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A Letter from the Editor

The big story is the York Conference. It was a coup – see Michael Henle’s article (page 4). Many thanks to John and Christine Roe for leading it and to the AP Society team for the backup.

In this issue instead of the usual report card we convey the Conference Experience with contributions from people who spoke and from those who listened. Two are by first timers. Richard Jenkins describes attending a conference for the first time without knowing anybody and Steve Loveman relives the torment and ecstasy of preparing and delivering his first conference talk.

As an alternative Prue Raper describes her real-life Uncle Giles (page 25) and Simon Barnes analyses, in a lightly worn post-structuralist way, the interplay of Dance and Dad’s Army (page 28). And we have AP’s granddaughter, Georgia Powell, on the tricky pronunciation of Powell (page 18).

But overcoats still seem to obsess AP Society members as Alison Walker eruditely demonstrates.

Finally we are introducing a new occasional feature “Overheard at Sillery’s Tea Party”. They took place in Oxford and we shall be taking tea there on Saturday 3 September 2016 and learning about AP and his Oxford Chums. Don’t miss it.

Stephen Walker
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From the Secretary’s Desk

Well what can I say, other than to echo Stephen's words? The conference in York was a triumph. I lost count of the number of people who said to me that it was our best conference yet. And so it was.

So many people contributed – in large or small ways – to the success. Prof. John Roe, of course, must take pride of place for putting the whole event together. Without John it just would not have happened! While I worried about logistics, Noreen masterminded and ran the conference desk, helped by Prue Raper and Christine Roe. Christine was a tower of strength: not just helping Noreen with the desk, but also directing delegates, liaising with caterers etc. Without Noreen, Christine and Prue nothing would have worked on the day. John Roe, Stephen and Alison Walker and Graham Parry deftly chaired the plenary sessions, while Graham Page played “bad cop” in keeping the speakers to time. And I’m sure I’ve missed others!

We must also thank the University of York, and their English Department, who facilitated our access to King’s Manor, provided some excellent lunches and made a financial contribution.

That leaves the most important groups, without whom it would not have been an event at all. So thank you to all our keynote speakers; everyone who contributed a paper or to a discussion; and everyone who came. You all made the conference into a memorable event.

Keith Marshall
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York Conference: The Experience

By Richard Jenkins

I first encountered *A Question of Upbringing* over fifty years ago and have remained a keen reader of *Dance* and the Works. However, I have not been an active member of the Society. I decided on retirement to come to the Conference.

I had failed in my preliminary task of reading *Dance* again. Would the Conference shatter my illusions? Revisiting the *Alexandria Quartet* had led to a depressing examination of one’s youthful discernment.

In fact, the conference experience was enjoyable and educative.

Christine Roe pointed me to the lift and proved to be an ever helpful presence.

Upstairs I found the Secretariat in welcoming control. I knew nobody but it did not take long to feel part of the group.

The balance between the enthusiasts and the academic experts was achieved. The surprise was how much both groups appeared to identify with the characters, as if they really existed. An example was the identification of Stringham as a “rebel”.

It was intriguing to consider Didier Girard’s “Shock”, identifying Jenkins – and AP – as a voyeur. He, the author, is preoccupied with those who live by the Will and exercise power at all levels. Could one go further?

Kate Bennett’s talk on John Aubrey was equally stimulating. To one who first saw Aubrey as a “Famous Gossip” there was much more to get to grips with in the future.

There was much to think about in “Finding Powell’s Voice”. It reminded me that my legal judgments contained many a colon and semi-colon and hanging participles. The Voice is so distinctive.

At the delightful Conference Dinner, as well organised as every other event, and the excellent trip to Castle Howard, one found oneself trying to place others in the context of a Powellian narrative.

One of my shoes squeaked loudly on every surface. Was this my “overcoat”?

After all, my name is Jenkins; my brother is Nick Jenkins. Resemblances end there. ■
York Conference: An Appreciation
By Michael Henle

The 2016 Conference of the Anthony Powell Society in York was another masterpiece of organization and arrangement, equal to, if not better than, the outstanding Venice conference. The facilities were excellent (and historical: Charles I slept there); the schedule was crowded, interesting, and varied; the banquet was the best of all the conferences I’ve attended.

Let me personally express particular appreciation for the contributions to the program that were scandalous and/or outrageous. High points in this category were:

- Steve Loveman on Adultery (What do Powell and Fitzgerald’s narrators make of it?)
- Didier Girard on the Marquis de Sade (What Powell makes of him.)
- Yuexi Liu on Exterior Modernists (Whatever this is, Powell is one!)
- Nick Birns on Horatio and Hamlet (Nick is akin to both), and
- Robin Bynoe on Sexy Commas (Whatever these may be, Powell uses them apparently. I want to learn how to use them myself.)

By far the most sensational presence at the conference was the French connection: Didier Girard of the University Francois-Rabelais. In his keynote (Shocking! Powell on Sade), Didier played agent provocateur, lobbing grenade after grenade at his dumbfounded audience, suggesting things I dare not write in this space. (See the published proceedings for details.)

In the question and answer session that followed, someone, reflecting the general astonishment, asked if he understood Didier correctly and that he [Didier] on purpose intended (here I paraphrase) to jolt the AP conferees out of their self-congratulatory atmosphere of AP adulation and hagiography. Didier replied, in effect, you understand me perfectly.

Needless to say, Prof. Girard effortlessly hijacked the ensuing Proust Panel Discussion. There was nothing the other participants (Nick Birns and myself) or anyone else in the room could do to prevent him from dominating that. I can’t wait to see what bombshells turn up in his submitted paper.

Nick Birns discussed “Jenkins as Horatio as Hamlet”
Hands up anyone who disagrees that it is hard to like Nick Jenkins.
The rafters of the Conference venue rang with affectionate references to characters in *Dance*; even the monstrous Widmerpool was spoken of with fondness, or at least with a horror that was entirely pleasurable. Nick Jenkins was a notable exception. His coldness and unresponsiveness were criticized, as was his repeated failure to arrest Widmerpool’s destructive progress. Puzzled dissatisfaction was rife.
The puzzlement is reasonable: being the centre of the work, we expect Nick to interest us, indeed charm us, at least as much as the other characters do. It was stated in his defence that if he had confronted Widmerpool the dance would have come abruptly to an end. Initially obscuring the puzzle, this line of argument revealed the solution to me on the staircase, I mean on my way back to the hotel after the last talk.

AP’s attitude to his characters is non-judgmental. All well and good – some of the greatest writers major in non-judgmental. However, AP’s use of Nick as first-person narrator to embody this attitude means that Nick can be little more than eyes and ears through which we experience the other characters. By trying to combine in Nick the intimacy and immediacy of a first-person narrator with a third-person narrator’s impartiality and distance, AP makes Nick unsatisfactory. If Nick warmed up, took part in the action and generally strode into situations with heavy boots on, as most first-person narrators do, he would no longer be unattractively distant and passive, but would also be unable to maintain an impartial stance. He cannot take on Widmerpool because by doing so he would become morally active. The dance could well go on, but it could no longer be the meditative pavane made possible by Nick’s stasis.

To have one staircase moment at a conference is unfortunate. To have two … My second was in response to what was said about AP’s view of Anthony Trollope. A life-long fan of AT, I nevertheless accept that there is no point in trying to persuade someone with hostile views to like him. However, I do have a bone to pick with AP and failed to take the opportunity to do so during the relevant discussion. It seems that AP considered AT couldn’t do women. Incomprehensible. AT had many weaknesses (eg. his stodgy style, so different from AP’s economy & elegance). His women are one of his strengths. He wrote about them with sympathy and understanding, and his women characters are adult human beings (unlike those of Dickens, for example). Indeed, they are more convincingly individual and independent characters than AP’s women, who in the main are shown as significant only as prizes/tormentors of men.

PS. An invisibly, intangibly tiny prize for the first reader to correctly identify in this piece all of the following:
• a hanging participle
• a participle correctly used
• two or more examples of the seductive power of punctuation (commas and full-stops don’t count)
• (what some people consider to be) a grammatical solecism (think pointy ears)
• any other grammatical errors unintended and unnoticed by me (if none, write none). ■
My grammar school dropped English Literature from the syllabus after age 13 to allow us to concentrate on our core O-level subjects. I would not therefore have rashly told John Roe that I would if need be make up the numbers of AP conference papers if I had seriously expected to have to deliver. Wiser heads subsequently told me never to show weakness to a conference organiser.

I adopted the theme of adultery for my paper because I wanted to talk about Bob Duport who, as just one of many adulterers in Dance, I always felt got a raw deal from Nick Jenkins. And because the conference theme required me to engage in some literary comparisons I re-read The Great Gatsby where I found a narrator, also Nick, similar and dissimilar to Jenkins, and a plot revolving around twin adulteries.

To prepare the paper I traced Jenkins’ relationship with Duport with the aid of Hilary Spurling’s invaluable handbook, Invitation to the Dance, and realised for the first time how subtly Powell develops Jenkins’ changing attitude to Duport, revealed in a number of brief, well-separated passages. I found unreliability and self-deception in Fitzgerald’s narrator, Carraway. And I tried to write all this down, relating one bit to another and drawing conclusions. I had a paper.

John Roe made two valuable contributions – adultery is not a male preserve and you’ve only got 20 minutes. So I added women to the paper, lengthening it, and thought about how to compress it. This compression necessitated a rewrite in the course of which I realised that the long paper was structurally defective – ideas and material all over the place. I needed an argument the audience could follow. And changing the structure gave me new ideas so my talk turned out to be quite different from my paper. In fact I had arrived at a destination not expected when I set out, an experience I recalled having been told was common among PhD students.

I printed my talk in a large typeface and read it aloud to myself several times and to my wife once. She understood it, which was encouraging though since she had also read the extended paper she had the benefit of a flying start. It was going to take about ten minutes, which I hoped was not short-changing the audience.

On the day I was conscious that those who preceded me clearly knew much more
about Powell than I did. I also realised that not only was this my first venture in Eng.Lit. but also, apart from contributions to weddings and funerals, my first public speaking for some twenty years. Though nervous I was eager to get it over with (a Jenkins-like reflection perhaps). At the same time I was encouraged by the attentive and sympathetic reception given to previous speakers and hoped for a *Pride and Prejudice* response ‘Bingley was ready, Georgiana was *eager*, and *Darcy* determined to be *pleased*.’

In the event I enjoyed delivering my talk, wanted to get my ideas over to the audience and lost my place only once. People were interested enough to ask questions and I was able to get on with enjoying the rest of the conference, only then fully realising it had been a bit of a strain and therefore what a sheltered life I now lead.

When I got home I rewrote my long paper to conform to my short paper and submitted it for publication. On the basis of this experience I would encourage anyone to give it a shot.

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*Vanbrugh Magnificence: Castle Howard*
“That was the best conference that we’ve ever had.” This was overheard several times. The conference was a triumph. A dazzlingly diverse display of topics and styles in an efficient modern auditorium set in mediaeval splendour.

It all started with John Roe’s introduction drawing attention to the breaking news that the Archbishop of Canterbury has learned, thanks to a DNA test, that his father was not the man that he had thought. It was not the alcoholic fraud Gavin Welby but a bounder called Sir Anthony Montague-Browne who had been Churchill’s private secretary.

What could be more Powellian? As Brian Appleyard in the Sunday Times printed on the day after the conference said

“It is the world of Anthony Powell’s 12 -volume novel cycle Dance to the Music of Time in which the variously damaged, privileged characters move through lives of infidelity and concealment all lost in a world the war and the aftermath have made terrifying and uncertain. People have become opaque.

To help us understand this opacity we had four keynote speakers: John Bowen explaining that AP in his criticism engages more with minor English writers such as Surtees than with major ones such as Trollope or Dickens; Didier Girard teasing us with suggestions of AP’s dark side in his talk on de Sade; Kate Bennett reminding us of the importance of AP for Aubrey and Aubrey for AP; and Nick Birns explaining how Nick Jenkins morphs from Horatio into Hamlet.

The undercard was not to be outdone with bravura performances from Colin Donald on how AP uses WS’s techniques, Bruce Fleming on reordering time, Steve Loveman on adultery, David Martin Jones on how the 17th century concepts of maxim, character and anxiety influenced AP’s depiction of character, Yuexi Liu on talk fiction, Peter Kislinger on parody and Robin Bynoe on the seductive power of punctuation. Ivan Hutnik on the tension between AP’s conventional rural life and the urban bohemian one he writes about. Also Michael Henle, as a mathematician, proved that AP’s Widmerpool and MP’s Marcel are the same quantity. George Ramsden showed us 10 things that you didn’t know you can do with wrapping paper. Finally the AP Repertory Company gave readings from Dance with a thespic verve that Simon Russell-Beale might have envied.

As entertaining as the talks were so was the chatter between them.

“Didier is too French to be French. I think he was born in Basingstoke.”

“We don’t teach Dance to undergraduates. It’s very long and a bit right wing. So is Virginia Woolf. But she’s a better writer.”

“That’s a bold step bringing Strangers and Brothers here.”

“York isn’t London is it?”

“Where’s that nice young man who wrote X Trapnel’s Profiles in String?”

“Never have I seen a Battenberg of such munificence.”

And finally “Are your trousers asparagus?”

“No – unripened green olives.”

You see what you missed by not being there. ■
Professor Didier Girard’s paper became the talk of the Conference. It was entitled *Shocking! Powell on Sade* and it proposed that there were sympathies, not understood hitherto, between Powell and de Sade. We await, of course, the small print when the paper is published. This is partly because some of the detailed argument went over the heads of many, who were concentrating on the pictorial slides that accompanied the talk, and partly because Professor Girard was talking at a level of principle rather than close textual analysis. Nevertheless some initial thoughts present themselves.

The most scandalous suggestion was that Powell might himself have indulged in some of the activities depicted in Professor Girard’s slides. The short answer to that is that we don’t know. Hilary Spurling may know, and, if she does, she may tell us in her biography or she may not. It is probably not very interesting in any case. Anyone may find themselves attending an orgy after misconstruing the detail on an invitation card. If one does, one hopes to behave with dignity and if possible to amuse. It becomes biographically interesting only if one makes the same mistake again and again.

The second suggestion was that Powell was interested in sexual cruelty (to sum up the whole Sadean approach to human relations with a speciously neat phrase). It was claimed in the corridors of King’s Manor that this was an idea that was shocking to Powellians: that we were a dovecote which Professor Girard was fluttering. That suggestion underrates Powellians. We are not doves. Like Lady Warminster, Powell regards himself as able to address any aspect of human relations. He expects us to follow him and he relies on our sensitivity if he feels periphrasis to be in order. Many writers slam the door on great swathes of experience and the members of their Societies sigh with relief. Neither Powell nor we are like that.

Powell clearly was interested in sexual cruelty. When Nick is young he talks endlessly with Barnby about what can be...
done with what he sometimes calls ‘women’, and what ‘women’ will do with you. He analyses with Moreland the technical differences between the approaches to seduction of Don Juan and Casanova. He is fascinated by the cruelty and voyeurism with which Donners treats women and the way some, principally Matilda, fight back. He records with detached fascination how Peter Templar dismantles the sanity of his second wife.

The final quarter of the novel leaves us in no doubt about Nick’s interest in sexual cruelty. The humiliations of Widmerpool by Pamela and then by Murtlock might have been dreamt up by de Sade. The death of Pamela is not something that many novelists would have wanted to engage with, and it is not surprising that Powell used his full battery of distancing effects to avoid telling the brutal facts directly. There are many passages in Dance that one has to reread to work out what on earth is going on, and this is about the most opaque of them all.

All this is no surprise. Good writers cast a cold eye on what they see and hold their gaze when lesser mortals look away. That is one reason why they are good writers – and why they are often not very comfortable people.

The last question seems to me to be this. Powell and de Sade were both interested to a greater or lesser extent in sexual cruelty: but is there any more to it than that? I think here that the differences are greater than the similarities, and the main factor, as so often, is the matter of humour – because without humour in writing there is no context and there is no sympathy. Professor Girard gamely made the case that de Sade did have a sense of humour. He described it if I remember rightly as ‘dry’, which so often, when used as an adjective qualifying ‘humour’, is a synonym for ‘no’. Anyone who sat through Yukio Mishima’s play Mme de Sade a few years ago in the West End will remember the deadening effect – entirely unrelieved by the surprising presence on stage of Dame Judi Dench – of the sum of the two great men’s dry humour. Anyone who ever attempted, as a schoolboy perhaps, a salacious treat from reading 120 Days of Sodom will recall the awful relentlessness of it, the total lack of self-awareness, the entire absence of anything interesting to say except what, with which and to whom. And that is why Powell is different. He always has interesting and funny things to tell us, even about sexual obsessives.

Barnby and Moreland, both egoists in their way, would have been useless at an orgy. Barnby would have been too busy theorising and Moreland would have been incapacitated with embarrassment. Nick though – Powell too, I suspect – would have hung out; he would have faded into the background as he did at Milly Andriadis’s party. He would have noticed the absurdities and the horrors and he would have brought them back for us, filtering the horrors through narrative distortions if he thought we needed it. To that extent Professor Girard is absolutely right.

And if Nick were required to take part, one can imagine his doing so with an expression of disdainful amusement, quite unlike the desperation on the faces of the naked Frenchmen in Professor Girard’s slides.
The visit to Castle Howard on the Sunday after the conference was both a treat and an occasion to consider the use of actual great houses as models for literary ones. I cannot avoid making comparison with Blenheim, near where I live and which I know well. Not because “The Family” are always inviting me around (a privilege which could plausibly have been AP’s) but because in the days when I ran EFL courses I regularly took my groups there. Whatever the nationality, age range, or level of cultural attainment, they were always delighted with the palace, its grounds and vistas. I, however, got rather bored with it – I went there too often.

How pleasant, therefore, to visit a stately pile highly comparable; but, of course, with considerable differences. First the similarities. Both great houses date from the early eighteenth century and are by Vanbrugh (1664-1726); both justify the famous squib aimed at him:

*Lie heavy on him, Earth! For he
Laid many heavy loads on thee!*

Both are set in sweeping vistas and have artificial lakes; but Castle Howard’s is more sweeping. The large expanse of Yorkshire Dales countryside on all sides bespeaks a location more isolated than Blenheim’s. The latter has Woodstock lying sycophantically at its gates: a Cotswold – more or less – country town which seems too pretty to be real (like Broadway in Worcestershire): a version of the genre as romanticised, even mocked up, by a Hollywood producer. There is nothing of the sort round Castle Howard. Indeed the existing village was moved to create the lake (as at Nuneham Courtenay, Blenheim’s fellow Oxfordshire pile).

Incidentally this practice actually benefited the rustic inhabitants who were provided with state-of-the-art model cottages in compensation for their razed hovels.

But the present village is not visible from the house, and the miles of open countryside reinforce the dominance of this lone great edifice over a landscape which in early spring also contextualises it with an appropriate touch of northern bleakness. The nearest major centre, from where we travelled, is York, twenty miles away, so fortifying its isolation. Oxford is only seven miles away from Blenheim/ Woodstock (and there are largish villages in between). For tourists they come in a job lot with Oxford. Blenheim is in danger of suburbanisation; Castle Howard is definitely not.

Early spring was stealing through this countryside when we arrived on a stimulatingly breezy Sunday morning: early, despite its being 10 April, because spring seems later in the North. Crowds, hosts of golden daffodils flowed everywhere in the grounds: fresh blooms, whereas down south they were already dying down.

The general aspect of the grounds and exterior of the house was already familiar to me as to millions of others as it had stood in for *Brideshead* twice: in the TV adaptation of 1981, and in the far inferior film version of 2007 – and the management does not let you forget that. In stark contrast to Blenheim, Castle Howard was more than half destroyed by a disastrous fire – in 1940, but nothing to do with the war. It was a fire so disastrous that, given the cash/resource-strapped character of wartime and the ensuing
decade, it was mooted that the whole house should be abandoned. Instead heroic and largely successful efforts have been made to restore it as far as possible; but this is such a huge task it is not completed yet. For the recent film, however, several still-gutted rooms at the top of the house were mocked up as pseudo aristocratic interiors and left that way for the delectation of sightseers. The impression is a touch surreal: a mock-up of an aristocratic setting in a genuinely aristocratic setting. Further embellishments include photographic records of the process of both adaptations and of their leading actors, as well as bequests of some of their general paraphernalia.

Incidentally, Brideshead was based on the Worcestershire seat of the Lygon family – near Broadway – and seems itself to be in Wiltshire. So why was this stately home, admittedly of the right period, far to the north in Yorkshire chosen for the role? Downton Abbey, just departed from our screens, was set in Yorkshire, but Highclere in Berkshire landed the part; and Cotswold Bampton in Oxfordshire stood in for its gritty Yorkshire home village, largely because of their relative proximity to London which cut down costs. Were TV budgets in 1980/81 more generous? Castle Howard would have made the ideal Downton had not its reprised role as Brideshead precluded that. But this owes more to its authentic setting than to the nature of the house itself. All these actual great houses, Castle Howard, Blenheim, Highclere, can stand in interchangeably for any fictional equivalent: illustrative of the integration across the realm of the great aristocracy by the early eighteenth century in cultural tastes as otherwise. This apex of Society was the only part of it which did not still exhibit significant regional variation.

As for the building itself, which was started in 1699, and its treasures, I cannot do better than quote from Wikipedia:

Vanbrugh’s design evolved into a Baroque structure with two symmetrical wings projecting to either side of a north-south axis. The crowning central dome was added to the design at a late stage, after building had begun. Construction began at the east end, with the East Wing constructed from 1701-03, the east end of the Garden Front from 1701-06, the Central Block (including dome) from 1703-06, and the west end of the Garden Front from 1707-09. All are exuberantly decorated in Baroque style, with coronets, cherubs, urns and cyphers, with Roman Doric pilasters on the north
The great grounds were laid out according to the best principles of the age. Embellishment and extensions continued throughout the eighteenth century: significant features were still being added as late as 1811. The interior was filled with family portraits and china from Meissen and other approved porcelain makers of the period.

Then in 1940 came the fire. To quote once more:

_The dome, the central hall, the dining room and the state rooms on the east side were entirely destroyed._

_Paintings depicting the Fall of Phaeton by Antonio Pellegrini were also damaged. In total, twenty pictures (including two Tintorettos and several valuable mirrors) were lost. The fire took the Malton and York Fire Brigades eight hours to bring under control._

In 1960-61 the dome was rebuilt. This is the most distinctive feature of Vanbrugh’s design: unusual in a great house as opposed to a cathedral of the period. Nothing could resurrect the original great paintings and frescoes destroyed; but in the following couple of years, Pellegrini’s _Fall of Phaeton_ was _recreated_ on the underside of the dome. The driving force behind the restoration was the then owner, George Howard, Baron Howard of Henderskelfe (1920–1984), who ended up as Chairman of Governors of the BBC appointed by Mrs Thatcher in 1980 despite her trumpeted preference for self-made millionaires over the hereditary – and inheriting – aristocracy. But Howard had inherited a ruin, which he had never, as a younger son, expected, but his elder brothers were killed in the war. Having accepted the challenge of restoration, he faced the near impossible task of raising sufficient money, in which he largely succeeded, opening the house to the public as early as 1952, although it must have been still a ruin then, and letting it out to film companies as early as 1961, long before the first _Brideshead_. He modernised exploitation of the vast agricultural estate. Hence if he was not a true Thatcherian self-made man; he was at least a self-remade man analogous to his own stately pile.

Incidentally he and his heirs are of a cadet branch of the Earls of Carlisle, themselves one branch among others of the ancient ramifying Howard family. Castle Howard was left to this junior branch about one hundred years ago. Four of our group earnestly insisted on having the correct _filiation_ explained by an impressive senior functionary; but I have forgotten it again now.

What did I like most? The great ornate fireplace below the Dome, the Dome itself, the Long Gallery with its variety of exhibits, and the chapel: the latter (1870-75) is pre-Raphaelite, and although Anglican, could have been one of the models for that installed by Lord Marchmain to please his bride when he converted to Catholicism on marriage. I also liked the rural Gainsborough, _The Girl with Pigs_: a predictable appreciation, but the subject makes a change from much eighteenth-century painting, indeed from much of Gainsborough. I appreciated the great grounds and vistas with their scattered classical edifices, and the lunch: I had beef from the estate and felt guilty afterwards that it was too good and elaborate a meal; but then I always feel like that after eating well. ■
Over the course of the six years covered by the three volumes of Journals AP read nearly every one of Shakespeare’s 36 surviving plays, many more than once. There are only five omissions, two of them, Two Noble Kinsmen and Henry VIII unsurprising given these plays’ partial attribution to “The Bard”, as AP often called him.

Two others, Julius Caesar and The Winter’s Tale are more surprising, and one would certainly like to have had his views on these. The Taming of the Shrew “admittedly lesser Shakespeare” according to him, is not mentioned in the Journals but is insightfully referred to in both the Notebook and Memoirs as an example of how The Bard’s creativity would not allow him to waste even inferior material, in this case using the Petruchio-Katherine set up to conduct a kind of Freudian experiment into what might happen if two neurotic narcissists ever got together.

AP has his likes and dislikes of course, though it appears that these were not indelibly fixed. Of King John for example he writes in January 1988:

_What a good play it is. The language holds up throughout. I had forgotten its excellence._

Four years later in June 1992 he is describing it as “A curious play that does not quite come off”.

Plays that he particularly enjoys include: Antony and Cleopatra, As You Like It, Troilus and Cressida, the Henry IV plays, Coriolanus, Hamlet and Macbeth.

Plays that leave him colder include Much Ado About Nothing (“The only play of Shakespeare that I actively dislike”), All’s Well That Ends Well, Twelfth Night, Measure for Measure, The Taming of the Shrew, Timon of Athens and The Merchant of Venice (though he seems from a couple of references to have a soft spot for Shylock’s daughter Jessica).

What angle does he approach the plays from? It might be described as self-consciously that of a fellow-professional and craftsman rather than as an academic critic.

We are given a strong feeling from various asides that Powell had little time for the “hair splitting of meaning” of university Eng.Lit., not just because he explicitly disdains the magisterial but sometimes opaque pronouncements of FR Leavis and his ilk, but because he takes opportunities to decry “academic heavy weather”, his term, for example, for fashionable theories of Jaques “fashionable melancholy” in As You Like It.

Perhaps the most idiosyncratically Powellite response is the one that affects to assume – as a kind of implied tribute to Shakespeare’s powers of invention – that the world of the play in question is real, and therefore the aspects that remain unresolved or mysterious are worth speculating further about, just as you would speculate or gossip about real acquaintances.

Note that the predominant strain of these comments is interrogative. Most of the insights are posed – a tad whimsically – as
untheoretical, no-nonsense questions and observations about real-life situations. Like the poet-critic William Empson, of whom Powell was an admirer, he is a stout defender of the much-maligned “How many children had Lady MacBeth?” school of criticism, because he thought such questions were important to understanding the action of the plays. Here follows a selection in that strain:

Were the world of the plays not so “real”, the obvious answer to the following questions would be “because Shakespeare didn’t resolve it or didn’t tell us, stupid”.

Why was Hamlet himself so popular with the common people? One would think him not a popular type. Perhaps it was just from dislike of Claudius whom one might have supposed as popular. Perhaps Claudius was recognized as a great faux bonhomme.

I have come to the conclusion that [the Elsinore watch] were a kind of Yeoman of the Guard, all more or less gents. You could get short-term Territorial commission during the long vac from Wittenberg. Parents probably rather encouraged their sons to take these (like going into the Yeomanry), to keep them out of mischief, perhaps also to supply a bit of pocket money. This might account for the shocking discipline, sentries saying how fed up they were, and glad their relief had turned up.

What an awful family the Lear’s were, Cordelia in her way as bad as any of them. What happened to Lear’s badly behaved Knights whom Regan and Goneril jibbed at putting up? Were those who survived the campaign with the French absorbed into Albany’s retainers? Or just took to freelancing?

How did Lady Macbeth rub her hands together while carrying a taper, which so far as I know could not be put down. I suppose it could be done rather lightly.

What were Miranda’s reactions when she first saw a woman, grasped that she had competitors? Did she still think how beauteous was mankind? Did they leave Caliban on the island, more or less in command, or was he taken back and shown at fairs?

I am struck by the fact that all the action [of The Tempest] takes place within three hours, so that Ferdinand’s labours gathering wood could not have been so dreadfully onerous, as he was later spending time playing chess. Bringing in wood seems to have been the chief problem on the island (fires for cooking, generating power for Prospero’s spells?) because Caliban was also chiefly employed in that manner.

It was obviously necessary to sack Cassio from Othello’s staff, if he could not carry his drink, and no business whatsoever of Desdemona’s unless she had indeed developed a fancy for him. Desdemona is usually played as a helpless innocent, but even from doubts expressed at time of her elopement, evidently she had some reputation for inconstancy, or at least light affections.

It is not at all obvious what advantage as a ‘pander’ Pandarus is getting from [the situation in Troilus And Cressida]. Was Troilus actually paying him? Cressida then says she has been protesting she does not like
Troilus ‘in the way women do when in love with a man’, goes to bed with him, but when she has to return to the Greek lines (being only a hostage with Trojans) she immediately starts up affair with Diomedes. It might well be argued that is just the way women do behave, but such hardly seems the argument of the play.

Had Mariana [who was jilted by Angelo] inherited the Moated Grange as heiress and lived there alone? Did Angelo suppose that property more valuable than in fact it was when he first became engaged to her?

Those of us who rate Powell the critic on a par with Powell the novelist enjoy the fact that AP is prepared to be quite critical of Shakespeare who, as mentioned before, he believed to have his off days like every other writer. Powell suggests in his memoirs that – by implication like Dickens and Balzac, but unlike himself – Shakespeare had a sufficiently powerful creative genius not to feel the need to be a perfectionist as well. By implication he ranks himself with Flaubert and Joyce as writers whose deficiency of inventiveness requires them at least to aspire to perfection.

In the light of this distinction, we can read it as a compliment of sorts, that Powell actively seems to enjoy pointing out perceived flaws in the work, and indeed there is a slight sense of affectionate relish in the passages where Powell considers that Shakespeare nods, sometimes even nodding so badly as to prevent the entire play from “coming off” to use that favourite AP expression.

These include the fact that Bertram, the hero of the “curiously unpleasant play” All’s Well that Ends Well,

Apart from good looks, reputation of having fought well against the Florentines, does not possess a redeeming feature. To his other unpleasantness he adds specific statement that he does not like cats.

Or the fact that the “awful” Duke’s marrying Isabella was a wholly unsatisfactory resolution to Measure for Measure.

[There is] not the smallest indication that Isabella wanted to marry him at the end. She was obviously a beautiful girl of the highest principles, who could undoubtedly have married had she so wished, in fact decided to become a nun of the strictest order.

Of As You Like It he writes:

The beginning is very good, particularly the girls talking to each other, immensely real and even modern in its way ... Shakespeare seems to have got bored at the end, finishing off with complete nonsense and a lot of songs. Touchstone I find unamusing.

Of Henry V

Henry’s wooing of the French Princess is infinitely embarrassing, one of the most awful passages Shakespeare ever wrote.

Of The Merchant of Venice:

One can just stand the caskets, but the ring business at end is exceedingly tiresome. A poor lookout for her husband with Portia behaving like that.

Of Timon of Athens:

Unsatisfactory play. In Hollywood terms: man has money and friends;
man loses money; man loses friends; man infinitely fed up at this; man dies. In short there is no development.

Of The Two Gentlemen of Verona:

It must be agreed some is intensely silly and the author evidently by the end was himself bored with writing the play.

To conclude there are a few AP criticisms which seem widely open to challenge. One example is his strictures on Twelfth Night, arguably shining example of Shakespeare at his most perfect.

I reread Twelfth Night. Never a great favourite of mine. Maria is lively, but Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek don’t really come off.

Then about this passage about Pericles, usually seen as the first of the so-called “late plays” in which AP unaccountably overlooks some wonderful scenes of awakening and recognition, heart-stopping speeches from Ceremon and Pericles that usher in the whole magical, reconciliatory world of late-period Shakespeare.

Of course the only scenes [in Pericles] that are really any good deal with Marina in the brothel. These are very good indeed.

There can be no arguing about the startling brilliance and comic verisimilitude of these scenes but the conclusion that they are the “only scenes” of quality is not one that most readers or playgoers would share.

Critical comments elsewhere about Pericles even raise questions about how deeply AP read the critical apparatus in most modern editions of the plays. In another reference to Pericles [Journals 1987-1989, 103] AP calls it a play put together in rather a haphazard manner, all the same some excellent bits, and essentially Shakespearean.

From what he does not say here AP appears to show surprising ignorance of the widely-accepted theory of this late play’s dual authorship, commonly seen as the reason for its stylistic and structural inconsistencies.

AP elsewhere attacks “donnish rubbish” about non-Shakespearean origins of witches scenes in Macbeth so is aware of authorship questions. It is all the more notable therefore that he does not mention Shakespeare’s probable collaboration with the minor poet and playwright (also alleged thief, pimp and violent thug) George Wilkins (c.1576-1618).

Wilkins co-authorship was not some new-fangled theory. According to the Arden edition of Pericles (2004)

The suggestion that Wilkins participated in writing the play goes back to the nineteenth century and was put forward forcefully by Dugdale Sykes in Sidelights on Shakespeare as far back as 1919.

The probability is that Wilkins’ advice on the professional requirements of brothel-keeping must have contributed to the shocking vivacity of these scenes in Pericles. As this is exactly the sort of thing that AP would normally comment on, it seems likely that he was not aware of it. The point is made only to show that if Shakespeare nods, so occasionally does AP.

This article is an extract from a paper given at the 2016 Anthony Powell Society Conference at King’s Manor in York, 8 April 2016. The full version of the paper will be published in the proceedings of the conference.
Pow-ell or Pole?
The knotty problems of how to pronounce a tricky surname

By Georgia Powell

I wouldn’t be surprised if future Powells opt for the uncomplicated “ow” sound. But my poor children and their surname are another matter.

All my life I have been battling with the problem of whether to pronounce my surname with an “ow” (as in trowel); or with an “oh” (as in “troll”). Powell or Pole, that is the question. So many assumptions about class and politics ride on that single syllable. How beautifully British. As discussions rage about what Margaret Thatcher would make of David Cameron’s EU renegotiations, we are reminded that even brothers do not always agree. Charles Powell, foreign policy adviser to Margaret Thatcher, is firmly in the “oh” camp. Lord Pole. But his brother Jonathan, Tony Blair’s first chief of staff, is an “ow” man.

My grandfather, the novelist Anthony Powell, was very much a Pole. So much so, in fact, that if I choose to introduce myself as Georgia “Pole”, I am usually asked if I’m “any relation to Anthony?” Yes, I reply, hence, of course, my confident trilling of “Pole” – a correct and ancient pronunciation of a name which can be traced back, according to my grandfather, to the early kings and princes of Wales. Pronouncing the name “Pole” is like a Masonic handshake for readers of A Dance to the Music of Time. No fan worth his salt of all things Powellian (pronounced “Poe-ellian”, naturally) would pronounce the “ow”.

Beyond that somewhat rarefied company, however, the entire Powell versus Pole debate must seem like some kind of ridiculous snobbery. Yet I’m not sure that is the case. General Colin Powell (whom my grandfather used to refer to as “Cousin Colin”) pronounced the “ow” in his surname and then confounded us all with “Cole-in”. There is some pleasure to be had in having a “difficult” surname. And there’s definitely a pleasure to be had in knowing how to pronounce a surname correctly.

In my case the truth is that, like the late David Bowie (pron. Boe-ie?) I really don’t

Anthony Powell poses with his house, The Chantry, in the background
know how to say my name. I am particularly pathetic when it comes to introducing myself on the telephone. I mutter a feeble mixture of both versions and often end up with people thinking that I’m the far more exotic “Georgia Pearl”, which sounds as if I am running a house of ill-repute in one of America’s southern states. Sometimes I refuse to say it at all and simply spell it out, leaving my listener to choose their own pronunciation.

It’s not snobbery that makes me persist with “Pole”. Rather, I have a certain attachment to my grandfather’s pronunciation of the name and I’m unwilling to relinquish it. It was so much part of him and it does, in some way, keep his memory alive. But I’m not wholly convinced by his Welsh history. True, there is an old Welsh fairy tale which refers to the King of Fairyland and father of the clan of Powell being called Pwyle. But I’m afraid that I find myself pronouncing his name as “Pile”. Which is altogether worse.

All in all, I wouldn’t be surprised if future Powells do not burden themselves with the multiple variants, and opt instead for the uncomplicated “ow” sound. That has long been my brother’s tactic and I rather envy him. Part of me wishes that I’d done the same from the start. So much simpler. My father, meanwhile, has mastered a subtle “Poe-well”, which seems to satisfy everyone.

But my poor children will suffer an even worse fate than I have had. Their father’s surname is Coke – pronounced Cook, obviously.

First published in the Daily Telegraph, 8 February 2016, and reprinted by kind permission.

To “ow” or Not to “ow”?

Inspired by Georgia Powell’s exposition, Steve Loveman provides us with the following useful Limericks ...

All serious students of Powell
Know his surname contains just one vole
Don’t pronounce it with two
Or they’ll cold-shoulder you
And behaviour like that takes its towel.

Or perhaps ...

Each serious student of Powell
Knows his surname contains just one vole
If you use two instead
They’ll all cut you dead
And treatment like that takes its towel.

Or even ...

When dealing with lovers of Powell
Lay your praises on him with a troll
But while lauding his fame
Take care with his name
Or you might score a nasty own gowell.

Powell Items at Bonham’s

It has been brought to our attention that there are a number of Powell-related items (mostly letters to Powell from various well-known friends and acquaintances, eg. John Betjeman) being auctioned at Bonham’s Kensington sale of Fine Books, Manuscripts and Original Illustrations on Wednesday 15 June, at 1400 hrs.

You can find the details online at www.bonhams.com/auctions/23576/ or call Bonham’s on 020 7447 7447.

The Powell-related items are lots 191 to 206 at the end of the sale.
Summer Saturday Stroll
Fitzrovia the Morning After
Saturday 2 July 2016
1030 for 1100 hrs
Meet: Bernard Street, outside Russell Square tube station
We start on the edge of Bloomsbury, where Anthony Powell lived for a considerable period as a young man, before straying into the distinctly less respectable surroundings of Fitzrovia. AP and his friends haunted many of the pubs in this area during the 1930s and 1940s, quite a few of which remain largely unchanged. The walk ends a short distance from Tottenham Court Road station and is approximately 1½ miles in length.

We will lunch at 1300 hrs at the Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, the pub frequented by both Dylan Thomas and George Orwell and the place where AP was first introduced to Julian Macclaren-Ross, the model for X Trapnel. The pub is described as serving “a resolutely British menu”.

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 Hon. Secretary’s top hat will be welcomed). Lunch will be “pay on the day”.
Non-members welcome
For further details and booking please contact Ivan Hutnik, ivanhutnik@gmail.com

London Group Extraordinary Pub Meets
Venue for both meets: Market Tavern
7 Shepherd Street, Shepherd Market London W1
Sunday 12 June, 1500-1700 hrs
with Prof. Didier Girard, who spoke so entertainingly on Powell and the Marquis de Sade at the York conference.
Thursday 7 July, 1200-1430 hrs
with American member Richard Rosenbaum who is visiting London.
The Market Tavern has been a pub since being built in the 19th century and is right opposite Powell’s late-1920s Shepherd Market rooms.

Non-members welcome
No need to book but further details from the Hon. Secretary.

London Group Pub Meets
Saturday 6 August 2016
Saturday 5 November 2016
The Audley
41-43 Mount Street, London W1
1230 to 1530 hrs
A pint, a pie and informal conversation in a Victorian pub AP would have known. Why not bring something AP related to interest us?
Non-members welcome
No need to book but further details from the Hon. Secretary
Dates for Your Diary

A Day Out in Oxford
AP and His Chums
Saturday 3 September 2016
Meet: Jesus College
Time: 1030 hrs
Cost: £25 (payable in advance)
Although the details are not absolutely finalised, the plan for the day is …
In celebration of AP’s Welsh ancestry we meet at Jesus College for coffee and a short introductory talk. The plan is that we then visit Balliol College, AP’s college, returning to Jesus for a buffet lunch at about 1300 hrs.
After lunch we plan to walk by Hertford College, visit Wadham College (home to Maurice Bowra) and then Merton College. After which you will be free to take afternoon tea or explore further at your leisure.
Non-members welcome
Group limited to 20
Please book with the Hon. Secretary

William Shakespeare
A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Tuesday 6 September 2016
1930 hrs performance
Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre
Join us for an evening at the Globe Theatre to see Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream – a play Powell clearly enjoyed – and celebrate the 400th anniversary of the bard’s death
We have booked a small number of tickets which are available to members (first come first served) at their face value of £45
Before sending money, please contact the Hon. Secretary to ensure tickets are still available
Tickets and further information from the Hon. Secretary

Annual General Meeting
and “Bring & Buy” Book Sale
Saturday 22 October 2016
St James’s Church
Piccadilly, London W1
1400 hrs prompt
Full details and official notice on page 24

London Group
AP Birthday Lunch
Saturday 3 December 2016
1200 for 1230 hrs
Central London venue tbc
This is a pay on the day event, but please book with the Secretary so we can ensure we have reserved a large enough table!
As always non-members are welcome
Further information when available from the Hon. Secretary
Society Chairman

When the Trustees reappointed the Society’s officers back in November 2015 Tony Robinson agreed to continue as Chairman but with the stated intent to stand down at some appropriate time during the year, but after the York Conference. That time has arrived.

At their meeting on 25 May the Trustees’ unanimously elected Robin Bynoe as Chairman. (Robin was hitherto our Vice Chairman).

Tony’s skills will not be lost to the Society as he remains a Trustee.

The Trustees thank Tony for his sensible and pragmatic leadership over the last few years and wish Robin well in his new role.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are due annually on 1 April (for rates see back page)

Reminders will be sent out (by email where possible) during March each year to those whose membership is about to expire

Remember you can save time and money with our 5 years for the price of 4 membership offer

To keep costs down we will be using email wherever possible so please look out for emails from the Society

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

Subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, at the usual address

Please help us to keep costs down by renewing promptly

Membership Updates

New Members
We extend a warm welcome to the following new and returning members:
- Henry Blagg, Nottingham
- Michael Bloch, London
- Ashley Herum, Santa Cruz, USA
- David Martin Jones, London
- Yuexi Liu, Leamington Spa
- Robert Pohle, St Augustine, USA
- Robert H Smith, Hartford, USA
- Charlotte Williamson, York

Condolences
We regret that since the last Newsletter we have learnt of the death of member Jeremy Strong, Eastbourne
We send our condolences to Jeremy’s family and friends.

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
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
Contact: Nick Birns
Email: nicholas.birns@gmail.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.

Newsletter Copy Deadlines

**Newsletter #64, Autumn 2016**
Copy Deadline: 12 August 2016
Publication Date: 2 September 2016

**Newsletter #65, Winter 2016**
Copy Deadline: 7 November 2016
Publication Date: 2 December 2016

Anthony Powell Resides Here

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

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Society News & Notices

John Trotter reads from Dance during the York Conference.
Notice is hereby given that the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Anthony Powell Society will be held on Saturday 22 October 2016 at 1400 hrs in the Conference Room of St James’s Church, Piccadilly, London W1

Nominations for three Trustee posts which fall vacant this year must reach the Hon. Secretary by Monday 8 August 2016. Candidates must be proposed by two members, indicate their willingness to stand and provide a short biographical statement. Nominations will be accepted by post or email.

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 Monday 8 August 2016. 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 17 October 2016.

We have decided that instead of a speaker there will be a “Bring and Buy” Book Sale at this year’s AGM – as we did at the 2013 Conference.

The idea is that you bring your surplus books to be sold, and you buy other books in the sale. The seller and the Society split the sale price so that everyone benefits.

Book Registration: 1300-1400 hrs

Book Sale:
1330-1400 hrs & 1500-1630 hrs

Please bring along your surplus books. Powell-related books would be good but anything in decent condition is acceptable. The more interesting the book the more likely it is to sell.

You say how much your book should be sold for. Please be realistic and don’t overprice books – we want to sell them! You also say what percentage of the sale price is to go to the Society (we suggest 50% but it’s your choice); you receive the remainder.

We will run the book stall, so all you have to do is bring books and buy books! Sales slips will be available on the day, or can be sent to you in advance. Please complete a slip for each book you bring and put it inside the front cover. This slip will form our record of the sale so is essential if you want to be paid!

Afterwards we will work out how much you are owed. You will be paid in the days following the AGM – there will not be time on the day! Unsold books should be taken away promptly after the sale.

Full sale terms & conditions to the left.

Annual General Meeting Terms & Conditions:
1. By entering a book for sale you are agreeing that you have the right to sell it.
2. You will be paid your proceeds within 30 days following the AGM.
3. The Society may accept a reasonable offer of less than the Asking Price at its sole discretion if it is not possible to refer to you quickly.
4. Title to the book transfers on receipt of money from the purchaser.
5. Unsold books not collected within 30 minutes of the end of the sale will become the property of the Anthony Powell Society and may be used as the Society sees fit.
One of the delights of *Dance* is its rich variety of characters from every walk of life, and the constant surprise when coming across people that you know well from your own circle. In my case, because I began my reading with *The Acceptance World*, one such person was Uncle Giles. From that first meeting at the Ufford Hotel in Bayswater, Uncle Giles was my Uncle Roddy.

For a start, Roddy, my mother’s older brother, born in 1889, had his own Ufford. From middle age, he appeared to lead a peripatetic life, with trunks, suitcases and boxes stowed away in numerous places – hotels like the Ufford (often in Bayswater), or in the homes of unfortunate relatives and friends (mine among them). This had not always been the case. As a soldier (probably in one of the East Anglian regiments) he was at Gallipoli. When one of my elder brothers purchased a tape recorder and “interviewed” Uncle Roddy, he had definite memories of that time, the most vivid of which were of the rations, or lack of them. After a lengthy diet of ships’ biscuits, a consignment of jam arrived via the Red Cross. The tins were opened excitedly, and the jam spread on the biscuits. Immediately a huge cloud of black flies descended and landed on the jam. A long-resented disappointment.

My first remembered encounter with Uncle Roddy came when my mother took me to visit him during his early period as a farmer in Hampshire. By then he had married (unwisely, as it turned out) and divorced Aunt Vi – deeply disapproved of by my grandmother, chiefly because she wore a red beret – frivolous. He was a very dashing chap then: he owned a midnight-blue dinner jacket.

Aunt Vi had left Uncle Roddy and run away with a canary breeder, leaving Roddy to bring up their daughter, Jane. More of her later, but at that time she was a talented rider, loving to shock us with her skills on horseback, and on that occasion galloping full pelt downhill, bareback and controlling her pony only with a head-collar – no bridle. There were definite traces of Pamela Flitton there, I realise now.

We skip forward to the time when Jane had left home and Uncle Roddy was the proprietor of a sweet shop in Winchester. He caused great annoyance and puzzlement to the confectionery reps by preferring to decorate his shop window with a vase of flowers and some tastefully
draped fabric rather than the wares that they were anxious for him to promote.

The shop, unsurprisingly, did not prosper, and Uncle Roddy began his peregrinations. I have counted no less than eighteen addresses for him in my mother’s old address book. He would arrive to stay with us on frequent occasions, and it was then that I got to know his chief preoccupations: money, and how to make and retain it; the family trusts; politics, and the future of the country in general. And, of course, his daughter Jane.

Jane had grown into a petite and beguilingly pretty blonde. Neighbours in their farming days had been the family of Victor Sylvester, the well-known bandleader. He later persuaded Jane to come to London, attempting to lure her to a hotel in Paddington. She was quick to interpret and reject that offer, but modelling beckoned. Being too petite to become a fashion model she took the path of cabaret, and became what was known in those days as a “show-girl” – in her case apparently becoming well-known as “The girl who looks bored at the Pigalle (night club)”. Constant attempts were made by her father to persuade her to choose a more respectable career, but he never succeeded. She did have one film role: that of Lady Godiva, clad very properly in a flesh-coloured body stocking, riding her horse through the streets of Coventry behind the film’s titles.

By the 1960s I was living in London, my mother having died, and my flat, too, became the receptacle of a quantity of Uncle Roddy’s “things”. In true Uncle Giles style, he would phone me at very short notice to say he was on his way to look at his “things”. Since they were stowed away in the farthest corners of my flat, this caused particular difficulty. The “things” mostly consisted of objects he had hoarded over the years in the conviction that they would eventually become valuable and saleable. It was my poor elder brother – the one with the tape recorder – who bore the brunt of this, Uncle Roddy insisting that he should take them to Sotheby’s or Christies to have them valued. My brother Tim described the humiliation of having young men at the auction houses tipping the objects out on to a velvet cloth, pushing them round with one finger and a sneering expression and suggesting that the Portobello Road might be the place for them.

In return for housing his goods, Uncle Roddy would take me out to a carefully researched restaurant or tea-room, famed for its Irish Stew or rock cakes – or indeed fish paste sandwiches and seed cake, as at the Ufford.
Because of his frequent removals from one address to another, it was difficult to keep up with him. Although we felt it was our duty to do so as he got older and more infirm, he was often highly indignant when we ran him to ground in Worthing or Eastbourne. His solicitude for our well-being extended to occasional scraps of what he regarded as family history. One letter carried the information that because our parents were so poor when they married, he and his brother decided that they should be given some items of family furniture, which rightly belonged to them (the brothers). Some of these he still recognised in my flat, and would complain about the way I had, or had not, polished them. We were, I’m afraid, frugal in our thanks.

How did it all end? Certainly in a way that seemed appropriate to Uncle Giles’s character. I received news that Uncle Roddy was in hospital in Chichester, having had a stroke; then that he had been discharged and was staying in “a lady’s house” nearby. The “lady” turned out to be none other than Aunt Vi. Uncle Roddy had always kept in touch with her, despite the divorce; and, the canary breeder having twittered his last a year or so earlier, he had seemingly decided that Aunt Vi would be the ideal person to look after him for his final years. She, when I spoke to her, sounded not at all happy about the arrangement, but nevertheless there he stayed, while she carried up meals to his bedside, and the doctor said how well he was doing. Luckily for her, he did not in fact last a great deal longer.

We went to his funeral, near Arundel, a little group of six of us from his family, and what seemed to be a large contingent of canary breeders on the other side of the aisle. Vi and her daughter Jane sat at the front as chief mourners. Jane, I have to say, had lost her looks, while her mother looked rather dashing in a hat with a veil. Jane apologised for the fact that they could not ask us back to the house. Too many bird fanciers in attendance, we gathered. I wondered if some of his “things” were still in the basement of the Ufford.

The original cast of Dad’s Army, classic BBC sitcom about the exploits of a Second World War Home Guard platoon – see Simon Barnes’ article overleaf
I first thought of offering this as a spoof. I was going to fake a serious claim for Anthony Powell as the author of the great television sitcom *Dad’s Army*. But then I wondered if there was more to the notion than a joke. The film, released earlier this year, brought *Dad’s Army* back into the newspapers; it stars Catherine Zeta-Jones, apparently auditioning for the part of Pamela Widmerpool, but that’s by the by. *Dad’s Army* operates on a neat inversion of the stereotype. In traditional British humour, the Walmington-on-Sea platoon would have been lead by the upper-class twit and the one who actually understood what was going on would have been his salt-of-the-earth second-in-command. But Captain Mainwaring* is in charge, though always conscious that he is from a lower social class than his number two, Sergeant Wilson.

Mainwaring is pompous, vain, over-fond of authority, self-important, chippy, over-eager to redress the class-imbalance, trapped in a bad marriage, full of unconvincing worldliness, lacking in social graces, ill-at-ease with women, desperate to cut an impressive figure, always eager to get on, and at bottom, mad for power.

Wilson, while always aware of his social advantages, is perennially unprepared for responsibility, seldom gets anything done, is remarkably ineffective in almost everything, but he is charming and at ease in any company. He is quietly successful with women, and has a sound and happy long-term relationship with Mavis Pike. Power interests him very little. He is a man with perspective, balance, detachment.

The Powellian code is not hard to crack here. Mainwaring is an essentially Widmerpudlian figure, while Wilson is like a parody of Nick Jenkins, or if you prefer, of Powell himself; the two even look rather similar; certainly the same air of sadness surrounds them both. One might add to this Powellian resemblance a cast of roughly-drawn rude mechanicals with amusing speech patterns, to be found in the Walmington-on-Sea platoon and in the Other Ranks in *The Valley of Bones*.

These slighter resemblances are intriguing, but the antithesis between the two central characters of both works is what matters here. If offered a choice between Mainwaring and Wilson – or between Widmerpool and Jenkins – as a companion over a drink or dinner, there is only one choice. But when it comes to winning the war, you might prefer to have Mainwaring, or for that matter, Widmerpool. This is a truth that gives depth to both the sitcom and the novel-sequence.

In a seminal episode, *The Battle of Godfrey’s Cottage*, Mainwaring, with Private Frazer and Corporal Jones, goes to Godfrey’s cottage to defend the adjacent crossroads against what he believes is the invading German army. His aim is to hold them up for as long as possible before the British army arrives. Mainwaring says:

> It’ll probably be the end of us but we’re ready for that, aren’t we men?

Meanwhile, Wilson is working out how to surrender, in the mistaken belief that the Germans have taken Godfrey’s cottage.

* For the uninitiated “Mainwaring” is pronounced “Mannering” in English English.
Widmerpool wouldn’t be worth writing about at Powellian length if there wasn’t any point to him. If he was merely loathsome, he would be lucky to last for a chapter. But Widmerpool, like Mainwaring, gets things done. In both Dance and Dad’s Army the man with greater social advantages is generally one-down, and in most practical matters comes off second-best. In The Acceptance World, Widmerpool’s emerging efficacy as a bill-broker is contrasted with Jenkins’s startling inability – his fatalism, his passivity – in the business of St John Clarke and his never-written introduction to the Art of Horace Isbister.

In the war trilogy, it is clear that Widmerpool is better at winning wars than Jenkins. Widmerpool holds the Cabinet Office job for which Powell (rather than Jenkins) was tried and rejected. Widmerpool is a power in the course of the war. If you are going to get involved in a war, then you probably need Widmerpool and Mainwaring rather more than you need people to be charming to local dignitaries or to representatives of foreign powers.

The attitudes of Widmerpool and Jenkins towards the war are made clear in their responses to the Katyn massacre. Jenkins is appalled, though the point, in Powellian fashion is not laboured; Widmerpool is appalled by anyone who wants to make trouble about it. Britain needed the Russians; Britain did not need the Poles. Humanitarian principles – perhaps humanity itself – must be discarded if the war is to be won. And Widmerpool is your man here.

But behind the practicalities of warfare lies the question of what people are fighting for: that is to say, what we will have left when we come to the peace. Jenkins represents the values that must survive the war: art, culture, writing and by implication, love and loyalty, along with all the understated decencies that characterise him. You could argue at a stretch that Wilson represents something of the same thing: civility, gentleness, and a deep if often exasperated affection for his lover, Mavis and their presumed son Frank.

We can only speculate on what Mainwaring does when peace comes to Walmington-on-Sea. But we know what Widmerpool does: if Jenkins loses the war in his life-long competition with Widmerpool, it clear who loses the peace. Dad’s Army and Dance are based on antithetical types: one ambitious, able, power-hungry and unpleasant, the other civilised, decent and rather ineffective. Both types have their points: both their areas of fallibility. Naturally, Dance takes it further and goes some way to presenting a resolution. A sitcom can’t do that, of course: the situation must be maintained week after week. An ultimate resolution (of the kind shown in the triumphant ending of the film) is by definition impossible.

The nature of the antithesis is actually spelt out for us, in a very unPowellian manner, in a throwaway line from Gibson Delavacquerie:

Love and Literature should rank before Sorcery and Power.

So yes, sure – Nick Jenkins and Sergeant Wilson should rank before Kenneth Widmerpool and George Mainwaring. And so they do in most of our lives – until we happen to need them.
Anthony Powell Society Newsletter #63

York, Overcoats and Unwritten Books

By Alison Walker

For me, one of the delights of reading Powell is how he sets off trains of thought, linkings and references, leading one to undiscovered delights by association.

First: overcoats. Widmerpool’s notorious and unsuitable garment marks him out for life, in the mind of the reader, as an outsider, one who is unable to fully grasp the protocols of the worlds to which he aspires. I was struck by several overcoats at the York Conference, not that the wearers were in any way Widmerpoolian, of course. But they were wonderfully striking, causing me to speculate whether the substantial and admirable tweeds of Michael Bloch or Clive Gwatkin Jenkins would have met with Our Kenneth’s approval, and might have more successfully achieved his insertion into the milieux he coveted. Definitely not Widmerpoolian, but indubitably worth a mention was the elegant overgarment sported by John Roe, the product of a local York tailor.

Musing on coats immediately brought to mind the ‘grey waterproof cape’ worn by Enoch Soames, the literary creation of Max Beerbohm. Soames spent his days in the Reading Room of the British Museum and his nights drinking absinthe – a real child of the 1890s. The supposed author of two volumes of poetry, Negations (1892) and Fungoids (1894), he sold his soul to the devil in order to be briefly projected 100 years into the future, to appear in the Reading Room and discover what posterity had made of his works. Sadly, he found the only reference under his name in the British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books was as a fictional character created by Beerbohm.

Beerbohm’s own sketch of Soames (or possibly William Rothenstein) does indeed show him wearing a cape as described. This illustration (below), and much more, including an account of the reappearance of Soames in the Reading Room, appears in the indispensable Wikipedia.

Enoch Soames’ publications are of course doubly fictional. The titles mentioned above are unreal, and just on the wrong side of credibility. They lead one to Powell’s own fictional titles. Jenkins’ work as a book reviewer leads him to contemplate a number of barely believable titles, such as A Stockbroker in Sandals, or Purged not in Lethe. Unreal titles abound in Dance, perhaps because Powell would have liked to have written them: Camel Ride to the Tomb, Sad Majors, Secretions, Fields of Amaranth and of course Fission itself. Then there is Profiles in String,
fictional fiction, which nevertheless appeared in print (and on Kindle – Powell and Trapnel would both have been amazed) in 2013.

Glancing back at the Reading Room, another unwritten book comes to mind. The *Necronomicon*, a book of black magic conjured up by the American horror writer HP Lovecraft, was frequently asked for by users of the Reading Room. Reference staff (of whom I was one) were regularly troubled by seekers of the occult truth, desperate to consult this vital but illusory book. So much in demand was it that it WAS written – several times, by different authors, including one edited by the wonderfully named L Sprague de Camp. None of them either readable or safe, and all dismissed by the British Library’s description of the *Necronomicon* as ‘an imaginary book’. However, just like *Profiles in String*, it exists, because someone, but not its original begetter, thought it should.

And as a final link in this literary chain, in one of the many photographs of HP Lovecraft (below) on the internet, he is wearing a large, possibly tweed, OVERCOAT. Widmerpool to a T.

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**London Group Pub Lunch**

7 May 2016

*By Stephen Walker*

We are short of space so here is the executive summary.

- Fifteen of us lunched at the Audley. Much good cheer and banter.
- Fish and chips standards have relapsed. Go for the cheese toastie.
- Only two ties and one cravat.
- The very unPowellian short sleeve check shirt look is gaining ground.
- Your Editor was accused of being Doric.
- Several contributors compared the length of their columns and demanded more inches.

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**Overheard at Sillery’s Tea Party**

“Powell is known to have rated Surtees as an author, so one is surprised that he was never involved with the Surtees Society, especially as it was based in Somerset.”

“Oh, he did investigate it but he found that it was inhabited by a lot of rather dim baronets.”

---

Mr Trilling obviously knows his material well and he is dexterous in presenting – with all the innocence in the world – the peculiar combination of arrogance and imbecility found at certain levels of intellectual life.

Anthony Powell in a review of Lionel Trilling, *The Middle of the Journey*, TLS, 16 October 1948
I was asked at a recent Hon. Secretary’s get-together when I had first read *Dance*. I was somewhat embarrassed to have to reply “I can’t remember”. This failing probably sets me aside from the previous contributors to this series.

Having thought hard, I think I probably first read the series in the mid-1970s, when I was in my thirties. I saw a copy of *QU* on the bookshelves of a charming girl whose parties in her Pimlico flat were somewhat like those of Mrs Andriadis. I read through the complete cycle and was very taken with what I think of as the ‘Fitzrovia’ characters (eg. Mr Deacon, Gypsy Jones); an assessment based on their lifestyle rather than where they actually lived. At the time I was working in offices in New Cavendish Street and got to know the surrounding area well.

I remember going to The George public house in Great Portland Street one evening and observing Eleanor Walpole Wilson and Norah Tolland (or their counterparts) and seeing the poet Hugh MacDiarmid drinking very much in the manner of Charles Stringham in *The King and Queen* in Foley Street. My office had a Max Pilgrim figure (who was quite senior) and one lunch time, wearing a cardigan and plus fours, he gave a very entertaining performance of ‘Mad Dogs and Englishmen’ to a piano accompaniment.

About three years ago I re-read the books from start to finish and found there was much I had forgotten but also much that I had retained. Amongst the latter were the ‘framing’ of Le Bas, Miss Weedon, Barnby and Widmerpool’s humiliation at the hands of Barbara Goring. The novels now provide a sort of safe haven where I can escape from the moral struggles of Graham Greene or the comic anarchy of Evelyn Waugh.

‘Time’ in Powell seems to be less linear, and somehow more forgiving, than in other novelists. I intend to re-read the individual books but on a random basis, so as to dip into the narrative in different places. At the moment, the public library will have to do. It is always interesting to look along the gaps in the line of paperback volumes on the shelves and to see how other readers are progressing. When I have sufficiently de-cluttered my own bookshelves, I will install *Dance*.
BOOK REVIEW

Stella Gibbons

*Pure Juliet*

Vintage Classics; £8.99

Reviewed by Robin Bynoe

Powell’s contemporary Stella Gibbons published *The Woods in Winter*, one of her best novels, in 1970. She lived for another nineteen years. She wrote two more but could not face the bother of the publication process. This is one of them. It has been put out recently and rather dismissively reviewed. The second, *The Yellow Houses*, is due for release in September.

Reviewers have noted its shortcomings. It is set in the mid-1970s (*Star Wars*, punk music, Women’s Liberation) but its characters, especially when young, talk a strange 1930s slang (‘Ravvy!’). More worryingly, the working class characters’ dialogue is phoneticised. They are made to say ‘Wot?’ when they mean to say ‘What’. (I have always wondered exactly how those two are supposed to sound different.) Gibbons’ ideas about how secondary education worked in the 70s is bizarre, as is how she thinks that you get from Hertfordshire to Cambridge by train: you change at Norwich. A poet features called Edmund Spencer, and no one remarks on the fact that there is a real and famous poet with that name. As with others of her books, it rambles from time to time and there are too many characters. These sins are all venial and could, would and should have been sorted by an editor. They don’t much interfere with our enjoyment.

The central character is one of Gibbons’ beautiful monsters. She is obsessed with a mathematical quest that takes over her life. She is selfish and insensitive to the point of being a psychopath. Other people build their lives – because they are on the whole well intentioned, as Gibbons’ characters often are – so as to cater for her impossible behaviour. The tiny degrees by which she becomes, or fails to become, humanised is conveyed with subtlety. Ultimately she publishes her work and is honoured by the ruler of an Oman-like state (Why? Why not?), to which in a hypnotic sequence they all travel to receive the award. It is a book that only Stella Gibbons could have written. It is weird, affecting and it sets up camp in your mind.

I would urge you to ignore the reviews and read it. She wrote twenty-six novels and it is by no means the best but by no means the worst either. The word is that *The Yellow Houses* is even better.

■
Uncle Giles Invests ...

Psst. Listen up. I want to let you in on a good thing. It’s a family trust and since I intuit that you are a sophisticated high net worth investor with the odd £100,000 to play with this should be just the ticket.

It’s called the “Baldwinmore Holdings”. Run by a rum sort of cove with an eye patch – looks a bit like Long John Silver. The firm is based in one of “Her Maj’s” Crown Dependencies so it must be above board.

These clever Treasure Island johnnies guarantee returns of 15 per cent p.a. tax free. How do they do it? Probably cornered the market in coconuts or perhaps they’ve discovered a buried chest of gold doubloons hidden by some pirate chappy when he was sweeping the Spanish Main. Anyway it’s all above board. They’ve been given a special dispensation.

My nephew once asked how come I could afford to stand him a meal at Foppa’s finished off with a port and a cigar. I told him, “Nick, my boy. Ask no questions and you’ll be told no lies. Who do you suppose paid your school fees? There is no suggestion that your dear uncle has done anything illegal and he has always made full disclosure and complied with UK tax laws.” Beyond a few slender dividends – nothing much. *Rien a declarer* as customs and excise would have it.

So here are Uncle’s tips on investing “Offshore”.

1. Aggressive tax avoidance is morally wrong. It’s what common people do. People like Third World dictators, or the comedian Jimmy Carr.

2. Choose a reputable law firm to handle your tax declaration. Not one of those namby pamby “magic circle” City outfits. Panama City – that’s where! They’re terribly good at making straw hats and sorting out other people’s taxes.

3. Remember an offshore investment isn’t about *avoiding* tax; it’s about having a vehicle for dollar denominated transactions. When you don’t want to use sterling.

4. There is nothing wrong with aspiration and wealth creation – that sort of thing! It’s the right of every patriotic Englishmen to make (lots of) money lawfully.

5. Now if any nosey parker from the tax office or the *Guardian* starts asking awkward questions, tell ‘em “it’s a private matter! I don’t discuss family affairs.”

6. You can afford to be generous. Think about “gifting” shares to a much-loved family member or perhaps to a close friend. Mrs Erdleigh has told me she wants to stand as an MP for the Green Party. Giving her a lot of shares would get her career off to a flying start.

Now then. Don’t breathe a word of any of this at the Ufford or your club. After all “you know who” may be listening. H**C. So schtum’s the word. ■
Jeff Manley writes ...

DJ Taylor in the *Independent*, 22 February 2016, has low expectations for the BBC’s plan to revive its 1970s sitcom *Some Mothers Do ’Ave ’Em*. The plan is to have the 74 year old Michael Crawford reprise his role as youthfully naïve Frank Spencer … Taylor thinks the BBC is making the same mistake that he believes befell Evelyn Waugh near the end of his career:

*When Anthony Powell, having finished his 12-volume A Dance to the Music of Time (1951-1975), resisted the siren voices urging him to create further opportunities for his characters he probably had at the back of his mind his friend Evelyn Waugh, whose Basil Seal Rides Again (1963) is a largely unsuccessful attempt to transfer the rakish ne’er do well of his 1930s novels Black Mischief and Scoop into the age of Harold Macmillan.*

When Powell received his copy of *Basil Seal Rides Again*, he thanked Waugh rather coolly and said that Basil was not his favourite among Waugh’s characters. Powell also noted that he looked forward to Basil’s being killed in painful circumstances, so perhaps he thought that *Rides Again* was not Waugh’s last word on the subject.

Larry Kart sends us this from Martin Seymour-Smith’s *Guide to Modern World Literature*:

*Powell is one of the most serious and technically adroit novelists since Dickens. His procedures are in fact unobtrusively modernistic, but are in the interests of an essentially conservative (with a small c) morality based not on puritanism but on freedom and on an exceedingly complex notion of, to put it necessarily crudely, decency. Jenkins is skeptical but – despite his coolness – obsessed, in his apparently casual way, with decency. He is almost paralysed by decency, as Powell shows us. Widmerpool is the foil to him: the ambitious go-getter, amoral, wanting to have his cake and eat it. Each book [in Dance] betters its predecessor but only because of its predecessor … At the end we recognize that the old charges against Powell – he could not deal with the lower classes, he was a snob, he was limited, and so on – have all been dealt with by him … Powell has very intelligently employed reader-reaction as feedback, and has succeeded in accomplishing almost all of the things he was supposed not to be able to do. This fundamental modesty has helped him to achieve one of the masterworks of his time … [Dance] is humane, poetic, and moving: not a comic work, as is so often supposed, but a tragi-comic one of enormous sensibility, subtlety, and compassion.*
There have been several articles likening various US Presidential candidates to a certain Kenneth Widmerpool.

First off, Ross Douthat (New York Times, 26 March 2016) has this to say about Ted Cruz:

*Throughout this rise, Cruz has often seemed less like Goldwater than like American conservatism's own Kenneth Widmerpool, the most memorable character in the English novelist Anthony Powell's series A Dance to the Music of Time.*

A dogged, charmless, unembarrassed striver, Widmerpool begins Powell’s novels as a figure of mockery for his upper-class schoolmates. But over the course of the books he ascends past them – to power, influence, a peerage – through a mix of ruthless effort, ideological flexibility, and calculated kissing-up.

Enduring all manner of humiliations, bouncing back from every setback, tacking right and left with the times, he embodies the triumph of raw ambition over aristocratic rules of order. “Widmerpool”, the narrator realizes at last, sounding like a baffled, Cruz-hating Republican senator today, “once so derided by all of us, had in some mysterious manner become a person of authority”.

This is not exactly a flattering comparison. But the American reader, least enamoured of a fated aristocratic order, may find aspects of Widmerpool’s character curiously sympathetic. And some of that strange sympathy could be extended to Cruz.

Of course blogger Barnaby Capel-Dunn, son of the supposed model for Widmerpool, non-concurs (http://capeldunn.blogspot.co.uk/2016/04/ted-widmerpool.html).

Meanwhile Peter Behrens, choosing his five books (Wall Street Journal, 30 April 2016) has this to say about Dance:

*If you’re missing Downton Abbey, try this return to the world of English class rivalries. Readers who have inhaled the first of its 12 volumes are unlikely to stop before consuming the last. The world is upper-class bohemian England from the 1920s through the ’60s. Kenneth Widmerpool, the ambitious businessman-soldier-politician who goes about knocking on Establishment doors, alternately grovelling and bullying, is one of the great comic monsters of English fiction. At Eton, Widmerpool was mostly known for the wrong kind of overcoat – a coat, the narrator remarks, “only remarkable in itself as a vehicle for the comment it aroused”. Widmerpool’s progress – from Eton outsider to life peer to dazed participant in hippie Saturnalia – is positively Trumpian in its menacing splendor.*

With thanks to Ashley Herum, John Stewart, Laurie Frost, Peter Kislinger, Nick Birns, Jonathan Kooperstein, Jeff Manley and others.
This squib from Stephen Moss (Guardian, 22 February 2016):

An encouraging report from the Georgia Institute of Technology argues that it is possible to inculcate moral values into robots by exposing them to the fictions and fables that underpin human cultures. “We believe story comprehension in robots can eliminate psychotic-appearing behaviour and reinforce choices that won’t harm humans and still achieve the intended purpose,” argue the researchers.

... But a less sunny outlook is suggested by a rival report from the Shepton Mallet School of Advanced Hermeneutics, of which I’ve had a sneak preview. It fed the entire world’s literature into a robot (called HOMER16) … preliminary results are worrying. Here are some extracts …

**1984:** Historical portrait of a well-ordered and unified society committed to the cause of national progress. Saddened to see the extent of the decline over the past three decades. Fail to understand why the telescreens designed for useful social interaction are now used for public performances of celebrity people lost in the jungle and youngsters singing badly …

**A Clockwork Orange:** Frightening study that shows the extent to which a love of classical music can damage the human brain. The works of Beethoven seem to be especially dangerous. Fail to understand why this material is still played, even on radio stations that very few people listen to …

**A la Recherche du Temps Perdu:** A book in need of an editor about a protagonist in need of a psychiatrist. Good on the dangerous consequences of eating cake.

**A Dance to the Music of Time:** Sequence of novels in which the hard-working Kenneth Widmerpool is done down by a motley assortment of charlatans and aesthetes, and dies in wretched circumstances. A powerful satire, as humans like to say, that recalls the fate of the admirably quick-witted and ambitious Becky Sharp in Vanity Fair. Human writers do not appear to like characters attempting to improve their lot – and the world in which they live.

**Moby-Dick:** An interesting book about fishing. A mad captain goes in pursuit of a white whale vowing revenge; a protracted pursuit begins; the whale mostly gets the better of it. Another novel that could have done with substantial cutting. Humans are so prolix …

Remarkable how many of the books that feature in human top-100 lists suggest a dysfunctional world. The conclusion to which my android brain is inevitably drawn is that humans, for all their outward self-confidence, are deeply troubled, and would benefit from urgent reprogramming.

Spotted by Julian Miller. ■
Under the typically tabloid headline "Scoop! The shockingly intimate truth of how Evelyn Waugh’s gay Oxford lover became Brideshead Revisited’s Sebastian" Philip Eade (Daily Mail, 2 April 2016) writes about Alastair Graham, Evelyn Waugh’s supposed homosexual lover in 1920s Oxford. Along with the erroneous contention that, in John Betjeman’s words, “Everyone was queer at Oxford in those days!” there is this (unsourced):

Alastair was seen by Evelyn’s contemporaries as a catch. Novelist Anthony Powell remembered him as “frightfully good-looking, with rather Dresden china shepherdess sort of looks … a lot of people were undoubtedly in love with him.”

Michiko Kakutani reviews Sunjeer Sahota’s The Year of the Runaways (New York Times, 22 March 2016) with a comparison to Dance:

The world [the book’s characters] inhabit – of grubby house shares, meagre meals, backbreaking jobs (when a job can even be found) – is light years removed from that of the aristos and bohemians in Anthony Powell’s A Dance to the Music of Time. But, weirdly, there are echoes of Mr Powell’s 20th century classic here. Not just in structure (this novel takes place over the course of a year’s four seasons, whereas Dance was divided into four “movements”, based around the four seasons of life), but also in its focus on how characters’ hopes and dreams are reshaped by time and (mis)fortune.

Spotted by Nick Birns.

Member Lisa Doty sends us this from Ken Thompson’s The Sceptical Gardener:

Gardening scarcely features at all 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 twelve-volume sequence with any horticultural connections. Heaven knows Powell gives us plenty of other reasons to dislike Widmerpool, but you know he will come to a bad end when you discover, quite early on, that his father’s business was the supply of liquid manure to the gentry.
### SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

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<th>UK Price</th>
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<td>2011 Conference Proceedings</td>
<td>£8</td>
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<td>Eton 2001 Conference Proceedings</td>
<td>£6.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeff Manley et al.; Dance Music</td>
<td>£7</td>
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<tr>
<td>150-page guide to the musical references in Dance; in the style of Spurling’s Handbook.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing about Anthony Powell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talks given at the 2004 AGM by George Lilley, Michael Barber and Nick Birns; introduced by Christine Berberich.</td>
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<td>Fourth &amp; final volume of Lady Violet’s autobiography covering mostly the 1960s. Includes many of Lady Violet’s coloured travel sketches. Hardback.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The 2011 Greville Press reprint of this rare Powell spoof.</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Gould; Dance Class</td>
<td>£12</td>
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<tr>
<td>American High School student essays from John’s two teachings of Dance at Philips Academy.</td>
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### JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

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<tr>
<td>Secret Harmanies: Journal of the Anthony Powell Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Back numbers of issues 1, 2 &amp; 3 are available.</td>
<td>£5</td>
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### AUDIO

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<td>BBC Radio Dramatisation of Dance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Originally broadcast on BBC Radio 4 between 1979-82. 26 one-hour episodes. Single CD containing 26 MP3 files.</td>
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<td>For copyright reasons available to Society members only.</td>
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### POSTCARDS

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<td>Anthony Powell’s Ancestral Lands Postcards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set of four colour postcards from photos by John Blaxter of the Powell ancestral lands on the Welsh borders.</td>
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<td>UK &amp; Overseas: £2.50 (£2 + £0.50 donation)</td>
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<td>Society Postcard</td>
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<td>B&amp;W postcard of Powell with his cat Trelawney. Pack of 5.</td>
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<td>UK &amp; Overseas: £2.50 (£2 + £0.50 donation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wallace Collection Poussin Postcard</td>
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<td>The Wallace Collection’s postcard of Poussin’s A Dance to the Music of Time. Pack of 5.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edited by John Saumarez Smith &amp; Jonathan Cooperstein; 2011.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fascinating letters between Powell and his friend and first American publisher Robert Vanderbilt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paperback: UK £8.50, Overseas £12.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hardback: UK £18, Overseas £24.50</td>
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