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Curry Lunches
London & New York
Saturday 28 June
To commemorate the opening of The Kindly Ones and the start of WWI
Details on page 18

Summer Saturday Stroll Through Soho & Mayfair
In the Footsteps of Milly Andriadis and Charles Stringham
To be followed by lunch at Da Corradi in Shepherd Market
Saturday 14 June
Details on page 18
From the Secretary’s Desk

This issue of the Newsletter brings good news. First of all we welcome some new volunteers to the team.

Stephen Walker has agreed to take on both the role of Social Secretary and that of Newsletter and Journal Editor. I have edited this issue of the Newsletter (I already had most of the material) and will be gradually handing over editorial duties to Stephen in the coming months; I know he already has lots of good ideas for articles. I retain overall responsibility as the Society’s publisher.

Handover of the Social Secretary role will also be gradual. Stephen’s first challenge was to nominate a restaurant for the London Group Stonehurst Curry Lunch in June (see page 18). Some events (eg. the AGM) have to remain the preserve of the Hon. Secretary or Trustees, so Stephen’s role is essentially to organise two or three events each year, plus the London AP Birthday Lunch.

Robin Bynoe (who, like Stephen, will be known to London Pub Meet habitués) has volunteered to take on the role of Merchandise Secretary. With luck and a fair wind the merchandise role will have been handed over to Robin by the time you read this.

Robin Bynoe and Graham Page have also heroically put themselves forward as Trustees and we anticipate asking you to elect them formally at this year’s AGM in October.

The good news continues as we are pleased to be able to hold subscriptions and merchandise prices at the current levels despite the recent further escalation in UK postage rates, especially for overseas mail.
The story thus far: Commissario Brunetti has discovered an espionage plot from the Cold War involving characters in a novel by Anthony Powell. His unofficial investigation began with a purse he found in a Venetian canal in 1958 when he was a boy. It contained a letter from a Comrade Belkin to an Englishman known as Sir Kenneth Widmerpool regarding a contact between them in Venice that also involved an artist from the novel named Daniel Tokenhouse. At the end of Part I [Newsletter 54, Spring 2014] Signorina Elettra informed Brunetti that another character named Russell Gwinett was an undercover CIA agent on the trail of these spies.

After considering the information from Signorina Elettra, Brunetti went to his friend Alfio who had an art gallery/antique shop near Santa Maria Formosa. They had known each other since school days. As he walked across the campo he saw Alfio in the doorway and called out, “Ciao, Alfio.”

“Ciao, Guido. What brings you over here?”

“How do you remember an Englishman who was an artist and lived in Castello across from the Arsenale? Name of Daniel Tokenhouse. He lived alone and never sold many paintings so far as I know.”

“I remember a very old man who was an artist we called Signor Daniele but not the family name. He was certainly a foreigner and might have been English. He used to come around from time to time trying to sell a painting. They were, I’m sorry to say, unsaleable. Painted in a sort of primitive social realist style. He lived above a greengrocer shop.”

“Do you know what became of him?”

“Yes, it’s an interesting story. He died about 25-30 years ago. He was very old – might have lived to over 100 – and wasn’t able to get around much in his last few years. Couldn’t get up and down the stairs to his apartment. After he died, it turned out that he owned the building. He left a will, and the Commune and British Embassy tried for years to locate his heirs in England or anywhere else but never found any. A few years ago, all his property passed by default to the Commune of Venice.”

“What happened to it?”

“Well, they sold the building … to another foreigner, of course. Swiss, I think. The new owners threw out the greengrocer whose family had run a business there for generations and lived behind the shop. Gentrification has now spread even to Castello. It must have been a fairly rough
area when the Englishman moved there after the war.”

“What happened to the paintings?”

“Also an interesting story. The Commune shopped them around to all likely buyers, including me. But no one was interested. They were finally taken as a job lot by a new dealer who, after storing them for a while, opened up a gallery in Castello … part of the gentrification, I guess. The irony of it is, there is now a market for that stuff. The Russians, Bulgarians and so forth, who now flock here by the thousands, started buying up these paintings out of nostalgia. I even heard they had a retrospective exhibit of Signor Daniele’s works in St Petersburg a few years ago. They actually have a resale value in that part of the world.”

“Do you know whether there are any left?”

“I should think so. The apartment was stuffed with them when he died and they later found some more in the attics. Go ask at the gallery. It’s next to the Biennale entrance, behind that restaurant in the Giardini that sells the best negrones in that part of town.”

“Thanks, Alfio,” said Brunetti as he began to retrace his path through the campo on his way back to Castello.

As he walked along the riva, he heard the ancient street singer belting out her repertoire, ranging from Santa Lucia to Funiculi, Funicula. He always suspected that the singer and her troupe were in league with the army of pickpockets who lurked along the riva. The singer and her forebears (probably Neapolitans if their music was anything to go by) had been singing along there for as long as Brunetti could remember. She certainly wasn’t surviving on the basis of her singing talent alone. But no one ever discovered any linkage to organized crime.

Brunetti found the gallery he was looking for just as Alfio had described. He decided to stop in the bar of the restaurant next door, since Paola had an English faculty luncheon on Wednesdays and wasn’t on hand to prepare a proper meal at home. As a result he hadn’t eaten much and was now quite hungry. He ordered a glass of white wine (it was too early in the day for one of their negrones) and a plate of tramezzini. These, when they were set before him, appeared to be rather tired. He took one bite out of an artichoke and radicchio tramezzino and then tried an egg and anchovy. Both were covered in mayonnaise and both were stale. He pushed the plate away leaving the rest untried, and wondered what had happened to such old standards as prosciutto and cheese.

After finishing his glass of wine to wash down the little he had eaten of the disappointing snack, he went next door to the gallery. He was approached by an extremely attractive shop assistant who looked like she was somewhere south of 25. He asked for a catalogue of the Daniel Tokenhouse collection and was handed several sheets stapled together on which many of the entries had been stricken through. The entries were written in what looked to him like Russian as well as English, making the list longer than it need have been. After flipping through several pages, he located a painting with a name similar to that mentioned in what he had come to call “the Belkin letter”.

“Is this one still for sale?” he asked her. She looked at the catalogue entry and asked him to wait a few minutes while she checked. When she returned she said “I’m sorry but that painting has just been
sold to a Russian tourist who will return to pick it up tomorrow morning. We hadn’t yet crossed it off.”

“Has it been wrapped up?” asked Brunetti.

When told that it was still unwrapped, Brunetti asked if he might see it.

“That would be highly irregular as it now belongs to the purchaser,” said the sales assistant.

Brunetti then showed his warrant card and explained that the police had an interest in that painting, which he well knew was untrue. The sales assistant took him to the rear of the shop and showed him the painting in its frame lying on a work table.

“Could I examine it?” asked Brunetti.

“If you do so carefully,” she replied.

Brunetti examined the rear of the painting and saw that it was covered by a paper backing to protect the canvas. He noticed in the lower right corner that a bit of the backing had been disturbed.

“Could you please remove this,” asked Brunetti, pointing to the backing.

“On, no! I couldn’t do that without the permission of the owner,” she replied.

Brunetti smiled and continued, “Alora, Signorina! I could call a magistrate on my telefonino and get a court order,” knowing full well that he couldn’t. “It would be much easier if you simply removed that paper backing and let me see if what I’m looking for is in there. It has nothing to do with the painting itself. If we have to follow procedures, you lose a sale and I lose time in my investigation.”

The young shop assistant considered this, and then reluctantly but carefully started removing the paper backing. Brunetti watched intently and quickly saw in the lower right-hand corner an envelope taped to the back of the canvas.

“You can stop right there. I think I see what I want.” He removed the envelope, which was unaddressed and sealed, opened it and examined its contents. Satisfied that he had found what he was looking for, he
returned the painting in its frame and wished the shop assistant, “Buona sera.”

When he arrived in his office, Brunetti closed the door and opened the letter that was typed on a plain sheet of paper. It began “Dear Comrade Castersugar” (which he assumed was the codename for Kenneth Widmerpool):

Elements in your government are now aware of your activity on our behalf and the successful business dealings that you have facilitated. These elements are preparing to take action against you. This is largely due to the unfortunate behaviour of your wife. Upon your return to your homeland, our people will arrange the liquidation of your wife who has become extremely inconvenient. Do not intervene in these matters. You will be well rid of her and will not be incriminated in her death. It will be made to look like suicide. Our people are very good at these things.

You will become aware from the usual London rumormongers of imminent moves to expose you and punish you for your actions on our behalf. Do not be alarmed. Our people will assure that nothing comes of these threats by making suitable reciprocal arrangements with your government to let some of their agents off the hook. After matters have settled down, you will receive an offer of employment from an institution of higher learning in the USA. You will accept this and, once in place, you will receive further orders form us. Once your US mission has been completed (which may take several years) we will arrange for your return to a suitable academic position in your homeland.

Best regards, Your Friends in the East.

Brunetti became quite excited by what he now saw as the possibilities that these discoveries opened up for him. For years now he had been stuck in the position of Commissario with no chance for advancement. His wife was likewise faced with no opportunities to move up at the University. And his children were only just beginning to think of university after over 20 years in high school. With these messages and Signorina Elettra’s research, he could help the British police solve the mysterious death of Lady Widmerpool. It might also help explain Kenneth Widmerpool’s activities in England as well as the US. And he could draw a line under the disappearance of Dr Belkin. In addition, he could also contribute information to East European art historians who were beginning to take an interest in the works of Daniel Tokenhouse. He could not remember how long it had been since he had had a real murder to investigate, and he had never had an opportunity to crack a spy ring let alone become an art history informant. First, however, he had to discuss matters with Paola.

When he arrived back at the apartment, he was greeted by the smell of clams and garlic – one of his favourite meals again: pasta alla vongole. He sat down with the family and explained his discoveries: “Do you see what this means?” he asked them. “We can now move on. No more environmental and illegal immigrant cases in boring old Venice. This could mean the big time. I could be in spy novels, like James Bond and George Smiley. And I could also be interviewed by TV presenters offering programs on the forgotten artist Tokenhouse.” Looking at
Paola, he announced, “This could mean you could be head of the Department of English Literature somewhere, and the children could finally go on to university, maybe Oxford or Cambridge. And I can escape from the mediocrity of Vice Questore Patta.”

“But Guido,” she responded, “don’t you see what you’re doing? You are trying to become a cross-over character by moving yourself from one novel to another. You risk stranding us between two authors, possibly losing the imaginative powers of either. You certainly can’t get anywhere in an Anthony Powell novel. That series has ended and so has its author. The spy theme was never developed. It just petered out. It seems unlikely someone would write a sequel. Kenneth Widmerpool died in the last novel, and there weren’t any interesting characters left to write about. We, on the other hand, are having a good run with Ms Leon. We’ve been in over 20 novels and she shows no sign of running out of material. Our marriage has survived despite all your longings for Signorina Elettra, and our children have stayed out of trouble. We’ve been in one of the longest running and most popular German TV series in history, and the producers are clamouring for more. The espionage novel died with the Cold War. Now it’s all terrorists, not spies, and let’s face it, religious fanatics are inherently boring. Is catching terrorists really any more exciting than environmental bandits and illegal immigrants or their persecutors? I don’t think so. And since no one you catch ever goes to jail, what does it matter? It’s solving the mystery that’s the point. So far as becoming an art history informant, that’s hardly going to further your career in law enforcement.”

She handed him the bowl of clams and pasta. “But I was so looking forward to solving this mystery because of its literary and artistic sources,” he said, somewhat abashed by her persuasive defence of the status quo, “and I’m sure that if I could do more of these cultural cases, I would receive more serious attention from critics and scholars than I do in my present position.”

“Well, be that as it may,” she replied. “I think we all want to remain right here in Venice, in our nice apartment with a terrace overlooking the Grand Canal. How many other police Commissarios do you know who enjoy that kind of life? The children and I can make do with the University of Venice or Padua. If you want to be a literary detective on the side, why not go out and find the Aspern papers? Many scholars are confident they were not destroyed, or at least not all of them. That should keep you busy for a while without disrupting our lives. And it might also get me some attention from my fellow Henry James scholars.”

He thought for a moment and decided he rather liked that idea. “Where would you suggest that I start?” he asked her.

“With the book, of course.”

Jeff Manley writes: Donna Leon’s Commissario Brunetti novels are published in the UK by William Heinemann and in the US by Atlantic Monthly Press. The latest was released in April 2014; By Its Cover, number 23 in the series, involves the antiquarian book trade. The best in my opinion are the first, Death at La Fenice and number five, Acqua Alta, but it is not necessary to read them in order.
Anthony Powell and Carel Weight

By Robin Bynoe

Heroes
Hugh Massingberd wrote in *Daydream Believer* about the excitement and occasional embarrassment of having heroes. It struck a chord with me. I have always maintained to anyone who might be interested that I have four heroes from my lifetime: people who could do no wrong. There were others from the past (Goya, Haydn, Liszt, Trollope, Dracula, maybe Elizabeth Gaskell) but it was different if you couldn’t possibly have met them. Furthermore there were candidates from the present who might be “better” in some absolute sense but didn’t have the essential quality of inspiring affection as well as respect. Miles Davis, for instance, was not a nice man, and Philip K Dick was regretfully (as Lord Sugar says) mad. So my four heroes are two American musicians, Thelonious Monk and Morton Feldman, the painter Carel Weight and Anthony Powell. They are all men, and artists of some sort; that’s just the way it is.

I saw Monk twice: across some footlights but far, far away. Feldman I encountered once. Powell I never met; I attempted a fan letter but before posting it decided against on the grounds of style. Carel Weight was a friend.

Partly because they are both English (though Weight came perilously close to being interned as an infant enemy alien in the First War) and partly because whilst Weight loved music Powell was benevolent but cloth-eared, I mused about possible connection between those two rather than one involving the Americans. Does a comparison of two men based mainly on my personal enthusiasm for both have any more than general interest? Possibly not. It was however the sort of exercise undertaken by Jenkins, when in reflective mood: himself and Members for instance [*AW* 33]; Powell did it all the time: Jenkins and Barnby, Jenkins and Moreland, Members and Quiggin and above all Jenkins and his evil twin Widmerpool. If it’s good enough for them it’s good enough for me.

Questions of Upbringing
They were of the same generation, Powell born in 1905 and Weight in 1908. Both men were brought up in and around London, but there the similarity in their backgrounds ends. Powell’s was the peripatetic life of the family of a career soldier but at a more general level he progressed on an even keel to Eton and Oxford. Weight’s father worked in a bank and his mother was a fashionable...
chiropodist, reputedly attending to the respective extremities of King Edward VII and Sarah Bernhardt (who presumably, late in life, got a fifty per cent discount); neither parent was domestically minded and so Weight, an only child, was farmed out during the week to a family in Worlds End, then a place of considerable poverty, returning to middle-class life at the weekends. He told me that at one time he was the only child in his class with shoes. In Worlds End he had a surrogate mother whom he loved and an alternative Christian name, ‘Vic’, ‘Victor’ being his second Christian name and ‘Carel’ possibly thought rather German, in the context of the War. In due course, after the usual paternal opposition, he got into a second-string art school.

The sheer oddness and occasional terror of this upbringing fed into his work for the rest of his life, just as, in Powell’s great novel, *A Question of Upbringing* set the agenda for the remainder of Jenkins’ life. A connection occurred to me when I recently read Julian Maclaren-Ross’s memoirs of his childhood. Maclaren-Ross wrote cool, rather Powellian prose, which is no doubt one reason why Powell regarded him so highly, but his subject matter – the dim suburbs of London, family secrets, changes of name, something dangerous in the bushes and foreigners in the background – is much closer to Weight’s.

**Years of Discretion**

Both Powell and Weight achieved some note in the 1920s and 1930s. Powell was a useful soldier in the War, particularly latterly; Weight was an appallingly inept private in the Royal Engineers but redeemed himself when, being rescued by Kenneth Clark, he became an official war artist and painted many remarkable works in the wake of the occupying armies in Italy and Greece, which can now be seen at the Imperial War Museum. They both became established figures in the arts world from the 1950s until their deaths around the turn of the Millennium.

Weight was Professor of Painting at the Royal College of Art, where he presided benignly over the emergence of the kitchen sink school and then English pop art; he provided Bacon with a place to paint when in lowish water, and earlier, when Kokoschka and Schwitters had arrived battered from Nazi Europe, he gave them moral support and food parcels. He was also very active in the Royal Academy, of which he came within two votes of being elected President, and curated definitive exhibitions by Spencer and Lowry.

Powell had a much less public life but quietly built up a body of work that caused many to regard him as the preeminent English novelist of his era. Both were awarded the CBE and later became Companions of Honour: an award reserved for those who have contributed solidly and unflashily to their sphere of activity, whom the Queen actually likes and for whom a mere knighthood would be vulgar.

The reputations of both have languished a little since their deaths. Not all Powell’s novels are in print. The average age of the members of the Anthony Powell Society is, I dare say, edging up: Carel Weight does not even have a society.

They have, of course, fans in common. One is Lord Gowrie, who has written and spoken penetratingly about both men. It would be surprising if they did not also have friends in common, but I can find few. Osbert Lancaster was one, but he was
closer to Powell than Weight. The only one of significance that I have found is the painter Adrian Daintrey, who was a good friend of both men. Weight had told me of visiting Daintrey towards the end in his rooms in the Charterhouse. A lovely man but rather sordid, he said, latterly. Years later I read in the *Journals* of Powell’s doing the same, and possibly reaching the same conclusion. I lent my copy to Weight.

‘Do you know Anthony Powell?’ I said. ‘Ah,’ said Carel. ‘Our greatest living novelist,’ I said. ‘Mm,’ said Carel.

I took this to mean either that he did know Powell and that his dislike for the man lay too deep for words, or, more likely, that he had no idea whom I was talking about. I retrieved my copy of the *Journals* after his death. It was impossible to tell from the volume whether he had read it.

They did of course meet, after a fashion. In *HSH* Nick attends the Dinner preceding the opening of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Presumably that is drawn from life. Weight would have also have been there as a Member; he never missed it.

**Collages and Stories**

Powell was an amateur artist when young and made collages to decorate the less formal parts of his house. Weight wrote simply but penetratingly about art, not really with the “stiff formality of painters’ prose” [*CCR* 115], though one sees what Powell meant. I don’t think that literature was hugely important to him, unlike music, although he liked to take themes for his work from books: repeatedly from Shakespeare and the Bible; also the Brontës. He wasn’t a Christian, he said, in any formal sense, but the Bible was an awfully good source for stories. (He returned the compliment in the 1960s, illustrating several books in the five-volume Oxford Illustrated Old Testament.)

As regards stories it seems to me that there is a connection. Weight’s conversational style was anecdotal. If you asked him about someone he would tell you stories about them. You might, anticipating the tendency for modern art critics to reduce all discussion to the exchange of abstract nouns, ask about some movement or other and he would answer with a story or three about the individuals concerned. As a result, you ended knowing much more about the movement. Something of this can be seen in *Dance*. Widmerpool is a great one for abstract nouns; so are the assorted left-wingers of the 1930s; but the truth emerges from the stories that Jenkins, relentlessly undogmatic, tells us.

Weight is often described as a ‘literary painter’. When this epithet is delivered with a sneer it is usually preceded by the word ‘English’. This has to do with his habit of telling stories, but there is also the suggestion of incontinent indulgence of the imagination. Certainly, if half way through painting a tree he saw signs of its turning into a sea monster, he might well indulge them. This had its serious side. Men and women in shabby clothes would enact the great stories in south London gardens: the rape of Lucretia, the return from the dead. In his best work the universe positively shivers with hidden meaning. Our attention is constantly drawn to the skull beneath the skin.

Every time that one reads *Dance*, it appears to be predominantly ‘about’ something different. The most recent time that I reread it, what struck me most was
an underpinning to the whole thing that was not naturalistic: again, the skull beneath the skin. We all know the flight of fancy with the workmen and the brazier, with their echoes of the ancient world, which start and end the novel, but these musings are more frequent than I had remembered. If there is a literary parallel to draw Nick will draw it: sometimes that seems to be his main style of non-outcomes-driven conversation. Landscapes bring to mind Babylon [HSH 1] or ‘dark ancientness’ [MP 157]; a hotel recalls the Temple of Janus [AW 3]. Individuals reflect archetypes: to take just one example, the War Office in MP is inhabited by ‘ghouls’, ‘aggressive shades’, ‘unsleeping sages’ and ‘phantasms’, all amidst the ‘dust of eld’; It is sometimes almost as if the real action is taking place at some mythical level, with Nick’s immediate experiences mere reflections, like those in Plato’s cave.

I know that that is very far from the conventional view of Dance as naturalism sometimes amounting to a refusal, per Kingsley Amis, to ‘make things up’, but there it is: that’s how it came across this time.

But one can take a comparison of their work only so far.

One of Powell’s most effective techniques is to have Jenkins examine some state of affairs through the eyes of another character, either someone who had the benefit of being an eye witness or as a thought experiment in which Jenkins will set himself to imagine what Uncle Giles (usually) would have made of it, Giles himself being un-consulted, indeed dead. So let us imagine what each man would have made of the other’s work.

There was no sign that Weight knew Powell’s work. In addition to the exchange recorded above I can say that the books were not to be found in the house. I don’t think that he would have particularly liked them. His taste was for opera and romanticism. He was not much interested in the quiddity of the English class system. He would have liked the oddity, but he probably wouldn’t have persevered.

Maybe Powell shared the view current in his generation that English painting, particularly when figurative, was intrinsically second rate: that a bad French painter was always better than the best English one. I imagine that he might have got stuck on the charm of Weight’s work and not recognised the play with hackneyed material as the teasing that it was. Weight, beyond the charm, was a painter who took a hard, cold-blooded, almost mathematical pleasure (to coin a phrase) in the architecture of his paintings; Poussin, as for Powell, was his hero. But I suspect that Powell, like Weight, would not have persevered.

I am speculating here. Maybe people remember otherwise.
Well, what a fabulous title, to start with! This is the tenth book in the *Dance to the Music of Time* sequence, and I must say it is one of the ones I’ve enjoyed most.

The story starts just after the end of WWII, with Nick demobbed and trying to take up normal life again. He revisits his old university to do some research on the writer Robert Burton, and encounters an old friend in the form of Sillery, as well as meeting Ada Leintwardine, who will have quite a major part in this volume. Ada is notionally acting as Sillery’s secretary as he prepares to publish his diaries, although she has literary pretensions herself. In fact, much of the book focuses on literature and publishing, as we are treated to the reappearance of one of my favourite characters, Quiggin. He has set up a new publishing firm with Howard Craggs, naturally enough called Quiggin and Craggs. The firm is also starting up a literary magazine, with which Nick becomes involved, very topically entitled “Fission”. Also involved is Ada, plus behind the scenes the firm is being bankrolled by Rosie Manasch and Widmerpool. Add into the mix the fact that Lady Craggs is the former Gypsy Jones, and you have a recipe for quite a publishing operation with a lot of personal axes to grind!

There is sadness too, as Nick’s brother-in-law Erridge dies suddenly, and there is a spectacularly awkward funeral where the Widmerpools, Quiggin and the Craggs appear noisily. Erridge had been going to fund “Fission”, and so the group feel obliged to attend, but Pamela Widmerpool (née Flitton) is in her usual contentious form, and ends up being sick in a rare vase back at the house – which leads to a comic scene of Nick and co trying to clean the vase without breaking it.

I think one of the reasons I liked this book so much was because of the appearance of a new character, the wonderfully-named novelist X Trapnel (apparently based on writer Julian MacLaren-Ross). If I recall correctly, Trapnel has been mentioned before, though this is his debut proper. Trappy, as he is known, is a fabulous, larger-than-life figure whose antics dominate much of the book, and he has a rather dramatic effect on the lives of several characters! He’s got strong opinions and is happy to have a go at anyone, in particular hapless book reviewers:

> How everyone envies the rich quality of a reviewer’s life. All the things to which those Fleet Street Jesuses feel superior. Their universal knowledge, exquisite taste, idyllic loves, happy married life, optimism, scholarship, knowledge of the true meaning of life, freedom from sexual temptation, simplicity of heart, sympathy with the masses, compassion for the unfortunate, generosity – particularly the last, in welcoming with open arms every phoney who appears on the horizon. It’s not surprising that in the eyes of most reviewers a mere writer’s
experiences seem so often trivial, sordid, lacking in meaning.

The biggest effect he has is on that unlikely couple, Kenneth and Pamela Widmerpool. To be honest, you have to ask yourself what motivated either of them to marry the other in the first place; however, putting that aside for a moment, Pamela the predatory female is once again on the hunt, and this time not only does she captivate Trappy but she also leaves Widmerpool for him! This is mildly surprising, as she hasn’t left him yet despite having a succession of relationships, and swapping comfort for the squalor he lives in doesn’t seem quite her line. However, she doesn’t stay with him for that long before stomping back to Kenneth – but not before taking out her anger on poor Trappy’s work …

Unsurprisingly, the “Fission” journal collapses, and there is fall-out amongst the personnel. The book ends with Nick returning to his old school, scene of his first encounter with Widmerpool all those years (and books!) ago, to enrol his son. Here he runs into Le Bas, his old housemaster, now old and acting as librarian. Despite the passage of time and the loss of many of Nick’s friends and contacts during the war, some things are unchanging.

And the title? Not as you might expect a hostess describing a lovely residence, or indeed Trappy talking about some grubby lodgings! This is actually the nickname given to Bagshaw, an old acquaintance of Nick’s who is to be editor of “Fission”; the nickname being given in one of two rather scurrilous scenarios!

Bagshaw was for ever fascinated by revolutionary techniques, always prepared to explain everybody’s

standpoint, who was a party-member, fellow-traveller, crypto, trotskyist, anarchist, anarcho-syndicalist, every refinement of marxist theory, every subtle distinction within groups. The ebb and flow of subversive forces wafted the breath of life to him, even if he no longer believed in the beneficial qualities of that tide.

I’m actually starting to find it hard to review these books, because I’m running out of superlatives! Certainly, this is one of my favourites in the sequence so far (if not the favourite – I can’t say till I’ve read them all). I found the portrait of literary life in the late 1940s fascinating and entertaining, and the escapades of Pamela and Trappy were a hoot. The book captures brilliantly the post-war atmosphere of insecurity and austerity. The humour is lovely – Pamela’s behaviour shocking and funny at the same time.

X Trapnel is wonderfully portrayed, a person always acting a part, driven by conflicting forces and desires:

Trapnel wanted, among other things, to be a writer, a dandy, a lover, a comrade, an eccentric, a sage, a virtuoso, a good chap, a man of honour, a hard case, a spendthrift, an opportunist, a raisonneur; to be very rich, to be very poor, to possess a thousand mistresses, to win the heart of one love to whom he was ever faithful, to be on the best of terms with all men, to avenge savagely the lightest affront, to live to a hundred full of years and honour, to die young and unknown but recognized the following day as the most neglected genius of the age.
I did wonder whether Powell was putting his own thoughts about writing into Trapnel’s mouth, as he goes on to express doubts about realism vs artistry in novels:

*There are certain forms of human behaviour no actor can really play, no matter how good he is. It’s the same in life. Human beings aren’t subtle enough to play their part. That’s where art comes in.*

On the subject of the dreaded Pamela comes my one reservation about the book. I haven’t really had an issue with Powell’s portrayal of women up to this point in the sequence, accepting that he is perhaps a little old-fashioned but not finding anything too objectionable. However, Pamela is portrayed as a real Praying Mantis – an angry man-eater who plays with the opposite sex; they fall at her feet left, right and centre and yet she is mostly indifferent. But at the end of the story, after she has ditched Trappy, he reveals the root of her problem, in quite crude terms – she is frigid, and the constant partner-changing is presumably being portrayed as a search for satisfaction (though I would be more likely to suspect the cause as being insensitivity on the part of some of the men she associates with). I confess I found this somewhat clichéd, even allowing for the stereotypes about women and sexuality which might have circulated in the past. And frankly, I think the deep psychological issues she has (displayed in her violence towards Odo Stevens when she descends to physical aggression) can’t just be explained away by the fact that sex is failing her. She’s a lively and fascinating character and I found this attitude let me down a little.

However, putting this one item aside, *Books* was a fabulous read. The mysterious and often dramatic marriage of the Widmerpools; the vicissitudes of “Fission”; the eccentricities of Trappy; all this and much, much more made the book a real unputdownable. Roll on the next Powell!

Yes, the end is in sight as I finally edge towards the completion of my year-long read of the *Dance to the Music of Time* sequence. I’m still slightly behind but determined to finish the last two books before the end of December, and I’ve just finished the penultimate book, *Temporary Kings* – a very intriguing volume indeed!

The action has flashed forward to the late 1950s and in typical Powellesque style we are thrown into a new situation with new characters – namely a literary conference in Venice which Nick is attending, and spending time with Dr Emily Brightman. However, it is not long before the tentacles of the past start to insinuate themselves into the narrative of the present and we learn much about the death of X Trapnel and the end of the days of “Fission”.

Brightman introduces Nick to one of her fellow Americans, a strange young man called Russell Gwinnett, who wants to write a biography of Trapnel and is happy to meet someone who knew him and can perhaps introduce him to other Trappy contacts – particularly, of course, the infamous Pamela Widmerpool.

Yes, it doesn’t take long for the terrible twosome to rear their heads! Pamela has been linked to the death of a famous French author, Ferrand-Sénéschal, and in fairly dubious-sounding circumstances. And while the conference visits a local palace, the dreaded Lady Widmerpool turns up, in the company of an American film director, Louis Glober, known to Nick from a party many, many years ago.

Kenneth soon turns up and the couple are rowing again!

The action continues in Venice, with Nick visiting an old colleague, Tokenhouse, who has moved from publishing to painting. Also in Venice is Ada Leintwardine and initially Glober has designs on her, but soon turns his attentions to Pamela. Mysteriously, Widmerpool turns up at Tokenhouse’s, looking for a Dr Belkin, who many people seem to be trying to track down. Our Kenneth is behaving even more strangely than usual, though that could be as a result of being married to Pamela! There are certainly complications brewing, with Gwinnett initially pursuing Pamela, and then the roles reversing; Glober also pursuing her; and the presence in Venice of one of her old lovers, Odo Stevens who is now married to Rosie Manasch.

The action shifts back to England, and the past is still informing the present. “Books” Bagshaw is now living in domestic ‘bliss’ in a very dysfunctional sounding household, which gets even more so when Gwinnett lodges with them for a while and Pamela is spotted naked there one night. Nick attends an army reunion and runs into old colleagues – he finds out more about Stringham’s death, and there is much discussion of the Widmerpool affair – it isn’t enough that Pamela has created a scandal by being present at Ferrand-Sénéschal’s death, but now Widmerpool is accused of spying and there are rumours of his arrest. What a couple!

There is then a remarkable chapter centred around a charity concert party given by Odo and Rosie Stevens, where the orchestra is conducted by Moreland. Poor Hugh is in declining health, and this is not
helped by the shenanigans at the party. In attendance are a wide variety of characters; Glober; Polly Duport, Jean’s daughter, who is now an actress; Mrs Erdleigh (however old must she be now!); Jimmy Stripling, Audrey Maclintick and of course the Widmerpools. Matilda Donners, Moreland’s ex-wife is also present, and her (and Audrey’s) ex-lover Carolo appears as a stand-in violinist! But it is after the concert, as various attendees await for transport home, that the most dramatic scenes take place. Glober ends up punching Widmerpool, Mrs Erdleigh gives Pamela various mystical warnings of impending disaster and high emotions are evident everywhere. The aftermath, in the final short chapter which covers Moreland’s last months, is oblique, to say the least.

TK was certainly some read! It’s packed with characters and events, and in some ways I felt that Powell’s style had reverted a little – from becoming clearer and a bit more transparent, he’s moved back into a denser and more elliptical way of telling his tale. Some things I’m still unsure about and some things I had to go back and read over again. However, on to specifics!

Firstly, what a wonderful array of characters, old and new. Gwinnett is fascinating – apparently descended from one of American’s founding fathers, awkward and difficult to deal with, yet obviously driven by deep emotions – I wonder whether he will reappear in the final book or if this is all we will see of him? Dr Brightman and Glober are also great fun, and it was lovely to see so many old favourites turning up – Audrey, Matilda, Moreland and especially the wonderful Mrs Erdleigh. And how clever of Powell to do this – the past interspersing with the present and so many characters dancing back in to the story, which perhaps is a way of reflecting what happens as you age and the various elements of your life start to bleed into each other and connections not noticed before become clear.

TK is full of fascinating developments and there are several unanswered questions in the book: who is the mysterious and Godot-like Dr Belkin, whom everybody is waiting for but no-one (including ourselves) ever meets? What exactly has Widmerpool been up to? What on earth motivates Pamela – is it just a lot of unspecified deviance? I suppose this reflects the fact that life is full of things that are never resolved.

It was lovely to see a little more of Isobel featuring in this book (albeit still fleetingly) and I wish that Powell had felt able to develop her character a little more. There are poignant echoes of the war, and hints of the horrors of Japanese prisoner-of-war camps from Cheeseman, when we learn a little more about the fate of Stringham:

Cheeseman gave that answer perfectly composedly, but for a brief second, something scarcely measurable in time, there shot, like forked lightning, across his serious unornamental features that awful look, common to those who speak of that experience. I had seen it before.

And then of course there are the Widmerpools, that ghastly but fascinating pair. We’ve watched Kenneth develop gradually from the first story, and it seems that in TK his bull-headedness and arrogance is finally catching up with him. He’s over-reached himself, dabbling in espionage and a trial is narrowly averted.
His marriage to Pamela, based on goodness knows what, seems to be a sham, with both parties leading independent lives and Pamela leaving a trail of broken men behind her. Again, I wondered why they stayed together, but it is possible that Nick’s ruminations on his father may shed some light on the matter:

*People put up surprisingly well with irascibility, some even finding in it a spice to life otherwise humdrum. There is little evidence that the irascible, as a class, are friendless, and my father’s bursts of temper may, for certain acquaintances, have added to the excitement of knowing him.*

Perhaps Kenneth likes Pamela’s anger, or maybe their marriage thrives on something more deviant. Their relationship is bizarre, the events that surround them unbelievable, but as Nick comments:

*After passing the half-century, one unavoidable conclusion is that many things seeming incredible on starting out are, in fact, by no means to be located in an area beyond belief. The “Widmerpool Case” fell into that category.*

And here is a SPOILER ALERT – any discussion of Pamela inevitably leads on to her demise in the last chapter, which I shall have to try to read again to see what it is I missed! Pamela overdoses in circumstances that are hinted at so obscurely as to be almost indistinct. I think she may have died in bed with Gwinnett, but the motivation is clouded. If I had a criticism to make, it would be that I ended this book (and the sequence of books which featured her) not really understanding her character. The others in the book develop throughout, we get to grips with their peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, and end up with a real sense of their personalities. But Pamela is a mystery, and remains so to the end. There is much hinting and discussion of perversity and voyeurism – a running theme through the book, from the ceiling in the palace to Magnus Donner’s old tendencies and possibly Widmerpool’s current ones – but not enough depth or motivation for my liking. I *wanted* to understand Pamela, to know what made her such an angry, bitter and damaged person, but I never felt I learned this. Powell is a writer of some subtlety, which means his work can sometimes be difficult and that he requires close reading, but I feel here that he is too oblique.

If this sounds a little negative, it shouldn’t – I was gripped by Powell’s narrative again, and the chapter where he gradually unfolds the post-party fall-out with its attendant revelations was masterly, like watching a train wreck about to happen which you couldn’t stop. I loved the clever way he intertwined past and present, reflecting the way real life is. And the Venice sequences were great fun – I know some people on the LT read-along weren’t so keen on Nick being away from England, but I thought it was a hoot the way that Nick couldn’t get away from his past or his acquaintances even when he was abroad! This was a great read, full of marvellous events and set pieces, and I can’t wait for the final volume!

**Summer Saturday Stroll Through Soho & Mayfair**

*In the Footsteps of Milly Andriadis and Charles Stringham*

**Saturday 14 June 2014**

1030 for 1100 hrs

**NOTE CHANGE OF **

**VENUE **

*Meet: Salisbury Pub*

90 St Martin’s Lane, London WC2

(very close to Leicester Square Underground)

The walk will depart from the Salisbury at 1100 hrs sharp.

The route, which is about 1 mile, will meander along Gerrard Street in Soho, through St James’s and Mayfair, ending in Shepherd Market.

Once in Shepherd Market we will lunch at Da Corradi, a small, friendly, family-run Italian restaurant. Lunch is booked for 1300 hrs.

No need to book for the walk, but if you wish to join the lunch party please let us know so we can book a group table.

There is no charge for the walk itself (although donations in the Secretary’s top hat will be welcomed) and lunch will be pay on the day.

Non members will be welcome.

For further details and booking please contact Ivan Hutnik, ivanhutnik@gmail.com, or the Hon. Secretary (address, page 2).

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**NE USA Group**

**Summer Curry Luncheon**

*Saturday 28 June 2014*  

*Weston, CT, USA*

Commemorate the 100th anniversary on this day of the luncheon in *Dance* where Billson, naked, gives notice and Uncle Giles reports the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, signaling the start of WWI.

_The Mute with the Bowstring stood at the threshold of the door._

Full details from, and RSVPs to, Eileen Kaufman, newglobe14@gmail.com, and Ed Bock, eabock@earthlink.net.

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**London Group**

**Stonehurst Curry Lunch**

*Saturday 28 June 2014*  

1200 for 1230 hrs

**Malabar Junction**

107 Great Russell Street, London, WC1

In emulation of our American allies the London group will also commemorate the opening chapter of *The Kindly Ones* and the start of the war to end all wars.

The Malabar Junction, which specialises in South Indian cuisine, is very close to the British Museum.

This is a pay on the day event but please tell us if you intend to come so we can ensure a large enough table.

Non members will be welcome.

For further details and booking contact the Hon. Secretary (address, page 2).
**London Quarterly Pub Meets**

Saturday 9 August 2014
Saturday 1 November 2014

The Audley
41-43 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? Non-members always welcome.
Further details from the Hon. Secretary.

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**Annual General Meeting**

Notice is hereby given that the 14th Annual General Meeting of the Anthony Powell Society will be held on Saturday 25 October 2014 at 1400 hrs in the Conference Room of St James’s Church, Piccadilly, London W1

The formal AGM business will be followed by refreshments and a talk “Architecture in Dance” by Harry Mount

Members only at the formal AGM; all welcome for the talk at about 1500 hrs

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**Nominations** for four Trustee posts which are vacant this year must reach the Hon. Secretary by Friday 8 August 2014. 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.

The elected Trustees must not be barred from being trustees under English law and a majority of the Trustees must be ordinarily resident in England and Wales.

**Motions** for discussion at the AGM must also reach the Hon. Secretary by Friday 8 August 2014. 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 Monday 20 October 2014.

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**London AP Birthday Lunch**

Saturday 6 December 2014
1200 for 1230 hrs
Central London venue tbc
Welcome to New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members:
Beverly Bell, New York, USA
Andrew Constantine, Esher
Barbara Dunlap, New York, USA
Dominic Johnson, London
Mark Leclercq, London
Prof. Graham Parry, Leeds
Richard Rosenbaum, Portland, USA
Kenneth Rosenberger, Atlanta, USA
Eileen Soderstrom, Chicago, USA
Alison Walker, Richmond
Andrew Way, Westgate

Subscriptions
Subscriptions are due annually on 1 April (for rates see back page). Reminders are sent during March to those whose membership is about to expire.

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

As we will be using email wherever possible, please keep a look-out for emails from the Society.

Subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, address on page 2.

Local Group Contacts

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

New York & NE USA Group
Area: New York & NE USA
Contacts: Nick Birns
Email: nicbirns@aol.com

Great Lakes Group
Area: Chicago area, USA
Contact: Joanne Edmonds
Email: jedmonds@bsu.edu

Nordic 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.

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

Newsletter & Journal Editor,
Anthony Powell Society
76 Ennismore Avenue
Greenford, UB6 0JW, UK
editor@anthonypowell.org

We are always especially grateful for reports or notices of Powell-related events and relevant photographs.
SITUATIONS VACANT

The Society is looking to recruit a volunteer for the following role:

**Membership Secretary**

Responsibilities will include:
- Manage the Society’s membership register
- Receive and account for subscription payments, and bank moneys
- Correspond with members and potential members on membership matters.

Candidates will have:
- Ability to manage a PC-based membership database
- Ability to accurately account for all incoming moneys
- Familiarity with MS Office
- Ability to deal with Society matters in a timely way.

Because of the necessity for access to UK banks, the successful candidate will need to be based in the UK.

Potential candidates should contact the Hon. Secretary.

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SITUATIONS VACANT

**Independent Examiner**

We require a volunteer of professional standing as Independent Examiner for our accounts. A knowledge of finance is essential but you do not have to be a qualified accountant.

As this is a legally required role the you will need to be based in the UK.

Potential candidates should contact the Hon. Treasurer, Derek Miles, miles@twisdon.fsnet.co.uk.

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SITUATIONS VACANT

The Society is looking to recruit a volunteer for the following role:

**Webmaster**

Responsibilities will include:
- Management and development of the Society’s website and online shop in coordination with the Hon. Secretary and Merchandise Secretary.
- Management and moderation of the APLIST email discussion list in coordination with the Hon. Secretary.

Candidates will have:
- Current webpage management skills
- Ability to write clear, concise text for online presentation
- Ability to be able to apply content updates promptly when required.

This role is not geography-dependent and the successful candidate could be located anywhere in the world.

Potential candidates should contact the Hon. Secretary.

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**McTigger Book Search**

Struggling to find AP volumes? Why not ask us to hunt for you? Just tell us what you want and how much you want to pay

Terms: Cost + p&p + small fee
Private sale; not associated with AP Soc.

Contact
Keith & Noreen Marshall
kcm@cix.co.uk
Venice Conference Announcement

Arrangements have now been finalised for the Venice event and bookings are being accepted

Thursday 9 - Saturday 11 October 2014

Fondazione Giorgio Cini
Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore

Programme - Friday and Saturday
★ Two mornings of conference sessions with internationally recognized experts on Anthony Powell and his period.
★ Tour of Fondazione Giorgio Cini, including the re-creation of Veronese’s Wedding at Cana.
★ Visit to Palazzo Labia to see the Tiepolo frescoes, and the setting for the ‘Gyges and Candaules’ scene in Temporary Kings.
★ Prosecco reception at Palazzo Labia.
★ Conference dinner at Do Forni Restaurant.
★ Two or three nights accommodation at Vittore Branca Centre, attached to and part of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini.

Pricing - all above included
• Members (single) €325 per person for 2 nights; €395 per person for 3 nights
• Members (double) €305 per person for 2 nights; €365 per person for 3 nights
• Extra nights accommodation may be arranged directly with the Study Centre (subject to availability) at €70 euros per person per night (single) or €60 euros per person per night (double).
• Please note: delegates are responsible for their travel costs to, from and in Venice.

Availability and Reservation
• Bookings are limited to 60 people.
• Double rooms subject to availability.
• Please contact the Hon. Secretary (address on page 2) for the latest availability.

We are looking forward to seeing you in Venice!
Thirteen of us from the London and SE England group met at The Audley on Saturday 10 May, one of those typically British spring days of mixed weather – sunny, gusty and showery. We found that the pub’s menu had become shorter and plainer: more redolent of traditional pub grub such as roast beef and pies, though as ever the fish and chips were the star item. The serving dishes (and portions) were fashionably large while the tables remain typically small, leading to much clinking of elbows as well as glasses, and seating in our favourite central alcove was a little cosy for all of us.

We also sampled a box of left-overs – some books which had not sold at the 2013 Conference Book Sale, that is – everything from early modern education to true life crime. Other aspects of books and reading under discussion included the short stories of Alan Bennett; children’s literature; Anthony Powell’s Barnard Letters; fantasy crime novels; and loss of reading patience as one gets older, in particular not reading to the end of a press article which is unlikely to contain anything of real interest.

As both the outgoing and the incoming Editors of the Newsletter were present (Stephen Holden observing that being called Stephen and having a beard was clearly a requirement), there was a good deal of talk about the Newsletter and writing in general. Stephen Walker is convinced that everyone has at least one article in them and was busy persuading potential contributors; as an experienced writer, Stephen Holden is accustomed to crafting articles on a wide variety of subjects, from animal husbandry to books and fashion.

We also talked of events, notably Venice; the next conference; Ivan’s forthcoming wedding; and the 2014 Summer Walk (see page 18) which he has created, and which he was off to try out in the rain afterwards. A trip which Keith and Noreen had taken down the River Thames from London to Southend-on-Sea on the preserved paddle-steamer Waverley aroused a certain amount of enthusiasm, too, so it may be that a water-borne outing will find its way into the programme of future events. Food and wine, London elections, London clubland and Welsh ancestry also featured prominently in discussions.

This is an academic study of how several British writers reacted to and assessed the US film industry specifically, and Southern Californian culture (if that’s the right word) generally, during the years straddling WWII. As the subtitle suggests, some were on short visits and others stayed on for more extended lengths of time; some went voluntarily while others, out of necessity or perceived necessity.

Those who made brief visits and then wrote about them include Anthony Powell, JB Priestley, John Fowles and Evelyn Waugh. Others who made more frequent or extended visits or even settled in Los Angeles include Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, PG Wodehouse and Dodie Smith. Except for Isherwood and Fowles, most had passed through or passed on well before 1965 when the period under review closes.

Most of the book covers the period from 1935 to 1950. The extension beyond the immediate post war period would appear designed to include some of Isherwood’s later works as well as Fowles, although the latter’s experience is little mentioned. Powell’s visit took place in Summer 1937 and lasted about 2 months. Waugh’s visit was in February-March 1947 and may have been a bit shorter than Powell’s. Isherwood’s tenure was the longest, and he could fairly be said to have become a Californian. Wodehouse remained in the USA until his death in 1975 but lived mostly on Long Island, apparently visiting Hollywood when his presence was required there or it was too cold on the East Coast. Dodie Smith, more playwright than novelist, moved to the US in WWII because of her husband’s status as a conscientious objector and would thus join Isherwood and Wodehouse in the exile category. She eventually returned to the UK.

Conspicuously absent is Jessica Mitford. While she may not qualify as a novelist and lived in Oakland, not Los Angeles, she wrote extensively about the US funeral industry in much the same satiric vein as Waugh. Also missing is Graham Greene, who visited Hollywood at least twice in connection with film productions of his work: in 1948 (The Third Man) and again in 1952 (The End of the Affair) [Norman Sherry, The Life of Graham Greene, Volume II: 1939-55, pp. 253-54, 442-43]. Greene also wrote about the US (or at least about Americans) as well as about American films, in at least one case, giving rise to a notorious libel case, as noted below.

The first part of the book explains how these writers applied British sensitivities to such things as climate (all seem to notice the glare in Los Angeles), harsh landscape, exotic vegetation, discordant architecture, lack of any historical context and confusion of a commercial product (motion pictures) with culture. Professor Colletta summarizes their assessment of Hollywood as “there being no there there,” borrowing Gertrude Stein’s description of her hometown of Oakland. Some of the
novelists went to work for the studios as scriptwriters: Isherwood, Huxley, Wodehouse and Dodie Smith. AP tried but failed to find such a job. Others (eg. Waugh) sought unsuccessfully to sell their work (Brideshead Revisited) to the studios or cooperated in translating their work (The Collector) into film (Fowles).

Powell, along with Fowles and Dodie Smith, and unlike the others Colletta considers, wrote no book length treatment (fiction or non-fiction) of his travels in the US. AP gives us a chapter in his memoirs (Faces, Chapter III, “North Palm Drive”);** Fowles, a section of his novel Daniel Martin as well as entries in his journals; and Smith, some memoirs.

Waugh wrote both a novella (The Loved One) and several articles, letters and diary entries about Hollywood; Huxley, the novel After Many a Summer Dies the Swan (1939); Isherwood, a novel (A Single Man) as well as diary entries, letters and articles; and Priestley, a travel book (Midnight on the Desert (1937)).

Wodehouse left a number of stories and novels involving Hollywood. These latter writers, not surprisingly, receive far more coverage than Powell, Fowles and Smith.

Powell’s work is cited most frequently in the early chapters that describe the reactions of British writers to the film industry and to the architecture, landscape and population of Los Angeles. His meeting with F Scott Fitzgerald is mentioned twice, most prominently in the chapter on celebrity, which is something Fitzgerald had largely ceased to possess by the time Powell met with him. That chapter also deals with the assessments by British writers of Charlie Chaplin. Here they encountered not a shallow celebrity but a genius who had enjoyed a great deal of success. Although Colletta says [125] that “nearly every British writer that went to Hollywood met [Chaplin],” Powell was one of the exceptions. Perhaps he wasn’t deemed sufficiently important in 1937 for a VIP visit. But Powell did meet several movie figures, notably including C Aubrey Smith, described by Colletta as “the prototype English gentleman of the Old School” [129] and the one who was parodied by Waugh in the character of Sir Ambrose Abercrombie in The Loved One.

Another film genius who emerged in this period but who gets less attention in this book is Walt Disney. It tends to be

** If there is a paperback edition of Colletta’s book, those page references in the endnotes citing volume 2 of Powell’s memoirs (Messengers) should cite volume 3 (Faces) which is where the corresponding quoted material appears. The pages and quotations are correct, but the wrong volume seems to have been inadvertently cited.
forgotten that before the “Disneylandization” of his reputation, Disney pioneered high-quality, original animated feature films, beginning with Snow White. He did this without the apparent support of the major studios and struggled financially with projects that were extremely costly, time-consuming and slow to return the large investments that were necessary. Powell doesn’t mention meeting with Disney, but Waugh describes in his Diaries (675) a visit to the Disney studios in 1947 and he pays homage to both Disney and Chaplin as “the two artists of the place”. Waugh, on the other hand, missed out on an opportunity to meet Fitzgerald who had died 6 years before his visit.

While he was in Hollywood, Powell wrote two articles for the London periodical Night and Day in a column entitled “A Reporter in Hollywood”. This gig was arranged by Graham Greene who was one of the editors. The article mentioned in this book [129-30] is Powell’s report on the screening of a film about the Spanish Civil War at which Ernest Hemingway (who had contributed to the script of the film) gave a talk. The other was a report of a Negro stage production of Macbeth at the Mayan Theater. This was sponsored by the Federal Theater Project, a New Deal agency [see also John Powell n Secret Harmonies # 4/5, 67]. These articles are both reproduced in Christopher Hawtree’s edition of collected material from the magazine published in 1985. Powell also mentions meeting the child film star Shirley Temple who contributed to the demise of Night and Day a few months after Powell’s visit when her studio, 20th Century Fox, sued the magazine for allegedly libelous references to her in a review by Graham Greene of the film Wee Willie Winkie.

The concluding chapter describes what Prof. Colletta calls “British Hollywood Fiction”. This is based primarily on the fictional writings of Waugh, Huxley and Wodehouse, with brief look-ins from Fowles and Isherwood. Powell never wrote a “Hollywood novel” but did include a character in his last two Dance novels who had a Hollywood filmmaking career – Lewis Glober; and both Polly Duport and Mona Templer had aspirations to film stardom. Nick Jenkins and Chips Lovell both worked at the British subsidiary of a Hollywood studio (as did AP) and there are several scenes in which they discuss filmmaking with their fellow employees. Powell’s fictional works might, therefore, have qualified for a brief mention of the sort accorded to Daniel Martin and A Single Man.
The book is well written and thoroughly researched. Powell’s brief Hollywood sojourn is accurately depicted and fairly placed into appropriate contexts. I read the book in three or four sittings and, when I got to the end, I was wishing for more. An epilogue summarizing what happened to the British Hollywood novel after 1965 would have made interesting reading. Or better yet, a sequel covering the years 1966 to the present, if that’s not too much to hope for. One would like very much to hear what Prof. Colletta has to say, for example, about Martin Amis’s 1981 novel *Money*. It is mostly set in New York and London but the plot (to the extent there is one) revolves around the financing of a movie to be produced in Hollywood by the narrator, John Self. The movie industry had remade itself by the time Amis writes, and the studios’ domination had ended. Moreover, Amis was keenly aware of his countrymen’s reactions to Hollywood’s earlier iteration. This is demonstrated, if by nothing else, by the appearance in *Money* of a character named Juanita del Pablo, a pornographic film starlet. A character with the same name features in Waugh’s *The Loved One* as a film star who must be physically remade to fit the needs of the studio.

Some useful mention might also be made of the recent BBC/Showtime TV series *Episodes* (2011-13), a satiric comedy primarily devoted to showing how two successful British TV film writers react to and are affected by present-day Hollywood. An epilogue or sequel could appropriately be brought to a conclusion with this description of Los Angeles from *On the Edge*, a 1999 novel about California’s consciousness expansion industry by British writer Edward St Aubyn (whose satirical novels are very much in the tradition of Powell and Waugh):

> One day the whole world was going to look like Los Angeles, he decided, not a city or the absence of a city, but ruined countryside, with houses squeezed between highways which never tired of whispering the lie that it was more interesting to go somewhere than be here. The entire westward move of American history seemed to have piled up on the beach, and the descendants of wagon-crazed pioneers, refusing to accept completely the restraint of the world’s widest ocean, frantically patrolled the edge of the West, like lemmings in therapy.

[Idem, 77-78; see also Newsletter 47, Summer 2012]

The book is well produced and printed. But the number of typographical errors is unacceptable for a book of this quality and price. As happens all too often, the proofing seems to have done by a computer spell-check program that can spot misspellings and, in some cases, faulty grammar but not missing or misused words. To take just one example, on one page there is a reference to an Eaton Ramblers tie while, in a later reference, the tie is referred to correctly as that of the Eton Ramblers. A computer will not necessarily catch that type of error, whereas a competent proofreader would have. At the price charged for a book of this type and complexity, the publisher should have splashed out for a professional proofreader, and not to have done so is unfair to the reader as well as to the author, whose careful research and drafting is everywhere evident.

Lisa Colletta will be speaking at the Venice Conference in October.
From Mr Colin Donald

A quietly sensational new book has prompted me to speculate on how much AP was aware of the life and career of the Glasgow ship owner and art collector Sir William Burrell (1861-1958).

Visitors to Glasgow will know of the Burrell Collection, located in a fabulous modern building in Pollok Country Park on the outskirts of the city, one of Britain’s great museums. It displays the extraordinary 8000-piece collection, ranging from ancient Chinese ceramics, to medieval tapestries, to northern European wood carvings, to 16th century English furniture, to paintings by Boudin, Corot and Degas.

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James Tucker writes to us on 5 April reporting a review in *Private Eye*:

*Review of The Days of Anna Madrigal by Maupin says it’s odd that two novelists who give us the roman fleuve are or were fussy about pronunciation of their surnames, AP famously ‘Pole not Powell’ and, apparently, Maupin, ‘More-Pin not Moe-Pan’. The resemblance doesn’t stretch to style, though. Maupin has a description of a tarpaulin ‘bulging scrotally’ over some items; not a Dance sort of phrase.*

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James Tucker writes again on 15 April:

What’s Become of Waring is mentioned in *Private Eye*’s unfriendly review of *Lost for Words* by Edward St Aubyn (are there ever any friendly reviews in *PI*?). The writer says that an “elegant little novel” dealing, like What’s Become of Waring, with “book-trade romps” was part of a tradition “sometimes extending to outright farce” which no longer works very well.

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With DJ Taylor at the Emirates Festival of Literature in Dubai, James Kidd talks to him about writing and talking about books in *The National*, 6 March 2014. *Inter alia* Taylor says:

*I believe there’s a literary festival going on every week somewhere in England, let alone abroad. It has become a kind of spectator sport in a way that it didn’t used to be. I find it very amusing to imagine what would have happened 50 years ago if a publicity girl had rung up Evelyn Waugh or Anthony Powell and asked them to read at a festival. Anthony Powell wouldn’t even sign a book for anyone he hadn’t met.*

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*Sorceresses, more than most, are safer allowed their professional amour propre.*

Anthony Powell, *Temporary Kings*
Anthony Powell Society Newsletter #55

Jeff Manley writes to us:

The Daily Telegraph on 15 April published a list of what it claims are the “Top 20 British Novels of All Time”. The title was later amended to include Irish novels as well after reams of protests for ignoring the nationality of writers such as James Joyce, Flann O’Brien and John Banville. Dance (all volumes) is among those selected. Here’s what they had to say:

“A fantastically ambitious and panoramic sequence detailing the lives and loves of various interlocking mostly upper middleclass characters across the 20th century, it continues to draw in fresh enthusiasts.”

Fair enough for a one sentence summary. There is no explanation of the selection criteria which is to say the least somewhat eccentric. It excludes writers such as Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene and Kingsley Amis while including Zadie Smith, Hilary Mantel and John Banville. Martin Amis’s Money is among the also rans but Lucky Jim is a no show.

DJ Taylor writes in the Guardian on 10 May 2014 about what happens to authors’ literary reputations after their death. And the Society comes in for an unexpected appreciative mention and link to the website:

The fate of Leonard, Lytton and Virginia [the “Bloomsberries”] suggests that the real desideratum, when it comes toreserving your place in the pantheon, is an influential sponsor to plead your case. Sometimes this can be an energetic literary pressure group – Anthony Powell’s reputation is kept green by the Anthony Powell Society, which organises conferences and lobbies for reissues; more often, a small but committed band of enthusiasts, quite often admiring fellow writers, labours to keep the work in print. If the rackety Soho boulevardier Julian Maclaren-Ross (1912-1964) or the novelist-cum-playwright Patrick Hamilton (1904-1962) still survive it is because there are enough well-placed fans eager to write prefaces to new editions and celebrate their publication with rapt encomia. Occasionally these lobbying campaigns can produce spectacular results.

Spotted by Bill Denton. ■
James Collins writes the “Private Lives” column in the New York Times on Sunday 16 March 2014 under the title “Let Me Count the Days”:

Nothing says mortality like the realization that you won’t live long enough to use up your office supplies …

How many of my books have I already read? That’s a delicate subject. I hold that by simply owning a book I deserve about 90 percent of the credit I would get if I also read it, but not everyone looks at things that way. I am a little shocked to discover that on any given shelf, I seem to have read, according to the conventional standard, only about one-third of the books.

That leaves around 3,300 unread books … If I read two books a month, it would take me 137 years to read those unread books. So there we have it: absent the discovery that those long-lived, underfed mice thrive equally well on a diet of vodka and peanut M&Ms, I am not going to live for 137 more years, and therefore I do not have enough time left to read the books I own. Death will intervene (thank God) well before I get around to the later volumes of A Dance to the Music of Time.

Spotted by Jonathan Kooperstein.

———

Writing in the Guardian of 18 April 2014 about the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, Andrew Brown concludes with a surprising comparison with Dance:

This mild man is oddly reminiscent of General Conyers, a character created by the rather more conventional Etonian Anthony Powell: “He was a man who gave the impression, rightly or wrongly, that he would stop at nothing. If he decided to kill you, he would kill you; if he thought it sufficient to knock you down, he would knock you down: if a mere reprimand was all required, he would confine himself to a reprimand. In addition to this, he patently maintained a good-humoured, well-mannered awareness of the inherent failings of human nature: the ultimate futility of all human effort.”

Spotted by Michael Barber and Julian Miller.

———

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury
In *Herald Scotland* on 1 March 2014, Alan Taylor writes that “Fiction within fiction is a library in itself”:

*Browsing through my book shelves I alighted on Anthony Powell’s roman fleuve Dance To The Music of Time and the volume entitled Books Do Furnish a Room. Like his creator, Powell’s narrator, Nicholas Jenkins, is a novelist who, taking a breather from writing fiction, is working on a book about Richard Burton, author of The Anatomy of Melancholy. To make ends meet, Jenkins reviews books, mentioning en passant several that he has in the pipeline: A Stockbroker In Sandals, Slow on the Feather, Moss off a Rolling Stone...

One of the key characters in Books Do Furnish A Room is the novelist X Trapnel, who was based on Julian Maclaren-Ross ... Trapnel is the author of Camel Ride to the Tomb which, we are told, “had all the marks of having been written by a man who found difficulty in getting on with the rest of the world.” This sounds very much like Maclaren-Ross to whom Powell devoted several pages in his memoirs.

“Good-night, Guy … good-night, Stephen … good-night, John … good-night, Ronnie … good-night, George.”

‘Exactly,’ said Stringham, “good-night, Eddie … good-night, Simon … good-night, Robin …” and so on and so forth until they had all said good-night to each other collectively and individually, and shuffled off together, arm-in-arm.”

“You were at an all-boys’ public school. Did they do that? My school was co-ed. It may well have been different.”

“No,” I said.

I introduced Dance, as we Powellites call it, in turn to my father. He died before he could read the last three volumes, but he bought and read The Military Philosophers before I did. He rang me up. ‘Extraordinary things happen at the end,’ he said. ‘I won’t spoil it for you.’ ■
In the TLS, 14 March 2014, Lachlan MacKinnon reviews *Tarantula’s Web: John Hayward, TS Eliot and their Circle* by John Smart:

*I think John Smart’s purpose in introducing Great-uncle Abraham is to suggest that Hayward’s less likeable side was an effect of rude health rather than disability; that Hayward was courageous in dealing with illness is the overwhelming testimony of those who knew him. Indeed, Hayward arouses pity at only one moment, and that is in his dealings with TS Eliot. Hayward was an undergraduate when he first met the poet; by 1928 he was reviewing for the Criterion. In 1933 Hayward moved into a flat in Bina Gardens, South Kensington, where he entertained on a remarkable scale. Among the guests Smart lists we find Auden, Anthony Powell, Lady Ottoline Morrell, James Thurber, Arthur Waley, the Marx Brothers, Virginia Woolf, Larry Adler, Dilys Powell, William Empson, the Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld and Bruce Richmond, then Editor of this paper. “Je n’oublierai jamais Bina Gardens”, Paul Valéry told Cyril Connolly. Most important, though, were the Sunday evenings principally devoted to three guests, Sir Geoffrey Faber, Frank Morley and Eliot, three directors of the recently established firm of Faber & Faber.*

*Spotted by Jeanne Reed.*

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DJ Taylor, this time in the *Independent* on 16 February 2014, writes about the relentless rise of long-distance commuting.

*London used to be populated by its workers. Not any more. The number of people travelling long distances to work is rising as relentlessly as the capital’s house prices …*

*The first chapters of practically every literary autobiography set in the early years of the 20th century reveal just how (relatively) easy it was to both work in central London and to live somewhere within walking distance. … The twentysomething Anthony Powell, employed at a publishers in Covent Garden, was able to live in Mayfair. This kind of existence would be impossible now. Powell, on his publisher’s salary, would either find himself sharing a house with five other people in somewhere like Clapham or having to resort to some impossibly far-off suburb.*
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Collected papers from sixth biennial conference at the Naval & Military Club, London.
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Jeff Manley et al.; Dance Music.
150-page guide to the musical references in Dance; compiled in the style of Spurling’s Handbook.
UK: £7, Overseas: £10.50

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Collected papers from the (third, 2005) centenary conference at The Wallace Collection, London.
UK: £11, Overseas: £17

UK: £7, Overseas: £13

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Writing about Anthony Powell.
Talks given at the 2004 AGM by George Lilley, Michael Barber and Nick Birns; introduced by Christine Berberich.
UK: £4, Overseas: £7

The Master and The Congressman.
40-page monograph by John Monagan describing his meetings with Powell.
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OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Violet Powell; A Stone in the Shade.
Fourth & final volume of Lady Violet’s autobiography covering mostly the 1960s. Includes many of Lady Violet’s coloured travel sketches. Hardback.
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Fascinating letters between Powell and his friend and first American publisher Robert Vanderbilt.
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Anthony Powell, Caledonia, A Fragment.
The 2011 Greville Press reprint of this rare Powell spoof. Now publicly available in its own right for the first time.
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American High School student essays from John’s two teachings of Dance at Philips Academy. Many fresh and perceptive insights.
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