing Secret Harmonies*. Eileen Kaufman, a great Noel-Poël favorite, imagined how Pamela Flitton saw Jenkins. And Joan Williams, unable to leave Toronto, sent her ideas about what Matilda Wilson thought of Jenkins in her last years.

The combined effects of these three candid assessments evoked expressions of surprise – and even consternation – from some of the males in attendance.

Discussion, led by this correspondent in the role of Smith the Butler, had to be curtailed at 3 pm to honor the terms of the hostage-release agreement with Mr Holzenberg. Arrangements were made for fuller discussion at luncheon at *The Star of India* restaurant on Saturday 4 February.

*Ed Bock*
New Publications

The Acceptance of Absurdity
Edited by John Saumarez Smith & Jonathan Kooperstein

Members’ Price
Paperback: UK £17, Overseas £19.50
Hardback: UK £25, Overseas £28
(includes shipping)

In February 1952 the proprietor of the leading Anglophile bookshop in New York, Robert Vanderbilt Jr, wrote to Anthony Powell suggesting that he should reprint one, possibly two, of Powell’s pre-war novels. This led to an animated exchange of letters about the production and sale of Two Novels: Venusberg and Agents & Patients and a longstanding friendship. When Powell became Literary Editor of Punch the correspondence took on a new life as both men helped each other find books to review or sell. The result is a literary kaleidoscope with London and New York equally represented. It also reminds a later generation of the lasting rewards of letter writing.

The first of Powell’s letters to be published

Anthony Powell
Caledonia
A Fragment

Publicly available for the first time from Greville Press

With an Introduction by Grey Gowrie

Members’ Price
UK £7.50, Overseas £9
(includes shipping)

Powell’s anti-Scotts pastiche was originally a limited edition of just 100 copies, privately printed in 1934 by Desmond Ryan as a wedding present for the Powells. Until now it has only ever been available in this very rare (and thus very expensive) edition or as reprinted in the Kingsley Amis edited New Oxford Book of Light Verse of 1978. Now it is publicly available for the very first time as an entity in its own right.

While not a facsimile this edition closely follows the 1934 original with the addition of a short introduction by Grey Gowrie.

At last a copy of Caledonia is within the reach of us all!
Subscriptions

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on 1 April and that rates remain unchanged this year (see back page). Reminder letters will be sent during March to those whose membership falls due this year.

Anyone whose membership is expired will be removed from the membership list at the end of July.

Reminders are a drain on our resources, with each overseas reminder costing in excess of £1 – a significant sum when we send out anything up to 50 second and third reminders most years!

Members are also reminded that subscriptions, membership enquiries and merchandise requests should be sent to Graham & Dorothy Davie at:

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Contributions to the Newsletter and journal Secret Harmonies are always welcome and should be sent to:

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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.

Newsletter Copy Deadlines

Newsletter #47, Summer 2012
Copy Deadline: 11 May 2012
Publication Date: 1 June 2012

Newsletter #48, Autumn 2012
Copy Deadline: 17 August 2012
Publication Date: 7 September 2012
Borage and Hellebore
The Many Sides of Anthony Powell’s Art
with Dr Nicholas Birns
Eugene Lang College
The New School, New York
author of Understanding Anthony Powell
Saturday 17 March 2012
1345 to 1645 hrs
Conference Room
St James’s Church, Piccadilly
London W1
Tickets £10
(includes tea/coffee and cake)
Is A Dance to the Music of Time the only reason to read Anthony Powell?
Or do his other novels, memoirs, journals, reviews, criticism and plays offer a body of work fully the equal of Dance?
Join Nick Birns and guests for an invigorating debate over whether Anthony Powell was the author of one great work or the great author of many works in multiple genres.
A rare opportunity to hear and debate with one of the world’s experts on Powell’s work
Tickets from the Hon. Secretary on 020 8864 4095
secretary@anthonypowell.org
or the usual address on page 2

London Quarterly Pub Meets
Saturday 12 May 2012
Saturday 18 August 2012
Saturday 3 November 2012
The Audley, Mount Street, London W1
1230 to 1530 hrs
Good beer, good pub 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

Evelyn Waugh Conference and Exhibition
Loyola-Notre Dame Library
200 Winston Avenue
Baltimore, MD, USA
Evelyn Waugh Exhibition
Ferguson Gallery, Main Level
27 February to 7 April 2012
Display of artifacts, documents, letters and photographs relating to Waugh’s visits to United States in 1948 and 1949.
Evelyn Waugh Conference
Ridley Auditorium, Lower Level
12-13 March 2012 starting at 10am
Topics include Waugh’s US Travels, Waugh and US Writers, Waugh and Film, Waugh’s Catholicism
Registration is free. To register and obtain information on accommodation email jmcginty@loyola.edu
One of the most remarkable artists of his own or any other period in this country. 

[Miscellaneous Verdicts, 351]

This was Anthony Powell’s verdict on Edward Burra. As young men with friends in common and similar backgrounds (they would have been contemporaries at Eton had not Burra’s ill health made home-schooling a necessity) their social paths crossed occasionally in 1920s London and on holiday in Toulon in 1928. In later life Burra’s recreational pursuits took him to places where Powell was unlikely to be found. Burra took up cannabis smoking and occasionally accompanied his friend and fellow artist John Banting and Banting’s equally alcoholic boyfriend, Jimbo on pub crawls in Rye and Hastings. While outwardly very different, Burra and Powell were both observers with an attitude of amused detachment and connoisseurs of gossip.

In the years since the major retrospective of Burra’s work at the Hayward Gallery in 1985, Powell’s high opinion of Burra’s talent has not been widely echoed and his reputation has languished. Part of the problem, as Powell recognised, is that Burra is uncategorisable and especially for a figurative painter, surprisingly enigmatic.

I can think of no-one who could be named as a parallel in answer to the question ‘Who was Burra like?’ wrote Powell in a review for Apollo in 1982. Sometimes he can be a surrealist like John Banting, at others a social realist and satirist in the Otto Dix/George Grosz mould. In later life Burra focussed on pastoral themes but there is none of the lyricism or romanticism of Graham Sutherland, John Piper or his friend and one-time mentor Paul Nash. Even his technique and choice of medium, which were both largely dictated by his disabilities, set him apart. Burra was apparently untroubled by the dictates of fashion. Not for him the muted browns and khakis of modernism – many of his early works are a riot of blue, red, orange and gold.

The last twelve months have seen an upswing of interest and a revival of his critical reputation. Zoot Suits, his 1948 painting of West Indian immigrants in London, sold for £1.8m last year and now to spur the Burra revival, the Pallant House Gallery in Chichester has staged a major retrospective of seventy paintings. The exhibition is arranged over six rooms in a chronological/thematic progression and opens with some of the paintings for which Burra is best known. Working with flattened perspective and in the so-called “tubist” style (also favoured by Stanley Spencer), Burra builds up thick layers of watercolour (with added spit) to create rich blocks of colour that look like tempera or oil. The subjects are drawn from Burra’s travels to Harlem, Paris, Marseilles and Toulon, where he stayed in the same hotel as Powell [Messengers, 156-7]. Sailors, whores, drinkers, strippers and transvestites are portrayed and caricatured, often with camp humour, in night clubs,
bars and cafés. Burra delights in visual puns, phallic imagery and the juxtaposition of glamour and seediness. “He enjoyed depravity and bathed it in a glamorous, eccentric light” explained George Melly. In Saturday Market (1932) a Hollywood starlet in a pink negligee incongruously navigates a course between the rotting veg and scavenging cats of a street market in Rye, while being eyed up by a rough-looking market trader. Sailors at the Bar (1930) sees Burra subverting perspective and form – a brass pole bisects the painting, while the tiled floor falls away vertiginously and leaves a foreground table apparently floating.

In the second room, entitled Danse Macabre, we see the fruits of Burra’s experiments with collage and surrealism to create depictions of figures with human limbs and machine heads. Burra had a long-standing interest in the supernatural and macabre; horror films and sci-fi; and admired Goya and Bosch. All these influences come to the fore in his artistic response to war in paintings like Soldiers’ Backs (1942-3), Blue Baby, Blitz over Britain (1941) and Skull in a Landscape (1946).

Some of these themes are developed further in Room 3, where several paintings have an atmosphere of threat and suspense borrowed from horror films, while the red torch-bearing mob in The Riot (1948-50) seem straight from a zombie film. Middle period Burra was, thought his friend John Aiken, “apocalyptic, comic-horrific, sleazy, grim”. In this room we also see the first example of Burra’s ability to make even a still-life sinister – the eerie Tulips in a Yellow Pot (1955-7).

Burra had painted landscapes in the 1930s but with the advent of war, travel became impossible and the Sussex landscape became his subject. However the romantic sense of poetic escape has no place in the works displayed in Room 4. Burra’s Sussex countryside is characterised by dark skies, gnarled trees, rusting machinery and skeletons.

In late middle age Burra was also to explore in his own disturbing fashion a very unnaturalistic English countryside; a sphere where he was perhaps finally at his best considered Powell [Messengers, 157]. Blue Robed Figure under a Tree (1937) shows a dark, scarcely human figure caught in a pincer movement between an unnaturally gnarly tree and a mass of indeterminate triffid-like vegetation. Gloating, malevolent figures caress cabbage sacks which look like bombs in Cabbage Harvest (1943-5). The harbour at Hastings Old Town has inspired artists for generations, including contemporary...
painters like Jason Garwood. In Burra’s treatment of the scene in *The Harbour, Hastings* (1947) a sinister, cowled hoodie, possibly a fugitive follower of Scorpio Murtlock, is lurking on the edge of the frame.

In the last fifteen years of his life, landscapes became his principal subject and he travelled north and west in search of rugged grandeur and open country. The paintings collected here vindicate Powell’s verdict quoted above and that of the Burra expert Andrew Causey, who considered that the “late landscapes are one of the most important and undervalued aspects of his work”. Supernatural, mystical elements intrude and Burra often portrays the landscape as having a personality. *In Picking a Quarrel* (1968-9) robotic monster machinery defiles a shrine perched above the bleeding earth. The mythological figure, the Green Man, looks on in *Landscape, Cornwall, with Figures and Tin Mine* (1975). One of the figures is an unflattering self-portrait – the-artist-as-raddled-old-geezer-with-Cornish-pasty.

The final room in this excellent exhibition is devoted to Burra’s work designing sets and costumes for the stage. Burra was an enthusiastic consumer of films and theatre from an early age. When a commission matched his own interests and he was able to draw upon memories of his own foreign travel, the results could be very impressive. This exhibition has brought together several striking examples of Burra’s set designs for *A Day in a Southern Port* (Rio Grande), *Miracle in the Gorbals, Carmen* and *Don Quixote*.

Finally, do not miss the video of Carole and Peter Smith’s filmed interview with Burra made in 1972 for the Arts Council (also available on the internet at [http://vimeo.com/20763625](http://vimeo.com/20763625)). Burra resented the whole process and prepared for his ordeal by getting stoned. He appears on film as a model of bohemian decrepitude and stonewalls in the face of very inoffensive questioning. During a sequence shot in his garden he stumps about with an everlasting cigarette glued to his lower lip and makes no attempt to pretend that the camera is not there. Although you can not help feeling sorry for the film makers, it is an entertaining performance and a must for anyone who is self-conscious about their teeth. Towards the end, while overcome with laughter at the idea of people improving themselves by viewing his paintings, he flashes some truly horrendous gnashers.

This is a very fine exhibition and the curator Simon Martin has done an excellent job of bringing back to our attention the work of an unjustly neglected artist. Will you come away understanding Burra better? Probably not but Burra would have been delighted. “I never tell anybody anything”, he said. “So they just make it up”.

Edward Burra is at the Pallant House Gallery, Chichester until 19 February after which it goes on tour to the Djanogly Art Gallery, Nottingham from 3 March to 27 May.
This book consists principally of three long articles on people described as “misfits” with whom the author, Duncan Fallowell (a travel writer, novelist and cultural journalist by profession) became fascinated more or less by accident. These are sandwiched between two shorter articles about something else entirely: a travel piece about Gozo, an island next to Malta, and the author’s memoir of the public reaction to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, who, while she may have been a misfit, is not defined as such in the book. The first misfit article is about a social climber on steroids known as Bapsy Pavra whose life was dedicated to a largely unsuccessful quest for access to levels of society closed to her. The second is about Fallowell’s unsuccessful pursuit of an interview with an enigmatic German artist, Maruma, who purchased the Isle of Eigg off the West Coast of Scotland, and with it the responsibilities of landlord to numerous tenants.

The third misfit article is the one to which Anthony Powell contributes. The story begins with Fallowell’s 1979 trip to the remote Welsh fishing village of New Quay (not to be confused with the much more frequently visited Cornish holiday resort of Newquay) for a short break. In a local pub he starts up a conversation with an oldish gentlemen sitting at the bar. Fallowell was struck by his fastidious attire and his perfectly manicured fingernails. Their conversation got around to Evelyn Waugh through Fallowell’s mentioning that he was rereading Waugh’s early novels at the moment. He commented that the more serious Waugh became, the worse was his writing but overall thought that he was quite well-endowed as a writer. The elderly gentleman, according to Fallowell, then “uttered an extraordinary remark. ‘He wasn’t well-endowed in the other sense, I’m afraid’”. Fallowell was at first caught completely off guard, but then, after regaining some degree of composure, wondered if the old gentleman was making a pass. When Fallowell, a bi-sexual, tried to pursue that possibility, the old gentleman mumbled, politely excused himself, shook hands and said goodbye to the landlord, who responded to him as Mr Graham.

It was only later that Fallowell discovered that this old gentleman was in fact Alistair Graham, Evelyn Waugh’s friend and lover from his Oxford days. He then began a quest for an interview with Graham to determine why he had dropped out of contact with the metropolitan world of Waugh and his other Oxford friends in the mid 1930s, never to return. Fallowell’s pursuit of Graham coincided with the 1981 airing of the TV series of Brideshead Revisited. When he returned to New Quay about the time that programme started, Graham refused to see him. It is not clear whether or not this refusal was related to the media frenzy that accompanied the TV series. Shortly thereafter, however, Graham had a series of health breakdowns coinciding with his pursuit by reporters seeking interviews with and photos of the “model” for Sebastian Flyte. After Graham had managed to go virtually
unnnoticed for nearly 50 years, all this unwanted attention seems to have contributed to his death in 1982, about a year after he had rejected Fallowell’s request for an interview.

Fallowell let matters rest until 1990 when his curiosity was again aroused and his researches were renewed. It was at this point that he decided to contact Anthony Powell as a possible source of information about Graham based on Powell’s having known him at Oxford. Fallowell knew Powell from a piece he had written about Powell for *Time Out*, which later reappeared in an American “glossy” that Powell, in his *Journals*, thought might have been *Vogue*. This turns out to be an article in the June 1984 US edition of *Vanity Fair* entitled “Books Do Furnish a Room”. (Thanks are due to APLIST contributors for sorting this out.) In the 1984 interview, during a period when his pursuit of Alistair Graham was on hold, Fallowell elicited some information from Powell that he may have recalled later when he resumed his quest for Graham. In answer to Fallowell’s question, “Was Oxford fun?” Powell responded:

I didn’t really in a way enjoy Oxford. I mean, one went to parties. There were several very rich people, mostly of rather obscure origins, and you would be invited by someone you didn’t know to a party for thirty with a bottle of champagne placed in front of each guest and that sort of thing. There was a man called Lulu Waters-Welch who entertained in this fashion. But a lot of the time one felt lonely and depressed. The *Brideshead Revisited* picture was, in my view, totally wrong.

[From *Vanity Fair*, June 1984, pp. 106-107]

So, perhaps, at least at Oxford, Powell was one of Fallowell’s misfits. In the same article, Fallowell summed up Powell as having what the Tories call “bottom”. That is, he is what he appears to be, and what he appears to be is a gentleman who isn’t a bore. This is an illusion, however. A gentleman has interests, not obsessions. Anthony Powell is a writer, and a writer is only as good as his obsessions. Hence the element of concealment – not of inconvenient truths in the outer world, but of self from self.

[From *Vanity Fair*, June 1984, p. 107]

Based on the favorable tone of Fallowell’s write-up of the 1984 interview, Powell had every reason to cooperate when he was contacted again in 1990. Powell mentions that second contact in his *Journals* for 7 March 1990 and recalls some of the information that he imparted:

I used to see Graham in the Hypocrites my first term or two at Oxford, but never really knew him except as the acknowledged great love of Evelyn Waugh. He possessed Dresden shepherdess good looks, nothing much to say for himself it always seemed to me, possibly a type of narcissus incapable of dealing with...
anyone not in love with him. He retired in comparatively early life to a remote village in Wales where he died a year or two ago, after existence there as a hermit. [J90-92, 19]

Powell had also mentioned Graham briefly in *Messengers* in connection with his involvement in the 1926 printing of Waugh’s first book, *PRB*, and as the possible source of Waugh’s introduction to Rosa Lewis’s Jermyn Street establishment, the Cavendish Hotel.

Fallowell also expanded his research to include contacts with Graham’s acquaintances and household staff in New Quay and members of his family, including a niece in South Africa who had inherited his papers from the house in New Quay. These sources were more willing to talk after Graham’s death, but none claimed to know why he had exiled himself to a remote Welsh fishing village for the last 50 years of his life. Some thought there may have been a need to leave London to avoid a homosexual scandal, and at least one thought, somewhat cryptically, that it may have had something to do with a piece of jewelry. But at the end of the quest, Powell’s own conclusion is as good as any other: “I think he was just like that. I always found him sort of buttoned-up, an odd figure, always difficult to talk to” [219]. And why not leave London? Graham’s affair with Waugh was largely over by the time of Waugh’s first marriage in 1928. After his mother’s death in 1934, he had inherited enough to live on comfortably in New Quay for nearly 50 years without ever having to seek employment. In London, his fixed income would not have stretched as far.

Although the focus of this part of Fallowell’s book is Alistair Graham, he makes at least one new contribution to Waugh scholarship by reporting Graham’s reference to Waugh’s private parts. But even that, along with other references and their tendency to belittle Waugh (if you’ll excuse the expression) as well as his work, is highly problematic. Indeed, at the end of his narrative, Fallowell wonders whether he may have misinterpreted what Graham meant when he said that Waugh ‘wasn’t well endowed in the other sense’. I could well in my vulgar way have jumped to the wrong conclusion. Perhaps Graham was simply saying that Evelyn was poor, had no money, and Graham was remembering the onetime dearest and then ungrateful friend who had cadged off him, whose overdraft Graham had guaranteed, and who ended up drunkenly bellowing in White’s club about buggers and pansies. [200]

Given Graham’s personality, even a less inflammatory remark, such as Fallowell’s alternative interpretation, to someone who could well, for all Graham knew, have been a journalist (which indeed turns out to have been the case) seems out of character.

Fallowell’s book is well organized and holds one’s attention. He seems incapable of writing a bad sentence. He describes the events in each article in the order in which he discovered them, not in the order in which they occurred. The book is also striking in appearance. It is printed on high quality paper and nicely bound. The type face (Plantin Rounded) is also striking, as are the colorful geometric designs on the endpapers and title pages. I opened this strange looking book as soon as it arrived, started reading it out of curiosity and couldn’t put it down.
From an article by Jonathan Ames in the *New York Times* “The Mess I’m In”, 22 December 2011:

I learned about kipple from the Philip K Dick novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Here is an exchange between a man named JR Isidore and a character named Pris Stratton.

*This building, except for my apartment, is completely kipple-ized.*

“Kipple-ized?” She did not comprehend.

*Kipple is useless objects, like junk mail or match folders after you use the last match or gum wrappers ... When nobody’s around, kipple reproduces itself. For instance, if you go to bed leaving any kipple around your apartment, when you wake up the next morning there’s twice as much of it. It always gets more and more ...*

*The entire universe is moving toward a final state of total, absolute kippleization.*

... My problem is that in one’s never-ending battle with this perpetual accumulation of life’s silt, I am France, and kipple is Germany. But why? Why am I so feeble, louche and easily overrun? Why is my apartment the dominant organic life form and not me?

Well, first of all I love books. Anthony Powell once titled one of his novels *Books Do Furnish a Room*. In my case, it’s more like *Books Do Overwhelm a Room*. I have a thousand or more novels and works of nonfiction, but not enough shelves, so I have uneven stacks of tomes everywhere, all teetering in an intoxicated manner. But I don’t care. I’m a middle-aged old fart who steadfastly refuses to ever read on an electronic device, if for no other reason than I’m a frightened, small-minded technophobe. Also, these gadgets are going to change the way novels are written and conceived, and I’m against change when it comes to things I do.

So books are the only form of kipple I’m not opposed to.

Spotted by Jonathan Kooperstein. ■

From an article in the *Irish Times* by Donald Clarke “A belated word on Christopher Hitchens”, 18 December 2011:

He was enjoyable when he was wrong. But his work was even more pleasurable to read when it chimed with one’s own opinions. I always felt on safe ground when reading him on English literature. Anybody who loved Evelyn Waugh, Anthony Powell and PG Wodehouse as much as he did was surely worth taking seriously. ■
From an article by Ken Thompson
“Gardeners: failed by fiction and film” in the Daily Telegraph, 17 November 2011:

Gardening scarcely features in Anthony Powell’s masterpiece A Dance to the Music of Time, but it can hardly be a coincidence that Kenneth Widmerpool – surely a candidate for the most obnoxious individual in 20th-century English fiction – is the only character in the entire 12-volume sequence with any horticultural connection.

Powell gives other reasons to dislike Widmerpool, but you know he will come to a bad end when you discover that his father’s business was the supply of liquid manure to the gentry.

From an article by Andrew McKie
“Bibliophilia for Beginners: Tips and Traps When Buying for the Aspiring Book Collector” in the Wall Street Journal, 25 November 2011:

All collecting is a disease, but lusting after rare books often strikes those without the bug as deranged. Unlike paintings or fine furniture, say, books are intrinsically mass-produced objects. What’s more, you can look at a watercolor or a piece of porcelain without doing it any damage, but – according to the memoirs of the writer and collector John Baxter – a rare book loses $5 in value every time you open it.

There are customers who buy leather volumes – often bound journals or superseded encyclopedias – by the yard, and may well never have heard of Anthony Powell’s novel Books Do Furnish a Room. That is interior decorating, not collecting.

But there are almost as many ways into the field as there are collectors. The obvious first step is to collect a favorite author – though, unless your pockets are very deep, think hard about who that is. Writers who were commercially successful may have had larger print runs, but also tend to attract more people who specialize in their books. And if you like Graham Greene, John Dickson Carr, Philip K Dick, Ed McBain or PG Wodehouse, remember how prolific they were.

In the book pages of Daily Mail, 6 January 2012, Social Historian Juliet Gardiner discussed her literary preferences. Under “What would you take to a desert island?” she lists two choices, one being:

Anthony Powell’s series of novels, Dance to the Music of Time – I have cherry-picked individual volumes but never read the whole sequence right through, and I’ll come back a better writer when I have, I’m sure.


Spotted by Prue Raper.
From an interview with Robert Doyle, mayor of Melbourne, by Michael Shmith in The Age, 2 October 2011:

The former English teacher is never without a book by the bed or at least two on his desk. He has been reading a lot of political biography of late and must be the only person in the world to have read Tony Blair’s memoirs twice. “It was pretty turgid the second time”, he says. “There’s something about political biography that makes it self-serving”.

His favourite book is A Dance to the Music of Time, the 12-volume sequence of English novels by Anthony Powell. “I read it every 18 months or so. I find everything in that work: it’s terribly funny, observational, tragic; it has that sweep of history and one of the most beautifully realised narrators in all literature”.

Powell is especially critical of the English boarding-school system – similar to what Doyle went through at Geelong College as a scholarship boy. “I found it brutalising in some ways but liberating in others. I had a couple of inspirational teachers who realised I came from a poor background”. In fact, he says, his Latin teacher at the school taught him the essential structure of English and proper use of grammar and syntax. “It’s like art – if you don’t have the basics, you can’t do the rest”, he says.

From an article by Peter Hitchens
“Let it Snow, let it Snow, let it Snow” about CP Snow in the Daily Mail, 1 December 2011:

So I don’t really care if he [CP Snow] is second-rate. Most people would benefit from reading some of his books (there is a sequence covering his entire life from provincial obscurity to honoured grandeur). How does one compare them to their rivals – Anthony Powell’s gloriously snobbish and elliptical A Dance to the Music of Time, or Simon Raven’s scurrilous and smutty – but often brilliant Alms for Oblivion?

Well, I prefer Raven to the others for simple pleasure, because he is crueller and funnier, and no respecter of persons. And while some of his plots are beyond absurd, and while he indulges his own homosexual interests a bit much, there is a lot of truth about the English upper classes here. Powell I don’t really like. There are some very fine passages, including a brilliant, squirm-making one about how men flatter their superiors while pretending not to. He is very good about the ending of friendships. But I’m not as bowled over by his supposedly brilliant creation, the all-purpose buffoon ‘Widmerpool’, as I’m supposed to be. And the story-telling isn’t always as compelling as it could be. Snow, while he takes more people at face value and is kinder to authority than Raven, may be a better guide to how this country actually works and how its mandarin classes used to speak and act and wield their knives before the age of Blair came and swept all that away forever.
From an article in the Catholic Herald by Fr Alexander Lucie-Smith
“Dickens is disappointingly thin – give me AN Wilson anytime – A very good novel can make a Mexican bus journey pass very quickly”, 8 February 2012:

But two jewels I must share. The first is a novel from the Thirties by Anthony Powell, entitled Agents and Patients. I am a huge fan of his twelve novel roman fleuve, A Dance to the Music of Time, but had never until now read his “single” works. This is something that has to be rectified. Agents and Patients is two hundred pages of sheer delight, a laugh out loud book, somewhat reminiscent of Aldous Huxley, but unlike Huxley, actually funny.

The other gem was an old Penguin of a novel I read in my youth, Wise Virgin, by AN Wilson.

From an article by DJ Taylor “I wanna be adored, your honour” in the Independent, 30 October 2011:

It is always amusing, in a world supposedly less hung up than it once was on the significance of class and regional background, to note the way in which people tend to use class or locality as an occasional weapon to be picked up and set down whenever it happens to be useful. Anthony Powell’s Journals, for example, record a visit from a photographer whose accent started off as bog-standard Estuary, only to assume more genteel inflections once the visitor realised he was, as it were, among friends.

From the Guardian Letters page of 17 December 2011:

A question of belief
It is sad that this brilliant polemicist has died so young (Obituary, 17 October). Chris Kitchens was a rock generation version of Cyril Connolly: knew everything and felt nothing. He came to fame as the progenitor of a class of English writers who hated the world about them but knew much less than he about it. But in the end, after you’d read everything he wrote, all his attacks on the good and the great, what did Mr Chris believe in? Himself. But as a literary scholar he was second to none, and I worship his memory for his telling me, over a long and boozy lunch in Nicosia in 1988, how best to approach Anthony Powell’s A Dance to the Music of Time. Tim Llewellyn London

Spotted by Julian Miller.
Christmas Quiz Answers

The Dance Days of Christmas

**12 Welshmen Marching.** Choose from: Sayce, Gwylt, Ellis, Evans J, Gittins, Gwither, Jones A, Jones D, Mantle, Morgan, Williams WH, Williams T, Williams H, Williams GE, Williams IG.


**9 Ladies Loving.** Baby Wentworth, Bijou Ardglass, Gwen McReith, Milly Andriadis, Matilda Donners, Mona Templer, Jean Duport, Mildred Blaides, Pamela Flitton.

**8 Authors Scribbling.** Choose from: Nick Jenkins, JG Quiggin, Mark Members, St John Clarke, X Trapnel, Russell Gwinnett, Gibson Delavacquerie, Alaric Kydd, Ada Leintwardine, Quentin Shuckerley.

**7 Music Maestros.** Maclintick, Carolo, Gossage, Hugh Moreland, Dempster, Max Pilgrim, Heather Hopkins.

**6 Fellow Travellers.** Ferrand-Senescal, Lindsay Bagshaw, Gypsy Jones, Daniel Tokenhouse, Widmerool, Howard Craggs.

**5 NCOs.** CSM Cadwallader, Sgt Ablett, Sgt Harmer, WO Diplock, Sgt Humphries.

**4 Driving Spivs.** Peter Templer, Bob Duport, Jimmy Stripling, Jimmy Brent.

**3 French Hens.** Choose from: Berthe, Suzette, Mme Dubuisson, Mme Leroy.

**2 Turtle Doves.** M & Mme Dubuisson

**A Shit who gets right up your nose.** Widmerpool (who else?!) ■

An A to Z of Anthony Powell’s Work

A. John Aubrey
B. Barnard Letters
C. Charley
D. Mr Deacon
E. Eton
F. Farinelli
G. Uncle Giles
H. Haverfordwest
I. Isbister
J. Judkins & Judkins
K. whoops it was missing!
L. Lushington
M. Maisky
N. Nothing / Nudity
O. Orlando Furioso
P. Priapus
Q. Quiggin twins
R. Rusty
S. Stourwater
T. Daniel Tokenhouse
U. Ufford Hotel
V. Venusberg
W. TT Waring
X. X Trapnel
Y. Yanto
Z. Zouch ■

1962 Novels

1. JG Ballard, *The Drowned World*
2. Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*
3. Len Deighton, *The IPCRESS File*
4. Agatha Christie, *The Mirror Crack’d From Side to Side*
5. Ian Fleming, *The Spy Who Loved Me*
6. Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*
7. John Le Carré, *A Murder of Quality*
8. Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*
9. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*
11. VS Naipaul, *The Middle Passage*
12. John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley* ■

No entries were received for the 2011 Prize Competition. ■
This from Henry Sotheran’s 250th Anniversary Catalogue of 2011:

“NO BID” ANTHONY POWELL EXPRESSES UNWILLINGNESS TO CONTRIBUTE TO BEVIS HILLIER’S FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN CATALOGUE

294. POWELL, Anthony.
Autograph postcard unsigned to Bevis Hillier laconically declining an invitation to contribute to a catalogue of Festival of Britain material, with one handwritten comment in manuscript, “No Bid”. The Chantry, nr. Frame, Somerset, 12th February 1976. £48

8vo., two pages on one leaf, Hillier has written an explanation of the card on the front, fresh.

In 1976 Bevis Hillier, along with Mary Banham, produced an exhibition about the 1951 Festival of Britain called A Tonic to the Nation. As part of this Hillier collected memories and anecdotes about the Festival from people who had lived through it or been a part of it. One of the people to whom he wrote was author and journalist Anthony Powell, known for A Dance to the Music of Time. He wrote to Powell asking for recollections and received this sharp response. Hillier has noted the circumstances of this short rebuff beneath Powell’s two word answer, remarking ‘if only he could have achieved the same laconic style in his prolix, circumlocutory novels!’

With thanks to the member, name now forgotten (apologies!) who submitted this for the Society Archive.

Christmas Crossword Solution

The Quarterly Review
A classic journal of ideas and culture www.quarterly-review.org

Founded by Walter Scott, Robert Southey and George Canning, the Quarterly Review (1809-1967) was one of the most influential journals in British history. Revived in 2007, the QR Mark II follows its great predecessor in providing uncensored political analysis and stimulating cultural critique – from abortion to Zimbabwe, via Nosferatu and Powell. Contributors include Rowan Williams, Richard Body, Ezra Mishan, Tito Perdue, Kirkpatrick Sale, Keith Waldrop, Rupert Sheldrake, Taki and many others.

Complimentary sample copies and subscriptions available by calling +44 (0) 1507 339 056 or email to editor@quarterly-review.org
SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

**Jeff Manley et al.; Dance Music.** A 150-page guide to the musical references in Dance; compiled in the style of Spurling’s Handbook. **UK: £7, Overseas: £9.50**

**Centenary Conference Proceedings.** Collected papers from the (third, 2005) centenary conference at The Wallace Collection, London. **UK: £11, Overseas: £15**


**Writing about Anthony Powell.** The talks given at the 2004 AGM by George Lilley, Michael Barber and Nick Birns; introduced by Christine Berberich. **UK: £4, Overseas: £5.50**

**The Master and The Congressman.** A 40-page monograph by John Monagan describing his meetings with Powell. **UK: £4, Overseas: £5.50**

OTHER PUBLICATIONS


**Anthony Powell, Caledonia, A Fragment.** The 2011 Greville Press printing of this rare Powell spoof. Now publicly available in its own right for the first time. **UK: £7.50, Overseas: £9**

**John Gould; Dance Class.** American High School student essays from John’s two teachings of Dance at Philips Academy. Many fresh and perceptive insights. **UK: £11.50, Overseas: £15**

**Michael Bakewell, Fitzrovia: London’s Bohemia.** Published in the National Portrait Gallery “Character Sketches” series. Snapshot biographies of Fitzrovian characters including Powell and many of his friends. **UK: £5, Overseas: £7.50**

JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

**Secret Harmonies: Journal of the Anthony Powell Society.** Back numbers of issues 1 to 4/5 available. **UK: £5.50, Overseas: £7.50 each**

**Newsletter Centenary Issue.** 120-page celebratory Centenary Newsletter (issue 21; December 2005). **UK: £5, Overseas: £7.50**

**Newsletter Back Numbers.** Back numbers of Newsletter issues 9 to 19, 22 to 29 and 31 onwards are available. **UK: £2 each, Overseas: £3.50 each**
Society Merchandise

AUDIO

**BBC Radio Dramatisation of Dance.** Originally broadcast on BBC Radio 4 between 1979-82. 26 one-hour episodes. Single CD containing 26 MP3 files. *For copyright reasons available to Society members only.*

**UK & Overseas:** £11 (£3 + minimum £8 Donation)

POSTCARDS & POSTERS

**Society Postcard.** B&W postcard of Powell with his cat Trelawney. Pack of 5. Picture below. **UK:** £1.50, **Overseas:** £2.50

**Wallace Collection Poussin Postcard.** The Wallace Collection’s postcard of Poussin’s *A Dance to the Music of Time.* Pack of 5. Picture below. **UK:** £2.50, **Overseas:** £4

**Wallace Collection Poussin Poster.** The Wallace Collection’s ½ life-size poster of Poussin’s *A Dance to the Music of Time.* Sent in a poster tube. Picture below. **UK:** £7, **Overseas:** £9

ORDERING

The prices shown are the Society members’ prices as of July 2011 and are inclusive of postage and packing. Please note the different UK and overseas prices which reflect the additional cost of overseas postage. Non-members will be charged the overseas price shown plus postage & packing at cost.

Please send your order to:

**Anthony Powell Society Merchandise, Beckhouse Cottage, Kendal Road, Hellifield, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 4HS, UK**

*Phone:* +44 (0) 1729 851 836  
*Fax:* +44 (0) 20 8020 1483  
*Email:* merchandise@anthonypowell.org

Payment may be by cheque, Visa, Mastercard or PayPal. If paying by credit card please include the card number, expiry date, 3-digit secure code, and the billing name & address. Cheques must be payable to *Anthony Powell Society*, for UK funds and drawn on a UK bank. PayPal payment should be sent to secretary@anthonypowell.org.
# Membership Form

## Member Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of membership (please tick):</th>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Members</td>
<td>£22</td>
<td>£28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint Members</td>
<td>£33</td>
<td>£39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Members</td>
<td>£13</td>
<td>£19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>£100 minimum</td>
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☐ Buy 5 years membership for the price of 4 (any grade)

Subscriptions are due on 1 April annually. If joining on or after 1 January, membership includes following full subscription year.

### Full Name:

Address:

Postcode/Zip:

Country:

Email:

Gift membership is also available; please contact us for details.

## Payment Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of years membership being paid:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 / 2 / 3 / 5 years for price of 4</td>
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Total amount payable: £ _____

(No. of years x membership rate)

☐ I enclose a sterling cheque drawn on a UK bank. Please make cheques payable to The Anthony Powell Society.

☐ Please debit my Visa / MasterCard

Card No.:

Card Expiry:

3-Digit Security Code:

(Please give name & address of cardholder if different from the above.)

GIFT AID (delete if not applicable)

I am a UK taxpayer and I want all donations I’ve made since 6 April 2000 and all donations in the future to be Gift Aid until I notify you otherwise. You must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year that is at least equal to the amount of tax that the Society will reclaim on your donations for that tax year.

By completing this form I agree to the Society holding my information on computer.

Signed: Date:

Please send the completed form and payment to:

Anthony Powell Society Memberships, Beckhouse Cottage, Kendal Road, Hellifield, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 4HS, UK

Phone: +44 (0) 1729 851 836 Fax: +44 (0) 20 8020 1483

Email: membership@anthonypowell.org