Contents

Was There a Powell Generation?, Mark Facknitz ..................................................7

Friends Do Furnish a Novel – Exploring Male Friendships in Dance to the Music of Time, Gabriella Walfridsson ......................................................20

Epiphanies, Peter Kislinger .....................................................................................26

Waiting for (Dr) Belkin, Edwin Bock .....................................................................46

The End of the Dance, Grey Gowrie ......................................................................72

The Politics of the Dance, Vernon Bogdanor .........................................................86

‘Think First, Fight Afterwards’ – The Soldier’s Art, AN Wilson .............100

Anthony Powell Interviewed by Colin Donald, 29 May 1992 at The Chantry ...........................................................................................................113

Singing a Would-Be King through Comic Invective: Jenkins as Widmerpool’s ‘Inexorable Accessory’, Ashley Herum .........................125

AD Powell and the Transactions of the Radnorshire Society, Keith C Marshall .............................................................................................................145

Dance for Everybody? Teaching and Living Powell’s Fiction, Nicholas Birns .............................................................................................................155

BOOK REVIEWS: Olivia Manning .................................................................159

BOOK REVIEW: DJ Taylor, At the Chime of the City Clock: A Triller 167

BOOK REVIEW: Literary Parodies .........................................................................172

Notes on Contributors .........................................................................................178

Society Merchandise & Membership ..................................................................181
Abbreviations of Anthony Powell Works

References to the Anthony Powell works cited throughout this volume are, unless specified, to the first UK editions of the individual works using the abbreviations given below; in the interests of concision these works are omitted from bibliographies. Other works are cited in full.

AP Anthony Powell

*Dance* Anthony Powell, *A Dance to the Music of Time* (London: Heinemann, 1951-75)


*VB* Anthony Powell, *The Valley of Bones* (London: Heinemann, 1964)


*BDFR* Anthony Powell, *Books Do Furnish a Room* (London: Heinemann, 1971)


*AM* Anthony Powell, *Afternoon Men* (London: Ducksworth, 1931)


*V* Anthony Powell, *Venusberg* (London: Ducksworth, 1932)

*FVD* Anthony Powell, *From a View to a Death* (London: Ducksworth, 1933)


*Plays* Anthony Powell, *Two Plays* (London: Heinemann, 1971)


| **TKBR** | Anthony Powell, *To Keep the Ball Rolling* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) |
| **Infants** | Anthony Powell, *To Keep the Ball Rolling: Infants of the Spring* (London: Heinemann, 1976) |
| **Messengers** | Anthony Powell, *To Keep the Ball Rolling: Messengers of Day* (London: Heinemann, 1978) |
| **Faces** | Anthony Powell, *To Keep the Ball Rolling: Faces in My Time* (London: Heinemann, 1980) |
| **Strangers** | Anthony Powell, *To Keep the Ball Rolling: The Strangers All Are Gone* (London: Heinemann, 1982) |
Editorial

Editorial text here

Stephen Walker
Hon. Editor
Was There a Powell Generation?

Mark Facknitz, Department of English, James Madison University

First given at the 5th Biennial Anthony Powell Conference; Washington, DC; September 2009.

“Was there a Powell generation?” I think my title is catchy, apt to go over well with a group of devotees, but I’ll confess straight up that I’m suspicious of the surreptitious value judgments and the general clannishness that goes along with talking about generations. However, I am very interested in what we learn about Powell and his cultural moment by asking if one could reasonably talk about a Powell generation.

To begin, there are some broad grounds of agreement about Powell, one his remarkable achievement in writing Dance, which I prefer to not call a roman fleuve because I think the volumes are, in part and in whole, far too architectural to be aptly figured as a river. Asked about his similarity to Proust, Powell responded:

Proust is an enormously subjective writer who has a peculiar genius for describing how he or his narrator feels.

If he then denies that he has a talent for self-revelation, I am convinced that he left it for us to say that he has a remarkable talent for self-concealment, a way of dispensing the perspective and wit of Jenkins here and there, a game of narrative cache-cache that makes finding Jenkins in the lines of the Dance remarkably like reading the allegorical paintings of Poussin, Bronzino, and Tiepolo for the presence of the tubby little boy, on the left with pipe, on the right with hour glass. Who’s that? Oh yeah, that’s Nicky.

We also accept his verdict that the special character of the occult in Dance is the author’s confession that he follows Blavatsky or Gurdjieff; rather the metaphor of the occult stands for a restrained and skeptical view of history and the large patterns of civilization, the idea that

that nothing ever changes: that what is now dished up in a supposedly different form is really exactly the same as the thing one was familiar with as a child. (28).

One watches, then, the process of time and meaning unfolding with an intense interest but rarely if ever tremendous clarity of mind, for just as the pattern appears ready to steady itself, as if to articulate itself against the stormy horizons of the novels, we are confronted with the blunt mortality

of human beings, facing outward like the Seasons, moving hand in hand in intricate measure: stepping slowly, methodically, sometimes a trifle awkwardly, in evolutions that take recognisable shape: or breaking into seemingly meaningless gyrations, while partners disappear only to reappear again, once more giving pattern to the spectacle: unable to
control the melody, unable, perhaps, to control the steps of the dance.

[QU, 2]

This allusion to Poussin’s painting is so provocative, so obviously significant, that one might think it is all the map the author intended to give us at the beginning. Not quite, I think. The force of the idea of the comic formality of the cold, the lyricism of the evocation of the painting by Poussin, and the structural and thematic announcements of the allusion tend to speak so loudly that the melancholy significance of the next paragraph might be missed:

“As winter advanced in that river valley, mist used to rise in late afternoon and spread over the flooded grass; until the house and all the outskirts of the town were enveloped in opaque, chilly vapour, tinted like cigar-smoke. The house looked on to other tenement-like structures, experiments in architectural insignificance, that intruded upon a central concentration of buildings, commanding and antiquated, laid out in a quadrilateral, though irregular, style. Silted up residues of the years smouldered uninterruptedly—and not without melancholy— in the maroon brickwork of these medieval closes: beyond the cobbles and archways of which (in a more northerly direction) memory also brooded, no less enigmatic and inconsolable, among water-meadows and avenues of trees: the sombre demands of the past becoming at times almost suffocating in their insistence. [QU, 2-3]

One response – assuming the means – to the butt end of civilization is Cecil Beaton’s October 1927 photograph of bright young things (below).

Cecil Beaton; Bright Young Things; October 1927. Left to right, Rex Whistler, Beaton, Georgia Sitwell, William Walton, Stephen Tennant, Zita and Teresa Jungman. © NPG London.
An inevitable comparison with Agincourt [King Henry V, 3.1. France. Before Harfleur.]

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
Or close the wall up with our English dead.
In peace there’s nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility:
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger;
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood.

Consider the Cecil Beaton pictures below a snapshot of with whom and when we are concerned.

Most works concerned with the idea of literary generations stop with authors who were fully adult non-combatants (Woolf, Eliot, Pound) or young adults who witnessed the war first hand, in England the likes of Vera Brittain, Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, Herbert Read, Edmund Blunden, right up to the nearly adolescent soldier CS Lewis. I’m suggesting that we might benefit by cutting one more facet to the stone, a ‘micro-generation’—or, I would prefer, a breach generation—between the generation that fought in the Great War and the one that comes after, that some have tried to call the Brideshead generation—without real success—and—with considerable sticking power—the Auden generation.

But before the Audenites, those born too late to be fully aware that there was a home front to the war of 1914-1918, that there were premises and privations that depended on the accident of war rather than the inevitable exigencies of nature, Robert Wohl dubbed the

Generation of 1914 … students packing off to war with flowers in their rifles and patriotic songs on their lips, too young, too innocent to suspect what bloody rites of passage awaited them; of trenchfighters whose twisted smiles and evasive glances revealed their close companionship with death … a generation missing, sacrificed, decimated, destroyed ‘for an old bitch gone in the teeth, for a botched civilization’.

As Ezra Pound so tendentiously complained in Mauberly. The paradigm for this generation was set most emphatically by Paul Fussell who took as an unshakeable premise that:

The Great War took place in what was, compared with ours, a static world, where the values appeared stable and where the meanings of abstractions seemed permanent and reliable. Everyone knew what Glory was, and what Honor meant.

Afterwards, one presumes, the world is dynamic, values unstable, and meanings apt to disintegrate before one can make full sense of them or act on them. The locus classicus for the threshold of the new age is Beaumont Hamel, the mid-point of the Somme butchery in mid-1916 – the battle began on the middle day of the year – and it’s made into an aggressively sentimental generational icon by psychiatrist Dick Diver in F Scott Fitzgerald’s Tender Is the Night:

This western-front business couldn’t be done again, not for a long time. The young men think they could do it but they couldn’t. They could fight the first Marne again but not this. This took religion and years of plenty and tremendous sureties and the exact relation that existed between the classes. The Russians and Italians weren’t any good on this front. You had to have a whole-souled sentimental equipment going back further than you could remember. You had to remember Christmas, and postcards of the Crown Prince and his fiancée, and little cafés in
Valence and beer gardens in Unter den Linden and weddings at the mairie, and going to the Derby, and your grandfather’s whiskers.

And can’t you just hear the younger brother, the one who apparently ‘couldn’t’, saying yatata yatata yatata. Indeed, the sentimental posture is open to those whose adulthood was transformed by the war, for example Abe North, the inebriate American composer, a Yankee Constant Lambert, who provokes Dick Diver with his sardonic comment: “There are lots of people dead since and we’ll all be dead soon,” said Abe consolingly.

Next there is a group which I identify as the breach generation, the segment of artists and writers who come fully into their own during the entre deux guerres or even after World War Two.

In sorting through the question of whether there was a Powell generation, I am primarily concerned with a group of English artists, almost all men, who were born into generally privileged situation between 1900 and 1906. They are adolescents during the Great War, aware of the sacrifices being made for them, and aware that if the war continues they will almost inevitably be called up and stand a two in three chance of being killed or permanently injured. This is their common feature: at the threshold of manhood they experienced the paradox of being guilty beneficiaries and even yet likely victims. Even entering Eton, they could predict that the war would probably still be there for them.

The breach is remarkably narrow. Siblings older by a few years were Edwardian; siblings younger by a few years frank post-war modernists.

CS Lewis, born 1898, was a subaltern in the Somerset Light Infantry and arrived at the Somme on his nineteenth birthday. He is too old.

Henry Moore, also born in 1898, was the youngest soldier in the Prince of Wales Own Civil Service Rifles when gassed at Cambrai in 1917. (Below, bas relief *West Wind*, 1928, St. James Park Underground Station.)

Auden, born in 1907, is too young, and so is anyone else from that year or after for the war ends before adolescence could have properly begun.

So far, a reasonable person would have to object that little seems to unify this group except the accident of being male, born between 1900 and 1906, and—most likely—at Eton during the Great War. However, it may be that generational friction makes the most heat at a point of contact where difference in chronological age may be small but difference in experience is large. For example, Michael Barber in his life of Powell comments that Maurice Bowra, born 1898, had served in the war . . . and this gave him an authority that character alone could not have achieved. His hedonism was not simply the product of his Hellenism, it was the affirmation of someone who had stared into the abyss. ‘Whatever you hear about the
war,’ he told Cyril Connolly, ‘remember it was far worse: inconceivably bloody—nobody who wasn’t there can imagine what it was like.’

Convinced as they might be of the merits of their own generation, Powell and his fellows always knew that [trench warfare] was one rite of passage they would never have to experience. [Barber, 41]

A fact plain to most veterans of the Great War, Bowra survived mostly likely because he was in the artillery, and as mired as he may have been in blood and guts, he was the less vulnerable than the foot which served with Graves, Sassoon, Blunden, Owen, and Manning. Powell, meanwhile, by virtue of a father who was a career officer, and who deployed forward early in the war until invalided and reassigned to staff after dysentery, understood in a personal way the extraordinary rate of casualties. In the first volume of his memoirs, *Infants of Spring*, he recalled:

I have quite often come across persons of my own age, even a year or two older, both male and female, who say that as children they were scarcely aware of World War I taking place; beyond a dim memory of chocolate in short supply. Such is not my own experience. For me the impact of the war was menacing from the beginning … The killed were often fathers of children who had come to tea, or subalterns remembered as chatting in the hall while they changed into tennis-show. Life seemed all at once geared to forces implacable and capricious, their peril not to be foretold. [Infants, 19]

Of course, Powell would not be alone in that susceptibility. Henry Green, for example – by virtue of a delicate and gloomy temperament and the proximity of his grammar school in Kent to the distant booming of the western front – had ample morbid imagination. For other youngsters, a mere brother, father, cousin, uncle at the front would irrevocably endow life with a fear of “forces implacable and capricious.” For this crowd, with which I concern myself, that emotional menace, that moral instability, would be the lasting consequence of the war. The mark a sharp finite limit to Gertrude Stein’s “Lost Generation.”

Accepting in broad terms Samuel Hynes’ election of WH Auden as the most important author among “men and women born in England between 1900 and the First World War,” I simply want to claim a special characteristic for those born between 1900 and 1906, partly because this helps me to understand what’s up with Anthony Powell, but also because when allied with other prose writers in his cohort— they are George Orwell, Evelyn Waugh, Henry Green, and Graham Greene—this gang of five, on the face of it so diverse in temperament, politics, and aesthetics, take on a remarkable set of similarities. For example, I believe they may be the first to fully grasp and respond to the idea, as Modris Eksteins puts it, that
Our century is one in which life and art have blended, in which existence has become aestheticised. History … has surrendered much of its former authority to fiction.

I will soon make some cursory comments about the other authors, but to mince matters no longer I think that of the crowd Anthony Powell’s *Dance* more thoroughly and imaginatively grasps the special quality of nostalgia and irony that comes of arriving at adulthood in the immediate wake of a cultural catastrophe. Just a few more years and there would be no sense of promises broken or assumptions overthrown. Rather, there would be the normative condition of modernity, which suggests Edward Mendelsohn is right in saying that

[Auden] was the first English writer who absorbed all the lessons of modernism, but also understood its limits, and chose to turn elsewhere.

Yet it is not the case that these largely privileged young men dumped their talents and their family’s money into distractions as they draped themselves in silk and wrapped themselves around each other. (Waugh and Green appear to have tried to ruin their art but were too naturally given to work to quite pull off dissipation and dilettantism.)

And yet here are some Bright Young Do-littles: Stephen Tennant (b. 1906), Brian Howard (b. 1905), Harold Acton (b. 1904) – the second and third being Martin Green’s dynamic duo – drivers of cultural transformation, English identity, and aesthetic adaptation to the conditions of modernity and the post-catastrophic reconstruction of English literary life after 1918.

More than thirty years after *Children of the Sun*, there seems something impertinent to picking delightful and flamboyant wastrels as representatives of their class, culture, and historical moment, and with Waugh, Green, Orwell, Greene, and Powell to choose among, one cannot claim to show that a certain type of experience, appropriate to a certain mode of being, was cultivated by the [the children of the sun] who felt that they were the generation of English writers growing up after the War; who convinced most of their contemporaries who care about books that they were right; and who, therefore, established a new identity for ‘England’.

Sorry, I don’t buy it. They did little, and too much by too many others endures.

Even in this slim slice this was an extraordinary generation. It was, for example, also a good moment for English music. Among the most notable were Gerald Finzi, village elegist and urbanophobe lost to Hodgkin’s and chickenpox, (1901-1956); William Walton, bright young thing, famous for music for Sitwell’s *Façade*, and probably the most aggressively modernist of the lot (1902-1983): Constant Lambert, friend of Powell, paramour of Margot Fonteyn, rogue, lush, and medico-paranoiac (1905-1951); and the venerable
Michael Tippett, commie, conschie, and openly homosexual, quite the most nearly level of the group (1905-1998).

It was rich in visual artists as well: Christopher Wood (1901-1930), Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975), John Piper (1903-1992), and Rex Whistler (b. 1905), painter of the café mural at the Tate, the most sardonic of the lot, and of them all the one who, dying at Normandy in 1944, punctiliously fulfilled Henry Green’s gloomiest prediction. Some of us indeed must die soon.

It would be interesting to chart the relations and reactions of poets and others, say C Day Lewis over against WH Auden, or critic Cyril Connolly (b. 1903) over against Stephen Spender (b. 1909) at the risk of losing focus or a hard edge to the thesis. This is a conference on Powell, so I limit myself to prose narratives. That said, I have come to believe that the underlying tangle of self, culture, moment, and nationalist mayhem is something only a novelist can fairly approach. And perhaps only a novelist with a strikingly large sheet to write upon. Powell has an especially successful method. For example, here are two passages from initial pages of widely separate novels in the Dance.

Crossing the road by the bombed-out public house on the corner and pondering the mystery which dominates vistas framed by a ruined door, I felt for some reason glad the place had not yet been rebuilt. A direct hit had excised even the ground floor, so that the basement was revealed as a sunken garden, or site of archaeological excavation long abandoned, where great sprays of willow herb and ragwort flowered through cracked paving stones; only a few broken milk bottles and a laceless boot recalling contemporary life. In the midst of this sombre grotto five or six fractured steps had withstood the explosion and formed a projecting island of masonry on the summit of which rose the door. Walls on both sides were shrunk away, but along its lintel, in niggling copybook handwriting, could still be distinguished the word Ladies. Beyond, on the far side of the twin pillars and crossbars, nothing whatever remained of that promised retreat, the threshold falling steeply to an abyss of rubble; a triumphal arch erected laboriously by dwarfs, or the gateway to some unknown, forbidden domain, the lair of sorcerers. [CCR, 1]

Reverting to the university at forty, one immediately recaptured all the crushing melancholy of the undergraduate condition. As the train drew up at the platform, before the local climate had time to impair health, academic contacts disturb the spirit, a more imminent gloom was re-established, its sinewy grip in a flash making one young again. Depressive symptoms, menacing in all haunts or youth, were in any case easily aroused at this period, to be accepted as delayed action of the last six years. The odd thing was how distant the recent past had also become, the army now as stylised in the mind . . . as the legionaries of Trajan’s Column, exercising, sacrificing, sweating at their antique fatigues, silent files on eternal parade to soundless military music.
Nevertheless, shades from those days still walked abroad … A residuum of the experience was inevitable. Meanwhile, traditional textures of existence were laboriously patched together in an attempt to reaffirm some sort of personal identity, however blurred. [BDFR, 1-2]

For those of you who love to luxuriate, as I do, in front of a Powell tableau, I apologize for hastening on, drawing from the *Casanova* passage the ironic conflation of ancient ruins with a bombed out public house, or the lintel to a public Ladies and the threshold of an abyss of rubble with squalor of an unattended accident of war. And to cast the leftover doorway as a “triumphal arch erected laboriously by dwarfs” suggests a potent metaphor for the melancholy vanity of modern civilization. That “depressive symptom” characterizes the return to civilian life after the second war, where again “the traditional textures of existence were laboriously patched together in an attempt to reaffirm some sort of personal identity, however blurred.”

In place of the feverish sodomies and frantic costumes and postures of the Children of the Sun, the key ideas here are mystery, melancholy, menace, sobriety, experience, inevitability, labor, and identity. Not to put to fine a point on it: Anthony Powell mans up. Rather than again nominating the naughty boys Tennant, Howard, and Acton, it makes more sense to suggest that the patron saint of the breach generation is Powell’s friend, the professional curmudgeon, Malcolm Muggeridge:

Among the classic *bon mots* by Malcolm Muggeridge several of his aphorisms resonate remarkably with Powell’s passage on the bombed out pub in *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant*:

- Every happening, great and small, is a parable whereby God speaks to us, and the art of life is to get the message.
- It was a sombre place, haunted by old jokes and lost laughter. Life, as I discovered, holds no more wretched occupation than trying to make the English laugh.

The second one seems a jab at Widmerpool himself:

- He was not only a bore; he bored for England.

Others reflect a sweetly sardonic morbidity that reminds one that Waugh and Green are close by:

- One of the many pleasures of old age is giving things up.
- St Teresa of Avila described our life in this world as like a night at a second-class hotel.

And one in particular I would be willing to read as Muggeridge’s gloss on Powell’s twelfth and final *Hearing Secret Harmonies*: 

---
The trouble with kingdoms of heaven on earth is that they’re liable to come to pass, and then their fraudulence is apparent for all to see. We need a kingdom of heaven in Heaven, if only because it can’t be realized.

Indeed in *Recalling 1939* Muggeridge might well be Jenkins, mixing dynamic images of an apocalyptic landscape with the ordinary artifacts of English life such as Big Ben and voices on the radio. The attitude to adopt in face of the end of time is one of phlegmatic irony. Hush up, bear up, that’s what one does:

As nearly always happens with long-awaited excitements, war, when at last it came, proved an anti-climax. After all the apocalyptic warnings delivered on so many solemn occasions from so many solemn throats, we confidently expected the sky to darken, Big Ben to be silenced, and destruction to fall about us with sheets of flame and mighty roarings as of a tempest. . . . we were at war fighting against all the evil things in the world and for all the good ones. [*Recalling 1939*, 72]

Henry Vincent Yorke (Green), 1905-1973, in his auto biography *Pack My Bag*:

I was born a mouth-breather with a silver spoon in 1905, three years after one war and nine before another, too late for both. But not too late for the war which seems to be coming upon us now and that is a reason to put down what comes to mind before one is killed, and surely it would be too much to pretend one had a chance to live. [5]

We who must die soon, or so it seems to me, should chase our memories back, standing, when they are found, enough apart not to be too near what they once meant. Like the huntsman, on a hill and when he blows his horn, like him some way away from us. [143]

But as life became more mysterious it become more frightening and I think it is interesting that because they had been through air raids without one bomb being dropped within seventy miles boys should see what they took to be malignant ghosts of those who had died for them drifting across their playing fields. [46]

Politically, at 180 degrees, is Eric Arthur Blair, George Orwell, 1903-1950. Nowhere is it more apparent that English intellect had recorded the necessity to recognize and resist the new malignancies of the twentieth century, the new premise that wars were not military engagements, rather the object of the bombardment was seemingly the demoralization of the civil population and the destruction of the cradle of the Basque race.

as George Steer framed the barbarity of modernity in his famous dispatch from Guernica.

Yet in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) Orwell figures out that the archaic mannerisms can still conceal one from the impolitic present. Of his volunteer service as a Republican partisan in Spain, he recalled:
It was an extraordinary, insane existence that we were leading. By night we were criminals, but by day we were prosperous English visitors—that was our pose, anyway. Even after a night in the open, a shave, a bath, and a shoe-shine do wonders with your appearance. The safest thing at present was to look as bourgeois as possible. We frequented the fashionable residential quarter of the town, where our faces were not known, went to expensive restaurants, and were very English with the waiters.

And this was not simply a lesson about foreign wars, foreign places, or people of other races. Orwell went to Spain having declared in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) that the sane person accepted and adapted to new fundamental realities of social life:

The machine-civilization is here, and it can only be criticized from the inside, because all of us are inside it. It is only romantic fools who natter themselves that they have escaped, like the literary gent in his Tudor cottage with bathroom h. and c., and the he-man who goes off to live a ‘primitive’ life in the jungle with a Mannlicher rifle and four wagon-loads of tinned food. And almost certainly the machine-civilization will continue to triumph. [...] It is meaningless to oppose Socialism on the ground that you object to the beehive State, for the beehive State is here. The choice is not, as yet, between a human and an inhuman world. It is simply between Socialism and Fascism, which at its very best is Socialism with the virtues left out.

Evelyn Waugh, 1903-1966, is probably the only other serious contender in this unserious game of “name first boy” in the class of 1920. In *Brideshead Revisited*, he utterly captures the lassitude that overcomes the melancholic survivor, the wanderer in modernity with just enough experience of an old way of being to be overwhelmed by the insufficiencies of the here and now:

How ungenerously in later life we disclaim the virtuous moods of our youth, living in retrospect long, summer days of unreflecting dissipation, Dresden figures of pastoral gaiety! Our wisdom, we prefer to think, is all of our own gathering, while, if the truth be told, it is, most of it, the last coin of a legacy that dwindles with time.

Waugh, however, soon confessed that *Brideshead*, written in wartime, was too tactlessly nostalgic, too lush with fantasy, too much lurking about the basilica vestibule hoping for crumbs of heaven:

It was a bleak period of present privation and threatening disaster – the period of soya beans and Basic English – and in consequence the book is infused with a kind of gluttony, for food and wine, for the splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language which now, with a full stomach, I find distasteful.

Waugh’s *bona fides* depend on *Brideshead*; indeed, Humphrey Carpenter’s portrait of the coterie in *The Brideshead Generation* concerns itself less with
the endurance of Catholic verities in the age of fascism than with the travails
and hijinks of vile bodies and the serio-comic melancholies of Pinfolds and
more with issues of struggle and grace. Waugh’s masterpiece is the least
Waugh-like of his works, weirdly as if stoicism and the cosmic long-view are
wartime luxuries, and religion in peacetime a swindle like a gin fizz or an
interlude with Pamela Flitton. By contrast, for Powell, the war is integral, a
fulcrum, crucial like education, money, marriage. If the secret harmonies are
what pass for God in Dance, they are no more or less vertical and
architectural in war than at any other time. As he promised us obliquely in his
dismissal of the similarity between Dance and Remembrance of Things Past,
ever will the work be swamped by ego, and never, one adds with a sad
recognition of the costs of history, will the death of one person alter the
course of events, at least not for long.

In contemplating such sorry stuff, we should mention one last heavyweight
contender, Graham Greene; in Ministry of Fear (1943), his evaluation of the
inevitable losses of childhood seems universal:

> Behind the complicated details of the world stand the simplicities: God is
good, the grown-up man or woman knows the answer to every question,
there is such a thing as truth, and justice is as measured and faultless as a
clock. Our heroes are simple: they are brave, they tell the truth, they are
good swordsmen and they are never in the long run really defeated. That
is why no later books satisfy us like those which were read to us in
childhood—for those promised a world of great simplicity of which we
knew the rules, but the later books are complicated and contradictory
with experience; they are formed out of our own disappointing
memories.

What to do when confronted with the cheap clutter of modernity:

> We mustn’t complain too much of being comedians–it’s an honourable
profession. If only we could be good ones the world might gain at least a
sense of style. We have failed—that’s all. We are bad comedians, we
aren’t bad men. [The Comedians]

To draw these five together – Muggeridge, Green, Orwell, Waugh, and
Greene – it is apparent that usually we mark the distinctions among them.
I’m trying to suggest instead a deep current of melancholy, anxiety, and
yearning that unites them. Finally, there is also a corresponding current of
stoicism, courage, and self-effacement that is the second and other crucial
generational marker. I hope that it’s no surprise that my nomination of
Anthony Powell as “first boy” is that he grasps, explores, and articulates the
‘temporary kingdoms’ of modernity against the landscape of nature and
history more acutely and thoroughly than any of the others.

That is why I nominate Powell.
In *Hearing Secret Harmonies* Nick starts a fire to tidy up detritus from yard and house.

“The day was not cold for the season, but an autumnal spell of mild weather—short, though notably warm that year—was now over. It had given place to a continuous wind blowing from the west, dropped the night before, after bringing down a lot of leaves and the sizeable boughs. There was a great stillness everywhere, except for a monotonous thud-thud from the quarry; a persistent low rumble, like a faraway train making laborious headway along a rough stretch of track. White vapour, less thick over by Gauntlett’s farm, where a few ghostly trees penetrated its mists, wholly obscured the quarry’s limestone platforms and Assyrian rampart.

For kindling, I shoved twists of newspaper in at the base of the heap. At the moment of ignition, the match flared against capital letters of a headline displayed on the outward surface of one of these scraps of newsprint.

**EDWARDIAN SYMBOLIST**
**SEASCAPE VOTARIES**

[HSH, 243-244]

Says Nick:

Well Persepolis isn’t unlike Battersea Power Station in silhouette. An industrial parallel is not excluded out of hand. [HSH, 250]

The key point is the symmetry of the three – antiquity, modernity, and nature excavated to build our follies. Shaped by very different processes, to the patient and forbearing eye they come to look remarkably similar against the background of the fullness of time.
Friends Do Furnish a Novel – Exploring Male Friendships in Dance to the Music of Time

Gabriella Walfridsson

First given at the 5th Biennial Anthony Powell Conference; Washington, DC; September 2009.

I first read Dance to the Music of Time as a young woman in my early twenties, about ten years ago. It opened up an intriguing and for me rather exotic world. Here I was invited into an otherwise closed environment. Not only did it take place in the past, and concerned another country and class than my own, it also allowed me to share the life of Nicholas Jenkins, and through him gain entrance into some of the very male-dominated spaces he and his large number of friends and acquaintances frequented. These male enclosures lured me in, and then of course, quite a lot of plot, narrative and characters held my interest. Since then I’ve returned again and again to the world of Dance, always finding new aspects of the novel. Still, the male relationships within it continue to intrigue me, and they are what I chose to study in my currently work-in-progress Master thesis. This paper is based on the work I’ve been doing for that thesis.

My paper moves from a somewhat general discussion of some philosophical and sociological theories on male friendship, to how these theories tie in with ideas expressed in Dance – especially Nick’s musings on friendship in both The Soldiers’ Art and Hearing Secret Harmonies, where he for example explores the differences between “friendships of youth” and “friendships of later life”. I also connect the theories to several male friendships within the novel, mostly those directly involving Nicholas Jenkins, though I will also explore the interesting dynamics between J.G. Quiggin and Mark Members. Finally, while doing this, I discuss my own categorization of the male friendships depicted in Dance, paying special attention to time and space as factors for their beginnings.

Theories of friendship seem ever present throughout history. The usual Greeks have written about it, with both Plato and Aristotle discussing philia, usually translated as “friendship” though really a much broader concept. Aristotle moves on to categorizes three different kinds of friendship: those of utility, those of pleasure and those of good. For him the important differences could be found in the underlying motive for forming a friendship, and he considered “the friendships of good” the most noble, where both persons concerned enjoyed each other’s characters equally. This final category is probably what most people today would consider true friendship to be.

Yet the need to examine friendship as a concept continued through the ages. There seems to exist a constant uncertainty about what actually can be considered to be true friendship. How to define it, and especially how it
differs from love, and from everyday interactions with mere acquaintances, are questions that philosophers return to again and again. The Roman Cicero writes about friendship in his famous *De amicitia*, and continues the quest for finding a proper definition of it. For him *virtue* is something fundamental for a well-functioning friendship – indeed he even claims that “friendship cannot exist except among good men”. Cicero also considers friendship as something that is supposed to last for life, so it’s important to choose one’s friends wisely. But how free are we really in our choices of friends? For Powell’s characters in *Dance* it seem so often matters of circumstance. It is hard to find reasons of choice or underlying motivation in the fact that Jenkins belongs to Le Bas’ house at school, or that he there shares his meals with Charles Stringham and Peter Templar and thus cements two of the most significant friendships in *Dance*. Or later when he runs into Widmerpool again in France - that perfect example of Powellian coincidence - and there first starts to change his perception of the man who will haunt his life all through *Dance*. It is in the episode in France that Jenkins’ very reluctant friendship with Widmerpool really begins. In Powell’s world matters of chance remain one of the driving forces of life. We meet the people we meet, and some of them we strike up friendships with. 

In Montaigne’s *Essays* male friendship is heralded as the epitome of relationships, and indeed most of the philosophers writing about friendship take it for granted that the friendships they discuss are those between men. It was very much a question of culture of course; from the free men of Greece and onwards cultural production has been in the power of privileged men. It is first with the change in powers and ideals in the 18th century that something seems to be happening. Masculinity comes into focus again, and the social roles of men seem to both open up yet become more restricted. Accepted behaviour between friends changes, and that dreaded thing called sexual identity becomes a factor. It becomes vital to position oneself within the male hegemony, and in late Victorian times male intimacy becomes tainted with a cloud of homosexual panic. It is indeed a strange position, where homosocial environments like the military, the emerging world of sports, and traditional places of education were revered as institutions of strong masculine ideals, yet the hearty manliness that becomes the norm within these institutions, moves men away from the earlier ideas of intimate friendships. Maybe it was a case of the group taking the place of the individual; the team, battalion, class or even nation becomes more important than the individual player. Even though times have changed since then there is still much residue of these ideas left. Many contemporary theories on male friendship – especially from the English speaking world, see for example those by Connell, Nardi or Kimmel – concern the lack of security within modern male identities. The sociologist Peter Nardi especially mentions the changes that men’s friendships have gone through in the last two centuries, and how men have become more and more
restricted when it comes to showing affection for other men. Yet this “crisis of masculinity” is questioned in its turn, explained away by changing conceptions, and apparently being just as much a recurring theme as the questions about the essence of friendship. Still, it is interesting to note that for example Geoffrey Greif in his friendship study from 2008 – called Buddy System: Men and their male friendships – writes about how when he casually asked around for ideas on male friendships he got the answer “men don’t have friends”. His study certainly sets out to disprove that statement. Interestingly enough Grief too falls into the historical tradition of trying to define friendship, finding four different categories among the friendships described in the almost 400 interviews of the study.

As a contrast to these English speaking theorists, a European continental approach to friendship that seems far less worried about insecure masculinities, can be found in the works of the Italian philosopher Francesco Alberoni. In Alberoni’s On friendship the bonds between male friends are still strong; for him there is none more important in a man’s life than his friend. Here we come back to Montaigne’s ideas on friendship and the strong love apparent in those relationships.

Placing Powell somewhere in between Nardi and Alberoni, it is possible to find both traditions within Dance. The classical philosophers are definitely present in the cultural rucksacks of Jenkins and his contemporaries. They are formed and educated within the ideal of the English Gentleman, which Christine Berberich explored so thoroughly in her recent book The Image of the English Gentleman in Twentieth-Century Literature. A restrained character, no public displays of affection, chivalrous attitudes to the other sex etc are such typical ideals. Yet there is also an expected acceptance of the Old Boys’ network, and the ideas of everlasting friendships made at school and university. In Dance, Widmerpool seems sometimes as the most modern in his refusal to acknowledge these networks when it comes to promotions, for example when Jenkins asks for help by alluding to their school days at the start of the war, and earlier in Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant where Widmerpool makes it very clear that his choice of doctor has nothing to do with old school ties.

Returning to the classical philosophers in Dance, traces of Hegel’s ideas on the friendships of youth can be found in Jenkins’ musings on friendship “made before thirty” not being like those of later years. Hegel writes about the intense friendships of youth – where two friends never can make a decision without the other – in his Aesthetics, and that such feelings are always lacking in mature relationships. This mirrors Jenkins’ ideas on youthful friendships, with the openness of mind and total acceptance of the other – “for the age when both parties begin more or less to know (or at least think they know) what the other is talking about” – and the contrasting restrictions Jenkins finds in his friendships of later years. Early on in Hearing Secret Harmonies
Jenkins wonders if he as a contemporary would have been friends with Scorpio Murtlock – “had not some forty years stretched between us” – and answers that “indications were at best doubtful”. It is not Scorpio’s appearance, his clothes or way of talking that is problematic for Jenkins; those are the very things that youthful friendships could have overlooked. The older Jenkins feels that Scorpio’s ominous side is what’s objectionable, and what he probably wouldn’t have liked even as a young man. Later, with Jenkins contemplating his relationship with Gibson Delavacquerie, and especially his knowledge of Delavacquerie’s sexual arrangements, we come to the very passage where Jenkins contrasts friendships of later life with those “negotiated before thirty”. Mature friendships are “apt to be burdened with reservations, constraints, inhibitions”. It is for example no longer possible to ask right out with whom someone is sleeping. In the friendships of earlier years conversations flow more freely and hardly any social restraints censor topics of conversation. Jenkins even finds thirty too late a watershed. He goes on to compare these earlier friendships to love affairs – “with all sexual elements removed” – since they can “exist with scarcely an interest in common, mutual misunderstandings of character and motive all but absolute”.

The contrast between love and friendship is mentioned already in volume eight of Dance; The Soldier’s Art. The rather sombre passage where Jenkins wonders how Moreland is doing after the break-up of his and Matilda’s marriage, calls attention to the fact that friendship needs nourishment, just like love. What is “popularly represented as something simple and straightforward – in contrast with love – is perhaps no less complicated.” Like love, friendship according to Jenkins, carry it’s own “seeds of dissolution, something more fundamentally destructive, perhaps, than the mere passing of time”. That is also what he finds has happened between Stringham and himself; the war, matters of circumstance, chance, have put them at such different positions during the war that it is almost impossible to remain true friends.

In The Kindly Ones Jenkins again expresses concern over the possible fragility of friendship, wondering if his earlier relationship with Peter Templar will survive a renewal or if Peter may have changed too much. I felt pleasure in the thought that I was going to see him again, tempered by that faint uneasiness about meeting a friend who may have changed too much during the interval of absence to make practicable any renewal of former ties.

Looking at the different approaches to friendship I’ve discussed so far, it is difficult not to start doing my own categorizations. It seems impossible not to create boxes to put the novel’s relationships in; with time and space being the defining factors. When and where the friendships were started are for me the key to the friendship movements in Dance, with three or possibly four stages to go through. The social structures of spatial segregation, to borrow Daphne
Spain’s concept from urban planning, sets the first stage from the very beginning of Dance. In *A Question of Upbringing*, when Kenneth Widmerpool comes running out of the mist, and Jenkins makes his way into the school house, to join Stringham in front of the fire in their room, they position themselves in the male-dominated space of the boarding school. Uncle Giles’ unannounced visit, and Peter Templer’s London adventure, breaks up the rigidity of the space, yet keeps the male dominance intact. Le Bas’ house is the founding fortress of the early friendships of youth in the novel. Later the spatial segregation continues at university; Sillery’s tea parties may extend the social circle, pushing both Mark Members and J.G. Quiggin into the narrative, but the main characters are still caught up in their male friendships of youth. The next stage of friendship is the professional one, starting with Jenkins trying to establish himself in London, and thus entering the more bohemian social circles of art, music and literature production. Here Hugh Moreland stands out as the most interesting and complex character, and Jenkins’ and his relationship makes for many intellectual expositions between them. Moreland is the friend whose opinions Jenkins returns to again and again in his narrative. I would also like to place the volatile friendship between Mark Members and J.G. Quiggin in this category. Their rivalry, begun at university where their aesthetic ideals seem diametric, grows to contain a kind of mutual professional respect. Quiggin, at his second meeting with Jenkins when still at university, is adamant to get to know more about Members; how well does Nick know him, is his poetry any good, does Nick have a copy and can he in such case borrow it? Later, when competing for the post of secretary to St John Clark, their successes and failures mirror each other, and with the passing years they move first into a reluctant truce and then an actual acknowledgement of both kinship and firm friendship. Their competitive relationship is perhaps my favourite fictional friendship in *Dance*.

The military relationships during the War years can be sorted somewhere in between the professional and mature stages of friendship. Odo Stevens, Sunny Farebrother and David Pennistone are all characters whose friendships with Jenkins stand out during that period of time, even if the latter two appear earlier on in the series, if very fleetingly in Pennistones case. But the war trilogy of *Dance* also show a return to yet more spatial segregation, yet more male-dominated spaces, and yet more male characters. There can be found the fascinating relationship between Colonel Pedlar and Colonel Hogbourne-Johnson, whose slapstick-like conversations in *The Soldier’s Art* bring both humour and a lesson in old school manners, and deadly uses of first names. Their “Eric” and “Derrick” turns when discussing what exactly a “pipe of port” is, are unforgettable.

Finally, the last stage of friendship, that of mature age, has been discussed earlier. Here I would like to place not only Nicholas Jenkins’ friendships of
later years, but those of General Conyers, Sir Magnus Donners and maybe in a way Edgar Deacon. Their attitudes to the younger Jenkins mirror the older Jenkins friendships of later years. Sir Magnus reminiscences of earlier school days, and life at the Sorbonne makes him say “only in later life does one learn what a jewel is youth”.

To sum up my paper, through the ages friendship seem to be a very elusive concept, always enticing new definitions and categorizations. Just like manliness and masculinities in their turn. Maybe the fluidity of both concepts makes the allure of studying male friendship even greater - “like everything that’s any good, it has about twenty different meanings” as Stringham says in *The Soldier’s Art*. *Dance to the Music of Time* in its completeness certainly has more than twenty meanings, and more than twenty male friendships. I’ve touched upon just a few of those. One thing seems clear though, that men certainly do have friends. But also that men, just as women, probably would do good to remember Le Bas’ words at the end of *A Question of Upbrining*, where he visits Jenkins unannounced at university. So I end this paper and say with him: “Friendships have to be kept up.”
Epiphanies

_REQUIRED INNER PROCESSES, THE COLDEST HEART, AND THE MARVELLOUS ROAD TO THE HYPERBOREANS_

Peter Kislinger  
Department of English, University of Vienna  

First given at the 5th Biennial Anthony Powell Conference; Washington, DC; September 2009.

One of the prejudices – and I am using the term with a Powellian undertone – of my PhD was that themes, motifs, imagery and narrative technique in Dance are part of a (developing) authorial choreography and should be seen as a unity. One of my main interests was the manifold thematic functions of the complex interrelationships between “story” and “narrative discourse”. The title of my thesis, _Some Truths seem almost Falsehoods and Some Falsehoods almost Truths_, had been inspired by Powell’s remark that Sir Thomas Browne’s paradoxical aphorism “contains in a sense justification of all novel-writing”. Two chapters deal with explicit and implicit quotations from, and allusions to, hermetic, especially Gnostic and alchemical traditions. By allegorising the creative process they link the author with his novel’s narrator.

In VB, Jenkins presents Jenkins, the experiencing self, in two encounters which have a formative influence on him – one with Pennistone and one with Barnby. Jenkins first meets Pennistone on a “gruelling” nocturnal train journey during the war. Jenkins sums up his conversation about the French writer Alfred de Vigny with David Pennistone in words the far-reaching consequences of which for himself he does not fully comprehend until his encounter with Barnby: “[T]he individual still counts, even in the army.” Pennistone agrees: “Although consigned to circumstances in which, theoretically, no individuality – though much will-power – exists” [VB, 116].

I think I can safely assume we all agree that a mere summary of the themes and motives touched on, or alluded to, in the conversations with Pennistone and Barnby is crudely reductive and thus fails to give an impression of their

---

1 Gérard Genette, _Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method_, (1980) (= Discours du récit, Paris 1972), 25; narratology, for Genette, is “essentially ... a study of the relationships between the narrative and narrating, and (to the extent that they are inscribed in the narrative discourse) between story and narrating.” [Genette, _Narrative Discourse_, 29]


naturalistic rendering. The passages are prime examples of what I call either “spiritual naturalism” (I borrow the term from Joris-Karl Huysmans’ des Esseintes, the novelist in À rebours) or “extended naturalism” (borrowing the term from the Austrian novelist Hermann Broch).

When Jenkins compares his career with how Barnby has fared in the army, he felt a pang. Barnby was a few years older than myself. I had nothing so lively to report. [VB, 118]

What follows is a breathtakingly sober self-analysis, which marks a new stage in Jenkins’s development. Carl Gustav Jung, on the prerequisites of such a stage:

the first step is to make oneself conscious of contents that have hitherto been projected. This endeavour gradually leads … to self-knowledge, and so to a distinction between what one really is and … what one imagines oneself to be.  

---

4 See Powell on Albert Camus’ novel La peste: “much of the time we feel that the writer is dealing with abstractions rather than with men. The author’s general thesis is that people are always ‘working from morn till night and then proceeding to fritter away at card-tables, in cafés and in small-talk what time is left for living.’ To cure the world of such behaviour would certainly be a tall order; and if we understand Mr. Camus rightly, it is only on obviously disastrous occasions such as the outbreak of plague that the way of duty is made clear to many who would otherwise have little idea what to do with their lives. This we take to be a distinctly romantic doctrine; and much of the dialogue, by its deliberate disregard for naturalism, supports this view:

“You know, doctor, I've given a lot of thought to your campaign. And if I'm not with you, I have my reasons ... No I don't think it's that I'm afraid to risk my skin again. I took part in the Spanish civil war.”

“On what side?” Tarrou asked.

“The losing side. But since then I've done a bit of thinking.”

“About what?”

“Courage. I know that a man is capable of great deeds. But if he isn't capable of great emotion, well, he leaves me cold.”

“One had the idea that he is capable of everything”, Tarrou remarked.

“I can’t agree: he’s capable of suffering for a long time, or being happy for a long time. Which means that he's incapable of anything really worthwhile.” He looked at the two men in turn, then asked: “Tell me, Tarrou, are you capable of dying for love?”

Such conversations surely belong to a romantic mood.” [Powell, “Plague in Oran”, TLS, 4 September 1948, 497]

5 Broch contends that while naturalism tends to take into account only the “outer world“ (reducing people merely to products of their genes and their social as well historical circumstances) an “extended“ naturalism needs to include their “inner world“, too. [Hermann Broch, “Was sollen wir tun?”, Gesammelte Werke in 10 Bänden, Band 6. Dichten und Erkennen, Essays Band I, (1955), 227]

Jenkins may initially have felt envy of Pennistone’s capacity for work in spite of the war\(^7\) but eventually accepts (his) dependence on social, historic and personal factors:

> Whatever inner processes are required for writing novels, so far as I myself was concerned, war now utterly inhibited. That was one of the many disagreeable aspects of war. It was not only physically inescapable, but morally inescapable too. [VB, 120]

His self-distancing comparison with Pennistone and Barnby culminates in a credo concerning the relationship between oneself and the times one is born into, an understanding of the requirements imposed on the individual by society in times of war and peace.

Why did one envy Barnby his operational flights? That was an absorbing question. Certainly not because one wanted to be killed, nor yet because the qualities of those who excel in violent action were the qualities to which one had any claim. For that matter such qualities were not specially Barnby’s. There was perhaps the point. Yet it was absurd to regard war as a kind of competition of just that sort between individuals. If that was the aim in war; why not in peace? No doubt there were plenty of individuals who felt that sort of emulation in peacetime too, but their preoccupations were not one’s own. Looked at calmly, war created a situation in which the individual – if he wished to be on the winning side – was of importance only in so much as he contributed to the requirements of the machine, not according to the picturesque figure he cut in the eyes of himself and others. It was no more reasonable, if you were not that sort of person, to aspire to lead a cavalry charge, than, without without [sic] specific training, split the atom. All the same, as Pennistone had said, these things are largely a matter of the will. I thought of Dr Trelawney, the magician, the night Duport and I had helped him to bed after his asthma attack, when he had quoted [Eliphas Lévi] as all that was necessary: ‘To know, to dare, to will, to be silent.’ Armed with those emblems of strength, one might, however out of character, lead a cavalry charge, perhaps even corner the pepper market and split the atom too. Anyway, I thought, it would be a dull world if no one ever had dreams of glory. Moreland was fond of quoting Nietzsche’s opinion that there is no action without illusion. Arrival at Aldershot brought an end to these reflections. [VB, 120-21]

In terms both of content and form, the passage draws on key-figures of European thought. In seemingly ad-hoc phrases, Cartesian mediations and Nietzsche’s “Will to Power” join forces, achieving the intended result, in an

\(^7\) “I envied Pennistone, who could turn from war to Descartes, and back again, without perceptible effort. I knew myself incapable of writing a line of a novel – by then I had written three or four – however long released from duty.” [VB, 120]
ironic, roundabout, way, by being expressed in the hermetic mumbo-jumbo of the 19th-century “magus” Eliphas Lévi.⁸

There is an essential parallel between Descartes’ *Discours de la Méthode* and Jenkins’s reflective discourse. The latter, too, can be read as a “history ..., a tale ..., a meditation”⁹ on the ways and means of “finding [one’s] own true self.” Pennistone confesses to writing “something awfully boring about Descartes”, which he, self-deprecatingly, dismisses as “really not worth discussing. *Cogito ergo sum*, and all that.” (VB 114)

Descartes, raised and educated by Jesuits, uses secularized language insisting on the primacy of *mutatio mentis*:¹⁰ “I have never contemplated anything higher than the reformation of my own opinions”¹¹ (in contrast to the Widmerpools of the world, “those restless and busy meddlers who, called neither by birth nor fortune to take part in the management of public affairs, are yet always projecting reforms”.¹² Jenkins, in his train meditation, in fact comes close to what Descartes called his “provisory code of morals, composed of three or four maxims” concerning the relationship of individual and society:

The first was to obey the laws and customs of my country ... regulating my conduct in every other matter according to the most moderate opinions, and the farthest removed from extremes, which should happen to be adopted in practice with general consent of the most judicious of those among whom I might be living. For ... I was convinced that I could not do better than follow in the meantime the opinions of the most judicious; and although there are some perhaps among the Persians and Chinese as judicious as among ourselves, expediency seemed to dictate that I should regulate my practice conformably to the opinions of those with whom I should have to live ... Also, amid many opinions held in equal repute, I chose always the most moderate, as much for the reason that these are always the most convenient for practice, and probably the best, (for all excess is generally vicious,) as that, in the event of my falling into error, I might be at less distance from the truth than if, having

---

⁸ Lévi plagiarizes Plato’s scheme reason, courage, desire; which is echoed in the three stage-models of the Latin mythographer and allegorist Fulgentius (contemplativa, activa, voluptaria) and in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola’s reason, strength, sensibility. (See Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, London 1958, 99) For Powell’s knowledge of Edgar Wind’s study and other Warburg Institute scholars see his *Daily Telegraph* reviews: 27 February 1959; 08 March 1963; 06 December 1963; 29 October 1964; 27 April 1972; 21 December 1972.

⁹ [http://www.literature.org/authors/descartes-rene/reason-discourse/chapter-02.html](http://www.literature.org/authors/descartes-rene/reason-discourse/chapter-02.html)

¹⁰ The Latin version for the Greek metanoia (changing one’s mind; in religious parlance “repentance”).

¹¹ [http://www.bartleby.com/34/1/2.html](http://www.bartleby.com/34/1/2.html)

¹² [http://www.literature.org/authors/descartes-rene/reason-discourse/chapter-02.html](http://www.literature.org/authors/descartes-rene/reason-discourse/chapter-02.html)
chosen one of the extremes, it should turn out to be the other which I ought to have adopted.\textsuperscript{13}

**The Moment of Primordial Choice: Søren Kierkegaard’s “instant”**

In his memoirs, Powell discloses a real-life model for Pennistone, who is “[a] faint projection of Alick Dru’s personality” \textit{[Faces, 137-143]} – an example of creative metamorphosis, a transmutation, an alchemical process of using biographical material in the framework of a novel, where every single detail is invested with “significance”. For Dru’s study on Kierkegaard, Powell has substituted Pennistone’s study of Descartes, retaining the Danish philosopher’s themes, as well as his narrator’s reflection on the philosophy of individual responsibility.

Jenkins finds himself confronted in the train episode by what Kierkegaard called “the instant”, “the moment of absolute choice”. The choice is between “the aesthetic”, which is associated with the constant search for novelty and pleasure\textsuperscript{14}, while “the ethical” is characterised by “responsibility” and “commitment”.\textsuperscript{15} Commitments, for Kierkegaard, are made by becoming an active participant in society rather than a detached observer or outsider. Kierkegaard’s “ ethicist” has a strong sense of responsibility, of duty and honour as well as respect for his friendships, family, and career.

Kierkegaard’s \textit{Either/Or} is also about the possibility of change that aims at achieving equilibrium necessary for moving on to the “religious sphere.”\textsuperscript{16} Judge Vilhelm’s (i. e. the fictive persona in \textit{Either/Or}) doubly ironic and strictly subjective formulation of “the ideal of the average” depends on the preceding “choice”, the “instant” (and let us keep in mind Jenkins’s Cartesian meditation). His

- “work has meaning for [him], and he believes “that to a certain degree, also has meaning for others”;

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[13]{http://www.bartleby.com/34/1/3.html}
\footnotetext[14]{Some eight or nine years before the episode, Jenkins felt that “[p]erhaps I was irrevocably transfixed … halfway between dissipation and diffidence”. [AW 21]}
\footnotetext[15]{“I myself am the absolute, because I myself can choose absolutely; and this absolute choice of myself is my freedom”. [Søren Kierkegaard, \textit{Either/Or II}, edited and translated by Howard V Hong and Edna H Hong (1987), 200]}
\footnotetext[16]{“Kierkegaard, like Blake, is claimed an early Existentialist, and Dru, believing passionately in individual choice, shared existentialist distaste for abstract thought ... Like Kierkegaard (in whom religious life was the aim), or Nietzsche (with a very different goal), Dru held that mysticism could be approached – was perhaps best approached – through the arts ... Dru would have enjoyed the American poet Delmore Schwartz’s observation: ‘Existentialism means that no one can take a bath for you’.” [\textit{Faces}, 141]}
\end{footnotes}
• He loves his “native country” and his “mother tongue, which liberates [his] thoughts” allowing him to “express extremely well what [he has] to say in the world.”

• “Amidst all this,” he adds, “I also live a higher life ...” (Kierkegaard Either/Or II 290), which is characterised by “intense inwardness.” (Kierkegaard, Either/Or II 298)[17]

Existentialist – Kierkegaardian – ideas were being bandied around in Dance, years before the train episode, being voiced by the clairvoyant Mrs Erdleigh, who admonishes Jenkins that “[p]eople can only be themselves .... If they possessed the same qualities you desire in them they would be different people.” (AW 21) Some time later, Jenkins “reflected, not for the first time, how mistaken it is to suppose there exists some ‘ordinary’ world into which it is possible at will to wander. All human beings are at close range equally extraordinary ...” (AW 91); which comes close to a direct lift from Either/Or: “The genuinely ordinary person is the genuinely extraordinary person. The more universally human an individual can actualize his life, the more extraordinary a human being he is ...” (Kierkegaard, Either/Or II 298) and that “[p]erhaps, after all, when closely examined, no sort of individual life can truly be ... labelled [conventional]” (LM 207), while, five years after the “instant” on the train, confronted with a spate of autobiographies by his middle-aged contemporaries, he first grumbles about those “on the whole unenthralling” chronicles, but then, having second thoughts, qualifies his stricture: “except insomuch as every individual’s story has its enthralling aspect” (BDFR 7) and that “… human life is lived largely at surface level ....” (BM 23)

Does this not sound like the apotheosis of the archetypal philistine petit-bourgeois? What is needed is an epiphany[18], in Kierkegaard’s terminology, the “instant”. Not only does Judge Vilhelm manage to survive but, what is

---

17 Henry James, in the Preface to his The Portrait of a Lady (1908), on such an existence on two levels after Isobel Archer’s “turning point”: “I might show what an ‘exciting’ inward life may do for the person leading it even while it remains perfectly normal.” James mentions the “mystic conversion” of everyday life that, to Isobel Archer, all of a sudden will appear to be new, and the “rare chemistry” of that “choice”. [Quoted in James Miller (ed.), Theory of Fiction: Henry James, 167]

18 Epiphanies are the “best and happiest moments ... always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden”, as Shelley in A Defence of Poetry defines those “evanescent visitations of thought and feeling”. [Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry” in The Oxford Anthology of English Literature, vol. 2 (1973) 759] Jenkins (experiencing self) comes close to a definition of such a state of mind. After the Victory celebration at St. Paul’s, he regrets the absence of “those inner perceptions of a more exalted sort” which are “evasive by their very nature, at best transient enough, but not altogether unknown. They were, in fact, so it seemed to me – unlike that morning in Normandy – entirely absent.” [MP 222-23; my italics]
more, he also feeds on that dreadful insight into some of the realities of “existence”. The suspicion that his insights are smug and complacent is refuted a few pages later by Judge Vilhelm.

What [a person] has lost in extensiveness he may win in intensive inwardness. In other words, not everyone whose life is a mediocre expression of the universal is ... an extraordinary person, for that would be an idolization of triviality; for him to be called that legitimately, some questions must be asked about the intense vitality with which he does this. (Kierkegaard, Either/Or II 298-299)

Judge Vilhelm “bears witness” that the “world” will change for a person choosing, by their own free will, a new “mode of life” (“existence”). By choosing the (subjective) form of a letter, Kierkegaard both offers and withholds an insight as well as avoids advancing normative or even “dogmatic ethics”.

I am no ethical rigorist, enthusiastic about a formal, abstract freedom. If only the choice is posited, all the esthetic [sic] returns, and you will see that only thereby does existence become beautiful, and that this is the only way a person can save his soul and win the whole world, can use the world without misusing it. (Kierkegaard, Either/Or II 161)

What I wanted to do was to show how the ethical in the mixed territories is so far from depriving life of its beauty that it expressly gives it beauty. With this I am through for now. It was never my purpose to present a doctrine of duty. ...

Consider what I have written as a trifle .... If I am anything at all, I am nothing more than a witness, and it is only in this sense that I thought this letter had a certain authority, because the words of one who speaks about what he has experienced have always authority. I am only a witness, and you have my deposition in optima forma. (Kierkegaard, Either/Or II 289-90)

Jenkins leaves the train awakened to a new relationship with society, “the world”, if only in the “war trilogy”. Although Powell does not deny the possibility of (individual) growth, he – and Jenkins, too – remains sceptical about the notion of linear development resulting in a final enlightenment of the self: “One never takes lessons to heart. It’s just a thing people talk about – learning from experience” [VB, 243. Yet readers have often denied to the “experiencing self” what Powell concedes to Jenkins and what has traditionally been at the heart of the European “Bildungsroman” (“novel of education”), ie. the sceptical, yet profoundly humane insight that we cannot be at the peak of our intellectual powers and moral insights all the time.19

---

19 Martin Swales, The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse (1978)
The content of the “instant” can be expressed by necessity only in strictly individual terms. Carl Gustav Jung, who was familiar with Kierkegaard’s writings, came to believe that Gnostic teachings originated in authentic psycho-spiritual experiences of Gnostic writers, that what originates in the psyche bears the imprint of that particular person’s psyche. CG Jung diligently compiled images from mythological, religious, orthodox as well as mystical traditions, describing the process of individuation, which often comes as a shock, a “brightening up”; he reminds us of “heroes” associated with “sun attributes”, and the moment of the birth of the “new person” being described as “illumination” \(^{20}\) (cf. the Mithras cult in VB). It is this birth of the “spiritual man” originally symbolized in the biblical, and later Christian, image of the baptismal act.\(^{21}\) Here is Powell summing up his portrayal of Alick Dru:

Kierkegaard, like Blake, is claimed an early Existentialist, and Dru, believing passionately in individual choice, shared existentialist distaste for abstract thought ... Like Kierkegaard (in whom religious life was the aim), or Nietzsche (with a very different goal), Dru held that mysticism could be approached – was perhaps best approached – through the arts. ... Dru would have enjoyed the American poet Delmore Schwartz’s observation: ‘Existentialism means that no one can take a bath for you’ .... (Powell, *Faces in my Time*, 141)

It is a quite ordinary experience during a humdrum military exercise in Northern Ireland – “naturalistically told” – that brings home to Jenkins that “no one can take a bath” for him. The episode of Jenkins’s failed attempt to cross the canal in Ireland in chapter 3 of *VB* turns out to be a baptism, while its concrete – “individualized” – result is the nocturnal train epiphany. But baptism, change into newness, is a very “ordinary” experience, too, yet “in a quiet way ... sufficiently dramatic” [BM, 130]. Jenkins “started to make the transit,” but “fell in after about three or four yards.” He immediately resigns himself to, almost literally, going with the flow: the “water might have been colder for the time of the year,” so he “swam the rest of the way, reaching the far bank not greatly wetter than the rain had left me”. Then he “swam across again.” On his return to the cowshed “a wonderful surprise was waiting” for him:

“We saved a mug for you, sir. Wet you are, by Christ [!], too.”
I could have embraced him ... *I felt immediately* ten years younger

*[VB, 89-90]*

Typically, Jenkins’s “transit” is later in the chapter merely alluded to – explicitly commented on by neither the experiencing nor the narrating self. First Rev. Popkiss, in his reading from Ezekiel 37, 1-6, refers to birth,

\(^{20}\) As quoted in Jolande Jacobi, *Die Psychologie von CG Jung* (1978), 133

\(^{21}\) Jacobi, *Die Psychologie von CG Jung*, 134
baptism, and rebirth. “Ezekiel’s vision in which the dry bones take on flesh”\textsuperscript{22} means development, and renewal, of a moral, ethical, psychological, spiritual (\textit{etc.}) kind: “The promised land”, Canaan, the other side of the river, are synonymous with New Testament images such as “Kingdom of God” or “Heaven”;\textsuperscript{23} then Jenkins, in the evening of the very same day, overhears Lance-Corporal Gittins “sing quietly to himself”:

> When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
> Bid my anxious fears subside,  
> Death of Death and hell’s destruction,  
> Land me safe on Canaan’s side \cite[108-109]{VB}

Baptism in the River Jordan was originally understood metaphorically as a \textit{mutatio mentis}. The Gospel of St John 3:5 speaks of being “born of water and of the Spirit,” otherwise we “cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (an image of inwardsness, or consciousness); similarly, Romans 12:2 admonishes the Romans: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”.\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{Metanoia} in everyday parlance has been narrowed down to a religious and moralizing cliché: \textit{repentance}. What does Jenkins repent of? Jenkins’s deadly sin is of course “Sloth” - “acedia” \cite[129]{KO}.\textsuperscript{25} The “deadly”, or mortal, sins do not necessarily result in criminal or anti-social acts. Jenkins’s \textit{repentance/metanoia} leads to “Death of Death” and “hell’s destruction” and finally (in the train epiphany) into the “kingdom of genuine identity”:

> “[O]rdinary human existence is spiritual death. But the ‘resurrection’ is the moment of enlightenment. ‘It is ... the revealing of what truly exists ... and a migration (\textit{metabole} – change, transition) into newness.’  
> Whoever grasps this becomes spiritually alive. This means ... that you can be ‘resurrected from the dead’ right now.”\textsuperscript{26}

Jenkins’s crossing of the canal, which he calls a “transit”, is just such a \textit{metanoia} and \textit{metabole} (= “change, transition”). Both images, both terms (“migration into newness”/ “peregrination”) are re-awakened to their literal meaning, transformed into in a naturalistically rendered train-journey. The

\textsuperscript{22} Northrop Frye, \textit{The Great Code} (1983), 72

\textsuperscript{23} The Hebrew “\textit{Garden of God (Gan Edhen)} is synonymous with the future Promised Land of Israel and the New Testament Apocalypse.” \cite[Code, 72]{Frye}

\textsuperscript{24} Greek \textit{metanoeite} = “looking behind the scenes”; “a change of outlook or spiritual metamorphosis, an \textit{enlarged vision} of the dimensions of human life. Such a vision ... detaches one from one’s primary community and attaches him to another.” \cite[Code, 130]{Frye}

\textsuperscript{25} “Mr Jenkins, I fear there is nothing left for you but Sloth. There are, of course, no personal implications. I am sure it is quite inappropriate, but like Avarice, it makes no great demands on the actor.” \cite[KO, 129]{Sir Magnus Donners}

\textsuperscript{26} Elaine Pagels, \textit{The Gnostic Gospels} (1981), 14
motif, and theme, is later varied by Erridge, who is “increasingly devoting himself to books about Anabaptists” – his interest is however in an entirely different sort of change, of “turn around”, i.e. in “revolutionary movements of the Middle Ages.” (VB 159)

Gnosticism maps out a four-stage process – metanoia, metabole, gnosis and “[w]hoever comes to this gnosis – this insight – is ready to receive the secret sacrament called the redemption (apolytrosis; literally: “release”).”

After the nocturnal peregrination there is mention of a “release”; after returning from Northern Ireland to London, Jenkins resorts again to that word, this time going back to Greek mythology employing the archetypal complex of “renewal”: the London streets looked “incredibly bright and sophisticated, the tarts in Piccadilly dazzling nymphs. I knew how Persephone must have felt on the first day of her annual release from the underworld.” (VB 117)

Jenkins is released from “anxious fears” and from a “hell” of quite a different kind; and Jenkins’s Normandy experience culminates in a “gigantic release”. (MP 163)

Powell burdens his narrator-figure with “the deadly sin” acedia (also accidie)/Sloth. Matilda Donners, decades after the charade, understands Sloth in its literal sense (sensu litteralis): “... Sloth’s absurd for you, Nick. Look at all those books you’ve written.” (HSH 60) Now, the New Testament term for sin is hamartia. It

“... comes from the sport of archery; literally, it means ‘missing the mark.’ New Testament sources teach that we suffer distress, mental and physical, because we fail to achieve the moral goal toward which we aim .... Many Gnostics ... insisted that ignorance, not (a moralized understanding of) sin, is what involves a person in suffering. ... Both Gnosticism and psychotherapy value, above all, knowledge – the self-knowledge which is insight. They agree that, lacking this, a person experiences the sense of being driven by impulses he does not understand.”

Years after his first skirmish with Myra Erdleigh and his self-identification as “the Archer”, and after Jenkins has become a liaison-officer with the allied forces, their paths cross again. Mrs Erdleigh now introduces him to new images, i.e. “the Centaur” and “exile”.

“... I can see at once from your face that you are well situated. The Centaur is friend to strangers and exiles. His arrow defends them.” (MP 136)

Not long before that encounter he had “missed the mark” because of Sloth in its everyday meaning of “indolence” or “laziness”. He failed to get a job as

---

27 Pagels, Gospels, 44
28 Pagels, Gospels, 149-150
liaison officer with the “Free French” because of his poor command of French and because his thoughts had been somewhere elsewhere.

The marvellous road to the Hyperboreans

Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, won’t you join the dance? The ancient, and not so ancient, Hyperboreans do join Dance – offering imagery which ingeniously establishes links between the world of the author and the world of his novel sequence. Both the narrator’s and the author’s zodiacal sign is Sagittarius – according to Mrs Erdleigh, “the Archer”, “the Centaur”, is “friend to strangers and exiles”. Whence and wherefore “hyperborean seas” at the end of the narrating act?

The thudding sound from the quarry had declined now to no more than a gentle reverberation, infinitely remote. It ceased altogether at the long drawn wail of a hooter – the distant pounding of centaur’s [sic] hoofs dying away, as the last note of their conch trumpeted out over hyperborean seas. (HSH 252)

Friedrich Nietzsche opens his last essay, The Antichrist, with an allusion to the Hyperboreans and with a quotation from Pindar’s Tenth Pythian Ode, referring to his sympathetic readers as “Hyperboreans”:

Let us look each other in the face. We are Hyperboreans – we know well enough how remote our place [much out of the way we live]. ‘Neither by land nor by water wilt thou find the marvellous road to the Hyperboreans’: Pindar already knew that of us. Beyond the North, beyond the ice, beyond death – our life, our happiness … We have discovered happiness, we know the way, we have got our knowledge from thousands of years [found the exit out of whole millennia of labyrinth] … Rather live amid the ice than among modern virtues and other such south-winds!

---

29 “I was disappointed and furious with myself … I wondered why I had never taken the trouble in the past to learn French properly; as a boy, for instance, staying with the Leroys at La Grenadière, or in the course of innumerable opportunities.” [SA, 102]
30 “These were some of the thoughts … that passed through my head while I sat on a bench in the hall waiting to see Major Finn … These rather sombre speculations were interrupted by a door opening nearby.” [SA, 92-93]
31 Pointed out first by Henry R Harrington, “Anthony Powell, Nicolas Poussin, and the Structure of Time”, Contemporary Literature, 24 (1983), 431-448. Powell was born “at the cusp of the Centaur and the Goat”, i.e. 21 December 1905. [Infants, 1]
32 http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19322/19322.txt

Pindar had cautioned, “Never on land or by water wilt thou find // the marvellous road to the Hyperboreans.” For Nietzsche, isolation is the price exacted from those who opt for self-knowledge, individuality, rationality, those who have found a way out of the labyrinth of mysticism, metaphysics, doctrines and dogmas. It is a view of the world that transcends what Nietzsche famously called “European nihilism”. Remember the first apodictic, now no longer enigmatic, sentence of the (anonymous) authorial narrator of Powell’s valediction to novel writing, The Fisher King? “Exile is the wound of kingship.” That wound is not a symptom of a specific 20th-century malaise or affliction, it is rather part of the human condition, it is a symbol “of the knowledge of the anguish of existence as a function not merely of this or that contingency, but of being.” Both in Dance and in The Fisher King exiles, Hyperboreans are not only perceived to be indispensable and essential for independence of mind and creativity, but also as images of the work in progress we are reading.

**Coldness – Snow – Lapis exilis**

What have been described as purely atmospheric images are placed at the beginning and end of the narrative act – those “centaurs” and “hyperborean” seas at the end of the narrating act and narrative are full of meaning for both Jenkins and Powell: “the distant pounding of centaur’s hoofs dying away, as the last note of their conch trumpeted out over hyperborean seas ...” (HSH 252) and “centaurs with torches cantering beside a frozen sea ....” (QU 5-6)

Jenkins and Powell are also conjoined in the ambivalent, and ambiguous, image of “coldness”: coldness of the heart, lack of compassion, intellectual coldness, in a word acedia, the deadly sin. Powell links the images of the “seven deadly sins” – for Jenkins they are “symbolic moods” (KO 120) – with astrological imagery. It is Sloth, i.e. the arrogance of the intellectual, which

---

Jahrtausenden des Labyrinths … Lieber im Eise leben als unter modernen Tugenden und anderen Südwinden.


Hypoborea is figured geographically north of Purgatory in Dante’s “Commedia”; and great and little bears (symbols of the North Pole) appear above the summit of Mount Purgatorio; Ishmael, in Melville’s Moby Dick, suggests that the painting in the Spouter Inn in Chapter 3 could be “a Hyperborean winter scene.”

33 FK, 7

34 Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Creative Mythology (1976), 424

the Greeks called *hubris*, resulting in retribution and *nemesis*, which Jenkins (and a reader identifying with him) suffers in the gradual unfolding of the Jean plot.\(^{36}\) One of the major themes of *Dance* is the split between the man and the writer, Jenkins, the man, and Jenkins, the novelist; Anthony Powell and “Anthony Powell”; the writer needs to be objective, ironic and detached; “cold intelligence” may be a *sine qua non* for a work of art, for creating patterns (represented by the Poussin painting, QU 7) out of chaos (represented by the Burton quote, HSH 251), for “constructing one of those designs ... which ... afford an obscure satisfaction to the mind: making the more apparent inconsistencies of life easier to bear.” (LM 66); outside his work, however, the very same qualities will make him appear tactless and lacking in compassion – his arrow then “misses the mark”, i.e. he “sins.”

Yet there is, I think, even more to “coldness” and the “Hyperboreans”. Both are by a long-established tradition also positively charged images associated with the British intellect that has achieved some kind of balance – the virtue of “the happy medium”. The Greeks had a word for it: *sophrosyne*. Its components include moderation based on self-knowledge, moral sanity, self-control, and reason.\(^{37}\) Robert Graves, too, described the motif and the imagery of the “Hyperboreans” – as well as “the Hypoborean Apollo” –, who were “without the shadow of a doubt Britons”\(^{38}\) living “at the extremes”, i.e. the Poles. The image signifying “coldness”, isolation, Britain, and moderation/average, has been a *topos* signifying supposedly British national characteristics since Elizabethan times\(^{39}\) and has become a cliché long since. For George Savile, 1st Marquess of Halifax (1633-1695), England’s central role in the balance of powers was owed to its peripheral geographical position\(^{40}\) and moderate climate – its true virtue was seen as the average

---


\(^{38}\) Apollo, the personification of ratio and intellect rose against Zeus and was humiliated and condemned to a year of physical hardship (“*humilatio*-motif) only to become a representative of *sophrosyne* and of the arts. He was also a god of the Hypoboreans, who Hekataios identified as British. [Robert Ranke-Graves, *Griechische Mythologie, Quellen und Deutung* (1984) (= Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, (1955)), 68. Powell, in *Punch* (“Gods and Goddesses”, 6 April 1955, 450. *Daily Telegraph*, 18 January 1973)], is less impressed by Graves’ attempts to trace Greek myths back to historical events. He rather favours Sigmund Freud’s and above all Carl Gustav Jung’s interpretations and thinks that “the psychological side” of these stories were “more interesting to [their Greek] author[s], too.”

\(^{39}\) Wind, *Mysteries*, 259

\(^{40}\) Wind, *Mysteries*, 259-60
between extremes. Powell recycles the commonplace from the world of politics by tracing it back to its origins.

Motifs such as intelligence, moderation, individuality, isolation, coldness are in HSH explicitly associated with an alchemical image (and symbol): “the philosopher’s stone”. Its Latin name is *lapis exilis*. Its colour is yellow, gold and white – “that’s why white snow is a symbol of *lapis exilis*”. What (else) are we being told here? What becomes manifest in the image of the “frozen sea(s)” is, first of all, that for Jenkins “coldness” is ambivalent. In alchemical writings, on the other hand, “sea” is said to stand for “unconsciousness in its static condition.” “Stagnation” then is intensified in the image of “frozen seas”. Water, snow, coldness, frozen seas/ice are a “network of relations through which ... the images reciprocally determine and comment on one another.”

It is Mrs Erdleigh who neatly sums up the ambivalence of coldness (for the creative artist and the “man”) when she addresses Jenkins: “You are thought cold ...” In order to be(come) “an artist” one has to die to everyday life (just in the right way) and exile oneself from reality. “You know”, Widmerpool says, “you sometimes make me feel that you must live completely out of the world.” (BM 270) Jenkins needs to reconcile “that hard, cold-blooded, almost mathematical pleasure I take in writing and painting” (CCR 20) with the Archer’s mission (“[h]is arrow defends exiles.”). Jenkins, the “man of intelligence”, often misses, due to *Sloth* and intellectual *hubris*, what Elain Pagels has called “the moral goal toward which we aim”, which for Jenkins is to become a “friend to strangers and exiles” (not just in his novels). General Conyers, dabbling in Jungian psychology, diagnoses Jenkins as “an introvert ... [i]ntroverted intuitive type ...” advising him to “keep an eye on not overcompensating.” (LM 234-35)

---

41 Wind, *Mysteries*, 262
43 Jung, *Psychology of Transference*, 47
45 “You are thought cold, but you possess deep affections, sometimes for people worthless in themselves ... You expect too much, and yet you are also too resigned. You must try to understand life” [AW, 21]. See Kafka’s “A book should serve as the axe for the frozen sea within us.” (= “Ein Buch muss die Axt sein für das gefrorene Meer in uns.”) (“Brief an Oskar Pollak” (“Letter to Oskar Pollack”), 27 January 1904, in Franz Kafka: *Briehe 1902-1924* (1958), 27)
46 Three more instances where Jenkins’s intelligence / intellect is addressed:

- “He regards himself as tremendously intelligent” [AW, 84]
have said, is Jenkins’s learning how to dissociate the man from his art, from his persona. In *Dance*, it is Quiggin, the Marxist “committed writer”, who addresses the dangers of Jenkins’s cold intellect and stance of, as he sees it, non-commitment:

“The Lewis gun may be sounding at the barricades earlier than some of your Laodicean friends think,” [Quiggin] had announced at the climax of our controversy about Milton - or Meredith.
“I can never remember what the Laodiceans did.”
“They were ‘neither hot nor cold’.”
“Oh.” (LM 105)

Jenkins understands at some point that irony can be “quite brutal in its unvarnished view of things.” (KO 143):

... I could not help thinking ... that facile irony at my uncle’s expense could go too far. No doubt irony, facile or otherwise, can often go too far. In this particular instance, for example, it was fitting to wonder what sort of figure I should myself cut as a soldier. (KO 162)

---

- “You said the other day that you found it awfully difficult to get on with people who were not intelligent.”
  “I only meant where writing was concerned.”
  “It didn't sound like that.” [AW, 147-48]
- “We girls don't want to die of cold,” said Anne Umfraville. “Nothing too rough either. I'm not feeling particularly cubistic tonight.”
  “Or too highbrow,” said Templer. “Nick will get out of hand. I know him of old.” [KO, 126]

47 The passage alluded to is Revelation 3:14-18:

> And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire.

48 “The Laodiceans get a bad press because they are the only people in creation who make their Creator vomit. That is not because they lead quiet lives: it is because they cling to a narrow, unadventurous vision of life: they have courage neither to be great saints or great sinners, and the latter are often closer to sanctity than the blandly respectable ... Even if the artist lives a quiet life in a semi-detached in Ruislip, the adventurousness, the openness, an unflinching vision of what is happening must still be there. The Laodicean imagination is sterile” [Andrew Clarke, http://www.anthony.powell.org.uk, 28 December 2005]. Surely the same applies for writers living for more than half century a quiet life in a “detached house” in Frome, Somerset?
The existential significance of making the cold transit from sloth=arrogance=snobbery to the shore of inspiration=insight=analysis=pattern-making for both Jenkins and Powell can finally be illuminated by turning to J.W. Goethe’s famous distinction between symbol and allegory. The art of allegory, for Goethe,

“transforms appearance into a concept, the concept into an image, but in such a way that the concept can be grasped and can be had completely as something delimited in the image and can be expressed in it ...”

while symbolism

“... transforms appearance into an idea, the idea into an image in such a way that the idea remains always infinitely effective and unreachable in the image and remains ineffable even if uttered in all languages.”

A chapter in Powell’s first volume of memoirs is called From Whence Clear Memory, where he recalls his earliest childhood memory. The passage holds the most perfect key to an understanding of the symbolic meaning of snow (etc.) in Dance as one can only hope for.

My earliest recollection is of snow descending in small flakes outside the window of an hotel bedroom. ... This was the winter of 1907, or early months of the following year. I was therefore two years old.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>Idea</th>
<th>Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Powell’s 1st recollection:</td>
<td>(Sudden flashes of) insights, knowledge, Gnosis; self-awareness, inspiration; beginning &amp; end creative &amp; emotional stagnation; Coldness = lack of warmth/ charity vs. coldness (= cool head); Apolloniant coolness, ratio; needed for creativity;</td>
<td>“For some reason the sight of snow descending on fire always makes me think of the ancient world.” Arrested development, individuality, individuation (etc.) Beginning (“birth”, “baptism”), ending (death, chaos) “frozen seas”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter, snow(fall), coldness; contrast of coldness/warmth; outside/inside; before/after Christmas &amp; New Year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


50 “die Erscheinung in Idee, die Idee in ein Bild, und so, daß die Idee im Bild immer unendlich wirksam und unerreichbar bleibt und, selbst in allen Sprachen ausgesprochen, doch unaussprechlich bleibe.” [JW Goethe, Sämtliche Werke in 18 Bänden, Band 9: Maximen und Reflexionen (1977), 693]

51 Infants, 41
“in the beginning shall be my end”

- Hyperboreans, exile(s)
- Sloth, intelligence, ideal of moderation & the average
- Jenkins [according to General Conyers’s Jungian analysis] is “[a]n introvert, of course … [i]ntroverted intuitive type … keep an eye on not overcompensating.” [LM, 234-35]
- Jenkins’s “cold-blooded … mathematical pleasure … in writing and painting.” [CCR, 20]
- Widmerpool [according to General Conyers] “is a typical intuitive extrovert …] Cold-blooded.” [LM, 228]; announced as “Mr Winterpool” [BM, 64];
- Jenkins: “I found myself almost deciding to sit down … and attempt to compose a series of essays on human life and character in the manner of … Montaigne, so icily etched in my mind … appeared the actions and nature of those with whom that night I had been spending my time.” [BM, 161];
- “sudden sensation of discomfort … being doused with icy water … an instantaneous realization” [BM, 72];
- “I suddenly felt horribly uncomfortable, as if ice-cold water were dripping very gently,
“Because a novel’s invented it is true”, Trapnel says; and he continues,

“The novelist is a god, creating his man .... The man, created in his own image, provides information about the god. In a sense you know more about Balzac and Dickens from their novels, than Rousseau and Casanova from their Confessions.”

Trapnel concludes that “only a novel can imply certain truths impossible to state by exact definition”. (HSH 80) Coldness, snow and fire mentioned at the beginning of the narration as well as at the end imply “certain truths” about both Jenkins and Powell; these allusive images and symbols accompany profound insights (or embarrassing experiences):

- The train epiphany (during a cold night on the train)
- Mention of “Budapest to Vienna by Danube” triggers a recollection of Bruegel’s painting *Hunters in the Snow* at Vienna’s Kunsthistorisches Museum (“almost my favourite picture”, Jenkins says; it was, by the way, bought by a merchant, an art collector of Antwerp, called Nicolaas Jongelinck [!]; the painting was a part of a cycle of six or 12, depicting the seasons)⁵² – amidst an allusive and dense texture of words: winter, snow/fire, cold, war, river (the River Danube, also mentioned by Descartes). (VB 112-13)
- The crossing of the canal
- Jenkins’s musings on “the complexity of writing a novel about English life” are placed within the context of a Janus-faced transition period, and creative stagnation as well as personal isolation: “I felt myself cut off from the rest of the world ....” (AW 38). They are couched in terms of New-Year resolutions.⁵³ “Outside was the northern winter, here [at the Ritz] the

---


There are two hunters and, on the left, three small figures working around a fire in front of the largest house. The difference between the hunters and the figures tending the fire is that the latter are unaware of any higher purpose or quest beyond their daily tasks, while the hunters doggedly pursue greater meaning, symbolized by the distant, craggy peaks (they are “hunters”, after all, men who “hunt”, seek to find ... not game in this instance but truth) … based on iconographical conventions.” [“Die Zeiten des Jahrs”, 86-94]

⁵³ “I felt suddenly determined to be no longer a victim of other people’s disregard for their social obligations.” [AW, 57]
climate was almost tropical.” (AW 31) Coldness and ice are invested with an emotional component at the beginning of the affair with Jean Templer(-Duport): “The night was very cold. (AW 64), and there is talk of “heavy snow”, “frozen air”, “a kind of glow”, “arrested development” and
... an Arctic city’s frontier forts. Veiled in snow, these hideous monuments of a lost world bordered a broad river of black, foaming slush, across the surface of which the car skidded and jolted with a harsh crackling sound, as if the liquid beneath were scalding hot. (AW 70-71)

• Outside/inside: “It’s cold” versus “[t]here is a fire in here” (says Jean; AW 144-45)

• Jenkins’s (tactless) reaction to Trapnel’s love affair with Pamela Widmerpool in the notoriously cold winter of 1947: “Only Trapnel, in his tropical suit and dyed overcoat, seemed unaware of the cold.” (BDFR 151; my italics)

No comment seemed anywhere near adequate. This was beyond all limits. Burton well expressed man’s subjection to passion. To recall his words gave some support now. “The scorching beams under the AEquinoctial, or extremity of cold within the circle of the Arctick, where the very seas are frozen, cold or torrid zone cannot avoid, or expel this heat, fury and rage of mortal men.” No doubt that was just how Trapnel felt. (BDFR 172)

Thus I would argue that supposedly purely “atmospheric” images triggered by “the sight of snow descending on fire” (QU 5) become, in retrospect, and can be shown to have been, invested by Powell (and by Jenkins, too) with specific meanings:

... mountain altars where offerings glow between wintry pillars; centaurs with torches cantering beside a frozen sea – scattered, unco-ordinated shapes from a fabulous past, infinitely removed from life, and yet bringing with them memories of things real and imagined. (QU 5-6)

Allow me three more observations before I “dare to be silent”. The first one is a quote I first found in the middle of the Eighties in one of Powell’s reviews for The Daily Telegraph (reprinted in Miscellaneous Verdicts):

In 1958, [Nancy Mitford] made a trip to England, staying successively with L.P. Hartley, Evelyn Waugh, and myself. “Leslie had the warmest house and warmest heart; Evelyn by far the coldest house and Tony Powell the coldest heart ... I find all these writers take themselves very seriously.”

---

“I made up my mind that this time I would not feel put out by her [Jean’s] behaviour, whatever form it took.” [AW, 65]
Powell comments that “[i]f kind hearts are more than coronets, cold ones are certainly less than bestsellers; but taking oneself seriously is perhaps another matter.”\textsuperscript{54} Nancy Mitford was not the only one to find Powell’s manner “cold”: “His cleverness and learnedness fill me with veneration and awe. His personality freezes me up.”\textsuperscript{55}

Second – though I am not entirely sure (what) it may add to our understanding of both Dance and its author – Anthony Powell’s wife, Lady Violet, hated snow.

Finally, what remains for a writer to do when The Strangers All are Gone? Powell ends this last volume of his memoirs with an exquisite, and moving, paragraph about a genuinely and inherently cold, as well as transient, work of art. He describes as it were his last recollection (as a matter of fact he recalls a passage out of Giorgio Vasari’s Lives of the Arists\textsuperscript{56}), on a winter day in Florence,

... when snow was deep on the ground, one of the Medici sent for Michelangelo to build a snowman in the courtyard of the Medici palace. Notwithstanding those (like Constant Lambert) who dislike the High Renaissance one can scarcely doubt that the finest snowman on record took shape.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} Nancy Mitford, as quoted in Powell, “Harold Acton, Nancy Mitford: A Memoir”, Daily Telegraph, 3 May 1975; also see MV, 335


\textsuperscript{56} Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects, from Cimabue to Our Times, or Le Vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori da Cimabue insino a’ tempi nostri, in the original Italian.

\textsuperscript{57} Strangers, 201
Waiting for (Dr) Belkin

or

Four Anthony Powell Characters in Search of a Coincidence

By Edwin Bock

First performed at the 5th Biennial Anthony Powell Conference; Washington, DC; September 2009.

LOCATION: Dr Belkin’s Clinic in The People’s Belkin Institute For the Treatment of Disabled Characters in A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME, Somewhere South of Budapest

TIME: The present.

STAGE SETTING: Waiting Room and Office of Dr Belkin and his Nurse

----

AUDIENCE OF EXPERT THERAPEUTIC CONSULTANTS

Waiting Room has imaginary entry door for patients Stage Left Also an imaginary door from the Waiting Room to Dr Belkin’s private office just beyond centre stage.

At Stage Right is imaginary private entry door from ‘outside’ to Dr Belkin’s private office.

The Waiting Room is entirely open to the Consultants Observation Chamber.

Dr Belkin’s private office can be opened to the Consultant Observation Chamber when he raises its (imaginary) front curtain. A sign shows whether the curtain is UP or DOWN.

THE CHARACTERS & THEIR COSTUMES
STAGE MANAGER: Bearded; similar to the figure of Time in Poussin’s painting, *A Dance to the Music of Time*. Has bell or lyre to sound note at rise and fall of curtain.

NURSE: At least a Nurses’ cap. At best: Nurse’s cap and uniform.

FIRE WARDEN: Helmet. Dark clothing (either fire warden uniform or dark suit).


KIPPER MAN: Overalls in Scene 1; uniform in Scene 2.

SHOP ASSISTANT Ideally, Morning Dress, spats, cane – or any elegant costume.

Carries large bag or capacious briefcase.

DR BELKIN: At least a stethoscope. A head reflector and white coat if possible

TWO DO-GOODERS carry placards urging better treatment for Primitives.

VISITING EXPERT CONSULTANTS are the members of the audience. who are

seated in “The Consultants’ Observation Chamber”, facing the stage.

Prologue

*IN LEFT FRONT OF STAGE (audience’s right), sitts THE STAGE MANAGER, in the posture of the figure of TIME in Poussin’s painting. He carries a lyre or gong. Nearby: a reversible Up-Down sign on stand – set at “Up”*

*ON THE STAGE sit the four patients, who do not move much as they study their Patient Questionnaires. They keep looking down until the Nurse ends her first speech to the audience.*

After Audience is seated, The Stage Manager breaks his pose, looks at his clock, and surveys the audience, perhaps frowning at a late-comer.

STAGE MANAGER: Welcome. In the first two scenes of this peculiar play, you become actors. Unpaid, of course. You play the roles of Visiting Consultant Therapists who are here to observe Doctor Belkin treat those four patients. You are in the Consultants Observation Chamber of The Belkin Institute for Disabled Characters from *A Dance to the Music of Time*. The Institute is run by The People’s State here

somewhere south of Budapest.
I’m Tiki Chronos, the Stage Manager. I help writers and actors keep things running, and right now I’d like to help you prepare to play your roles once I ring this bell and the imaginary curtain goes up on Scene 1.

If you look at the back of your program, you will see a diagram of how our stage would be set, if we had a stage. Up here (indicating) is the Patients’ Waiting room in Dr Belkin’s clinic. There are the four patients filling out their Patients Questionnaires. Over there is the imaginary entrance door for patients. Here is the desk used by the Non-Entity Nurse.

She is called ‘Non-entity Nurse’ because in this peculiar play, set in this peculiar People’s Democracy, she’s one of a lower caste made up of working persons who were not created by Antony Powell.

One layer above the Non-Entities in the social structure are the disabled minor characters in DANCE – the ones Dr Belkin’s clinic tries to cure. People like those four characters there.

Considerably above the Disabled Powell characters in this society are two elites. The first is made up of the full-sized, healthy DANCE characters – those who are significant enough to merit their own individual entry in Hilary Spurling’s directory of characters in the 12 DANCE novels.

The other upper-class is made up of non-Powell humans who are members of the elite People’s Party in this one-party state. All important persons – including scientific and medical specialists like yourselves – are Party members – at least as long as they obey the laws. The laws here strictly forbid ‘fraternization’ between the upper classes and the lower castes.

You, for example, would be punished if you fraternized with Non-Entities – like our Non-Entity Nurse.

You would be severely punished if you associated with the lowest caste in this country: the Primitives. The Primitives are at the very bottom. They are regarded as sub-human because they were created by Powell and other novelists merely to serve as nameless, mute puppets – given no names, no lines to speak, only partly-formed personalities. In the People’s Republic, these Primitives are confined to Institutions. One of the four patients sitting there is a Primitive. He has succeeded, so far, in passing himself off as one of his betters, pretending to be a Disabled DANCE character eligible for treatment here. Can you guess which one it is? *(Kipper Man makes an eccentric movement in his chair.)*

*(looks at watch)* Let me show you the rest of Dr Belkin’s suite. Over on that side of the stage is Dr Belkin’s private office. There is his desk and the therapeutic chair his patients sit in. Between his office over there and this Waiting Room is an imaginary wall. Here is the imaginary door between the two rooms. And over here is the entrance door used by Dr Belkin and the Non-Entity Nurse to come in from the outside.
Dr Belkin can make his office completely private by (1) closing this door to the Waiting Room, (2) closing this door to the outside, and (3)—watch closely—by pulling down the imaginary overhead partition that separates his office from the view of you sitting in the consultants chamber—somewhat like closing an overhead garage door. To help you know whether this overhead partition is down or up, I will turn this sign—UP on one side, DOWN on the other. When it’s down, you in your role as consultant therapists can’t observe what is taking place in his office. But, of course, as an audience member, you can see—and imagine—everything.

(As Nurse approaches Stage Right and prepares to enter Dr Belkin’s private office…)

STAGE MANAGER: It’s 9.32 a.m. Here comes the Non-Entity Nurse. She had to get up at 6 this morning to catch the dingy Non-Entity commuter bus. When I ring this bell, the curtain rises and each of you assumes the role of a ‘Comrade Consultant’.

Are you ready?

Scene 1 - Nurse and Patients

A Single Musical Note is Sounded to Signal the Curtain Rising

Four patients are seated in Waiting Room, filling out PQs (Patients’ Questionnaires)

THE NURSE ENTERS STAGE RIGHT into Dr Belkin’s Office.

Patients in the Waiting Room do not see or hear her. They continue working on their forms.

NURSE: (Faces audience. Reads the Standard Consultant Welcome from an institutional clip-board)

Comrade Consultants, Welcome to the People’s Belkin Institute and to the clinic of Stalin-Prize-Laureate Dr. Karl G. Belkin. The Doctor will be here presently. We appreciate your willingness to serve as consultants as we treat suffering characters from the 12 novels that make up Powell’s DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME. The four characters Dr Belkin will be treating this morning all suffer from Pathologically Insufficient Identities – PII for short—because of the way Anthony Powell created and then abandoned them.

(STAGE MANAGER halts the action.)

STAGE MANAGER: (to audience) Remember that, please. The initials PII stand for “Pathologically Insufficient Identity.”
NURSE (resuming) In the first segment, you will observe the PII patients as I interview them to determine if they qualify for treatment.

According to State regulations, the doctor may treat only certain types of minor DANCE characters. They are the ones who were created without names – or who were deprived of spoken lines, – characters crippled to such an extent that their very existence was ignored in the authoritative directory of DANCE characters assembled by Hilary Spurling.

(STAGE MANAGER holds up Spurling book. Nurse does not notice this.)

Dr Belkin seeks to help these unfortunates. What they need most of all is to have their own individual entries in Spurling’s directory.

Dr Belkin’s unique therapeutic method is to involve the patient in a remarkable coincidence. He won the Stalin Prize for what is now known as the Belkin Therapeutic Coincidence. In your training as therapists you probably had to memorize Belkin’s Theorum: namely, **The likelihood of a deprived Powell character achieving his/her own Spurling Listing (SL) is in direct proportion to his/her involvement in an egregious coincidence.**

(EC) Its symbolic formula is:

\[ SL = EC \text{ (squared)} \]

((STAGE MANAGER holds up poster. Nurse pauses but does not notice.)

NURSE: (Continues) Applying Coincidence Therapy is difficult. It may not break the laws of nature. And it must be done without violating the basic realities and plot dynamics laid down in Anthony Powell’s texts.

Once again, The People’s Belkin Institute thanks you for your participation. We look forward to your constructive suggestions.

After reading the Official Welcome, the Nurse mimes opening the imaginary door between Dr Belkin’s office and the Waiting Room. She steps in, closes the door behind her and, looks at the patients, who are filling out their PQs. They do not seem to know she is there. She comes downstage, points to the patients, and says to the audience, with compassion:

A group of partly-human natures

In desperate need of nomenclatures.

She then comes upstage and turns to Patients, who now look at her eagerly.

NURSE: Citizen Patients, please answer every question on your Patient Questionnaires. Under State regulations, Dr Belkin is not allowed to treat any character who does not meet certain requirements.

Hence, Part One of your Questionnaire asks

First, where do you appear as a living character in any of the DANCE novels?
Next, how did the Creator name or identify you as a character?

Then it asks whether the Creator gave you spoken lines: how many and on which pages?

You do not qualify for Dr Belkin’s therapy if you are already listed in Spurling. At the other extreme, if the Creator denied you both an identity and spoken lines, your character is too primordial to respond to our therapy. Such primitives are usually confined to one of the State Primitive Happiness institutions.

(On hearing this last condition, the Kipper Man shows despair, puts his head in his hands)

The bottom section of your Questionnaire is where you describe your symptoms, your sufferings, and the harms you have endured because the Creator made you only a fractional character.

When you have completed your Questionnaire, I will go over it with you at my desk. When Dr Belkin arrives, he will study it and my notes, and then conduct your therapeutic interview. In that interview, you may address him, informally, as Comrade Doctor. You need not use his full title, “Stalin-Prize Laureate Comrade Doctor”. Does anyone have a question?

FIRE WARDEN (raising hand) Comrade Nurse, I am Citizen Fire Warden –

NURSE: (sighs, and then, bitterly) Not ‘Comrade Nurse’. My formal title is Non-Entity Nurse. I was not created by Anthony Powell, so, no matter how highly-educated I am, no matter how hard I work, no matter how meritorious my moral standards, I must live forever as a member of the Non-Entity caste. Not a pleasant existence, I assure you. But what is your question, Fire Warden?

FIRE WARDEN: Will the Comrade Doctor give us any identity we want? And how soon will it be before we qualify for Spurling’s list?

NURSE: Dr Belkin must work within the limits set by the Creator. He cannot change any condition or major fact that the Creator has made. But Dr Belkin discovered a treatment that has cured cases like yours, and done so within the Creator’s boundaries. By “cured”, I mean he has enabled some characters with PII disabilities to qualify for a Spurling listing.

This new treatment is known as Belkin’s Therapeutic Coincidence. Dr Belkin says that no matter how minor a DANCE character you are, if you become involved in an extraordinary coincidence that “fits” within the Creator’s boundaries, (aside to audience, waving her finger on each word) and that is not more egregious than any of those already in Dance, (turns
back to patients) you have an excellent chance of being listed in the next edition of Spurling.

THE NURSE & THE SHOP ASSISTANT

NURSE: Anyone finished yet?

SHOP ASSISTANT: (oily, seductively – the Serpent in *Paradise Lost*) I have. Thank you, Nurse, for your lucid explanations. I wish all People’s professionals would speak so clearly to us.

NURSE: (blushing) Thank you. Please sit there at my desk. (Answering his gesture that asks her if he can bring his bag:) Yes, you may bring your bag with you.

(During the interview, the other characters finish up their PQs. By mime, the Kipper Man asks others for help. The Director’s Wife spurns him. The Fire Warden indicates places on his PQ and mimes suggestions, leading to further hand-wringer questions and responses.)

Shop Assistant brings his bag, hands Nurse his PQ and sits. As she reads his form, he makes a business of trying to steady his bag on his lap. Then, ostentatiously, he opens it and looks into it, as if to see if the contents are safe.

NURSE: (reviewing form) In *The Soldiers Art*, pages 1-3. Identified as “An Assistant” in a London second hand theatrical costume shop. (Stops reading. Looks inquiringly at him, and, showing her thorough knowledge of DANCE, says) However, as I remember the opening of *Soldiers Art*, your character is described as “Bent, elderly, bearded” You don’t fit that description. How is that?

SHOP ASSISTANT: (enigmatic smile) My patented Senior Vitamin Supplements. I’d offer you one, if you didn’t look so vibrant and youthful.

NURSE: (adjusts hair, resumes studying form). The Creator gave you about 14 sentences of speaking lines on pages 2-5. (After studying the next portion, looks at him skeptically) In early 1940, as thousands of men were entering the Armed Services every day, the Creator made you appear to think that Jenkins was an actor, and that he was buying an officer’s greatcoat to appear in a play! That’s hard to believe. But perhaps what the Creator called your “Levantine manner” did help you make the sale. (Again pointing to paper) Your response to the top part clearly meets the basic requirements. And, here in the bottom half, you have described in detail your symptoms and sufferings. So Dr Belkin will have enough to work with.
(Shop Assistant makes exaggerated moves to balance his bag on his lap.)

NURSE: Are you having difficulty with your bag? You may put it on my desk.

SHOP ASSISTANT: You are so considerate to an old man: a model for all skilled People’s professionals! (Stage whisper) I don’t dare let the bag out of my hands. It contains priceless theatrical memorabilia and costume jewelry. May I show you some?

(As Nurse looks at watch with worried frown, he opens it.)

Here is the wig that Laurence Olivier wore in HAMLET. See, it’s inscribed to Vivien Leigh on the inside! And this is the bracelet that Sarah Bernhardt wore in her farewell performance.

NURSE (impressed) How it glitters!

SHOP ASSISTANT: My dear, you have been so sincerely – and charmingly – helpful. Already I feel greater depth to my character. You communicate a rare, healing spirit. Please accept this bracelet with my thanks. It is as unique and precious as I feel you are. (Hands her the bracelet.)

NURSE (Overcome) I don’t know what to say. (To audience) I’m sure this has never happened before to a Non-Entity Nurse. I wonder – since I’m a Non-Entity, outside the Creator’s universe – am I allowed to accept it?

SHOP ASSISTANT: Please don’t quench the magic of this moment.

(Scraping of chairs and coughing by Fire Warden and Director’s Wife – makes Nurse feel guilty.)

NURSE: Oh! This interview has lasted longer than regulations permit. Non-Entity Nurses are fined for the slightest violations. We must stop now. (She keeps bracelet.)

SHOP ASSISTANT: (taking her hand and pleading winningly, although a harsh selfishness shows through) The incompleteness of my character is unbearable. I curse the Creator every night. My urge for significant existence is so strong it pains me. If my treatment is successful, I’ll be able to give you more treasures. I hope you will summarize my case to Dr Belkin favorably, with all your sympathetic professional skill (rises and returns to his seat)

NURSE (to patients) Next, please.

THE FIRE WARDEN & THE NURSE
Throughout this interview, there is active miming by all the other patients: Shop Assistant sits between Director’s Wife and Kipper Man. Opens beguiling conversation with Director’s Wife after admiring her jewelry; tells her (in mime) about his theatrical treasures, arouses her curiosity and then her cupidity; opens his bag and displays another Sarah Bernhardt bracelet, shows other treasures. Meanwhile, Kipper Man asks question of Shop Assistant. Shop Assistant mimes a response, points to section of Kipper Man’s PQ and appears to offer helpful suggestion.

NURSE: (summarizing from PQ) Appears on pages 160-161 of The Soldier’s Art. No name, just “one of the fire wardens”. Speaks 17 sentences, but they are highly significant for the plot. About the death of Lady Molly and Lady Priscilla during the air raid. No separate listing in Spurling. (Points to PQ) This meets all the requirements. (Points to last section of his PQ) I notice that in the last section you have written a lot about how much you have suffered because the Creator gave you no name.

FIRE WARDEN: It’s been a great distress to me and my wife – nameless for such a long time now. You must have suffered from that, too, being a Non-Entity Nurse. I suppose your uniform helps a little, but it can’t make up for namelessness, can it?

NURSE: (intensely) It’s even worse for us Non-Entities – excluded from Powell society, as we are. Male PIIs are always trying to take advantage. (Sees him nod assent.) ‘Course there are decent ones, too . . . like you.

FIRE WARDEN: (speculating dreamily, leaning back in chair, raising arms heavenward) I wonder if the Creator has made a system where the good and the bad, the high and the low, all even out in the long run, and where the poor and the crippled – and the Non Entities – get a kind of reward for the life they’ve had to live . . .

(Noise of chairs being moved)

NURSE: Please don’t be so philosophical. I can’t bear it. But it’s been pleasant talking with you.

Fire Warden returns to his chair. For the rest of Scene 1 he looks upward in intense spiritual meditation.

Both Director’s Wife and Kipper Man rise.

DIRECTOR’S WIFE: (haughtily to Kipper Man) I am next. (She moves to chair at Nurse’s desk and hands her PQ to Nurse as if conferring a gift.)
THE NURSE & THE DIRECTOR’S WIFE

During the interview, the Shop Attendant cultivates Kipper Man’s interest in the contents of his bag.

NURSE: (studying the PQ) Appears in Hearing Secret Harmonies Chapter 3, pages 102-113. (impressed) Why, the Creator gave you an identity! – the wife of a wealthy director of Donners-Brebner. And he gave you 33 sentences of speaking lines! You do lack a first and last name, though, and you are not listed as a separate character in Spurling, so you qualify. (Looks her over, starting with the hat.) You’re much better off than most patients we see. Yet here, in the bottom section, you have used both sides of the page to list your symptoms and your sufferings. Most of this appears to be about how badly you need a proper name.

DIRECTOR’S WIFE: (patiently) Of course, a Non-Entity cannot fully appreciate how much one is harmed in society by the lack of a proper first and last name. My husband is on the board of the Royal Opera House. But I am never invited to serve on boards. I’m certain it is because they would find it awkward to list me simply as a Director’s Wife on their letterheads. I hope Dr Belkin can relieve my sufferings and get me into Spurling. It’s a sort of social directory. (She spreads her arms in demonstration. The Nurse notices she is wearing a bracelet like the one given her by the Shop Assistant.)

NURSE: What an attractive bracelet!

DIRECTOR’S WIFE: Isn’t it? See how it sparkles. And, you know, it once belonged to Sarah Bernhardt. I just bought it from that old man. He’s forced to sell it to take care of his dying wife. He worked in the Theatre Museum, he told me. In that bag, he has loads of precious, historical things.

NURSE: Thank you, Director’s Wife. Dr Belkin should be here shortly. Next patient, please.

THE NURSE & THE KIPPER MAN

Director’s Wife returns to her chair. Kipper Man moves to Nurse’s Desk. He is timid, frightened, but he walks in the style described on page 1 of A QUESTION OF UPBRINGING: “. . .in blue overalls. . .with a jocular demeanor and long, pointed nose like that of a Shakespearian clown . . .”

NURSE: Won’t you sit down? Let me have your form.

KIPPER MAN: (like Bill Sykes in “Major Barbara” but with a natural politeness) Thanks, luv.
During this interview, the Shop Assistant, by mime, renews his sales pitch to the Director’s Wife, who at one point eagerly leans over to peer into his bag, Fire Warden still sits silently, looking upward.

NURSE: (frowning at PQ) You appear as an individual only in one sentence in the first paragraph of the first of the twelve novels! That’s when you throw a kipper onto a coke fire. The Creator gave you no name, no lines to speak. And, worst of all, he never placed you in a definite moment in time – not even in a year or a decade. You haven’t written anything at all in the last section. You don’t seem to qualify for Dr Belkin’s therapy. (Kindly, to a fellow outcast) Shouldn’t you be—wouldn’t you be better off—in a Primitive Happiness institution?

KIPPER MAN: Got any notion how characters without an existence in time are treated in those primitive care places? Cooped up five to a cell. They use us for the dirty jobs no one else would do willingly. Jobs where time doesn’t matter—like folding and posting income tax refunds or repairing the signal failures on the Picadilly Line. I’d be better off if I was a Non Entity like you. Non Entities aren’t confined. They get to go to music halls and pubs. I wish I could tell you—

NURSE: (kindly, touched) And I thought we Non-Entities were mistreated! You timeless ones do have a miserable lot. It’s not right. Let me look over your form again to see if anything can be done. Dr Belkin is always talking about helping the under-classes. (pauses, worried) It’s just that it’s against regulations for us to admit you here as a patient. Wait! I’ll fill out the bottom part—and blur your answers to the top part. What do you want to get from Dr Belkin?

KIPPER MAN: (passionately) I couldn’t become a character in Spurling. I don’t even ask for a name of my own. But I want to have more than a one-sentence description. Most of all, I want to be placed in a definite time, where I’m seen or talked to by other characters who do have a time location. I’ve got to have that to keep out of those Primitive Happiness places.

NURSE: I’m filling in the bottom part for you. I know Dr Belkin would want to help. But it’s illegal for us to treat you, and you stand out so in your overalls. (Gets idea.) Wait. Do you know the patient with the bag? (Kipper Man nods) He comes from a second hand costume shop off Charing Cross Road. While we’re waiting for Dr Belkin, that costume man—he’s called the Shop Assistant—may be able to get you dressed in something that won’t make the administrators here suspicious. I’ll write a note to the Shop Assistant. (mimes writing note) Please take this to him. It says that I’ll make it worth his while if he will get you some proper clothing. Go now. And good luck.
(Kipper-Man walks toward the Shop Assistant)

A Single Musical Note Sounds to denote the curtain falling

During short intermission . . .

STAGE MANAGER compliments audience members on their acting. Asks if there are any questions so far. He turns Curtain Sign to ‘DOWN’ position. Then he explains the BBC signals that will be used in Scene 2. Then he warns them that while they play the role of Consultants in Scene 2, Dr Belkin may ask them to offer therapeutic suggestions. Also tells them to be ready to stand when Dr Belkin first addresses them.

FIRST DO-GOODER and SECOND DO-GOODER walk up to Easels on either side of the stage and place signs on them reading: PRIMITIVES ARE HUMANS and RXs FOR PRIMITIVES.

A Single Musical Note is Sounded to Denote the Curtain Rising

Scene 2 – Dr Belkin’s Coincidence Therapy

(Same place. One Hour Later. )

Patients as in Scene 1. But Kipper-Man is wearing the cap and uniform of a porter or commissionaire.

Dr Belkin enters right. Crosses his office and opens door to waiting room.

BELKIN: (in formal tone) Please step in, Non-Entity Nurse.

NURSE: (equally formal tone) Of course, Stalin-Prize Laureate Comrade Doctor.

(Nurse follows Belkin into his office, closes door. Instantly, their manner changes, showing effects of long professional collaboration . . . and mutual infatuation.)

BELKIN: (taking her hand) Gwendolyn.

NURSE: Karl. (after a pause, steps back) I put the Patient files on your desk. My observations and suggestions are on top, as usual.

BELKIN: Gwendolyn, the State has awarded me a dacha and a strip of forest in the lake district.
NURSE: (wistfully) How wonderful. Will you have it by summer?

BELKIN: (angrily) Yes, but whenever I go there, we will have to be apart.

NURSE: (consoling) Now, Karl.

BELKIN: It will mean more separation from you. And more unfairness. I get all the prizes, and you, who first thought of the idea of Coincidence treatment, get no recognition at all.

NURSE: Karl, we’ve been over this so often. Now is not the time. The Consultant Colleagues have been waiting for more than an hour. (remembers) Oh, Karl, I’ve slipped in a Primitive patient. It’s against the law. But he’s such a pathetic case. He’s called “Kipper-Man”. I know we can help him. My therapy proposal is in my file note. It’s risky, of course. But he’s so open-hearted. To make it safer, I arranged a change of clothing for him. Now he’s wearing a chauffer’s uniform. If we don’t cure him, he will be kept in the lowest type of Primitive Happiness Institution.

BELKIN: I feel the way you do about helping Primitives. But we must be careful. Even a Stalin Laureate would be punished for breaking the laws about Primitives — (sighs) and for breaking the laws about ‘fraternizing’ with Non-Entities.

Nurse goes into Waiting Room. Belkin sits at desk and studies files, making a few notes.

Then Belkin gets up, raises the curtain wall partition so that his private office is open to the Consultant Chamber. Stage Manager turns Up-Down Sign to Up.

As Belkin first faces the Consultants, Stage Manager cues them to rise in respect.

BELKIN’S ADDRESS TO THE THERAPISTS

BELKIN: Please be seated. Welcome, Consultant Colleagues and welcome to your graduate apprentices. You have already observed the administrative interviews conducted so ably by our Non-Entity Nurse. Having reviewed their Questionnaires and the Nurse’s observations and suggestions, I will now conduct the therapeutic interviews.

Before I prescribe a therapeutic coincidence, I may pause to consider any coincidences that you propose. Please write your proposal and hand it to the attendant.

Bear in mind that a therapeutic coincidence (1) must not violate natural laws or the known facts of medical, psychological, and social science. And (2) it must not contradict Powell’s texts. Indeed it must “fit” into the Creator’s
narrative structure. For example, prescribing a coincidence that would necessitate turning the character Widmerpool into the character Isobel would be unacceptable – and might be dangerous to both of them.

**COINCIDENCE THERAPY FOR THE FOUR PATIENTS**

_Belkin turns, opens the imaginary door to the waiting room_

**BELKIN:** Please bring in the first patient.

**NURSE:** (to patients) Citizen Patients, after you enter the Doctor’s Office, Comrade Dr Belkin and I will take your vital signs for this type of therapy. The Comrade Doctor will use an instrument to measure your Dialectical Pressure. Next he will measure your Historical Stage Potentiality rate. These data help us to determine the types of coincidence therapies that can be applied in your case and the range of coincidences that your body will respond to. These are non-invasive tests. They will not hurt, and they do not require that you undress.

Fire Warden, step in, please.

**THERAPEUTIC INTERVIEW ROUTINE:** Nurse introduces patient. Then Nurse helps Belkin take the patient’s DIALECTICAL PRESSURE and measure the patient’s HISTORICAL STAGE POTENTIAL Belkin reads out the figures, and Nurse enters them into the Patient’s folder. Then she returns to her desk in Waiting Room.)

_Fire Warden enters Dr Belkin’s office._

**NURSE:** Comrade Doctor, this is Fire-Warden.

**BELKIN:** Please sit down. I will take your Dialectical Pressure. (places stethoscope on left temple, listens, pronounces to Nurse) 160/70. Now your Historical Stage Potential. (places stethoscope on right side of neck) 1,000. Excellent. Well above the minimums. Gives us an good range of choice. Thank you, Non-Entity Nurse.

_Nurse leaves, sits at her desk in waiting room. Frowns as she sees Shop Assistant opening conversation with Kipper Man._

**BELKIN** (reviewing file and Nurse’s notes) The Creator gave you sentences that are of great importance to the plot. You tell Jenkins that Lady Molly and Priscilla Lovell died when the house in South Kensington was bombed. But I see here in your Questionnaire that you are suffering because you have no name and no entry in Spurling.

**FIRE WARDEN:** That’s right, Comrade Doctor. It’s been a life of agony for me and my Missus.

So awful. We’ve turned to spiritual life to try to convert our misery into faith. Can you help us?
Belkin turns from patient and addresses the audience in the manner of a medical professor speaking to interns and residents on grand rounds.

BELKIN: Comrade Consultants, this patient’s Dialectic and Historical Stage Potential readings are well above minimums. He can withstand considerable supplementation, and his strong spiritual urge is, on the whole, a positive feature.

As one begins to consider possible therapeutic coincidences, the first step is to examine thoroughly the Creator’s texts. Step Two is to search intensively for applicable coincidences in the interstices of the Creator’s texts: in what the Creator has left unsaid, undescribed, undetermined. As our Non-Entity Nurse often advises our interns: (Points to Nurse)

NURSE: (to audience) To cure your patient’s DANCE disease,

Imagine in interstices.

BELKIN: (resuming) A creative coincidence-therapist can usually discern several promising coincidences. The final step is deciding which of the coincidences will be best for the patient.

(Turns to Fire Warden)

BELKIN: Fire Warden, you say that you and your wife have found relief in spiritual community. And the Creator’s text says that you got to know Lady Molly in South Kensington because she took her daily newspapers from you. Is that right?

FIRE WARDEN: That’s right. I had a Newspaper shop near the station.

BELKIN: And where is your spiritual community located?

FIRE WARDEN: In Battersea, just across the bridge. Only short ride for us – on the old Number 31 bus.

BELKIN: Are you willing to accept a coincidence that will guarantee you a name and a listing in Spurling? Even if it brings you and your wife some worries?

FIRE WARDEN: We would do anything to have full identities, whatever it costs.

BELKIN: Please sign this acceptance form. (Goes to door) Non-Entity Nurse, please come in and witness the acceptance.

Fire Warden signs. Nurse witnesses.

BELKIN: Tonight, when the BBC Radio 4 Shipping Forecast first mentions the sea areas “Rockall & Malin”, you will acquire an expanded role in DANCE that will put you in a coincidence of the highest acceptable audacity. You will acquire a family name that is already listed in Spurling.
Your family name will be Murtlock. According to the Creator’s text, Mr. Murtlock, you are a newspaper agent who belongs to a fanatic religious group in South London. And you and Mrs. Murtlock are the parents of the sinister Scorpio Murtlock, a major character in *Hearing Secret Harmonies*.

FIRE WARDEN MURTLOCK: A name! At last, a name! And a Spurling listing!! Bless you, Comrade Doctor. (shakes hands) Bless you, Non-Entity Nurse (embraces her).

(Exits Right from the Waiting Room exultantly humming ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’, noticeably uplifting the spirits of the remaining patients.)

BELKIN: Next patient, please, Non-Entity Nurse.

*Nurse ushers in Director’s Wife, who heartily shakes Belkin’s hand.*

DIRECTOR’S WIFE: A great honor, Stalin-Prize Laureate Comrade Doctor Belkin.

BELKIN: Please sit here so I can take your readings. Dialectic 80/35 ummm Historical Stage Potential 900 ummm

DIRECTOR’S WIFE: (somewhat alarmed) Not good?

BELKIN: Nothing to worry about. Your system can tolerate a relatively narrow range of coincidences. It won’t prevent us from treating you, but we will have to be careful not to endanger the security of your established character by prescribing a risky coincidence. We must find one that will hold up.

Belkin turns to audience

Comrade Consultants, this patient’s readings warn us to be especially cautious. The patient’s suffering could be quickly relieved by an audacious coincidence. We could add to her character a relationship that would certainly get her into Spurling. For example, she could become the daughter of Isbister, the famous painter, who has a lengthy Spurling listing. But the experienced therapist must ask himself: how would this coincidence survive the realities in the Creator’s texts? We would need to imagine the patient’s conversation with Jenkins at the Donners Memorial Prize Dinner during pages 102-113 of *Hearing Secret Harmonies*.

STAGE MANAGER: (Halting Action) He doesn’t have time to read from those pages during his talk. But here are a few of the questions that the Director’s Wife asks Jenkins. (Reads a few.)

BELKIN: Would a daughter of Isbister speak the way the Creator made this Director’s Wife speak? Would she ask the same naïve questions? Might she not tell Jenkins about Isbister, her father, and if she did, wouldn’t their
subsequent conversation be entirely different from the one fashioned by the Creator?

Therapeutically, the core obstacle here is that this patient spoke with Jenkins at some length during the Donners Prize luncheon. Jenkins is the narrator of all twelve novels. He is bound to recognize the name of every character the Creator installed. If, for example, we added to the Director’s Wife the run-of-the-mill coincidence that she is the daughter, say, of Colonel Hogbourne-Johnson, Jenkins would surely ask about her father, and the drift of the Creator’s dinner conversation would be affected.

So with this patient, we are in a tight spot. Can any of you suggest an acceptable and secure therapeutic coincidence?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (confidently, pleased with himself) How about making her the daughter of Michael Smethwyck, the person the young Jenkins met at one of Short’s luncheon parties at Oxford in A Question of Upbringing. Smethwyck, Powell tells us in Temporary Kings, became a museum official and then headed his own gallery. If you applied this coincidence, the patient would merit a Spurling listing — and she would get not only a family name but a first name. Spurling says that one of Smethwyck’s favorite literary heroines was named Goneril. He would have given that name to his daughter. And the maiden name of Goneril Smethwyck would surely catch the attention of professors of literature and their doctoral students looking for dissertation topics.

ANOTHER AUDIENCE MEMBER: (crushingly) But wouldn’t Jenkins recognize the name of such an old classmate? And wouldn’t that cause the dinner conversation to veer away from the Creator’s plot line?

BELKIN: (To cut off further discussion) A good question. Thank you both for your thoughts, Comrade Consultants. (to Director’s Wife) You see what care we must take to protect your security as a character.

DIRECTOR’S WIFE: Oh, Stalin-Prize Laureate Comrade Doctor, is there nothing you can do ease my unhappiness and my namelessness? Mrs. Bruce, the wife of the American Ambassador, is sending out invitations to the reception for William Buckley and his wife. Some of my friends have already received them. I’m told the Embassy will never invite a nameless person because they cannot run a security check. My whole social future is at stake. Please, please help me.

BELKIN: Yes, yes, I know, it’s so unfair that Evangeline Bruce is a named character with a Spurling listing and doesn’t even appear in the novel while you speak for several pages and have no name. However, our search for a suitable coincidence must be limited to DANCE characters whose name is unknown to Jenkins. The best viable coincidence I can offer you is to become the daughter of the white-moustached Army Captain whom Jenkins
encountered on a wartime train journey to London. He is the officer who moved his gear in the baggage rack to make room for the bags of a new passenger named Pennistone. The Creator has Jenkins describe him as a middle-aged Quartermaster captain who worked on a sheaf of requisitions through the night. There is no reason to believe that he was not a good father and that he did not have a successful career after the war, in the Army or in the City.

Pause Director’s Wife begins to sob.

BELKIN: If you add this coincidental relationship to your character, you will not gain a name. So it may not get you a personal listing in Spurling. But it will add to your significance, it will blend easily into the texts, and it will not have to endure decades of destructive criticism from the Anthony Powell Society or from the Times Literary Supplement.

Frustrated and angry, the Director’s Wife pounds her fists on her lap, then starts to cry. Looks around desperately.

BELKIN: Dear lady, I wish we could do more. There is no need to decide immediately. We will reserve the Quartermaster Captain’s daughter option for you for 30 days. (to Nurse) Please help her to the Waiting Room and call her chauffeur.

NURSE (Starts to take Director’s Wife by the elbow sympathetically)

DIRECTOR’S WIFE: (furious, pushes Nurse away, stomps into Waiting Room, crosses to Exit Door Left, and storms down through the audience and slams the door at the rear of the Auditorium.) Take your Non-Entity hands off me. Don’t treat me as if I were the daughter of a mere Quartermaster Captain. Ohhhh, what will my friends think if I don’t appear at Mrs. Bruce’s reception at the Ambassador’s palatial residence in Regents Park. Ohhhh, I’m so unhappy. Nobody knows how much I suffer, etc.

BELKIN: (to audience) Alas, Comrade Consultants, we are not magicians. The limitations of our science have tragic costs. (to Nurse) Bring in the next patient, please.

BELKIN (whispering to Nurse) How many patients know he’s a Primitive?

NURSE: The Shop Assistant must know, he got his uniform and he helped him with his Questionnaire. And just now he watched me bring him in here. The Fire Warden, Mr. Murtlock, also helped him with his PQ, but he’s gone.

Nurse leads in Kipper Man in his chauffeurs cap and uniform.

BELKIN: (to Consultants) Comrade Consultants, the therapeutic procedure that is about to start involves a patient who is a Primitive. (gasps from some audience members) We have a situation where our Therapeutic Oath may conflict with the limits imposed by the People’s Regulations. Violation of
those regulations is a crime. As Consultants you would be accomplices. You might be stripped of your right to practice – perhaps even imprisoned. I will pause to give anyone time to leave the Chamber.

Some Consultants Exit.

FIRST DO-GOODER: Don’t go. Stay. Stay.
SECOND DO-GOODER: Primitives should be treated.

(Stage Manager gestures for order.)

Belkin and Nurse take Kipper Man’s measurements. Nurse remains.


KIPPER MAN: Comrade Doctor, Non-Entity Nurse told me you might help me stay out of the Primitive Happiness Institutions. To have a chance of freedom, I must exist in DANCE in a fixed point in time, I have to get some greater connection with a Spurling character who does exist in time. That would raise me to be a Citizen like the other patients.

BELKIN: (to Kipper Man) Your system will be able to adjust to major changes. But limits are imposed by regulations about what may be prescribed for patients who present with no fixed position in time. The Nurse has written favorably about your worthiness, and she has proposed a brilliant therapy program that would give you at least two anchor points in time.

You will not get a family name, but you will get spoken lines of conversation with a Spurling-listed character. I’ll outline it for you chronologically.

You keep your existing Kipper-Man appearance at the start of A Question of Upbringing

You would add to this role the one-sentence character who makes up part of the crowd at The Mortimer on page 25 of Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant: “A man with a yellowish beard and a black hat was buying drinks for two girls . . .” That gives you one appearance in time, although it’s rather broadly dated. You were there on an evening in 1928 or 1929, according to Spurling.

Next, you also become the unnamed driver of the hired car that arrives late on the night of the Mozart party at the Stevenses in the early summer of 1959. In that role, you speak six sentences in conversation with a certified-Spurling character, Sir Leonard Short KCB.

That is on page 265 of the novel Temporary Kings. You gain a specific day and hour.

So, your need for a fixed position in time is filled twice over. You also get speaking lines And because Jenkins, the narrator, hardly notices you in the
crowd at The Mortimer, the double therapeutic coincidence is secure from criticism. And it doesn’t conflict with the Creator’s plot lines in any way.

KIPPER MAN: Oh! Oh! Oh, great! Great! Thanks Comrade Doctor. Thanks Comrade Doctor.

BELKIN: You should thank the Nurse. She saw your human potentials, she arranged for the costume that concealed your Primitive status, and she (pointing) conceived this audacious therapeutic program. (Applause from the Consultant Chamber encouraged by Stage Manager.)

We’ve broken the regulations by treating you. The longer you stay here in the status of a Primitive, the riskier it is for us all. The Nurse has drawn up your Prescription Acceptance Statement. Once we sign it, she will register it. Lose no time in becoming a citizen. As soon as you hear the words “Rockall & Malin” on any BBC Shipping Forecast, all the coincidences will take effect. At that moment, you gain the legal status of Citizen. You become a free man.

Kipper Man signs. Embraces Nurse and shakes hands with Belkin. Starts to Exit into Waiting Room

NURSE: Not that way. Use the Doctor’s private door so that the Shop Assistant won’t see you. (As Kipper Man exits, she says in low voice to Belkin) I don’t trust the Shop Assistant, Karl. Be careful with him.

BELKIN: All right., Gwendolyn. (to audience) Please notify those who left that we are starting on the last case. (Some consultants return.)

NURSE: (to Shop Assistant) The Comrade Doctor will see you now.

SHOP ASSISTANT: (angrily) It has been a very long wait. What has become of Kipper Man?

NURSE: He used the Doctor’s private door. It was an emergency.

SHOP ASSISTANT: Where has he gone with my chauffeurs’ uniform? Where has he taken it?

You asked me to get him a costume — (moves close to the Nurse, leering) And you promised you would make it worth my while. (lifts his bag)

NURSE: Please step inside. Comrade Doctor, the Shop Assistant.

BELKIN: (taking the readings) 200/50 HSP 19,000. Excellent. Your body can accept an unusually wide range of coincidences.

SHOP ASSISTANT: Comrade Doctor, My longing for significance keeps me in excruciating pain day and night. I must have a name, and it must be a name of significance in the texts. One that will be prominently listed in Spurling. More prominently than that monkey Maisky who gets two paragraphs on page 118. (Sinister and threatening) It is vital for the success
of my business that you provide me with a coincidence that raises me to the level of a memorable character.

BELKIN: Citizen Shop Assistant, I will do the best I can, but it may not be in your long-term interest to receive an audacious coincidence. There are risks that we must consider —

SHOP ASSISTANT: Comrade Doctor, *(opening bag)* If you give me what I need, you may have your pick of these priceless theatrical heirlooms.

*Belkin shakes his head and indicates rejection of the offer.*

BELKIN: We do our best for every patient on the People’s Health Service. It is illegal for us to accept money from patients. It would violate the People’s regulations.

SHOP ASSISTANT *(angry, making a threat)* Isn’t it also a crime to treat Primitives in this institution? Isn’t it *(takes out Nurse’s note)* also a criminal offense to ask a Citizen patient to help a Primitive and a Therapist break the law? If a treasure from my bag will not motivate you, then perhaps the fear of professional ruin and imprisonment will stimulate your thinking. If you do not give me what I need *(waves Nurse’s note)* I will see to it that you and Non-Entity Nurse are arrested and degraded.

BELKIN: *(angry but frightened)* Why, you —

NURSE: *(interrupting, getting close to Belkin)* Comrade Doctor, I’m sure that we can prescribe a magnificent coincidence that will provide the cure the Shop Assistant needs and deserves. Please see my covering memorandum on top of the file.

*As Belkin studies her memorandum, the Shop Assistant becomes suspicious.*

SHOP ASSISTANT: No tricks, now. I want a guaranteed, signed list of what I will get from your coincidence therapy. If the guaranteed results are not satisfactory —

BELKIN: *(heartened by the Nurse’s memorandum)* Citizen Shop Assistant, Here is the list of guaranteed results. You will gain a name, and a personal entry in Spurling.

You are guaranteed a much more significant and conspicuous standing than the one you have at present. The coincidence is entirely compatible with the Creator’s text. The apostles of the Creator, who admire the audacity of his coincidences, will praise this one, not criticize it. Please sign your acceptance, and the Nurse will witness it.

SHOP ASSISTANT: *(A triumphant smile broadens as he reads down the list.)* If your coincidence does not meet these specifications, it will be prison for both of you. *(He signs and hands it to Nurse who signs it as witness.)*
BELKIN: It is now official and will take effect when the long fifth time-beep next sounds on Radio 4 or on the BBC World Service. Let’s listen.
(turns on Clinic radio wave scanner - just as the hour time beeps begin.)

STAGE MANAGER: beep beep beep beep beep beep beep

BELKIN: (heartily) Citizen, congratulations. (Crescendo to the new name) You have just added the character of Braddock-alias-Thorne, who already has a substantial listing in Spurling. There is a good chronological “fit”. The Braddock-Thorne police poster is viewed by Stringham, Templer, and Jenkins in the summer of 1922. Quite compatible with your aged appearance in the Costume Shop in early 1941. This coincidence will meet all your specifications.

SHOP ASSISTANT: (resuming ingratiating ways he had in Scene 1) It’s not quite what I wanted, but (smiling triumphantly) it does meet my requirements handsomely. I also get two names, not just one. (Opens bag) Comrade Doctor, let me present you with this priceless dagger: it was used by Laurence Olivier in 

Hamlet. I’m sorry I lost my temper. Bless you both.

He starts to exit through door to Waiting Room.

Belkin follows him into the Waiting Room, trying to return the dagger.

Shop Assistant exits Waiting Room before Belkin can catch up.

Belkin halts in Waiting Room. Examines dagger, takes it out of its sheath.
Then places both dagger and sheath on Nurse’s desk. Turns and walks back into his office.

A musical note signals the fall of the curtain

STAGE MANAGER informs audience that it is no longer playing the role of Consultants. Could also invite final questions or observations they have before ending their Consultant roles. Then sets the scene for Scene 3. Explains they can now see both chambers as audience members.

A musical note signals the rise of the curtain

Scene 3 - Professional Courtesy

Same Place – 20 Minutes Later

Belkin and Nurse are in his office.
NURSE: Karl, all the Consultants have left. Many admiring comments. They may not consider the long-term possibility that the Shop Assistant’s coincidence could be challenged by criticisms from Powell apostles.

BELKIN: Yes, that could happen. But the Kipper Man has been cured and is now free. The Shop Assistant can never change that. He will soon see that the more conspicuous he makes himself, the more likely it is that fanatical Powellite and writers for Private Eye will try to expose any flaws in his coincidence.

NURSE: Karl, if you will initial these four treatment agreements, I will be able to lock up.

Belkin signs.


BELKIN: Gerassim. My English mother wanted to name me “George V”, but my father admired Tolstoy’s peasant servant in The Death of Ivan Ilyich. (takes her hand)

I should feel happy at this moment but I’m miserable – about the injustice of my getting honors for discoveries that came from you. Your idea of Braddock alias Thorne was brilliant. If you were not a Non-Entity, the multiple-coincidence technique would be named for you. As it is, our profession is denied the lustre of your genius. And I am denied the right to adore and – love you.

(In same dreamy manner used by Fire Warden in Scene 1, spreading arms, looking heavenward)

I wonder if there are waves in the spiritual cosmos that raise one up as much as bad fortune has pressed one down. A cosmic dialectic of evolving Marxian historical stages that—

NURSE: (interrupts) Oh, Karl Gerassim, don’t be so philosophical. I can’t bear it.

BELKIN: (suddenly excited) Would you repeat what you just said – slowly?

NURSE: “Don’t be so philosophical. I can’t bear it.”

BELKIN: You’ve used that phrase before!

NURSE: Yes, I guess I often use it. Especially in the presence of socialist dialecticians.

BELKIN: (hitting his forehead) Physician, heal thyself!! Darling, you’ve generated an idea that will cure all our troubles. Why didn’t I think of this before?

NURSE: What is it?
BELKIN: Look. What makes you a Non-Entity is that you are outside Powell’s world, right?

NURSE: Of course.

BELKIN: You’ve given me an idea that can make you as much a Citizen of that world as any of the patients we’ve treated today.

NURSE: But –

BELKIN: If you marry me – I am a Spurling character – you are *ipso facto* incorporated, if indirectly, into that world, are you not?

NURSE: But – that alone would not be enough to raise me to Citizen level. I would also have to appear in my own right as a character in the Creator’s texts.

BELKIN: Yes, and I believe you already have appeared. If you marry me, you would get, ‘attached-character’ status, and that would qualify you for coincidence-therapy, wouldn’t it?

NURSE: Yes, but –

BELKIN: Let me take your readings. *(applies instrument)* 400/20 and 500,000. You know what a fantastically wide range of coincidence therapies that opens up!

NURSE: Yes.

BELKIN: Please write this down on a Prescription form: Item 1, you marry me. *(Take 3 times daily – for life.)*

Item 2: Add to that matrimonial standing the character of *(pause) ‘The Girl in the Chelsea Cinema Queue’! *(Nurse gasps and raises hands in surprise.)* She’s in pages 97-101 of *At Lady Molly’s*. On page 101, after the conversation with Quiggin, the Creator has her say to Nick: “Don’t be so philosophical. I can’t bear it.” That coincidence not only makes you a character (though an anonymous one); it gives you spoken lines. You would gain full Citizen status. Free at last from Non-Entity-ism.

All of that will happen — once you sign to accept the Prescription. Please make it out so that it will take effect when the next musical note is heard.

NURSE: *(signing)* Please sign it yourself – and add your dear initials: K.G.B.

Belkin signs and then initials. They embrace as:

*A musical note signals the fall of the curtain.*

*Followed by the same note in three measures of exuberant 16th notes*
(The STAGE MANAGER leads the audience in applause, throwing confetti, as members of the cast take their bows – all except THE DIRECTOR’S WIFE)

BUT ….THE REAR DOOR OF THE AUDITORIUM CRASHES OPEN . . . . .

Scene 4  A Moral Ending – Blood Flows
(During – or just after – the applause, THE DIRECTOR’S WIFE BURST INTO THE ROOM WITH A LOUD SHRIEK. She runs up and enters the stage through the Waiting Room door, notices the dagger on the nurses desk, picks it up. Then turns on Belkin.)

DIRECTOR’S WIFE: You horrible socialist quack and your horrible non-entity nurse. You haven’t cured me. You’ve wrecked my hopes. Mrs. Bruce’s social secretary won’t send me an invitation to the William Buckley reception. My friends all phoning to tell me how much they pity me. Because of you, my social standing has been ruined forever. Ruined by you forever, by a Communist quack. You deserve a dacha in hell. Well, this will send you there. . .

She makes a sweeping stabbing motion at Belkin.

Nurse runs over and interposes her body as Director’s Wife stabs at Belkin.

Nurse staggers (ketchup capsule stains her uniform). BELKIN catches her and eases her into a chair.

Director’s Wife stops and stares at Nurse, as all the other characters gather around Nurse’s chair.

NURSE: Karl, Karl. I die a Comrade with a Spurling listing in the next world. (Gasps for breath) Karl, you must go on curing all those crippled Powell characters in Dance. There are so many who need your help.

DIRECTOR’S WIFE, BELKIN, STAGE MANAGER & REST OF CAST stand behind her.

And, Karl, whenever you treat any of those minor Dance characters, (gasp) please remember (gasp) my final words:

As others strain to hear, NURSE sits up, breathing hard, and says between her last gasps:

To cure your patient’s DANCE disease,
Imagine in interstices.

ENTIRE CAST: (In slow, mournful finale, all together.)

Imagine in interstices!
STAGE MANAGER: (to audience) That is the absolute end.
You worked hard here – for a long time – performing as actors and as audience. You deserve relaxation. You can leave now with our thanks. Good bye.
The End of the *Dance*

*Grey Gowrie*

*This talk was first given on 19 November 2010 at The Wallace Collection, London as the Annual Anthony Powell Lecture.*

I should like to dedicate this talk to the memory of Frank Kermode who died recently, aged 90. Forty years back, Frank hired me to teach English and American literature at UCL, where he was Lord Northcliffe Professor. Admirer of Shakespeare, the Authorised Version of the Bible, Wallace Stevens and Muriel Spark, Frank was one of the last century’s great critics. Unlike many who confine themselves to polemic, he was also an unmissable writer. After a couple of years, I left his department to join an honourable, but altogether dysfunctional, administration: the Conservative government between 1972 and 1974. This was the era when a Secretary of State instructed us how to shave in the dark. It has been well chronicled recently by Dominic Sandbrook. Leaving Frank for Ted Heath seems at this distance rather like, were one a girl, leaving Barnby, say, or Hugh Moreland for Widmerpool. Indeed may I also recommend, to the dedicated Widmerpudlians of the AP Society, Philip Ziegler’s *Edward Heath*, one of the great biographies of our time. They will find much there to delight them. Ted was a good man as Widmerpool is not. But there is overlap in mannerisms and manners.

One of Frank’s most impressive books is called *The Sense of An Ending*. I want to talk about some of the ways Anthony Powell steered *A Dance to the Music of Time*, our supreme *roman-fleuve*, to sea; glancing over his shoulder, as it were, at another modern master, Marcel Proust. And I want to do so not least because, in my experience, there are quite a few readers of *Dance*, fervent fans even, who do not get on as well as they would like with *Hearing Secret Harmonies*, the twelfth and last novel of the sequence; or, more accurately, the twelfth and last book of the novel. When you grill them, the objection seems to be that an egotist like Widmerpool, each of whose appearances in the proceeding books is governed by the will to power, or the quest for status, authority, and the like, turns himself, unconvincingly in this view, into a 1970s hippie. I have also heard the charge that Powell, who published *Harmonies* in his seventieth year, was the wrong type, the wrong kind of author to tackle the Abbie Hoffman or Charles Manson or sex, drugs and rock’n’roll era of the previous decade: the years, to adapt Powell’s admirer Philip Larkin, between the end of the Chatterley ban and the Beatles’ first LP. On the contrary, I believe that from our perspective, 40 years on, Powell was absolutely the right author for a time when, as his own story was being brought to its close, an exuberant and anarchic irrationality seized Western culture. Dropping out or doing one’s own thing became a social and political imperative. To a classical imagination like Powell’s there was
nothing surprising, nor unprecedented, in the young dropping out while the old were dropping dead. The music of time always depends on changes of tempo.

Before he embarked on Dance, Anthony Powell was a novelist and professional writer. He had published five novels and written reviews and film scripts as well as journalism and an historical study. His career was interrupted, like so many others, by six years of war. During the quarter century or so of Dance’s composition, he continued to earn his living as an editor and reviewer. He was known to his friends as Tony. His narrator also bears a conventionally abbreviated Christian name and a Welsh surname: Nick Jenkins. Powell was always a transparent commentator on his own life and work. In Faces in My Time, third of his four volumes of memoirs, he describes the gestation of his novel. He talks about weighing the pros and cons of organising a continuum of characters, instead of laying them off at the end of each novel; a bad idea given the likelihood, as he puts it, of their continuing to hang around the stage door in search of re-employment. He also concludes that “the first person narrative was preferable in dodging the artificiality of the ‘invented hero’, who speaks for the author”. This internal debate was transformed by an epiphany, a donné, a bit of luck. A magical mystery moment was given to a mind not much interested in religion (though Powell knew the King James Bible very well and liked English hymns sung by Welsh voices) but always intrigued by myth, coincidence, superstition, the occult – all the sediment cultures accumulate for people to wade through while they conduct their lives. Here, in Dance, is the world of Dr Trelawney, Mrs Erdleigh and Scorpio Murtlock. Powell’s own pentecostal moment occurred in the Wallace Collection:

> At a fairly early stage in tackling this matter – that is, a long sequence of novels with recurring characters – I found myself ... in front of Nicolas Poussin’s picture there given the title of A Dance to the Music of Time. An almost hypnotic spell seems cast by this masterpiece on the beholder. I knew all at once that Poussin had expressed at least one important aspect of what the novel must be.

While the dance or merry-go-round of life, seen through allegories of the seasons, or human attributes and ambitions, or toys from the attic of myth, like Phoebus’s chariot, is all a-quiver in the Poussin, there was also a precedent, again French, for “dodging the artificiality of the invented ‘hero’ who speaks for the author.”

Powell never blurs or hurries over his admiration for Proust. In more than one essay, he describes Proust as the greatest French novelist. His true Penelope was never Flaubert. A whole section of his book Miscellaneous Verdicts, Writing on Writers 1946-1989, is entitled “Proust and Proustian Matters”. Even more compelling, the narrator of Dance, Nick Jenkins himself, brings his “onlie begetter” on stage. In The Military Philosophers,
third book of the wartime trilogy, Jenkins has escaped working under Widmerpool. Promoted acting major, he finds himself shepherding diverse, fractious and exiled military allies through northern France during the autumn after D-Day. He comes close to tears when he discovers that a seemingly nondescript seaside town, bourn of worrying chores for a staff officer told to find appropriate billets for tired men and status-conscious officers, has turned out to be Cabourg. Cabourg is Proust’s Balbec: the Normandy resort of the Narrator’s family holidays. Here is the passage:

Cobb was making notes in a little book. Marinko gazed out of the window, overcome with Slav melancholy, or, more specifically – being of the party that supported the Resistance groups of Mihailovich – dejection at the course British policy appeared to be taking in that connexion.

“Just spell out the name of that place we stopped over last night, Major Jenkins,” said Cobb.

“C-A-B-O-U-R-G, Sir.”

As I uttered the last letter, scales fell from my eyes. Everything was transformed. It all came back – like the tea-soaked madeleine itself – in a torrent of memory ... Cabourg ... We had just driven out of Cabourg ... out of Proust’s Balbec. Only a few minutes before, I had been standing on the esplanade along which, wearing her polo cap and accompanied by the little band of girls he had supposed the mistresses of professional bicyclists, Albertine had strolled into Marcel’s life. Through the high windows of the Grand Hotel’s dining room – conveying for those without the sensation of staring into an aquarium – was to be seen Saint-Loup, at the same table Bloch, mendaciously claiming acquaintance with the Swanns. A little further along the promenade was the Casino, its walls still displaying tattered play-bills, just like the one Charlus, wearing his black straw hat, had pretended to examine, after an attempt at long range to assess the Narrator’s physical attractions and possibilities. Here Elstir had painted; Prince Odoacer played golf. Where was the little railway line that had carried them all to the Verdurins’ villa? Perhaps it ran in another direction to that we were taking; more probably it was no more.

“And the name of the brigadier at the Battle Clearance Group?” asked Cobb. “The tall one who took us round those captured guns?” He wrote down the name and closed the notebook. “You told me, Major Jenkins, that at the beginning of the war you yourself saw a Royal Engineer colonel wearing a double-breasted service-dress tunic. You can assure me of that?”

“I can, Sir and, on making enquiries, was told that it was permitted by regulations, provided no objection was taken by regimental or higher authority.”

Moments of rapture alternating with moments of utter banality make Anthony Powell (and Proust also, come to that) the compelling life artist he is. Colonel
Cobb is a walk-on only. The social realism, social comedy drawing is what we expect from Dance. Cobb is an American and himself an ironist; here he is mobbing up British insistence on proper form. But does not the prose lift into poetry when Nick finds out where he is?

I do not think A La Recherche du Temps Perdu is an influence on Dance exactly. That would be like saying Marcel was an influence on Nick, or on Tony, as a person. Dance is even more closely autobiographical in narrative outline than A La Recherche. It is rather that Proust, like Poussin, showed our narrator his way out of the dark wood of the middle years. Tony, and Nick, had to devise what to do after five novels, six years of war, and a study of Richard Burton – in real life, a study of the 17th-century memorialist John Aubrey. Powell chooses Proust more as a companion, a Virgil for his Dante, than as a literary model. Dance is much more tightly constructed than A La Recherche. Powell’s friend and contemporary, Evelyn Waugh, thought it much funnier. Earlier in The Military Philosophers (one of the greatest books of the sequence, by the way; if, like me, you have worked in government, you will at once recognise how immaculate is Powell’s command of bureaucratic obfuscation and procrastination – he pre-dates the Sir Humphrey series by many years in this regard; the book is also, in spite of the war coming to an end, a dark one, as we lose both Templer and Stringham), Nick reads a passage from Remembrance of Things Past, as he calls it, which describes Prince Odoacer at the Princesse de Guermantes’s party. He does so because the Prince, Gogo to his pals, is a great-uncle of the Dance character Prince Theodoric. What is going on, however, is a skilful and subtle literary joke: Dante joshing Virgil as they proceed through the middle of the way. There is no Prince Odoacer in A La Recherche and Nick is reading a passage invented by his creator. Both Powell and Proust were accomplished parodists. Proust published many parodies of the Duc de Saint-Simon, his Virgil, so to say, or one of his Virgils, Ruskin being another. AP anoraks will recall that Dogdene, the Sleafords’ country mansion and Molly Jeavons’s home during her first marriage, scene too of Widmerpool’s most spectacular sexual humiliation, was visited and written up by Pepys. Nick enjoys reading the Diarist’s account of toying wantonly there, in a painted closet, with “a great black maid”. It is doubtless not lost on Nick that Pepys’s physical resemblance to Widmerpool does not mean he shares Widmerpool’s lack of success with women. The Proust parody, or rather the Scott-Moncrieff parody, is pretty good; the Pepys is perfect.

In spite of being asthmatic, a mummy’s boy and, in time, Dreyfusard, Proust loved his spell of military training. Saint-Loup, who falls in the Great War, is, with Swann, the most sympathetic of A La Recherche’s huge cast of characters. Brought up at Stonehurst, near Aldershot, only child of a professional officer and his wife, companion of their household’s domestics, Nick is more ambiguous about the army. He is fascinated by Vigny’s

75
**Servitude et Grandeur Militaire**, the soldier’s art, and by the prima donna-ish behaviour of all generals. Most of the second war, which he strove so hard to serve in, proved frustrating for him. Among Powell’s many gifts, one he shares with film-makers Antonioni and Rohmer, is an ability to render the state of boredom in a sad or comic but utterly unboring way. Castlemallock, in Northern Ireland, is where most of *The Valley of Bones* is set. It is Nick’s slough of despond. (Bunyan is an influence, by the way, especially towards the end of *Dance.* ) The Irish have no charm for Nick, unlike the Welsh of his regiment and his ancestry. Nick’s aristocratic in-laws are Tollands, wholly English. Tony’s are Pakenhams, Anglo-Irish. No point in being a novelist if you cannot shade reality or move the furniture around. Proust plays similar games. Swann is described as looking not unlike a portrait by Tissot of his real life-prototype, Charles Haas. Both writers love painting. They use works of art to lend features to their characters. Stringham looks like the (wrongly identified) Alexander in the National Gallery’s great Veronese. (Incidentally, how well the perfectly cast Paul Rhys played him in the underrated, slightly too short, Channel 4 soapification of *Dance.*) Jean Templer, later Duport, later Flores, looks like a young and virginal saint in a Flemish or German Old Master drawing when Nick first meets her after leaving school.

Five or six years later, married now to Bob Duport but not yet Jenkins’s mistress, she has turned into a memory of Rubens’s second wife or her sister, in his painting *Le Chapeau de Paille*. Odette, whose affair with Swann takes place around the time of the Narrator’s birth – structural genius, that – is a Botticelli. Nearly 50 years later, in *Le Temps Retrouvé*, which my Penguin edition calls *Finding Time Again*, Odette still looks like a Botticelli. Alas, she has become a crashing bore. One of my regrets in life is never telling Tony of a camp parlour game invented by two dons when I was teaching at an American university in the 1960s. You had to render Proustian themes to the tune of “Colonel Bogey”; David Lean’s film *The Bridge on the River Kwai* was not so long out. The first one was the best.

**Swann’s Way**
A book by Marcel Proust
Tells how
Its hero took to roost
Racy
Odette de Crécy
Who to his friends could
Not be in-
Troduced.

In a pictorial context, Violet Powell’s illustrated *Album to Dance* is almost as indispensable as Hilary Spurling’s great *Handbook to Dance*. Let us make it a mission of the AP Society to get both back into print very soon.
In his inaugural lecture in this series, Tariq Ali did a fine job trouncing the cliché, the inaccurate received wisdom, that *Dance* is about upper-class people or a confined world. This is as silly and partial a viewpoint as describing Powell’s friend and school contemporary, George Orwell, as a science fiction writer or a writer of animal tales. Powell himself uses Proust slyly for the same deconstructive purpose. Again in *The Military Philosophers*, Nick has dealings with Lieutenant Kernéval, a Free Frenchman based with de Gaulle in London. Nick is amazed at the lack of interest Kernéval showed when they passed through Cabourg, with all its associations with Proust. “Doesn’t he always write about society people?” was Kernéval’s chilly comment. Nick runs into him again the following year, after the great Service for Victory at St Paul’s.

We climbed the stairs. I told him this was probably the last time we should meet officially.

“You know that French writer you spoke about? Something to do with a *plage* in Normandie?”

“Proust?”

“That’s the one. I’ve been into it about him. He’s not taught in the schools.”

Kernéval looked severe. He implied that the standards of literature must be kept high.

The magnetic poles of sex and love, now pushing towards each other, now pulling each other apart, condition of fiction as of life, are confronted head-on by our good companions Proust and Powell. Half a century after the *Lady Chatterley* trial, it is right to give three cheers for the end of literary censorship, but an embarrassed cough when one thinks of the colossal difficulty of writing about sex without obliquity, without what T.S. Eliot called an objective correlative (the birds and the bees, if you like). Hence the triumph of my late and much missed best friend Auberon Waugh’s Bad Sex Award. Proust is a genius, right up there, in my view, with Dickens or Wagner or Victor Hugo. Only a genius could have supplied us, in an account of a teenage boy masturbating in the little upstairs room “that smelt of orris root”, with the kind of romantic writing we associate in our literature with early Wordsworth, or with the aesthetic precision in prose we associate, as Marcel himself did, with Ruskin. Twice in the novel the Narrator is voyeur in respect of Charlus. He witnesses a sordid scene of buggery between the Baron and the tailor Jupien in the courtyard shop of the Duc de Guermantes’s town house. M de Charlus has come to visit the Duke’s aunt, Mme de Villeparisis; the Narrator and his family live in the same Guermantes complex. There follows soon after an astonishing and lyrical prose hymn to nature, a Beethoven-like Ode to Joy. In the last book, *Finding Time Again*, he happens upon the male brothel which Charlus has bought for Jupien. He watches a sordid and this time horrifying scene. The Baron, old now, is being
flogged by one of Jupien’s young men, many of whom are on leave from the involuntary horrors of the Western Front. Now the dénouement is horror-comical. It is well-rendered in a recent film, *Time Regained*. John Malkovich is surprisingly, and effectively, cast as Charlus. (He also played Valmont in a film version of Choderlos de Laclos’s *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, another AP bible.) In the Proust film, after what we would no doubt think of as a gay Max Mosley scene, the young men line up to receive their tips from Charlus in the most servile way. “*Merci, M le Baron*”; “*Vous êtes trop gentil, M le Baron*”; “*Grand honneur, M le Baron*” and so on. Charlus complains to Jupien, in the book as in the film, that the present batch are insufficiently severe. *Les sensations* seem to get less *fortes* as we age.

Yet Proust the genius did flunk a test which Powell the supreme craftsman passes triumphantly. The Narrator’s affair with Albertine is the great weakness of *A La Recherche*. It does not terribly matter because *Un Amour de Swann* is the Platonic ideal of Mills and Boon: romantic, erotic, heterosexual, nail-biting as in Odette’s affair with Forcheville and Swann looking up at her window. Above all, it is resolved; not happily, not exactly unhappily, but in the ordinary human, untidy way.

(A wonderfully comic moment in my own life occurred when my close friend, the art critic David Sylvester, who died in 2004, made a Proustian crack. David and his companion Sarah Whitfield had spent many years on the definitive study and catalogue raisonné of the Belgian master René Magritte. “To think that I have wasted years of my life on a painter who was not my type,” David muttered, straight-faced.)

Albertine may not terribly matter to us, but her failure was acknowledged by Proust himself. In the last year of his life he and André Gide would meet and discuss homosexuality. In today’s jargon, Gide was more conspicuously “out” as a writer than Proust. It seems Proust blamed himself for the “indecisiveness” (his term) which had made him (in Gide’s account) nourish the heterosexual side of his book by transposing to the shadow cast by young girls everything his own homosexuality recalled as being gracious, tender, charming; leaving only the grotesque and abject side of it to appear in the cities of the plain. Proust was ambivalent, however, even in this piece of self-criticism. He believed that what attracts us to a person is almost never beauty and has little to do with desire. He is, indeed, the great master of the mismatch between love and desire, together, of course, with the Shakespeare of the Sonnets. Individuals who take their pleasure easily with each other fail to generate the tension of true romance. Odette in old age tells the Narrator that Swann was the love of her life. One suspects that Forcheville, whom she marries after Swann’s death, may have been more to her taste. Shits, like sluts, often do rather well. The central issue, though, is that while the complexities of love and desire are much the same whatever your orientation, a novelist as great as Proust, and one who moreover devotes so much of his
novel to the consideration of homosexuality and lesbianism, fails in purely fictional terms when he transposes the gender of his Narrator’s true love. The jealousy bits work well, not least because they do involve what Proust calls inversion. What is Albertine getting up to with her girl friends? But the character herself is in drag. In common with Françoise the cook, we don’t much care when she dies.

Anthony Powell has a delicate and delightful touch when it comes to physical love. He is better than any writer I have read at mapping the space between our interest in gossip and the love lives of our friends – only iron-clad egos like Widmerpool’s are immune – and our own experience. Nick is a late starter. His early and inept handling of Suzette (the mix-up at La Grenadière in *A Question of Upbringing* is both touching and funny), and of the debutante Barbara Goring, is briskly corrected when he has been seduced by the sluttish left-wing militant, Gypsy Jones. When I was living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the 1960s, a charming and talented neighbour, mother of a close friend, told me she was the model for this incident at the back of Mr Deacon’s shop. She had also been a girlfriend of Samuel Beckett. Beckett’s first book was a study of Proust. These are the kinds of life connections that give so much pleasure in *Dance*. The Beckett cosmology, I find, is much closer to Powell’s wintry classicism. But the young are in thrall also to spring. When Nick takes Jean Duport in his arms in the back of Templer’s car as it passes the Jantzen factory on the old Great West Road, or when she receives him naked at the door of her ground-floor flat in near Rutland Gate, we enter the true acceptance world. The ideal and the real are one, however transitory this may prove to be.

“This style suits you.”

“Not too outré?”

“On the contrary.”

“Is this how you like me?”

“Just like this.”

Dialogue is the way to do it. AP should have been given a lifetime Good Sex Award.

When it comes to their sense of an ending, the two novelists differ markedly. You would expect this, given Powell’s sympathy for Proust but his quite different vision of human life. Proust is the last and possibly the greatest of the Romantic writers. Modernists claim him and there are indeed relativities, shifting perspectives. These seem trivial when set against a narrative of such acute self-consciousness, a self-consciousness he exports to consideration of others. I take Romanticism as the significant shift which occurred towards the end of the 18th century, when artists and thinkers started to examine individual sensibility as a way of asking questions about nature or society as a whole. Pinnacle of posh, the Faubourg St Germain is compelling less in its
own right than for the fact that weedy, half-Jewish doctor’s son Marcel both
conquers it and puts it under the eye of his own feelings at any given point,
rather in the way a photographer can alter the same scene by choosing a
different lens. By all accounts, Proust was an inordinately charming man;
more charming, I suspect, than the Narrator who can, over the lifetime we are
required to spend with him, frequently become a pain in the backside. This is
lifelike. We frequently become a pain in the backside to ourselves. (Powell’s
friend and admirer, Kingsley Amis, with The Green Man, wrote a terrific
novel about this very phenomenon.)

Nick Jenkins’s touch on the tiller of his own identity, by contrast, is much
lighter, though the self-portrait is no less dimensioned. Typical of Romantic
literature is the idea of becoming as distinct from being. In the New
Testament, the story of the Resurrection is a romantic story; the Crucifixion a
classical one. “Nothing to be done”, as the first line of Waiting for Godot has it.
Proust’s coda reverses the opening chord of T.S. Eliot’s quartet East
Coker. In my end is my beginning is the Proust idea. (Incidentally, Eliot was
a friendly acquaintance of Powell and much admired by him; The Waste Land
supplies many a tune for Dance. The novelist would have been well aware
that contemporary artists and intellectuals who were also conservatives were
thin on the ground.)

Of course classical themes like change, decay, madness and old age, observed
against the awful social and political failure that was the First World War, are
present in Le Temps Retrouvé. The old social order has dissolved. The
gratin, the nouveau riche and the demi-monde are now interchangeable.
Madame Verdurin is now the Princesse de Guermantes and Odette is her
cousin-in-law the Duc de Guermant’s mistress. The world of Franoise the
cook remains the same. “Inversion” is still a great social leveller. Jupien’s
niece is adopted by Charlus and married into the Cambremer family. Our
own sub-Proustian soap, Downton Abbey, showed promise in this regard
when Thomas the valet made a pass at a visiting duke. The theme was not
developed. But in Proust temporal erosion is but dust compared to the lilt of
art, the Narrator’s recognition of his destiny as a novelist. The Romantics
substitute art for religion. In his synopsis, using an image that anticipates
Giacometti, Proust writes: “I imagine men as perched on stilts, representing
the length of time they have lived.” Proust was no more religious than
Anthony Powell. His faith was architectural-aesthetic; it had to do with the
great French cathedrals. But Le Temps Retrouvé is, psychologically and
artistically, suffused by resurrection even though, even perhaps because, the
story is a double-take on the romantic idea of becoming. The novel about
becoming a novelist has, after all, been written. Its author is about to die.

T.S. Eliot’s “In my beginning is my end” is where the contrast throws light
on Anthony Powell. Recollecting the genesis of Dance in his autobiography,
he writes:
Certain technical matters had to be settled at once for early establishment of a sufficiently broad base at the start from which a complex narrative might arise, fan out; be sustained over a period of years.

So to understand the end of the dance, we have to go back to the beginning.

In the first book, *A Question of Upbringing*, we meet four young men. They are at that awkward age between adolescence and manhood. They are mature, but not men. They are inmates of the same house at their boarding school which is precisely described – the most accurate rendering of the famous school in literature – but never named. Three are friends who mess together; that is, share a tea-time meal with companions of their choice. The fourth boy is a bit older, not part of the mess. He is first seen by the narrator emerging out of the Thames Valley mist, earnestly training for sports at which he will never shine. He is unattractive, has no sense of humour and while too senior to be bullied is somewhat a figure of fun. The three friends are not snobbish exactly. They are more interested in the fact that one of them has just lost his virginity on a supposed trip to the optician in London. But they live in an age – we are in the early 1920s – acutely aware of social nuance. Jenkins’s and Templer’s folk are professionals, military and financial respectively. Stringham’s are rackety and posh, also divorced. There is something subtly off-key about Widmerpool. He has already passed into mythic legend by wearing the wrong kind of coat. Colonel Cobb would have been riveted.

Once again, anyone hearing this introduction who had not read the novels might well think they were in for social comedy, very English social comedy at that. But look how things will fan out, to use Powell’s phrase, for these four young men; look how the Fates, as in ancient epic or tragedy, will reel them in. Jenkins’s most significant love affair, before his marriage, will be with Templer’s sister. Widmerpool’s success in business will cease to make him a figure of fun for Templer; he finds employment for the sister’s estranged husband, thereby bringing the couple together again and wrecking Jenkins’s romance. Indirectly, through Templer’s first wife, who has left him for a left-wing intellectual met by Nick at university, Jenkins encounters the girl he at once knows he will marry. He is the only one of the four who will have a long, stable and happy marriage with children: the emotional base for his creativity. Stringham is a figure of classic melancholy; very attractive, endlessly entertaining. He can mime Widmerpool perfectly. He dislikes, and sees through: school, university, his family, work, marriage, life. He becomes an alcoholic and then a recovering alcoholic, no less an affliction. But he is also the tragic hero of *Dance*. He enlists in the ranks for the war and finds himself a mess waiter in Jenkins’s and Widmerpool’s regiment. The latter avoids embarrassment by arranging for him to be shipped to Singapore and therefore, indirectly, to a Japanese war camp and his death. “Awfully chic”, as he puts it, “to be killed.”
Stringham has a niece: a poisonous, pretty child who throws up into a font at his wedding. She will turn into the man-killing vampire of the novels, Pamela Flitton. She seduces and humiliates Templer, causing him to volunteer for what turns out to be, in the context of war again, a suicide mission. She marries Widmerpool so that he can provide her with a convenient base from which to make violent sexual raids on other people’s lives, notably Jenkins’s admired writer friend X. Trapnel. She is a kindly one, a Fury. She governs much of Dance’s mythological sub-structure. She is drawn, just a little of course, from the real-life figure of Barbara Skelton, author of a wonderfully named memoir, Tears Before Bedtime. I once asked a friend of mine, who had had an affair with Barbara Skelton, what was the secret of her appeal. “The tawny skin”, he replied, “and the cruelty.” The art of the novel, as exemplified by Dance, is to create characters at once realistic, idiosyncratic and emblematic: like Hamlet, say, or Ophelia. You grasp their narrative or structural significance. But you must also be able to recognise them should they walk into the room. In theory, it is far-fetched to marry your two gargoyles to each other. In practice, the gratification for someone who looks like Widmerpool, and is so concerned with the figure he cuts in the world, of marrying a knock-out like Pamela is altogether convincing.

On Pamela’s side, the alliance is more mysterious; convincing on that very account. “Why did she do it?” Flavia Wisebite, Stringham’s sister, Pamela’s mother, asks Nick at a wedding years after Pamela’s death; Pamela contrives to commit suicide while in bed with Trapnel’s biographer.

How could she? Find the most horrible man on earth and then marry him? She always had to have her own way. It was quite enough that everyone said that Widmerpool was awful, hideous, monstrous. She just wanted to show that she didn’t care in the least what anyone said. She was the same as a child. Absolutely wilful. Nobody could control her.”

When he meets Pamela as an ATS driver in the war, Nick has a sense that she is thoroughly vicious: “using the word not so much in the moral sense but as one might speak of a horse – more specifically a mare.”

Widmerpool has been too continuously a leitmotif in Jenkins’s own story to be considered the most horrible man on earth. Like Pamela, who uses sex not for pleasure, nor for consolation, nor to connect and communicate with another, but to dominate, to impose her will, Widmerpool is throughout the sequence a forceful archetype as much as a character. Characters suffer. They learn. They attempt to reconcile the world without to the world within. Archetypes, whether heroes or anti-heroes, are not proponents of the examined life. They are forces: of their own destruction, of other people’s destiny. “That boy will be the death of me,” says Stringham of some comic blunder of Widmerpool at school. Twenty years on, he proves to be. Widmerpool exemplifies to Jenkins, the slow starter in life, the perils and attractions of taking charge of your life, of subordinating everything you do
and feel to an heroic exercise of will. Powell invests too much in Widmerpool’s horror-comic potential to let him remain purely a gargoyle. Widmerpool has intellectual ability, formidable energy, application. He can forget himself sufficiently for a few moments to analyse the behaviour of others, if, and only if, doing so helps him get on. He is therefore effective in business during his Donners-Brebner years. In the army, he ends up as a Colonel with an OBE for his work in the Cabinet Office. He becomes a Labour MP and is one of the first to be made a Life Peer under the Tories in 1958.

By the end of the sequence, set in time some ten years later, two of the four school contemporaries are dead. Nick is a happily married man of letters in his sixties, whose wife, Isobel, has given him two children (who do not appear in the novel except as dedicatees of individual books) and also an immense cast of in-laws. These do appear. The wonderful Erridge – touch of the Longfords, both Edward and Frank; touch of George Orwell – has gone, but a niece, Fiona, daughter of Tory MP Roddy Cutts and Isobel’s sister, Susan, is pivotal for the end of *Dance*. She is a member of Widmerpool’s nemesis Scorpio Murtlock’s ruralist, hippy, alternative society cult. Quite a few of my own friends of that time used to travel around the countryside in horse-drawn caravans and a cloud of marijuana. They could perfectly well have camped in a field near the Chantry. Perhaps they did. I am not for a moment suggesting that these saintly figures engaged in satanic rites. But such are not unknown in the country. Quite recently, more than 40 years on, the Lord-Lieutenant of the county adjoining ours has had to tackle a worrying outbreak of witchcraft. It was a pretext, in his view, for incest and child abuse. Our perceptions may be defined by decades. As Powell was classically aware, human compulsions are not.

Fiona Cutts meets Trapnell’s necrophiliac biographer at one of Murtlock’s ritual orgies and bids fair to become the respectable wife of a now respectable academic. Widmerpool’s quasi-heroic will to get on, his unconsidered desire and pursuit of some illusory whole, has led him to embrace the counter-culture of Abbie Hoffman, Herbert Marcuse and Powell’s own fictional French guru, Léon Josef Ferrand-Seneschal. This nightmare figure not only involves Widmerpool in “liberated” sexual high jinks, but nearly gets him indicted for treason. The apostle of liberty is feeding stuff to the Soviet Union as busily as he can. If you are very blinkered, you can read the whole of *Dance* as a satire on the righthinkmanship of the Left: *tendance* John Carey and other spiritual heirs of Quiggin. The extremity, therefore, of Widmerpool’s quest, the lengths he will go to or not stop at to realise what General Conyers (almost my favourite minor character in *Dance*) would have called his personal myth does have a touch of the heroic about it. Indeed, the hyper-literate Jenkins compares him mentally to Ariosto’s Orlando, Childe Roland of the Romances. Like Orlando, when he drops out, he does so with a
vengeance: the reverse epitome of cool, of doing your own thing. As a fine later novelist, A.S. Byatt, put it: “The innocence of the Sixties flickers into cruelty very quickly.”

Widmerpool has always answered to the imperatives or trends of a given day. Now they will deliver him a ridiculous death. A well-known public man nearing 70, he has in Scorp Murtlock, as in Pamela, found a will stronger than his own. He dies offstage from the narrative, as Stringham and Templer have died. He is by now wholly grotesque: a diminished man in a blue nightie, participant in ritual orgies (he prefers looking) and forever tilting at the windmills of fashionable thought. The genesis of Wagner’s immense Ring was a projected opera called The Death of Siegfried. Hearing Secret Harmonies immolates the anti-hero of Dance. We may think of it as The Death of Widmerpool.

Proust and Powell both use the device of a party to bring their surviving characters on stage for the last time. In Le Temps Retrouvé, the afternoon party of the Princesse de Guermantes (Madame Verdurin to you and me and also to a confused Bloch) segues into a grotesque masked ball where old people have painted themselves up, as if old age had not already disguised them. The awful Bloch looks like an old Shylock. He is the same age as the Narrator, who is barely 50. In Harmonies, we meet Widmerpool on stage for the last time, creating acute embarrassment at a wedding. We meet the once bewitching Jean and the once loathsome Duport at a gallery exhibition, one devoted to bad art: Mr Deacon has been fashionably rebranded by the young. But all this, in both novels, is administration: theatrical “business” merely compared with the realisation of manifest artistic destiny for Proust and the tragi-comic Widmerpool’s Tod for Powell. Powell also grasps that the job of the artist is to create association, generate metamorphosis, modify the world through an act of the mind. But his world, and Poussin’s, is a bleak one; even though for my time and money Powell is the greatest comedian, the funniest writer I have read. The Theatre of the Absurd was big around the time Hearing Secret Harmonies was being composed, and it shows.

Widmerpool’s death strips Jenkins, sole survivor now of those four schoolboys, of a recurring figure in his life: “one of those fabulous monsters that haunts the recesses of the individual imagination.” Life, and a novel orchestrating a life, delivers both the grotesque and the absurd. But these attributes have their heroic, and thereby their timeless, tragic aspects as well. There is not so much that is funny about Widmerpool’s end. His heart stops when he sprints into the lead on one of Murtlock’s group runs through the woods, a desperate attempt to assert himself over the young Magus. Harmonies is the most pastoral of the books, the most given to natural description, a direct reversal of the ordering of A La Recherche. The last run is more than contextually tidy; we met Widmerpool on a run at school and Nick, in his Aldershot childhood, used to observe Dr Trelawney and his robed
followers running over the Surrey furze. But now the run reminds us that all we know of life is movement, striving, entropy, repetition. Our ethical imperative is to run towards the wintry silence with honour, like Stringham; not vanity, like Widmerpool. Bithel, whose life in the army Widmerpool wrecked many books ago, acts as a melancholy Loge. He delivers the news of the death. All the survivor, the writer, knows for certain is that things happen and will happen again, seasons return and the dance go on.
The Politics of the Dance

By Vernon Bogdanor

This talk was first given on 18 November 2011 at The Wallace Collection, London as the Annual Anthony Powell Lecture.

The historian, AJP Taylor, once said of Anthony Powell, ‘All that is wrong with Mr Powell’s books is that there are not enough of them and they are too short.’ I regard the Dance as the finest achievement of English fiction since the war. One indication of my enthusiasm for it is that my paperback copies of the Dance are falling to pieces from repeated readings; and in each repeated reading, I discover new subtleties. This lecture is intended as an affectionate tribute.

Politics in a work of literature [according to Stendhal] is like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, something loud and vulgar, and yet a thing to which it is not possible to refuse attention.

Anthony Powell would, I think, have agreed with that. What Stendhal regards as vulgar, and what I am sure Anthony Powell would have regarded as vulgar, is the ideological novel, the novel of ideas, the novel whose main purpose is to persuade the reader of the truth of a particular political programme. Arthur Koestler’s Darkness at Noon is perhaps a good example of such a novel, more familiar on the Continent than in Britain, since we have always been suspicious of ideology, and have been lucky enough not to have had to face the ideological challenges which have so disrupted the Continent. But there are nevertheless examples from English literature – the novels of Disraeli, for example, which Powell admired, though less for their politics than for their depiction of the aristocratic society of the 19th century; and Powell’s friend, George Orwell also wrote ideological novels.

But politics can appear in a novel in a quite different way – not as ideology but as background – as, for example, in Anthony Trollope’s Palliser novels. In these novels, the leading characters are politicians or part of the political world, but there is hardly anything in them of political ideas, any more than there are theological ideas in the Barchester series. Politics in the one and the church in the other are merely the background, the social landscape as it were; the background could just as easily be the law or any other profession. Politics is part of the stage machinery. Such political ideas as are expressed in the Palliser novels are banal in the extreme. Enoch Powell, mentioned briefly in Hearing Secret Harmonies, said of Trollope that he was a perfectly recognisable type; the person who has preconceived self-satisfied political notions, with not a suspicion of the depth, the passion and the complexity of politics. He would have been a predictable and perfectly typical Social Democrat voter in 1987’. Enoch Powell quotes from Phineas Finn a passage which is ‘the prelude to several pages of
the sort of platitudes with which any plain citizen will, if given the chance, bore a real live politician to distraction.

Anthony Powell did not of course rate Trollope very highly as a political novelist, or indeed as a novelist of any sort, since he believed that Trollope lacked any real understanding of human nature. I am sure that many of you will remember the amusing exchange between the narrator, Nick Jenkins, and General Liddament in *The Soldier’s Art*, when the General, upon discovering that Jenkins is a ‘book reader’, asks him if he likes Trollope and is disconcerted when Jenkins confesses that he has ‘Never found him easy to read’.

was clearly unable to credit my words. This was an unhappy situation. There was a long pause while he glared at me.

‘Why not?’ he asked at last.

He spoke very sternly. I tried to think of an answer. From the past, a few worn shreds of long-forgotten literary criticism were just pliant enough to be patched hurriedly together in substitute for a more suitable garment to cover the dialectic nakedness of the statement just made.

‘– the style – certain repetitive tricks of phrasing – psychology often unconvincing – sometimes downright dishonest in treating of individual relationships – women don’t analyse their own predicaments as there represented – in fact, the author does more thinking than feeling – of course, possessor of enormous narrative gifts – marshalling material – all that amounting to genius – certain sense of character, even if stylised – and naturally as a picture of the times –’

‘Rubbish’, said General Liddament.

He sounded very angry indeed. All the good humour brought about by the defeat of the Blue Force had been dissipated by a thoughtless expression of literary prejudice on my own part. It might have been wiser to have passed some noncommittal judgment. Possibly I should be put under arrest for holding such mutinous views. The General thought for a long time, perhaps pondering that question.

‘All I can say is you miss a lot’.

He spoke mildly.

‘So I’ve often been told, sir’.

The General cannot understand how a literary man could possibly not like Trollope.

Now the *Dance* is not of course political in either of the two senses that I have so far mentioned. It has no ideological or political message – although it has, as I hope to show, what might be called an anti-political message. And, although politics does in fact play an important role in the series, it is by no means mere background as it is in Trollope. What role then does politics play?

It is perhaps first worth noting that Powell does not like politicians very much. Apart from Widmerpool, there are only two characters who are
professional politicians, and one of them is a minor figure – Fettiplace-Jones, who had been captain of the house when Nick Jenkins entered Eton – the school is not in fact named, but from the description at the beginning of *A Question of Upbringing*, it can only be Eton. The other is Roddy Cutts, Jenkins’s brother-in-law. Both become Conservative MPs. Powell was of course a strong Tory himself, and one of the many misconceptions about the *Dance* is that he is only interested in satirising figures on the Left. In fact, Powell has little time for either Fettiplace-Jones or Cutts. Fettiplace-Jones is introduced as having developed ‘that ingratiating, almost cringing manner some politicians assume to avoid the appearance of thrusting themselves forward’.

Roddy, a more important character, is described in *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant* in the following way.

Tall, sandy-haired, bland, Roddy smiled ceaselessly. The House of Commons had, if anything, increased a tendency, probably congenital, to behave with a shade more assiduity than ordinary politeness required; a trait that gave Roddy some of the bearing of a clergyman at a school treat. Always smiling, his eyes roved for ever round the room, while he offered his hosts their own food, and made a point of talking chiefly to people he did not know, as if he felt these could not be altogether comfortable if still unacquainted with himself.

Roddy just succeeds in holding his seat in the 1945 general election, which resulted of course in a Labour landslide, but he nevertheless retained the forceful manner, half hectoring, half subservient, common to representatives of all political parties, together with the politician’s hallmark of getting hold of the wrong end of the stick.

But Fettiplace-Jones was perfectly able to compete with Roddy – ‘His untiring professional geniality rivalled even Roddy’s remorseless charm of manner’.

There is another character in the *Dance* who, although not a professional politician, plays a large part in politics and government – Sir Magnus Donners, a Conservative MP and a member of the coalition government during the First World War, but out of Parliament by the mid-1920s. Sir Magnus becomes a minister again in the Churchill coalition government during the Second World War, and so has, presumably, become an MP once more, since he has not been ennobled.

Powell’s friend, Robert Conquest, has said that Powell was ‘without special interest in politics’. That is wrong, I think. Indeed another standard but absurdly wrong-headed misconception about the *Dance* is not that it is non-political but that it is too political, too conservative in his approach. Associated with that of course is the standard accusation of snobbery, an accusation more properly directed at Powell’s idol, Marcel Proust, who seems...
to have believed that individuals were condemned to remain in the class into which they were born, and that real communication between those in different social classes was not really possible. Powell, it seems to me, held neither of these views; and his heroes and heroines are not the well-born, but those who live by the imagination, and, in particular, those who live for the creative arts.

Powell says of VS Naipaul in his autobiographical volume, *The Strangers All Are Gone*, that

> In one sense [he] could hardly be less ‘committed’ (to use an old-fashioned term); in another his political interests, in the deeper meaning of the phrase, are intensely alive.

The same can, I think, be said of Powell himself. The *Dance* is, I think, suffused with politics. The main purpose of this lecture is to try to prove this statement. But I am conscious that I am only scratching the surface of the subject.

I believe that the *Dance* is political in a third sense, quite different from the two senses that I have already mentioned. It is political in the sense in which, for example, the novels of George Eliot are political. The *Dance* is political in the sense that it is a study of individuals in a society in which politics plays a fundamental part. It is political in the sense that the reaction of the characters, and most obviously that of Widmerpool, to political events is a measure of their temperament, of the sort of people that they are. A good example is given by Nick Jenkins’s Uncle Giles, who thinks himself ill-used by the world and regards himself as ‘a bit of a radical’. His approach to politics and to life reflects his fundamental egocentricity. ‘His mastery of the hard-luck story’, we are told, ‘was of a kind never achieved by persons not wholly concentrated on themselves’. Of Hitler, he says casually, ‘I like the little man they’ve got in Germany now’.

Nick Jenkins, no doubt speaking for Powell, reports that

> This view, apparently so perverse in the light of Uncle Giles’s often declared biblical principles, was in a measure the logical consequence of them. Dating to some extent from the post-war period, when to support Germany against France, was the mark of liberal opinion, it had somehow merged with his approval of all action inimical to established institutions. National Socialism represented revolution; to that extent the movement gained the support, at any rate temporary support, of Uncle Giles. Besides, he shared Hitler’s sense of personal persecution, conviction that the world was against him. This was in marked contrast to the feeling of my brother-in-law, Erridge, also a declared enemy of established institutions, who devoted much of his energies to assisting propaganda against current German policies. Erridge, however, in his drift away from orthodox Communism after his own experiences in Spain, had become an increasingly keen ‘pacifist’, so that he was, in

89
practice, as unwilling to oppose Germany by force of arms as Uncle Giles himself.

‘We don’t want guns, Erridge used to say, ‘We want to make the League of Nations effective’.

Erridge, like Uncle Giles, feels himself ill-used by the world, though with even less reason.

Erridge, a rebel whose life had been exasperatingly lacking in persecution, had enjoyed independence of parental control, plenty of money, assured social position, early in life. Since leaving school he had been deprived of all the typical grudges within the grasp of most young men. Some of these grudges, it was true, he had later developed with fair success by artificial means, grudges being, in a measure, part and parcel of his political approach.

Uncle Giles’s remark about Hitler is in fact just the sort of remark that someone with his temperament would have made, and it illuminates his character, just as admiration for Hitler illuminates the character of another radical of the period, Lloyd George, who said, after meeting Hitler in 1936 that he was ‘the George Washington of Germany’. Uncle Giles dies, symbolically, on the day before the Nazi-Soviet pact is signed in August 1939. One might compare the attitudes of Uncle Giles and Erridge towards the rise of Nazi Germany with the decent and common-sense view of Ted Jeavons in At Lady Molly’s, where the following dialogue occurs: the year is 1934.

‘Declare war on Germany right away’, said Jeavons. ‘Knock this blighter Hitler out before he gives further trouble’.

‘Can we very well do that?’

‘Why not?’

‘No government would dream of taking it on. The country wouldn’t stand for it’.

‘Of course they wouldn’t,’ said Jeavons.

‘Well?’

‘Well, we’ll just have to wait’, said Jeavons.

‘I suppose so’.

Has the dilemma facing British governments in the 1930s ever been more succinctly described?

The first two volumes of the Dance take place in the 1920s and the atmosphere is distinctly post-war. In the fourth volume, At Lady Molly’s, Jeavons says,

‘People don’t think the same way any longer … The war blew the whole bloody thing up, like tossing a Mills bomb into a dug-out. Everything’s changed about all that. Always feel rather sorry for your generation as a matter of fact’.
The coming of the war, ignited by the murder of Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Hapsburg throne, is announced with great subtlety and economy of means in the sixth volume of the series, *The Kindly Ones*. It occurs shortly after Billson, the parlour maid in the house of Captain Jenkins, Nick’s father, has appeared naked in the drawing-room, a hysterical reaction to her betrayal by Albert, the cook. Uncle Giles then arranges and falls into conversation with a lunch guest, General Conyers, who is trying to get his car started.

‘Are you an expert in these machines, Giles?’ He asked.
‘Never driven one in my life’, Giles replies. ‘Not too keen on ‘em. Always in accidents.’. And then he says almost casually. ‘Some royalty in a motor-car have been involved in a nasty affair today. Heard the news in Aldershot. Fellow I went to see was told on the telephone. Amazing isn’t it, hearing so soon. They’ve just assassinated an Austrian archduke down in Bosnia. Did it today. Only happened a few hours ago’.

Uncle Giles muttered, almost whispered these facts, speaking as if he were talking to himself, not at all in the voice of a man announcing to the world in general the close of an epoch; the outbreak of Armageddon; the birth of a new, uneasy age. He did not look in the least like the harbinger of the Furies.

‘Franz-Ferdinand?’ asked General Conyers sharply.
‘And his morganatic wife. Shot ‘em both’.
‘When did you say this happened?’
‘This afternoon’.
‘And they’re both dead?’
‘Both of them’.
‘There will be trouble about this,’ said the General.
‘He inserted the starting-handle and gave several terrific turns.’
‘Bad trouble’, he said, ‘They’ll have to postpone tomorrow night’s State Ball. Not a doubt of it. This was a Serbian, I suppose’.
‘They think so’.
‘Was he an anarchist?’ asked Mrs. Conyers.
‘One of those fellows’, said Uncle Giles.
‘Mark my words’, said General Conyers, ‘this is a disaster. Well, the engine has started. We’d better be off in case it stops again. Good-bye to you both, thank you again enormously. No, no, not another word. I only hope the whole matter settles down all right. Good-bye, Giles. Good-bye, Nicholas. I don’t at all like the news’.
‘They went off down the hill. We all waved. My mother looked worried.
‘I don’t like the news either’, she said’.

This section of *The Kindly Ones* ends with the following passage about Albert, the cook, one of whose nightmares is that women are given the vote.
Childhood was brought suddenly, even rather brutally, to a close. Albert’s shutters may have kept out the suffragettes: they did not effectively exclude the Furies.

If we now go back four volumes to A Buyer’s Market, we find the immediate post-war atmosphere described when Nick visits Paris for the first time. It is the era of the Paris peace conferences, a time when there was

the illusion of universal relief that belonged to that historical period: of war being surprisingly at an end; of the imminence of a good time; of all that odd sense of intellectual emancipation that belonged, or at least, seemed perhaps rather spuriously to belong, to the art of that epoch, its excitement and melancholy mingling with the kaleidoscopic impressions of a first sight of Paris.

The 1920s were an apolitical era when those of comfortable means sought to make up for lost time, the wartime years, when pleasure had been in abeyance. The 1920s were an era of self-conscious aestheticism when Bloomsbury values were dominant.

Every house stuffed with Moderns from cellar to garret. High-pitched voices adumbrating absolute values, rational states of mind, intellectual integrity, civilised personal relationships, significant form [significant form is the aesthetic doctrine propounded by Bloomsbury’s art critic Clive Bell] … Le Sacre de Printemps turned up, a hand slides up a leg … All are at one now, values and lovers.

One can visualise the scene and perhaps also visualise a conversation about the arts between those quintessential Bloomsbury figures, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf and John Maynard Keynes.

In the 1930s, the years of the next three volumes, The Acceptance World, At Lady Molly’s and Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant, politics once more takes the centre of the stage. Dicky Umfraville notices the change in The Acceptance World. The time is spring 1933.

Something seems to have gone badly wrong with this country too. It’s quite different from when I was over here two or three years ago … No parties, no gaiety, everyone talking in a dreadfully serious manner about economics or world disarmament or something of the sort … All the people I know have become so damned serious, what?’

and later Umfraville remarks,

What an extraordinary world we live in. All one’s friends marching in the park.

Prominent amongst the marchers of course is St John Clarke, the quintessential middlebrow and bourgeois novelist who had been a best-seller in the Edwardian era – a figure suggested in part perhaps by Galsworthy. Powell regards those who ostentatiously take up political causes as egotistical. Certainly St. John Clarke is a monstrous egotist. Barnby sums him up in a
phrase reminiscent of Oscar Wilde as someone who ‘fell in love with himself at first sight and it is a passion to which he has always remained faithful’. In *The Acceptance World*, St John Clarke is persuaded by the resentful literary critic, Quiggin, a man with a permanent chip on his shoulder, to take up the cause of the hunger marchers, and is to be found as an elderly gentleman in a wheel chair in Hyde Park, with Sillery, the worldly Oxford don, shouting ‘Abolish the Means Test!’ and joining ‘that group of authors, dons and clergymen increasingly to be found at that period on political platforms of a ‘Leftish’ sort’.

When Erridge, another of Powell’s egotists, goes to Spain to assist the Republicans in the civil war, he leaves St. John Clarke in charge of his affairs.

If Erridge never came back from Spain – an eventuality which had to be considered – there was no knowing what messes might have to be cleared up. Besides, Erridge’s plans often changed. His doings had to be coped with empirically. Like less idealistic persons, he was primarily interested in pleasing himself, even though his pleasures took unusual form. Little could be guessed from an outward examination of these enthusiasms at any given moment.

In *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant*, Spain is the main topic of conversation at a Sunday lunch party held in 1936 and hosted by Katherine, Lady Warminster, sister of Lady Molly, and stepmother to the Tollands.

‘People like myself look forward to a social revolution in a country that has remained feudal for far too long’, said St John Clarke, speaking now almost benignly, as if the war in Spain was being carried on just to please him personally, and he himself could not help being flattered by the fact. ‘We cannot always be living in the past’.

This expressed preference for upheaval for its own sake roused Roddy Cutts – St John Clarke was about to expand his view on revolution, when Roddy cut him short in measured, moderate, parliamentary tones.

Their disagreement is ended by the hostess in the following way.

‘I haven’t been in Spain for years’ said Lady Warminster, in her low, musical voice, speaking scarcely above a whisper. ‘I liked the women better than the men. Of course they all have English nannies’.

Quiggin casts doubt on the real depth of both St John Clarke’s political commitment and of Erridge’s. Of the novelist, he declares, when Clarke moves from orthodox Communism to Trotskyism under the influence of Werner Guggenbuehl, ‘The man has got it in him to be a traitor to any cause’.

As for Erridge, Quiggin insists that he,

‘seems to have shown a good deal of political obtuseness – perhaps I should say childlike innocence. He appears to have treated POUM, FAI, CNT and UGT as if they were all the same left-wing extension of the
Labour Party. I was not surprised to hear that he was going to be
arrested at the time he decided to leave Spain. If you can’t tell the
difference between a Trotskyite Communist, an Anarcho-Syndicalist,
and a properly paid-up Party Member, you had better keep away from
the barricades’.
‘You had indeed’.
‘It is not fair to the workers’.
‘Certainly not’.

The friendship between St John Clarke and Erridge serves to displace Quiggin
who had sought not merely influence but also a legacy. St John Clarke,
however, decides to leave his estate to Erridge.

But of all the characters in the Dance affected by politics, it is of course
Widmerpool who most powerfully indicates how political allegiances reflect
traits of character. Through all the convolutions and gyrations in his political
attitudes, one factor remains constant. Widmerpool always succeeds in
gravitating to what he regards as the winning side.

In the apolitical 1920s, Widmerpool becomes a private secretary to Sir
Magnus Donners, and so presumably a fairly orthodox Conservative. By
1936, he seems to have become acquainted with Mrs Simpson, later to
become the Duchess of Windsor, but thought by some likely to marry Edward
VIII and so become Queen. Widmerpool confides to Nicholas that

‘I have been moving in rather exalted circles lately’ …
‘Indeed?’
‘Not exactly royal – that is hardly the word yet … You understand me
…?’
‘I think so’.
‘It was an interesting experience’.
‘Have you actually met …’
Widmerpool bowed his head, suggesting by this movement the
knowledge of enviable secrets. At the same time he would allow no
admission that might be thought compromising either to himself or those
in high places whose reputation must rightly be shielded. I tried to extort
more from him without any success.
‘When did this happen?’
‘Please do not press me for details’.

But, with the abdication, Widmerpool’s hopes are destroyed.

‘I never saw a man so put out by the Abdication’ [Chips Lovell says] ‘It
might have been Widmerpool himself who’d had to abdicate. My
goodness, he had taken it to heart’.
‘What specially upset him?’
‘So far as I could gather, he had cast himself for a brilliant social career
if things had worked out differently’.
‘The Beau Brummell of the new reign?’
‘Not far short of that’.
By the 1930s, Widmerpool has moved to the Left, but has become, nevertheless, a strong advocate of the appeasement of Nazi Germany.

‘I quite see’ [he tells Jenkins in At Lady Molly’s] ‘that there are aspects of Hitler’s programme to which objection may most legitimately be taken. For example, I myself possess a number of Jewish friends, some of them very able men – Jimmy Klein for example – and I should therefore much prefer that item of the National Socialist policy to be dropped.’

An interesting variant on the ‘Some of my best friends are Jewish’ theme and serving surely to dispose of yet another misconception about the Dance, that Powell is anti-semitic.

‘I am, in fact’ [continues Widmerpool] ‘not at all sure that it will not be dropped when matters get straightened out a bit. After all, it is sometimes forgotten that the National Socialists are not only “national”, they are also “socialist”. So far as that goes, I am with them. They believe in planning. Everyone will agree that there was a great deal of the old Germany that it was right to sweep away – the Kaisers and Krupps, Hindenburgs and mediatised princes, stuff of that sort – we want to hear no more about them. Certainly Not. People talk of rearming. I am glad to say the Labour Party is against it to a man – and the more enlightened Tories, too’.

In place of rearmament, Widmerpool suggests measure to remove German fears of encirclement by means of discussions with prominent trade unionists and businessmen, such as Sir Magnus Donners. Perhaps Germany’s former colonies could be returned to her.

‘What is the objection? They’re no use to anyone else.’

Other measures of conciliation are also possible.

‘Take a man like Goering. Now, it seems pretty plain to me from looking at photographs of him in the papers that he only likes swaggering about in uniforms and decorations. I expect he is a bit of a snob – most of us are at heart – well, ask him to Buckingham Palace. Show him round. What is there against giving him the Garter? After all, it is what such things are for, isn’t it?’

The war transforms Widmerpool, or rather brings to the surface character traits that were already present, but submerged.

‘I have come to the conclusion that I enjoy power.’ [he tells Nick Jenkins in The Military Philosophers] ‘That is something the war taught me. In this connexion, it has more than once occurred to me that I might like governing …’

He brought his lips together, then parted them. This contortion formed a phrase, but, the words inaudible, its sense escaped me.

‘Governing whom?’
Leaning forward and smiling, Widmerpool repeated the movement of his lips. This time, although he spoke only in a whisper, the two words were intelligible.

‘Black men—

‘Abroad?’

‘Naturally’.

‘That’s feasible?’

‘My reputation among those who matter could scarcely be higher’.

‘You mean you could easily get an appointment of that sort?’

‘Nothing in life is ever easy, my boy. Not in the sense you use the term. It is one of the mistakes you always make. The point is, we are going to see great changes. As you know, my leanings have always been leftwards. From what I see round me. I have no reason to suppose such sympathies were mistaken. Men like myself will be needed.’

‘If they are to be found’.

He clapped me on the back.

After 1941, once the Soviet Union has become an ally following the German invasion, Widmerpool becomes an apologist for Soviet atrocities and in particular the massacre of 15,000 Polish military officers in the Katyn forest.

In 1943, the Nazi occupying forces announced that they had discovered a mass grave containing the bodies of these officers, and that they had been killed during the period of Soviet occupation in 1940. Stalin insisted that the murders were the responsibility of the Nazis. The Polish government in exile in London asked the International Red Cross to investigate. Stalin used this as an excuse to break off relations with the Polish government in exile, and to proclaim a group of Polish communists in Moscow as the official government of the country. When Gorbachov came to power in the Soviet Union he accepted that Stalin had been responsible for the Katyn massacre. Russia has since issued an official apology for this atrocity.

But, during the war and for some time afterwards, western political leaders, such as Churchill and Roosevelt, though confident that the crime was a Soviet responsibility, felt constrained to accept Stalin’s version of events so as not to antagonise an ally. Many others, not in leadership positions, and by no means all on the Left, also accepted the Soviet version without having the excuse of raison d’etat. Powell perfectly catches the tone of voice of the apologist in the remarks of Major Kenneth Widmerpool. The Poles, Widmerpool declares,

are rocking the boat in the most deplorable manner. Our own relations with the USSR are never exactly easy – then for the Poles to behave as they have done … One would really have thought someone at the top of the Polish set-up would have grasped this is not the time to make trouble … Just because these deaths are very upsetting to the Poles themselves – naturally enough, harrowing, tragic, there isn’t a word for it, I don’t want to underrate that for a moment – but just because of that, it’s no reason to
undermine the fabric of our alliances against the Axis. Quarrels among
the Allies themselves are not going to defeat the enemy … In any case …
whatever materializes, even if it does transpire – which I sincerely trust it
will not – that the Russians behaved in such a very regrettable manner,
how can this country possibly raise official objection, in the interests of a
few thousand Polish exiles, who, however worthy their cause, cannot
properly handle their diplomatic relations, even with fellow Slavs …
How, as I say, can we approach our second most powerful Ally about
something which, if a fact, cannot be put right, and is almost certainly,
from what one knows of them, the consequence of administrative
inadequacy, rather than wilful indifference to human life and the dictates
of compassion?

In *Books Do Furnish a Room*, Widmerpool jokes about the possibility of
Stalin marrying his rather formidable mother.

‘My mother has always been a passionate admirer of Marshal Stalin, a
great man, whatever people may say. We had jokes about if he were to
become a widower’.

It comes to seem as if, as well as being an appeaser and fellow-traveller of the
Soviets, Widmerpool was also a Russian agent. An explanation of this is
offered by ‘Books’ Bagshaw.

‘Apart from anything else, it’s one of those secret pleasures, like drawing
a moustache on the face of a pretty girl on a poster, spitting over the
stairs – you know, from a great height on to the people below. You see
several heads, possibly a bald one. They don’t know where the saliva
comes from. It gives an enormous sense of power … Think of the same
sort of fun when you’re an MP, or respected civil servant, giving the
whole show away on the quiet, when everybody thinks you’re a pillar of
society’.

Nick Jenkins offers another explanation. Widmerpool, he suggests, had
not only desire to reshape the world according to some doctrinaire
pattern, but also to be revenged on a world that had found himself
insufficiently splendid in doing so.

In 1945, Widmerpool becomes a Labour MP and supporter of the Attlee
government. In 1955, he loses his seat but in 1958, following the Life
Peerages Act, he becomes a Labour life peer in one of the first batch of
creations, recommended by the then Labour leader, Hugh Gaitskell. Roddy
Cutts

was sure the recommendation must have been cleared with the Leader of
the Opposition, in spite of his reputed dislike for Widmerpool himself …
‘Labour peers had to be created’ [Cutts continues] ‘It wasn’t at all easy
to settle on suitable names. Not everyone wants to be kicked upstairs to
the Lords. Widmerpool lost his seat. He’d made himself very useful on
the financial side at one time or another, no matter what the talk about
fellow-travelling. Yes, I mean contributions to Party funds. Why not? The money’s got to come from somewhere. Probably undisclosed inner workings of the Labour Party machine played a rôle too. Patronage? Might be. These things happen. No different to ourselves in that respect. A political party has to be operated. The PM would never have gone over Hugh’s head’.

To which the only comment must be – plus ça change.

Shortly afterwards, he moves, perhaps to avoid exposure as a former spy, to the United States, and by the time he returns to England in the 1960s, he has become a devotee of the counter-culture. He publishes a book entitled Pogrom of Youth.

‘I take pride’ [he declares] ‘in ridiculing what is – or rather was – absurdly called honour, respectability, law, order, obedience, custom, rule, hierarchy, precept, regulation, all that is insidiously imposed by the morally, ideologically and spiritually naked, and politically bankrupt, on those they have opposed and do oppress’.

He has become Chancellor of one of the new universities of the 1960s – Sussex perhaps – and, when a degree ceremony is disrupted by student protestors, Widmerpool, whose hunger for power is accompanied, as Powell believes often to be the case, by masochism, comes to identify with those who are persecuting him. He falls in with a New Age cult run by the sinister Scorpio Murtlock, born Leslie, but reinventing himself in accordance with his zodiac sign. Here too Widmerpool seeks power and hopes to displace Murtlock as leader of the cult. Going for a naked run in the woods with his guru, Widmerpool ignores warnings to slow down. At the end of the Dance as at the beginning, he is striving.

‘I’m running, I’m running, I’ve got to keep it up’.

Then

‘I’m leading, I’m leading now’

before collapsing dead in the woods.

Powell, it has often been pointed out, is fascinated by cults and by those who claim to have contact with the unseen – Murtlock, Mrs Erdleigh and Dr Trelawney. But these cults too he regards as just another means by which power can be obtained over others. Significantly, the female devotees of Murtlock’s cult – Fiona Cutts and Rusty – are, for all the talk about liberation, kept in a strictly subordinate position. The cults, therefore, are not, for Powell, merely absurd, but also sinister and dangerous. Widmerpool himself is not merely foolish and grotesque, but also sinister and dangerous, being indirectly responsible for the death both of Stringham and of Templer, and perhaps of others whom he has betrayed to the Soviet Union. One suspects that Powell believes there to be a link between the world of cults and the
larger world of 20\textsuperscript{th} century ideological politics. For, after all, were not Communism, Fascism and National Socialism themselves in their way cults, founded by grotesque misfits, and, at their inception, mocked, ignored and under-estimated, until they were in a position to wreak untold devastation upon the world?

For Powell, political commitment is but one method by which men and women seek power over others; adherents of ideologies are particularly suspect.

‘I would be hard put’ [Powell said in 1963] ‘to deny that theorists are distasteful to me. People get me down who claim, you know, to have the answer to life’.

Those who seek power, whether on the Left or on the Right, have more in common with each other than they do with those whose aims do not include power over others. For the fundamental theme of the \textit{Dance} is of course the contrast between those who live by the will and those who live by the imagination. The novels polarise two contrasting attitudes to life. It is those who live by the imagination, and, in particular, creative artists, who, in Powell’s view, are more likely to enjoy satisfactory lives. Widmerpool, who had imposed upon himself, ‘the severe rule of ambition’, is the supreme example of someone who lives by the will. He has little time for the arts,

‘Even if artistic matters attracted me – which they do not – I should not allow myself to dissipate my energies on them’.

In the aesthetic field’ [Nick Jenkins tells us] he was a void.

The arts themselves [Jenkins insists, and here surely he speaks for the author] by their ultimately sensual essence, are, in the long run, inimical to those who pursue power for its own sake. Conversely, the artist who traffics in power does so, if not necessarily disastrously, at least at considerable risk.

As someone who has tried to write about 20\textsuperscript{th} century political history, it seems to me that no novelist captures the tone of the decades from the twenties to the sixties better than Anthony Powell; and he does so with great subtlety, obliquely and indirectly, and with great economy of means, often through the briefest of conversations. The \textit{Dance}, as I hope to have shown, is in no way apolitical, and it is far from being a conservative tract. Politics indeed is of the very essence of the \textit{Dance}, a remarkable series of novels which hinges on the contrast between two alternative temperaments, two alternative approaches to life, one of which, the less desirable, is the political.
‘Think First, Fight Afterwards’ – The Soldier’s Art

By AN Wilson

This talk was first given on 30 November 2012 at The Wallace Collection, London as the Annual Anthony Powell Lecture.

Modernism, in literature that is to say, if not the preserve of the political Right, certainly numbered very decidedly right-wing men and women among its more skilled proponents: TS Eliot, Ezra Pound, Celine, Wyndham Lewis, Basil Bunting, David Jones were all politically well to the right and would surely have to be part of any Modernist First Eleven sent into bat against contemporary literary traditionalists or middle-brows, many of whom, such as Galsworthy, were in fact what my favourite newspaper, the *Daily Mail*, calls left-leaning.

For those on the left, who assume that modern means progress, and think of modernism in painting, poetry and the art of fiction as, roughly speaking, a progressive movement, there is something of a puzzle here. For those on the right, perhaps, modernism’s concern with form before content, and its attempt to become detached from the personal, could be seen to fit in more or less well with the attempts on the political right during the twentieth century either to preserve or to recreate social structures and hierarchies threatened by progressivism.

Into this perhaps paradoxical area stepped the soldierly figure of this evening’s subject. From the first novel, *Afternoon Men*, there was an obvious desire to follow into modern, experimental, if not out and out modern-IST fictional form. Nor was this ambition in any way abandoned when he started out, after a period of military service in his father’s old regiment during the Second World War, to write the great sequence *The Dance to the Music of Time*. That *roman fleuve* is surely to be read alongside the weekly outflow of criticism in *The Daily Telegraph*, where time and again a very distinctive aesthetic is laid forth. If we had to join a rally in Hyde Park like Gypsy Jones and Mr Deacon, and make banners for the Creed, the slogan might read – Scott Fitzgerald, Lermontov, Ronald Firbank Good: Trollope and Hugh Walpole Bad. Yet there was a paradox, which Powell himself no doubt both enjoyed and understood, in the fact that what remains an essentially modernist work of literature was the favoured reading of clubmen and public-schoolboys, all of whom – often with wild inaccuracy – like to say that such and such a coincidental meeting or successful piece of social climbing in their own lives is “pure Anthony Powell”: or, if they are really showing off, “pure Tony Powell”. One such name-dropper in the public-prints, not even remotely related to Powell by blood, once wrote that he “always thought of him as Uncle Tony”.

100
I could not begin to unravel the paradoxes in the Modernist-Aesthetic/Political-Conservative story – and indeed, were Powell himself editing this lecture, he would already have wished to dissociate himself from some of the right wingers I have assembled in his cricket-team – having, as he did, an unambiguous abhorrence not only of fascism, but of anything which smacked of religious fervour, particularly in the Romanist direction. But if unravelling the mystery is too ambitious a task for one evening, I wonder whether one might come closer to acclimatizing oneself to the essential Powellian mood or spirit by musing upon what he called in one of his novels *The Soldier’s Art*. Or, put more simply, whether an interesting area of thought is not Powell’s relationship with the military.

Rereading *Henry V* in his old age and finding it “rather mixed bag”, Anthony Powell nevertheless had unreserved interest in Captain Fluellen, and unrestrained admiration for Shakespeare’s depiction of this Welsh soldier. –

When Fluellen says, ‘I warrant you, you shall find the ceremonies of wars, and the cares of it … and the sobriety of it, and the mockery of it, to be otherwise’, he is exactly like Horace Probert, my Company Commander in the 1/5th Welsh who was fond of laying down the law on military matters. I thought of Fluellen at the time and reading this, Probert immediately brought back.¹

The Welch Regiment was that in which Powell’s father served as a regular soldier, and was, Powell informed readers of *To Keep the Ball Rolling*, “made up of the old 41st and 69th Foot, with its long roll of battle honours and phenomenal record for winning the Army Rugby Cup”². You can not exaggerate Powell’s interest in matters Welsh, in the military, and in Shakespeare, and it is a surprise, in a way, that he said so little about Fluellen. Nor can you doubt, irritating as Powell found it when readers matched characters in *The Dance to the Music of Time* with those in real life, that Horace Probert is the man who suggested one of the finest figures Powell every drew – Captain Gwatkin.

The most memorable Shakespearean scenes in time of war are perhaps, not the grand set-piece battle scenes, so much as the novelistic details – Hotspur losing his temper with the trimly dressed perfumed lord who came to question him about prisoners – (Wavell says in his anthology *Other Men’s Flowers* that this speech immortalizes the everlasting dislike felt by a soldier of the line for a staff officer: “The feeling between the regimental officer and the staff officer is as old as the history of fighting. I have been a regimental officer in two minor wars and realized what a poor hand the staff officer made

---

¹ Journals, 1987-89, p.174
² TKTBR, p. 268
of things, and what a safe luxurious life they led...”3 – Wavell could have been describing Widmerpool.) Or the Dad’s Army recruiting scene in Henry IV Part II – and, of course, the figure of Fluellen. They are the most novelistic, and certainly they are the most Powellian, bits of Shakespeare.

We do not look in The Dance to the Music of Time for great battle-scenes, nor for the analysis of the famous figures of the twentieth century. One of the most characteristic sentences in Powell’s memoirs, I think – is this:

I have always found a certain fascination in the style of individual generals, even at the rank’s lower levels, far more so than those destined to find a place in the annals of war.4

It is hard to imagine this sentence – which occurs in the volume of memoirs entitled Faces in My Time – being penned by any novelist other than Anthony Powell. Both syntax and content, like so much of what he wrote, hover teasingly just this side of self-parody. As to the syntax, is the word “those” a genitive, and in which case how has it lost the preposition “of”? Yet “Far more so than of those destined to find a place in the annals of war” would lack the distinctive Powellian elan, that peculiar off-handedness of his prose-manner, the printed equivalent of his own spoken 1920s drawl - which is so satisfying to us addicts. Other English novelists, from Thackeray to Olivia Manning, might bring a famous general on to the scene in times of war, but only as stage-decoration to remind us that in the midst of war we glimpse the great ones who are directing events. Tolstoy himself, of course, makes General Kutuzov one of the most memorable characters in literature, and, indeed, sets him up as the admirable counterpoise to Napoleon. Whereas Napoleon, Widmerpudlianly attempting to dominate events by his will, comes the inevitable cropper, old Kutuzov, half blind, half asleep, and swearing more vividly than one of his own troopers, submits – in the Tolstoyan version – to the movement of history with what some would call oriental obedience and detachment. The snow, and the great Russian people, do the rest.

Hearing that I was attempting to research a life of Tolstoy, Powell once said to me on the telephone that he was astonished that I should waste my time on such a theme. War and Peace, he told me was “Just Cinema”.

With one part of myself, I inwardly reacted in the manner of General Liddament, in The Soldier’s Art, when casually told by Nick Jenkins that he does not care for Trollope:-

“What do you think of Trollope?”
“Never found him easy to read, sir”.

The last time I had discussed books with a general had been with General Conyers, a much older man than General Liddament, one whose interests

---

3 A.P.Wavell, Other Mens’ Flowers, p. 98
4 TKTBR, p.301
were known to range from psychoanalysis to comparative religion; and in many other directions too. Long experience of the world of courts and camps had given General Conyers easy tolerance for the opinions of others, literary as much as anything else. General Liddament, on the other hand, seemed to share none of that indulgence for those who did not equally enjoy his favourite authors. My answer had an incisive effect. He kicked the second chair away from him with such violence that it fell to the ground with a great clatter. Then he put his feet to the floor, screwing round his own chair so that he faced me. “You’ve never found Trollope easy to read?” “No, sir”.

Later in the chapter, Powell reflects upon the possibility of actually being put under arrest “for holding such mutinous views”.5

Throughout The Dance to the Music of Time, Nick Jenkins offers his readers a glancing selection of his own literary tastes which, taken together, amount to something approaching a manifesto. Behind the scorn for St John Clarke’s Match Me Such Marvel a book which nearly all the female characters in the first few volumes admire, but which – as he reveals to that great St John Clarke fan Bithel, Nick has not read yet in 1940 - is the supercilious and self-confident determination of the author of Afternoon Men to detach himself utterly from the middle-brow narrative reassurances of Hugh Walpole and John Galsworthy. The inability to get along with Trollope is part of this very decided modernist emphasis. Equally, though Tolstoy is never openly derided in Dance (though it is easy to imagine what Nick and friends would make of the vegetarian, pacifist-anarchist Tolstoy of his later life) the glancing and repeated adulatory remarks about Lermontov’s Hero of Our Time tell their own story: a desire for an oblique, short-hand and sideways narrative attack. The very qualities which Tolstoy’s admirers like in War and Peace – a universality of approach, a belief that narrative prose could ever, let alone should – paint the whole picture – are ones at odds with the Powell aesthetic, added to which, the apparent “straightforwardness” of Tolstoyan fiction, especially in War and Peace, while working well enough, perhaps for the great Russian giant, could be seen as the thin end of a wedge ending in such cozy “realist” pap as The Forsyte Saga – a bestseller, of course, in Soviet Russia, as Powell’s friend Muggeridge never tired of saying.

Nick’s conversation in the mess with General Liddament is represented, like any good club or messroom anecdote as a blunder on the narrator’s part, but its rhetoric does not allow us to suppose he has wavered in his literary views; there is no climb-down, and indeed in the context of the scene the General’s liking for Trollope – at a slightly later phase he hurls one of the little blue World’s Classics reprints of that author so popular during the Second World

5 Dance3, p.p. 294-5
War – is seen if anything as a sign of his absurdity rather than the reverse. The disagreement about Trollope echoes the earlier, hilarious moment in *The Valley of Bones* when General Liddament, conducting a snap inspection of Nick’s platoon with Captain Gwatkin, asks Jenkins what the men had for breakfast. When Liddament asks them if they had porridge, Nick is obliged to point out that none had been issued by the quartermaster. The men under Nick’s command have the – extremely Welsh, I should wish to add – characteristic of giving an answer which is calculated to please. They all pretend that they do not like porridge, as the general goes down the ranks: until they get to Corporal Gwylt who adds, “Oh, yes, yes, sir. I do like porridge”.

Slowly the General straightened himself. He raised the stick so that its sharp metal point almost touched the face of Corporal Gwylt.

“Look”, he said, “all of you. He may not be the biggest man in the Division, but he is a sturdy fellow, a good type. There is a man who eats porridge. Some of you would do well to follow his example”.

In both these volumes of *Dance* – and I think the war volumes are the strongest in the entire sequence – we see the characteristic Powellian way of building. It is as unlike Tolstoyan “cinema” as could be. You actually feel that anecdote, as a form, is the core. Far from having a huge scenario, such as that of *War and Peace*, into which the actors in the drama are called to fit in, you have an anecdote, humorous in itself and illustrative of the subject’s characteristics: everything else builds around this. It is passe-partout rather than carving in marble.

And, of course, Powell was, as he freely confessed in *To Keep the Ball Rolling*, more interested in those on the side-lines than in “those destined to find a place in the annals of war”. To this extent, one is reminded of the marvellous scene in *The Guermantes Way* when Proust goes to visit his friend Robert de Saint Loup at the garrison in Doncieres. He hopes to be able to get the soldiers to talk to him of military matters; but Saint Loup has to explain to him that the real aesthetic beauty of military history is different from other sorts of writing. “In the narrative of a military historian”, says Saint Loup, “the smallest facts, the most trivial happenings, are only the outward signs of an idea which has to be elucidated and which often conceals other ideas, like a palimpsest ... You read, let us say, that this or that corps has tried ... but before we go any further, the serial number of the corps, its order of battle, are not without their significance”...

Although the narrator records Saint-Loup’s words, we do not feel they are of central relevance to the over-all aesthetic purpose of the work as a whole, any more than their later analysis of Napoleon’s tactics and manoeuvres really

---

6 Dance3, p. 97
impinge upon the narrator’s imagination. To that extent, the disquisitions are simply a sort of overture to the young officers’ real obsession at the time of Proust’s visit – namely the Dreyfus case. Powell’s writing is much more compressed than Proust’s and events of great moment, such as the Fall of France or the invasion of Russia, are mentioned in half sentences: the Second World War, engrossing as it is for the narrator of The Dance is – as in the amusing confusion in the theatrical outfitters, in which the tailor selling him an overcoat thinks he is an actor in a West End show entitled “The War”, less heavily present as a “theme”.

For this reason, perhaps, when Nick’s conversations touch upon opinions, or views of life, their relevance to the over-all theme of the sequence are both much sharper and at the same time, delivered in a much more throw-away fashion. When, for instance, he encounters Pennistone on the midnight train in The Valley of Bones – it is his second meeting with the military philosopher with whom he is destined in a later part of the war to work in Intelligence, the first meeting having been at that memorable party of Mrs Andriadis in A Buyer’s Market - they fall to good talk avidly, Nick, after months with the bank clerks of Gwatkin’s Company, feeling somewhat culturally deprived. It is typical that Breughel’s “Hunters in the Snow” in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna is singled out as a favourite painting, while, in literature, they speak of Alfred de Voigny’s Servitude et Grandeur Militaire. Having established the perhaps surprising fact that the French poet spent fourteen years of his life as a regular soldier, Pennistone says

“Vigny never saw action. Only the most irksome sort of garrison duty, spiced with a little civil disturbance – having to stand quietly in the ranks while demonstrators threw bricks. That kind of thing”.

“I see”.

“In some ways the best viewpoint for investigating army life. Action might have confused the issue by proving too exciting”.7

Again, this amounts to something like a manifesto, not merely for this particular volume, The Valley of Bones, but for the whole Dance. The astonishing thing about his achievement in the sequence, and in my view, for all its quirkiness and eccentricity it continues to stand out as one of the major achievements of twentieth century English fiction – is that although it is twelve volumes long, The Dance is constructed around gossamer-thin twists and connections – very much in the manner, surely, of that supremely great novella Hero of Our Time. It could not be less like Proust – as Powell himself observed in a Journal entry for 10th January 1989 – “I reread the whole of Dance. This prompted various reflections on the sequence as whole. The novel, for better or worse, seems to me quite on its own in content, construction, as far from A la recherche in one direction as from The Forsyte

---

7 Dance3, p.107

105
Saga in another. Nor does its tone or style appear to me in the least like Evelyn Waugh, except in most superficial connexions”... After a few more observations in this vein, Powell wrote, “These comparisons reflect quite extraordinary incomprehension of novels, and novel-writing technique, on part of reviewers, sheer literary ignorance or stupidity”.  

One can only agree. Dance moves forward at the speed of anecdotal conversation, and, like such conversation, retains its cohesion not in some vast finished “form”, as might be looked for either in Proust’s A la Recherche or in very different vein Balzac’s Comédie Humaine, but in a whole series of apercus which are confirmed over the years by other little bits of perception, gossip, anecdotage.

It is surely instructive that he made a phrase of Joseph Conrad’s the title of his memoirs. Naturally, it was the coincidence of surname which suggested the title – “To keep the Ball rolling, I asked Marlow if this Powell were remarkable in any way”, to receive the reply, “He was not exactly remarkable”, Marlow answered with his usual nonchalance. “In a general way it is very difficult to become remarkable. People don’t take sufficient notice of one, don’t you know”. This saying of Conrad’s is matched, I think, by Powell’s remark in his journals, which comes at the end of an angry, indeed almost apoplectic, reading of Larkin’s published letters, in which disobliging remarks are made about Powell – “He did not read many novels himself, nor was he interested in other people, only himself. Interest in other people is the one absolute sine qua non for a novelist in my opinion”. Powell’s anger was understandable. He had shown friendship to the poet, and even someone less touchy than himself might have bridled, to see himself described in print as ”a horse-faced Welsh dwarf”.

Whatever the truth about Larkin’s lack of interest in fiction or in human beings, there can be no doubt about Conrad’s fascination with both. Conrad’s Marlow in particular, is surely an inspirational figure to the imagination which created The Dance to the Music of Time. (There is surely a thesis either waiting to be written or, more likely, waiting to be read, on Conrad’s influence on nearly all subsequent English novelists of distinction – with the obvious exception of Evelyn Waugh, who seems totally untouched by any of the Conradian quirks or personal obsessions which crop up in Graham Greene, Anthony Powell, Olivia Manning, and so on). Conrad’s first reader at Unwin’s, Edward Garnett, described the Polish exile’s conversation as “a romance, free and swift, it implied, in ironical flashes, that though we hailed from different planets the same tastes animated us...” It is one of Powell’s

---

8 Journals 1987-1989, pp. 162-3
achievements in the *Dance* to button-hole the reader very much in this Marlovian, or Conradian manner, bewitching us into interest ourselves with – to use Conrad’s phrase, “that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask”.\[11\] 

Those who – “through sheer literary ignorance or stupidity” – to stick for a moment with that useful phrase – imagine Powell to be interested in, let us say, the upper classes for their own sake, or who wish to make *The Dance* an anglice version of Proust – would perhaps be surprised to reread the first two volumes of the war novels. The central novel of the trilogy, *The Soldier’s Art*, is very largely taken up with the travails of an out of work alcoholic homosexual called Bithel, who is eventually deprived of his work in the Mobile Laundry by the decisive action of Widmerpool. There is little here to interest the Baron de Charlus, though perhaps the Baron would share Bithel’s taste for some of the better-looking Other Ranks. *The Valley of Bones*, the preceding volume, is, essentially, the story of Gwatkin, an assistant bank manager from a small town in south Wales who for a short and poignant period of his life, finds in the soldier’s life the closest he ever gets to Romance. (The closest, that is, until, in Northern Ireland, he falls in love with Maureen the Irish bar-maid who, for Nick recalls Barnby’s remark – “The Victorians saw only refinement in women, it’s their coarseness makes them irresistible to me”\[12\]. One of the most moving passages in the whole sequence is the moment when Nick discovers- Nick, who has felt so much a fish out of water in this Company, from a social and imaginative viewpoint, discovers Gwatkin’s fondness for *Puck of Pook’s Hill*, and in particular for the chapter about the Roman Legionary.

*The Dance* begins with the narrator watching workmen digging a hole in the road, and warming themselves around a makeshift brazier - a concatenation of figures eventually suggestive of the great Poussin masterpiece which gives the sequence both title and theme. But before things fall into place, snow falls and Nick Jenkins says, “For some reason, the sight of snow descending on fire always makes me think of the ancient world – legionaries in sheepskin warming themselves at a brazier: mountain altars where offerings glow between wintry pillars; centaurs with torches cantering beside a frozen sea – scattered, un-co-ordinated shapes from a fabulous past, infinitely removed from life; and yet bringing with them memories of things real and imagined”.\[13\] It is practically a poem and the paragraph will surely remain in our heads, aeons later, when Gwatkin and Jenkins muse upon the legionary and Kipling’s Hymn to Mithras, both satisfyingly, from Powell’s point of

---

[11]: Quoted, among many invaluable insights into Conrad, in Frances Wilson’s *How to Survive the Titanic*. The sinking of J.Bruce Ismay, p. 180
[12]: *Dance*3, p.183
[13]: *Dance*1, p.2
view, both pre- and non-Christian. (At his Memorial Service at Grosvenor Chapel, at which his nephew-in-law Harold Pinter read so memorably from the Book of Ezekiel, the Chapter on the Valley of Bones, Powell’s brother-in-law, Frank Longford, was scandalized that Swinburne’s “Garden of Proserpine” was, at the late author’s request, also read aloud – unsuitable, he believed, to be uttered in a place of Christian dedication).

Nick does not spell this out, but, like Gwatkin, he too is a military romantic, who finds his work as a very junior staff officer in Northern Ireland both crushingly boring and disillusioning. He is clever enough to console himself with the parallels with Alfred de Vigny, who never saw action, and who thought you had a truer insight into army life than if, like Evelyn Waugh, you had taken a reckless role in the Cretan campaign, or, like Tolstoy as a young artilleryman, seen action at Sevastopol. Hugh Massingberd, himself the grandson of a Field Marshal, once took Powell to dinner at Pratt’s Club. The next time he went there, some of the more conventional members, themselves officers, active or retired, wanted to know who the guest had been, who displayed so obsessive a knowledge of recent mergers between different regiments, and held such strong and slightly peppery views on the ceaseless reforms and shrinkages in the British Army of the 1970s or 1980s.

The embittered Uncle Giles, a passed-over Captain, speaks bitterly of General Conyers –

Aylmer Conyers had a flair for getting on...No harm in that, I suppose. Somebody has got to give the orders. Personally I never cared for the limelight. Plenty of others to push themselves forward. Inclined to think a good deal of himself, Conyers was”.

It is General Conyers who took charge of the embarrassing situation at the Bungalow in Stonehurst when Billson, the maid goes mad and enters the drawing room, on the day war broke out in 1914, stark naked to give notice-

In human life, the individual ultimately dominates every situation, however disordered, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. On this occasion, as usual, all was not lost. There was a place for action, a display of will. General Conyers took in the situation at a glance. He saw this to be no time to dilate upon Turkish subjection to German intrigue. He rose – so the story went – quite slowly from his chair, made two steps across the room, picked up the Kashmir shawl from where it lay across the surface of the piano. Then, suddenly changing his tempo and turning quickly towards Billson, he wrapped the shawl protectively around her.

---

[14] Dance 2, p.1
[15] Dance 2.,p.532
Like so many moments in *Dance*, it is paralleled by other moments with which it has no immediate or obvious connexion—the naked state in which Jean Duport opens the door to our narrator, for example—he is flattered until years later he learns she had been expecting Jimmy Stripling—or the naked rites enacted in the last bizarre movement of *Dance* by Scorpio Murtlock and Widmerpool himself. This is not to mention the nakedness displayed in Tiepolo’s ceiling and expounded by Dame Emily Brightman in *Temporary Kings*, the marital irregularities of the original tale in Herodotus finding their grotesque parallels in the marriage of Widmerpool and Pamela Flitton.

It is noticeable that neither General Liddament nor General Conyers conform to what those unacquainted with the military would consider stereotypical of the Army top brass. General Conyers plays the cello, and interests himself in the writings of the psychoanalysts. General Liddament was said to be an officer with ideas of his own. Possibly in order to counteract this reputation for an excessive precision in approach to his duties, an imperfection of which he was probably aware and hoped to correct, the General allowed himself certain informalities of dress and turn-out. For example, he carried a long stick, like the wand of a verger in a cathedral, and wore a black-and-brown check scarf thrown carelessly about his neck. A hunting horn was thrust between the buttons of his battle-dress blouse. Maelgwyn-Jones also reported that two small dogs on a lead sometimes accompanied General Liddament, causing great disturbance when they squabbled with one another.\[16]\[16\].

In *To Keep the Ball Rolling*, Powell, no great fan of Field Marshal Montgomery, nonetheless quoted with approval one titbit—“There were unexpected sides to him. Nancy Mitford told me that Montgomery had expressed a wish to meet her at dinner in Paris, when he had revealed a perfectly competent knowledge of her novels”.\[17]\[17\]. Incidentally—fascinating prepositions there too—meet her “at” dinner rather than “for” dinner.

One of the obvious differences between Proust and Powell is that Proust was not an only child. No one would guess this from reading *A la Recherche*, but the real Proust had a brother, who, like their father, became a very distinguished medic. (Nor would one guess from the scene at Doncières that Proust had actually served in the military). Powell, by contrast, really did have a solitary childhood, much as described in *The Kindly Ones*. Nor did schooldays and Oxford completely supply him with the emotional or imaginative substitutes for familial relationships. Proust’s juvenile hero or almost alter-ego is the mysterious M. Swann who, while being taken for a

---

\[16]\[16\] *Dance* 3, p. 94
\[17]\[17\] TKTBR, p. 301
bourgeois figure by his own provincial relations in fact moves with ease in the salons of the Faubourg St Germain. By turn, the narrator, who is so absorbed in his own sensations and illnesses and aesthetic epiphanies that he has absolutely no desire for a family of his own, becomes fixated upon the aristocratic dynasty, the Guermantes, who - first glimpsed as heraldic links in church glass with the old chivalry of France, and seen in the most fleeting of glimpses in childhood and youth, become an embodiment for him of all that he loves, and hates, about France at the time of Dreyfus. The Tollands play no such role in the story of Nick Jenkins. *The Dance to the Music of Time*, which seems to ramble about from theme to theme and whose narrative voice is that of the Marlovian anecdotalist, does actually have rather a simple plot. A solitary boy becomes part of a family. A whole lot of people, disconnected at the beginning of the narrative, are bound together in the end by marriage and consanguinity. It is not really possible to exaggerate how much this mattered to Powell emotionally, nor how central family became to him.

Behind Nick’s growing involvement with the Tollands – obviously paralleled in Powell’s own marriage to Violet Packenham, but in various ways not entirely a mirror of his own story – there was the tiny unit of his own family – the rather shadowy mother, the father whose army career took him, for example to Paris during the Peace Conference, where Nick first claps eyes on General Conyers – the Bungalow near Aldershot; and Uncle Giles, with his lonely hotel-existence, his chippy radicalism, his seediness. The solace discovered in marriage – never dwelt upon, but hinted at in such moments as Isabel’s incarceration in a nursing home after a miscarriage – are what Powell himself called – in reference to a novel by a nephew – “not unmoving”.

The army is the background to all Nick’s Other World, the door he never opened into the rose garden. Unlike his father and Uncle Giles, he does not become a professional soldier, but when he does join up, it is with a sense of inevitability that he finds himself in South Wales, not merely following in the footsteps of a soldier father but in touch with deeper roots.

Perhaps others of the stock, too, had embarked with reservations on a career by the sword. Certainly there had been no name of the least distinction for four or five hundred years. In mediaeval times they had been of more account in war; once, a long way back – in the disconcerting, free-for-all manner of Celtic lineage – even reigning, improbable as that might now appear, in this southern kingdom of a much disputed land.[18][18]

No one in the book shares the narrator’s interest in these genealogical snippets, and the Powellites short-hand is here so dense as to be all but incomprehensible, I think, to any who did not already know of the author’s
interest in Welsh genealogy and connexion with a line of Dark Age kings – Temporary Kings, as they might now be seen. When Nick attempts a conversation with Gwatkin about his possible kinship with Lord Aberavon – a family of the same name – “going back to Vortigern – by one of his own daughters”[19][19], he finds he is speaking to deaf ears.

Kinship, which means so much, both to Nick and to Powell himself, and which were explored by both exhaustively in their own libraries and antiquarian researches, forms the basis of the novel. A different type of novelist – for example John Cowper Powys – might have made the incestuous Vortigern, and the many Powells and Dymokes of the Middle Ages – the subject of an imaginative journey. Instead, Nick Jenkins assembles his own dynasty, by alliance with the Tollands, and by progeny, though the identity of both wife and children remains forever stylishly shadowy, sketched sometimes in half sentences. Figures such as George Orwell who in life were friends become transmogrified in art into the closer bond of brother-in-law, if – as seems fair – we can watch the tall, gangling, left-leaning, Boy’s Comic-addicted Orwell morphing into Erridge. The ties of kinship with the Tolland/Warminster dynasty are one of the frameworks – necromancy and fortune-telling being another – by which the disparate strands of experience coalesce, through experience into art, and through art into experience.

“The fact is, Conrad could not devise a plot, he depends entirely on other aspects of writing a novel. I believe he admits this somewhere”[20][20]. So wrote Powell in his Journals on February 3, 1991. He certainly could devise plots, - some of his earlier novels such as What’s Become of Waring could be said to be almost too neatly plotted – but in A Dance to the Music of Time, he turned aside from the simplicity of plot to something much more realistic, much more diffuse, much more deftly drawn : it is a form entirely his own, roman fleuve aspiring to the condition of anecdote. The discursive old man who wrote the Journals is, in a sense, the fictitious character whom he imagined as the narrator Nick Jenkins thirty years and more earlier. “I reread Henry IV.2...Shallow is perhaps my favourite character in Shakesepeare” [March 18, 1992]. This is surely a definitive judgement.

Like his seventeenth century hero John Aubrey, Powell combined an ear for gossip with a feeling for the antiquarian detail. Few things in his oeuvre demonstrate this combination better than an anecdote he picked up from his friend Wyndham Ketton-Cramer in Norfolk, a story which also has pleasingly military accoutrement.

This Norfolk parson, not knowing the church, had arrived early for a funeral in order to have a shirt time to look round. In an embrasure over

[19][19] Dance3, p.188
a tomb he saw a medieval or renaissance helmet. Helmets, even whole suits of armour, were dedicated to churches in the past, but I believe those to be seen in country churches have not always been worn in war or even for tilting, but come to rest in their surroundings after being used, like hatchments, merely to display at his funeral the coat-of-arms of a local nobleman or squire. Whichever type, Ketton-Cramer’s parson friend lifted the helmet down, and as there remained time to kill before the service, tried it on. Assuming this iron head-dress was easy enough, but when the moment came to replace the helmet the clergyman was unable to extract himself. All efforts failed. When the mourners, followed by the undertakers and coffin, arrived at the church, they were surprised to be received by a cleric wearing a knight’s bascinet. Presumably he had contrived so to lift the visor, though if that Ketton-Cramer was uncertain. All he knew was that the burial service had to be pronounced by a priest thus accoutred.[8][21].

[8] TKTBR,p.345
Anthony Powell Interviewed by Colin Donald, 29 May 1992 at The Chantry

A former literary journalist for The Scotsman newspaper, Colin Donald asked to interview AP after receiving an appreciate note about a review in The Scotsman of Under Review. The latter part of his visit to The Chantry was recorded on tape, but remained unheard and un-transcribed for almost 20 years. Excerpts were presented at the AGM of the Anthony Powell Society at St James’s Church, Piccadilly on 22 October 2011.

[Discussion following CD’s presentation to AP of Halidon Hill: a Dramatic Sketch (1822, first edition) by Sir Walter Scott]

I actually - believe it or not - I did read a couple of Scotts within living memory. Because... I don’t know if you have read AN Wilson’s first book which was called The Laird of Abbotsford but I thought it was awfully good. And I didn’t know him at all in those days and it did induce me to – I hadn’t attempted Scott for years and I read Old Mortality which I have never read, I must admit to skipping bits. I think I read two more, I now can’t remember which.

He has got something about him. Can you read him? As one gets older I do find I can read things which I couldn’t read in my middle period but one really ought to read that sort of thing when you’re a boy. Do it all. I find there are certain Dickenses that i can...umm... I am re-reading Bleak House with again certain amount of skipping, the good bits are frightfully good.

One gets awfully bored with the woman [Esther Summerson] who begins telling the story turns out to be the illegitimate daughter of Lady Deadlock, she’s terribly humble and all that sort of stuff is very boring, but all the descriptions of London are marvellously good.

You have said that one of the things that interests you most in writing novels is the difference between what the writer writes and the reader reads. What is it about this that interests you the most?

Well people feel very differently. Novelists feel very differently about that, because some novelists like their... they’ve got their picture of some character and they want the reader to think exactly what they think about it. I don’t feel that at all. I’m rather fascinated if the reader... if somebody one perhaps hasn’t very much liked as a character if they turn out to like them and the situation in which one has... I always try to be as fair as possible about situations and you just present them as they would be... one inevitably has one’s own feelings about it. And the critic often I find judges quite differently about it, to the way one might judge oneself. In the very early days of writing Dance I remember one reviewer said that it was about an orphan called Kenneth Widmerpool and do you know... was really so to speak quite taken in which seemed to me perfectly right, I felt I I had written
it in the right way in that way and not been, not at all... and occasionally in a foreign review one gets that as well. A French review, they often say the most...

Actually I think French reviewing is even worse than British on a whole because they know exactly what they want to say and they have this absolute kind of routine thing that is the correct thing for a French literary man to say. It’s why in a way you get better reviews sometimes in America because they’re not quite so...so hidebound. I must say in a general way reviewing is pretty poor.

You make the comment that reviews can be well-written or badly-written and people don’t seem to...

Well absolutely, yes...

If I could explain my response to certain parts of A Dance to the Music of Time, there are two comments that seem to me to lie right at the heart of the book. One is where Mrs Erdleigh tells the narrator when she is telling his fortune that he must ‘try to understand life’. And the other is when a character, I think its Moreland asks why ‘no writers have ever told the truth about women’. These - as an example of the subjective response - these seem to me to be the challenges that the narrator and yourself set out to tackle in the book.

Yes well I would quite accept that really. Mrs Erdleigh is not a specific figure but as I explained in my Memoirs I was very much brought up with that kind of person in the background. My grandmother was frightfully keen on fortune-telling and all that kind of thing. And my mother’s sister was who was a great friend of my maternal grandmother and my mother was very keen on... “oh there’s been a new fortune teller somewhere or other or new prophecies about what’s going to happen”. So I was very used to that and I thought that would be rather a good vehicle for not presenting stuff about oneself in a straightforward way.

I think one of the great difficulties about novel-writing is that unless you’ve got a real talent for describing yourself, which obviously certain people have for example obviously; Proust had an enormous talent for it, though whether he speaks the truth or not is another matter. He had an enormous feeling of what he was like. On quite another level somebody like Cyril Connolly was awfully good about describing what he was like and really was only interested in himself, and other people through himself, but I never feel I am at all good at describing, I never feel strongly myself what my own character is like and what my own life has been like and so on, so one has to present it in rather other ways and that is really the Mrs Erdleigh part. But Moreland is very much modelled on my great friend Constant Lambert and we used to talk about that sort of thing a great deal and although of course at the beginning
where he’s described at the beginning of *Dance* the way the narrator and he talk is very much the way we used to go on, of course...

There is obviously the moment he begins to describe his marriage and that sort of thing, that is all purely imaginary but at the same time I do always think of Constant very much when I write about Moreland and that seemed another good vehicle for describing myself by showing myself talking to him. The things that he says about life are not necessarily the things that he really said. They may well have been the things that I said to him or I said to someone else, but they do express views in that sort of way and I think that again is one of the great problems for a novelist, is the way to express what you feel, what way you tell a story, what way you present the whole thing, is I think the thing I think about most, I have thought about most, that is one of the chief problems. Otherwise a great deal you can leave to instinct and what comes out having decided roughly speaking what you are going tell. I think a lot of stuff then comes out instinctively, that you are not conscious of inventing by writing elaborate instinct notes and all that sort of the thing.

**The technique you use is to raise the question, once, about understanding life...**

Yes...

**It’s a very striking phrase because it’s...**

Well that I think really is what the novel is about you know. And when I started writing it, as I have really said again I never felt very much at ease in the 80,000 word novel. I’m not very good at inventing plots and you do find that pretty well all novelists, however great, they really have a fairly limited number of characters who they double up on. I felt it would be better if one could use them and continue with them, how long I didn’t really know, until you know, you came more or less to the end of their lives. When I had done six novels I realised that I should have to do at least three about the War and um, counting on my fingers how old one would be, I thought well one doesn’t want to run out of steam, and one doesn’t want to pop off. So I thought I would end it with another three making a neat 12, but I didn’t decide after the War that I would write 12, I just really hoped for the best.

**Just to come back to what you were saying then about a view of yourself and writing about yourself. You say that you never had a strong view of yourself that you could write about, but when you deal with a character, when you bring up a character, you analyse them... sort of take them bits and look at them very closely. It’s quite hard to see how you could do that without having applied that process to yourself.**

Well that I absolutely agree with. I think that people who say – they don’t say it quite so much now – but when I began to write *Dance* they used to say very much that the narrator is such a dim character, which actually the Americans
never say and when the book’s translated they never say. But it seems to me that by the comments of the narrator about other people that you really ought to judge the sort of person he was from that.

**I have often thought that reading that criticism. And also the criticism that he is somehow a rather wet character...**  
Yes, yes, well [laughs] one likes to think that, yes.  
...the situations he gets involved with seem [to show him] in extremely un-wet ways.  
Yes, yes. That’s certainly said time and time again. I think that as I said earlier about reviewing, there really is really nobody now I can point to... and there were one or two people who really were pretty good about thirty or more years ago like Connolly for instance who did take a bit of trouble in their reviews but nobody now seems to, you know, do more than produce this utterly routine stuff.  
If I may say so that’s why I was struck by your review [laughs] because you had obviously thought about it a bit.  
You said – and sorry to keep saying ‘you said’ – there is a comment that you make I think in your Memoirs, or perhaps in the novel I can’t remember, that reading a writer’s work and meeting the writer are very different subjects, radically different experiences, implying that it can be a rather disappointing one.  
Well I think that’s quite true. Yes.  
I was going to ask what is your experience of that from both sides, from having had people meet you and meeting other writers.  
Well... yes [pause]. One’s own... I think writers with very strong personalities they do come over much more... I think it’s very difficult to judge for instance really how good Evelyn Waugh is because he had this enormously strong personality and had this enormous gift for writing. But as he himself said was not a bit interested in psychology.  
Well I feel myself in a novel I essentially *am* interested in psychology and I would say that how Waugh will work out in the future it’s pretty hard to say. It seems to me... I think that Decline and *Fall* is immensely funny and *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* is extremely good too. It’s unique in its way. It’s got this characteristic which I greatly enjoy in books in that it’s both very funny and very frightening at the same moment. It’s one I re-read a great deal.  
But I was very struck by a review of John Bayley’s the other day – I think he’s a jolly good critic in lots of ways – in which he compared Waugh with Wodehouse. I felt that was enormously true because when people... I can’t really read Wodehouse but when people tell me the sort of gems out of it I
think they are immensely funny and ... I admire the verbal facility enormously. I never met him, I corresponded with him a bit and I felt that was really a bit true about Evelyn too. That he had these tremendously funny incidents but I was not enormously held by something like the *War Trilogy* or something like that. I don’t... It’s obviously well done in a certain way, but I don’t feel, as he’s not interested in the psychology of people. [Pause] It’s very hard to know off the cuff what books you do like.

**Is Brideshead one that you like?**

No, I actively dislike it. I think it’s a terrible book, I think absolute sort of phoney... It’s a kind of romance, like it’s Disraeli rather you know, I don’t know if you have ever read any...

**No I haven’t**

They are these enormously fruity romances about political life and grand life and they have got awfully good bits in them, there would be an enormously amusing account of a race meeting or something like that and people talking in this high-faluting language and all that. And I think *Brideshead* is really like that, quite unlike anything that ever happens anywhere. When one reads something like *Black Mischief*, one is awfully struck by how well it’s done but I don’t find my attention held very much by it.

You know as opposed to Proust shall we say who has terrible *longeurs* but at the same time one is always interested in what he has to say. He goes hammering along... but in spite of that one does...

Dostoevsky I am very fond of too, but Dostoevsky I think ...one does get frightfully sick of Russian ‘way as such [?] Someone like Mr Berkobensky [?] is a frightfully funny character, one of the great comic characters and one absolutely believes in the way they all behave. I am very fond of *The Possessed*. He calls it *The Devils* which is a much better title, it’s sometimes called. I must prefer that to *The Brother’s Karamazov* most people always like the *Brothers Karamazov* but I like this and next to that I like what’s he called...

**Crime and Punishment?**

No not *Crime and Punishment*, the one about the chap, Prince Myshkin...

**The Idiot?**

*The Idiot*. It’s absolutely awful this business of being ancient, one forgets absolutely one’s own name. One has to say that bit in Shakespeare when he says ‘To be or not to be’..

**Kingsley Amis’s novel Ending Up** [has a character who can’t remember nouns].., not that I am comparing you to that man...
Yes! [laughs] Kingsley’s idea about being old... they [the characters in Ending up] are all about 50 or something like that... I thought the first 90 pages of Lucky Jim were frightfully funny and remain frightfully funny really today and I thought The Old Devils was quite good.

I was going to ask [about The Old Devils] as that’s one of my favourite books.

I think that’s really rather good. In fact I have just finished reading it for the third time because I think first of all, although I am of Welsh extraction myself, I think all those Welsh names... I do find awfully confusing when they are all together, all the women... that’s all complicated. I first of all read it and made myself a list of the characters with their wives and read it again. And then my son [Tristram Powell] did the television thing and I thought really did it rather well, and by then I had to re-read it to find out who everyone was then. Did you see it?

Um, I did see the first episode, but I sometimes have this thing with adaptations, with a book that I like very much, I think that if I ever read it again I will just see these actor’s faces....

I do rather agree Yes.

Whereas some adaptations I enjoy thoroughly, Brideshead for example. Do you know Kingsley, have you ever met him?

No I never have.

He has got this incredible vitality, he produces a book every year. But um...

Some of them are a bit...

They are a bit I think... you know not always...

I like The Green Man.

Yes I love The Green Man, I was reading that again the other day. Ending Up is very funny. Ending Up is good yes. I must re-read that I haven’t re-read that. Sort of things like Take a Girl Like You I don’t find terribly interesting.

Some I think... The Green Man is one example of an enormously big idea. Another one is The Alteration

Oh yes, that’s very very much...I wondered, or strictly speaking it was my wife who wondered in the first instance whether... Kingsley was you know at the City of London School with what is he called Master something or other who was a very good chorister, who is slightly older than him who comes into his Memoirs and... what’s he called, he’s always referred to as Master something.. who was a tremendous sort of... on the radio. I wonder if whether pondering on him Kingsley thought of The Alteration [laughs]. He is a tremendously talented chap...
[Question not recorded while cassette was turned over, but I think a question about the centrality of World War II to his vision of life/Dance]

...I then wrote a couple more [volumes of Dance] and then of course the War came and I always thought the War was coming for a year or two before it did. And I thought if one survived one clearly wouldn’t be able to write a novel immediately after coming out, because I have to be in a fairly passive state when I write a novel. Some people don’t some people like being in turmoil but I don’t myself.

I had always been interested in John Aubrey, the 17th antiquary, and I rather mugged him up before the war, and then of course during the war one could read books about him and books which would be frightfully boring in the ordinary way, which seemed rather relaxational [sic] on leave or indeed even in the evening I used to, when I was in the War Office I used to come back have the last pub [?], and then go straight to bed with some 17th Century book, and one got through quite a lot that way. I then worked very hard when I came out of the army and did produce this book. And then I ...[laughs] the way it all worked out was that Graham Greene was then in a publishing office. He always had this idea he was going to starve to death, I think to the end of his days he did, and he was managing director of a publishers. And I was induced to take it there. And then it was really difficult to get a book out in those days, but they then took three years to get it out which was a record for those days.

Graham and I had an awful row when we were all lunching there and he suddenly said – and the book was supposed to be coming out before Christmas on the third year. He then began saying he wasn’t sure if they could get it out before Christmas and I then rather blew my top, and he said [chuckling] “well it’s a bloody boring book anyway” which I was frightfully cross about because from one’s publisher...

It now seems frightfully funny of course. And then Graham went back – and this was tremendously characteristic – he then went back to Eyre & Spottiswoode where a rather awful man called Douglas Gerald was in charge and said that they had treated me abominably and had a row with them – he loves these rows you see his adrenalin is only set going by rows – and more or less left them owing to.. he said they had treated me so badly having had an argument with me...

And then he lived abroad really so I really never...or used occasionally to correspond when he got another decoration or something like that. But we were on perfectly good terms. I really couldn’t read his books ever and he couldn’t read mine.

Really, you never liked his books?
No. I think he’s a totally second rate writer. But equally he had a sort of facility, I think he was a clever chap. But I just can’t read them they don’t... they’re characteristic books which don’t hold my attention [?]

Even something like The Honorary Consul?

I can’t remember if I actually tried that. I think I did get through The Quiet American and that sort of thing and...somehow they don’t... they seem to be quite unreal, people don’t... they seem to be merely rather superior detective stories. I don’t believe in these heroes... it’s very very second rate Conrad I think. Sometimes the kind of figures in Conrad, who um, the sort of Conrad like Victory isn’t that about the chap who...the one who picks up a girl who has been rather ill-treated in a band, she’s in an orchestra or somewhere in the Far East and it all leads to this frightful trouble. Which is a very Graham Greene situation. Somehow I believe in Conrad but I don’t believe in Graham. He’s an able chap and he can be quite an able critic sometimes but really he has the curious temperament of always wanting rows and you know, with all his religious stuff. I was never very convinced by that.

He would seem to be the opposite of what you say about you not having a great view of yourself, he would seem to have a strong view of himself and his life and his writerly myths.

Certainly, certainly. Absolutely.

VS Pritchett made the comment which I quoted in my review of Under Review, in his essay on one of your Dance novel. He said that ‘fierce melancholy was your energising wound.’

[Laughs] I see what he means. If you take the view that all writers have got to have something that sort of gingers [?] them off of that sort. I suppose yes, I think I am rather melancholy but again it seems to me more taking a fairly objective view of things. A point which I do think is enormously important which I came across reading Nietzsche, he said that the Greeks always wrote in a completely stylised way about human beings because he knew that if you described them naturalistically they were always funny. I think that’s tremendously profound view [chuckles] All things being equal I don’t particularly want to go down in history as purely a comic writer. I’m delighted when people think my books are funny. But they are in the first resort written to my mind as people behave. A lot of what people have picked out as the funniest bits are absolutely what happened. And – you may not remember – in one of the War ones the general comes...

Porridge?

That absolutely happened as I described it. There is nothing added at all. When he said ‘have the men had porridge’. I absolutely agree when you write it all down it does sound excruciatingly funny.
Which general was that?

He said what have the men had for breakfast, and I was by my platoon and said they had liver or whatever else it was, he said did they have porridge and I said no sir and he said why not? I said there was no issue, then he said there ought to have been porridge. He said to one of the men saying do you like porridge and went down the line getting to a very very small man and pointed his stick and he said ‘Yes Sir’. And he pointed his stick and said ‘There see, he may not be the largest man in the division but he has got a lot of very good sense’ and marched out with his ADC. It all happened exactly that.

Which general..?

He was called Wilson, he was just the major general who was in charge of the division I was in in Northern Ireland. And then I was a subaltern at the beginning of the war and then I was eventually moved to the War Office where I remained for four years as a liaison officer.

Was there a point when the format of *A Dance to the Music of Time* became clear to you, how you were going to set it up?

Well I...

I don’t mean the [number] of volumes I just mean the voice of it...

The thing was as I was approaching the War I really would want at least one volume on going into the Army and all the bits when I was in the infantry. And then the second one I saw I had obviously got to do one where I was up at Division, doing a very lowly job but, I was as it were on staff, which was quite different. And then I moved on to the War Office, again quite different being a liaison officer for these people, the Poles and Belgians and Czechs, and of course one had to keep such narrative as there was going all the time as well. Ones real trouble was keeping on working at the rate of a vol [sic] every two years and having to invent a lot of stuff and feeling one mustn’t fall behind but feeling if possible you mustn’t be inferior in your style.

The ground rules of the style of autobiographical, talking about writing novels within the novel, did that suddenly click with you at some point?

No I really always had that in mind.

Your work has never been adapted for TV or anything like that...

No, at least three or four times they have done... it’s all been laid on you know, and then something, they’ve said no they can’t do it. The BBC got as far as four episodes at one moment and then said no they didn’t want to do it. My own view now is that I think it probably won’t be done until it’s really a sort of costume... rather like all these EM Forsters one after another. I think it’s a slightly awkward length of time now, one does never know. And Hilary Spurling who is a great friend of mine and supposedly [laughs] writing my biography and I think is an awfully good writer. She says with great truth
these things suddenly happen and that’s all you can say, it’s no good pressing them and I think that’s true of adaptions [sic].

**Did you happen to see the [recently broadcast] Angus Wilson [Anglo-Saxon Attitudes]?**

No i didn’t actually, I didn’t.

**It was terribly good.**

It certainly had immensely good notices. He was I think a perfectly honourable writer. He was not one I ever really felt really drawn to as a novelist. [Inaudible] there was something I didn’t quite like about his novels? Again I sort of knew the man.

**Do you read many contemporary novels?**

You know I’m afraid I don’t you know. I certainly should read them if there were any I was attracted to. I go on reading Kingsley Amis’s when they come out for instance or VS Naipaul’s when they come out but I must admit I haven’t read any of these younger people at all. AN Wilson has a great facility for writing novels but I really do much prefer his biographies and he is an extremely good biographer.

**He has a biography of Jesus coming out**

Who is it going to be?

**Err, Jesus**

[Laughs] Oh Jesus. Yes, I remember that. That I think will be very interesting. He has got slight religious mania hasn’t he? He is always changing his religion. I don’t know what he is at the moment of speaking. Is he an atheist at the moment of speaking?

**I don’t know.**

I don’t know, he certainly has been. He tried to go into both the Church of England and the Church of Rome as a young man and they wouldn’t have him. He’s an amusing figure; I’d forgotten that was going to be his next.

**In all of your novels and your criticism you enjoy and enjoy pointing out that things are very different from what they are assumed to be like.**

Yes I think that’s quite true.

**For example you said that Hemingway, far from being a great hearty, was in fact a great aesthete...**

Yes

And that more generally that toughness is more important to an artist. Seeing things through takes a kind of toughness. That’s what the artist
needs, not sort of aesthetic abandon. Do you have a sort of theory about paradoxes? Or do you just enjoy them?

Not as such particularly, but I think it is so often true. It is a kind of cliché which is awfully apt to grow up about people that gets repeated over and over and you find when you examine it that it isn’t like that at all.

That again is why I enjoyed your review so much because it did point out that this is not the absolutely ordinary view of Lawrence and various other people. I think Lawrence for example is really quite a good poet you know and a brilliant letter writer and that sort of thing and he does go off the rails but he hasn’t got the.. I think Sons and Lovers is rather good but the other novels there is a terrible sort of over-heated thing I don’t enjoy very much.

And of course there was all this business of telling him he was a genius, all these people like Ford Maddox Ford and so on going around saying this and he then did believe it and of course combined with his bad health...he was a very remarkable chap of course, but I don’t myself like his novels. I think a poem a poem like Snake is rather good.

On the subject of relationships with other writers you have said that these can be difficult not because of jealousy as is often assumed but because of the personal nature of their stock in trade. As so many of your friends have been writers, did you develop a system of dealing with that?

[Laughs] It all sort of worked out naturally I think. Some you remain friends with. I did remain friends with Evelyn Waugh, he was about two years older than me so I only... I knew him first at Oxford when he was living a rather reclusive life because he was sitting for his schools I think, I’m not sure he hadn’t been sent down for a term and was making up or something like that. I did know him then, when he was far at his best in London when we were both young men knocking about London. He was much his nicest then. And then he really did remain on and off friends until within two or three months from his death when we saw him at a wedding, didn’t we? [Lady Violet: Yes] When he was rather doddering about as I indeed am myself now. Then he suddenly popped off a month or two later. There are extremely few people who managed to put up with him during that period but that was on the strength of never being at all intimate, just, you know. Knowing him.

How about George Orwell?

Well he was really a close friend of ours and he just died and you know, actually I was not present... i wasn’t actually the last person to see him but I might easily have been. But he of course was... he kept all his friends in very rigid compartments and he had all sorts of friends who I would never have met. He used to dump his adopted child with us when he went off to speak to what was usually some protest meeting about some chap who’d been in
prison. He’d say ‘he’s probably a scoundrel but they oughtn’t have locked him up’ [laughs]

**And finally on a scale of difficult jobs, how highly do you put [novel-writing]. Do you think it’s one of the hardest jobs?**

Oh well yes [laughs] I put it very highly indeed but I think it’s often awfully badly done.

**Thank you very much for tea.**
Singing a Would-Be King through Comic Invective: Jenkins as Widmerpool’s ‘Inexorable Accessory’

Ashley Herum

In the introductory passage to “The Valley of Bones” (henceforth “the Introduction”), the first of the three “war volumes” that form the third movement of Anthony Powell’s A Dance to the Music of Time (henceforth “Dance”), the narrator Jenkins does not mention the name “Widmerpool,” yet Widmerpool and his name permeate the passage. Likewise Widmerpool, although unmentioned, nevertheless inhabits the novel’s prologue in the form of snow and icy water. The Introduction is, in part, a reiteration of the prologue to the novel as a whole (henceforth “the Prologue”). Present in both are images of twilit snow, ruins or—as in the Prologue—quasi-ruins, and figures “both real and imagined” (QU, 2): workmen gathered around a fire; centaurs bearing torches; Cunedda and his horsemen. Present, too, in both sections of the novel is an elegiac, brooding tone. In part, this tone is a result of the crepuscule of the scenes; the half-light lends to them a dream-like quality, as of the shadowy realm of memory. Indeed, the narrator Jenkins portrays twilight as a physical manifestation of the act of remembering, an act with which he himself is engaged simultaneously as the novel “takes place”; for it takes place within his memory. In addition, the sentence structure imposes a measured tempo. The rhythm of the sentences is hypnotic; it ensnares the reader, as if in the clutches of the waves that figure in the Introduction. The waves’ recurrence, furthermore, calls to mind the cyclical dance to which, in the Prologue, Jenkins compares the movements of some workmen he sees on the street. The image of a cyclical dance, in which successive generations of human dancers inhabit the same “dancing floors” –although the Zeitgeist may vary (Morris, 118)– and in which individual dancers encounter one another recurrently, informs the whole of Dance.

In the Introduction to “The Valley of Bones” as well as in Dance’s Prologue, Jenkins is in solitude – whether actual physical solitude or whether solitude imposed by the force of his daydreams, which separate him from others – as he ruminates about matters having to do, indirectly or directly, with Kenneth Widmerpool. Throughout Dance, Jenkins seeks out solitude in order that he may engage in musings that are, one gathers, essential to his equilibrium as a writer, as if, during such intervals of isolated pondering, he were generating within himself, out of his memories, the stuff of his writing. In the Introduction to “The Valley of Bones,” as his military career begins, Jenkins, although flanked by two fellow officers, manages effectively to be alone within his own musings (VB, 1). In “The Military Philosophers,” on two occasions near the end of his career as a soldier, Jenkins expresses either relief at being alone, as when he arises early in the French town Cabourg – “Proust’s Balbec” (MP, 167), as he reminds himself, as if to say the town in
which he found himself existed partly through his fellow writer Proust’s agency - in order to attend to his liaison duties, or else the desire to be alone, as after the Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul’s in honor of the Allied victory (MP, 165-6; MP 229). Because these scenes take place either at the very beginning or at the very end of Jenkins’s military service, they seem to mark out Jenkins’s transition from a world of writing to one of warfare, and vice versa.

In addition to being partially a reiteration, with variations, of the novel’s beginning, the Introduction, unlike the Prologue, explicitly treats war and the environment war creates, in which individuals have unusual opportunities to ascend or fall in status and authority, as its main themes. The Introduction obliquely reminds us that, through warfare, an individual – even a commoner, even Widmerpool–may seize royal power, establishing himself as a (would-be) progenitor of a new lineage. In reminding us of this, the Introduction prepares us for Jenkins’s portrayal throughout the war volumes of Widmerpool’s continued quest for, and increasing possession of, military and political power. In the scheme of things as Powell establishes them in Dance, however, such a lineage as Widmerpool apparently wishes to establish would be “new” only in the sense that a new individual would be playing the part of (would-be) progenitor;¹ for such a lineage would simultaneously be old in the sense that the function of lineage be an already established one; it is only the dancer, so to speak, who is new.² This re-stating of the novel’s theme–the cyclical nature of human endeavor– creates cohesion among the many volumes of Dance. It is additionally noteworthy because, by means of this reiteration of the novel’s theme, Jenkins links himself, through his semi-mythic, royal Welsh ancestor Cunedda, the founder of a line of Welsh kings, to the novel’s anti-hero, Widmerpool, whose career and recurrence as a “dancer” in Jenkins’s life is the novel’s raison d’être. Jenkins indirectly presents Kenneth Widmerpool as the “new” Cunedda.

Cunedda’s descendant, Nicholas Jenkins, is linked to Kenneth Widmerpool in another way than through Widmerpool’s emulating of Cunedda’s role. Just as ancient kings had their chroniclers, their praise-singers, Widmerpool, the would-be king, has, as his chronicler, Jenkins – even if Jenkins’s chronicle of Widmerpool’s career is one not of praise but of comically-delivered invective (Ford, xvi; xxi; xxviii-ix; Nagy, 242).³ Indeed it is Widmerpool himself who

¹ As Michael Meredith has noted, Widmerpool and his savage wife, Pamela, do not have offspring, 27.
² See also Karl, 20.
³ In citing Gregory Nagy and Patrick K. Ford who himself, on page xxi of his Introduction, cites Nagy’s Greek Mythology and Poetics: ‘As Gregory Nagy has asserted with respect to Homeric poetry, fame is what a hero gets ‘specifically by way of poetry’
is portrayed by his chronicler Jenkins as calling forth Jenkins’s power as a writer. Soon after Jenkins has left public school, his parents send him to stay with a French family, the Leroys, in their house in France, ostensibly so that he may practice his French. Jenkins implies, however, that his parents don’t know what else to do with him between his leaving public school and going up to the university (QU, 72; 106). Widmerpool too, is present as a paying guest at the Leroys’, but his stance towards his future is much different from Jenkins’s: Widmerpool has plans.\(^4\) As he informs Jenkins, he has already determined that his future career will be in business and politics (QU, 133). He interrogates Jenkins as to his own plans, and Jenkins confesses, as it were, to the reader – although not to Widmerpool – that the “several lame remarks” he makes to Widmerpool “to the effect that (he) wanted one day ‘to write’…had not even the merit of being true, as it was an idea that had scarcely crossed (his) mind until that moment” (QU, 134). Although Widmerpool’s reception of Jenkins’s news is not encouraging – “‘To write?’ he says, “But that is hardly a profession…” (QU, 134) – nevertheless, by evoking from Jenkins an avowal of his intention to take up what in fact does become his profession, he has prompted Jenkins to lay a stake in the future, thus – unwittingly -  linking his fate with Widmerpool’s own.\(^5\) In calling forth Jenkins’s’ avowal that he wishes to write, Widmerpool in a sense fathers him. Jenkins’s father and Widmerpool, in fact, share many characteristics in common. Both are of Celtic ancestry. Both are self-important and lack a sense of humor. Both hunger after power. Both disapprove of art (KO, 26-7; 34-42; VB, 1-3).

Jenkins to some extent shares his writer’s prowess, including its symbiotic relationship with Widmerpool, with his aristocratic public school friend, Charles Stringham. Nicholas Birns has pointed out that, in the scene in “A Question of Upbringing” in which Jenkins, Stringham and Templer come upon Le Bas reading poetry in a meadow, Stringham seems to play the part of Jenkins, as though he spoke for Jenkins by proxy (Birns, Guessing, 148). Where one would expect Jenkins, the future novelist, to display the most zeal and knowledge in answering Le Bas’s questions about literature, it is Stringham who plays the part of school boy littérateur. It is as if Stringham represented the narrator Jenkins’s own artistic self, the self that “mimics” others. When we first encounter Stringham, in “A Question of Upbringing,” we learn that he is “an excellent mimic” (QU, 9), who is adept at imitating

\(^{(136)}\) I wish to suggest that Jenkins, in inveighing against Widmerpool, is true to his Welsh poetic heritage.

\(^4\) Taichi notes Widmerpool’s reliance on and belief in his own plans in forming his view of reality, 41-2.

\(^5\) At this point in Jenkins’s life, he is as dismissive of Widmerpool’s ambitions in business and politics as Widmerpool is of Jenkins’s interest in writing; however, he is too polite to let Widmerpool know this (QU, 133).
Widmerpool’s jerky bodily gestures and thick-tongued manner of speaking, just as Jenkins, as Dance’s narrator, also is adept at representing Widmerpool’s mannerisms. If Widmerpool’s insistent presence at the Leroy’s calls into being Jenkins in his role as a writer, so, similarly, does Widmerpool’s presence in “A Buyer’s Market,” at the coffee stall to which Mr. Deacon and Gypsy Jones have led him and Jenkins, serves as a summons to Stringham, “(Widmerpool’s) mimic” (BM, 93). As Jenkins says, “The presence of Widmerpool at the stall added a touch of fantasy to Stringham’s appearance at that spot; for it was as if Widmerpool’s own antics had now called his mimic into being as inexorable accessory to any real existence to which Widmerpool himself might aspire” (BM, 93). Stringham’s status as “inexorable accessory” to Widmerpool’s existence mirrors Jenkins’s own status as Widmerpool’s chronicler. It is Stringham, however, who first, through his mimicry, chronicles Widmerpool’s foibles. It is Stringham who first, perhaps intuitively, recognizes what manner of being Widmerpool is, and who, in “A Question of Upbringing,” advises Jenkins, who has just asked him “But what is (Widmerpool) really like?” (QU, 14) that, “If you are not sure what Widmerpool is like…you can’t do better than have another look at him. You will have an opportunity at prayers tonight” (QU, 14). Indeed, over the next fifty years, Jenkins is to receive many “another look” at Widmerpool and, through them, an increasing awareness of what he is “like.”

According to Jenkins’s recollection, he himself seems dimly, if not quite consciously, aware of Widmerpool’s kingly ambitions from the time of his first close look at him. Seeing him emerge from the mist, he observes that Widmerpool carries himself “almost majestically” (QU, 4). It is as if, in Dance, Jenkins sings Widmerpool, the would-be king, in place of Stringham, the hereditary ruler; for Widmerpool, after treating Stringham for many years as his rival, supplants him. By the time Stringham, Widmerpool, and Jenkins are in the army together, Jenkins hopes in vain that Widmerpool may treat Stringham in the collegial way proper to “an old acquaintance” (SA, 189); instead, Widmerpool treats him murderously and with contempt. Widmerpool’s and Stringham’s mutual antagonism is portrayed in Dance’s Prologue, in the images of fire falling upon snow and the fire-bearing centaurs who “canter(…) beside a frozen sea” (QU, 2).

Robert K. Morris, building upon an observation of W.D. Quesenbery, Jr.’s about Widmerpool’s watery nature, claims that Widmerpool is watery both in

6 Earlier in “A Buyer’s Market” Jenkins, when unexpectedly encountering Widmerpool at the Walpole-Wilson’s dinner party, makes a similar remark: “Indeed, Widmerpool’s presence in the flesh seemed even now less real than Stringham’s former imitations of him…” (BM, 30).

7 Birns suggests that Widmerpool’s maltreatment of Stringham is revenge for Stringhams’ mockery of him as a public school boy (Birns, Understanding, 182-3).
humor and elementally, whereas Stringham is of melancholic humor, but “elementally...is air and fire” (Morris, 114-17; Quesenbery, 5-26). As Morris notes, Jenkins’s first depiction of Widmerpool shows him emerging from a wintry mist, while the first image he presents of Stringham is of him standing indoors, beside a fire (Morris, 114). Quesenbery believes that, taken together with other details, the workmen’s fire in Dance’s Prologue indicates that the workmen have “established a civilization” (Quesenbery, 16). It is for the “fiery” Stringham and the kind of civilization he represents that Jenkins has an affinity. In the Prologue, Jenkins imagines “centaurs with torches cantering beside a frozen sea” (QU, 2): Henry R. Harrington implies that these centaurs are representative of the narrator Jenkins himself, who, elsewhere in Dance, announces to the fortune-teller Myra Erdleigh, “I am the Archer” (Harrington, 445-6; AW, 9); that is, he was born under the sign of Sagittarius. Powell portrays Jenkins as a Cheiron-like, civilizing centaur, who feels oppressed by Widmerpool’s kingly ambitions, and who, so to speak, carries Stringham’s torch.

In the Introduction to “The Valley of Bones,” Jenkins, now an officer in the British Army and newly stationed in a region of Wales from which came some of his ancestors, describes himself as inundated by his daydreams. One might be inclined to assume that it is the repetitive beat of the nearby sea that compels Jenkins to surrender to his memories and musings, but he himself, in fact, attributes the power of drawing forth his recollections to one of the very things he is then in the act of remembering—a line from Valéry’s poem, “Le Cimetière Marin.” The line is one his friend, the composer Moreland, used to recite: “La mer, la mer, toujours recomencée”: It is an apt line to appear in the Introduction for several reasons. Its words remind us that the Introduction, in being a reiteration of Dance’s Prologue, is an instance of “beginning again.”

Furthermore, the “graveyard by the sea” of the poem’s title induces in one thoughts of the previous war, World War I, during which a great number of England’s aristocratic young men “la(id) twenty-year-old bones (VB, 2)” in French earth. Their deaths presumably allow Widmerpool more latitude than he would otherwise have had in his early expansion of his influence (Polland, 44)8

8 Louise Polland discusses how the deaths of great numbers of aristocratic young men in World War I resulted in an increased number of commoners being admitted to Oxford (Polland 44). Moreover, while at Oxford during this period, “young men were allowed to be openly ambitious and there was much less snobbishness about birth” (Polland, 53). While Widmerpool chooses not to attend university – preferring, as he explains to Jenkins, to begin straightway on making headway in the business world – it theoretically would have been an option for him. He may, however, neither have been a good enough student while at public school to qualify for a scholarship nor have been able to afford the tuition on his own; a conversation he has with Jenkins while at the Leroys’ suggests that both
Jenkins recalls, too, that Valéry’s line used to be quoted by his friend Moreland, a character who, like Stringham, seems to some extent to speak in lieu of Jenkins (Birns, Guessing, 148). Thus the line, as “mediated” by Moreland, allows Jenkins to speak more dramatically than he typically might. Jenkins himself says as much when he refers to the “everyday landscape of heaving billows” by which he finds himself as “too consciously dramatic for (his) own taste” (VB, 1). Valéry’s line, in that it used to be quoted by Moreland, also recalls Jenkins to his life as an artist, and to his affiliation with artistic men, Stringham among them, who –unlike Widmerpool–do not shun art in favor of “practical matters” (VB, 2). As an artist, Jenkins is preoccupied not with the “practical matters required of one (VB, 2)” that he feels tugging at his attention in the Introduction to “The Valley of Bones,” but with the concerns of a writer –that is, giving play to his memories and musings. In Dance’s final volume, “Hearing Secret Harmonies,” he likewise temporarily evades practical matters: While taking part in a meeting about the potential encroachment of the nearby quarry on the rural landscape where he now lives, the elderly Jenkins wanders away from the others in order to survey his surroundings and brood on whatever thoughts may arise. As he relates, “I was mistaken in supposing Mrs Salter the foremost of our party, that none of the others had pressed so far as the elder thicket. That was what I had decided to do myself, a small luxury, before bending the mind to practical problems” (HSH, 161). As he indulges in this “small luxury,” Jenkins muses:

“The scene in the fields round about resembled a TEWT – Tactical Exercise Without Troops–such as were held in the army, groups of figures poring over maps, writing in notebooks, gazing out over the countryside. My own guilty feelings, on such occasions, came back to me, those sudden awareness at military exercises of the kind that, instead of trying to comprehend in a practical manner the quarrymen’s proposals, I was concentrating on The Devil’s Fingers themselves” (HSH, 161)

In both these scenes, while at war or while reminded of when he was at war, Jenkins is engaged in generating a state of mind conducive to creating art. While Widmerpool would no doubt have disapproved of Jenkins’

these things may have been the case. He informs Jenkins that “There was not much money when my father died” (QU, 132). Yet he may only have meant to imply by this remark that he saw greater value in embarking without delay on his projected career than in acquiring a university education. His genuine disdain for arts and letters makes this not unlikely. In any case, increased opportunities for the ambitious commoner were available not only at Oxford but in British society at large.

9 The phrase “practical matters required of one (VB, 2),” is similar to part of the epigram Valéry chose for “Le Cimetière Marin” - μὴ, φίλα ψυχά, βιον ἀθάνατον σπεῦδε, /τὰν δ’ ἐμπράκτων ἄντλει μοχανάν (My soul, do not strive after immortal life, but exhaust your practical contrivance(s), trans. my own)” (Pindar, Third Pythian, 62-3).
daydreaming—especially that which took place when in the Army, under his own command—it is precisely Jenkins’ daydreaming that fosters within himself the conditions required to write a memorial of Widmerpool. Indeed, in the Introduction to “The Valley of Bones,” as Jenkins daydreams, Widmerpool’s presence impinges upon Jenkins’s awareness, as if Jenkins were in the sway of an imperative to remember him: Embedded within Valéry’s line of poetry - “La mer, la mer, toujours recomencée”- is part of Widmerpool’s name, “mer,” “(the) sea.”

Widmerpool’s Christian name, Kenneth, is also “hidden in plain sight” in this passage in the form of the name of Jenkins’s both “real and imagined” (QU, 2) ancestor, the Welsh king Cunedda.10 As one reads Jenkins’s ponderings about “what on earth such (a) predecessor(...) (as Cunedda) would have been like personally; certainly not above blinding and castrating when in the mood” (VB, 3), Widmerpool himself may come to mind. Although blindings and castratings might not have been the sort of mutilations that were precisely in his line, beheadings may have been more to his liking; it is he who is responsible for Stringham’s ending up in one of the Japanese POW camps, infamous for the beheadings visited upon the internees.

In the thrall of the waves—or, as he states, in the thrall of Valéry’s line of poetry, as if the artistic representation of the waves had as much, or more, power, as the real ones (VB, 2)11—Jenkins, in his imagination, sees Cunedda’s “horsemen” (VB, 3). The horsemen of Jenkins’s daydreaming recall the centaurs of the Prologue, figures representative of Jenkins himself (Harrington, 445-6), who bear fire as if to fend off the “watery” threat posed by Widmerpool. In the context of Dance, these horsemen also remind one of England’s once-ruling élite; for horsemen—and horses—often figure in Dance as symbols of England’s former imperial ascendancy. Stringham’s colonial father “looked wonderful on a horse” (CCR, 89), while Dicky Umfraville, whom Stringham is said to resemble, “was a well-known gentleman rider” (AW, 152).12 In the course of Jenkins’s final conversation with Stringham, whom Jenkins has sought out in order to warn him that Widmerpool has transferred him to the Mobile Laundry Unit, knowing that it is soon to be deployed to the Far East, Stringham remarks that he “ha(s)n’t sat

---

10 The Welsh double-d, as in “Cunedda,” is pronounced “ð.” See also Birns, who notes, “(T)he mention of Cunedda, the late fourth-to-early-fifth century Brythonic chieftain who is seen as a figure in both Welsh and Scottish history, as an ancestor in the female line of Jenkins is fascinating. “Cunedda” equals “Kenneth,” and Widmerpool’s paternal ancestry is said to be originally Scottish, of the name of Geddes. So there is a sense that Widmerpool and Jenkins have an ancestor in common…” (Understanding, 177-8).
11 Similarly, as noted, Stringham’s imitations of Widmerpool seem to Jenkins, in BM, to have more reality than Widmerpool’s actual deeds.
12 In addition, when Jenkins first meets Widmerpool’s nemesis-to-be, Sunny Farebrother, he “imagine(s) him a “cavalryman” (QU, 77).
on a horse for years” (SA, 81). While he is effectively banished from England to his father’s land in Kenya, Stringham’s dispatches to Jenkins include “drawings of a horse he sometimes rode” (72). His fall from this horse, which delays his entering university, is an image of his deposition. Despite the finality of the image, his unseating is a drawn-out process, partly orchestrated by Widmerpool.

In addition to Stringham’s drawings of his some-time mount, rendered in “blobs and spidery lines” (QU, 72-3), there are other artistic representations of horses throughout Dance. Of particular relevance to Widmerpool’s rivalry with Stringham are the two horses, “Trimalchio” and “Pharisee” that adorn Stringham’s room, first as a schoolboy, later as a recently divorced, young-ish man. For the flat in which he lives as a single man once again, and in which Widmerpool forcibly puts him to bed, is decorated with the same objects that he displayed in his room at public school. Included among them are images of two racehorses, Trimalchio and Pharisee (QU, 9; AW, 205). One thinks of how, in Brian Friel’s Making History, Hugh O’Neill, the last native ruler of Tyrone, figuratively and unwittingly invites the Plantagenets into his realm. He is shown decorating his dwelling with broom, that emblem of the Plantagenet dynasty, so that, being filled with flowers, it will seem hospitable to his new, young, English wife (Friel, Act 1, scene 1). Similarly, Stringham seems figuratively and unwittingly to have made a place in his own house for “Trimalchio,” that ludicrous slave-turned-rich-man, that parvenu in Petronius’s Satyricon, as well as for “Pharisee,” one of a group known to care more for money and outward displays of civility than for actual humane behavior or for actual absolving of debts owed to God (to put it in the terms of the New Testament). One might replace the names “Trimalchio” and “Pharisee” with “Widmerpool.”

There is also, in “A Buyer’s Market,” the hypothetical horse that may or may not be included in a memorial to Field Marshal Haig; Widmerpool opines that a horse must be included in any such statue, should one be erected (BM, 40). Widmerpool does not, however, mention that perhaps Field Marshal Haig, who had hopes for his cavalry offensive at the Battle of the Somme, in leading thousands of British soldiers (some of them aristocrats) to their deaths in the course of that battle, may unintentionally have helped pave the way for arrivistes like Widmerpool himself.13

Indeed Widmerpool is presumably unaware of the symbolic import of his own certitude that Field Marshal Haig’s memorial must include the image of a horse. He may, however, have some insight into the greater, societal significance of his having forcibly put to bed Stringham, the aristocrat who taunted him at public school; yet it would never occur to him that Stringham’s

---

13 This idea was suggested to me by Polland, 45; 48.
state is not owing just to extreme drunkenness but also – even, above all – to his having been overcome by the – so to speak – toxicity of the impromptu speech Widmerpool had delivered earlier in the evening at Le Bas’s Old Boy dinner.

No doubt without Widmerpool’s intent, his speech sounds like an allegory for his own ascending career and Stringham’s descending one. Fortifying himself at times with sips of water (AW, 191), Widmerpool utters, in part:

“‘Now if we have a curve drawn on a piece of paper representing an average ratio of persistence, you will agree that authentic development must be demonstrated by a register alternately ascending and descending the level of our original curve of homogeneous development. Such an image, or, if you prefer it, such a geometrical figure, is dialectically implied precisely by the notion, in itself, of an average ratio of progress. No one would deny that. Now if a governmental policy of regulating domestic prices is to be arrived at in this or any other country, the moment assigned to the compilation of the index number which will establish the par of interest and prices must obviously be that at which internal economic conditions are in a condition of relative equilibrium. So far so good. I need not remind you that the universally accepted process in connexion with everyday commodities is for their production to be systematized by the relation between their market value and the practicability of producing them, a steep ascent in value in contrast with the decreased practicability of production proportionately stimulating, and a parallel descent correspondingly depressing production. All that is clear enough. The fact that the index number remains at par regardless of alterations in the comparative prices of marketable commodities included in it, necessarily expresses the unavoidable truth that ascent or descent of a specific commodity is compensated by analogous adjustments in the opposite direction in prices of residual commodities (emphases mine throughout this excerpt)…’’’ (AW, 193-4)

Jenkins observes that Widmerpool is apparently either blind or indifferent to the embarrassed responses of his audience; however, even Widmerpool cannot ignore one of the effects of his far-from-eloquent speech: Le Bas is stricken with a stroke (AW, 196). Jenkins, forever weighing and assessing the acts and appearances of the people around him, is unwilling to admit to himself that there is an irrefutable correlation between Widmerpool’s speech and Le Bas’s stroke (AW, 195-6; Wilcox, 230-3). Stringham, however, is in no doubt about the connection. He declares, “‘It was Widmerpool’s speech, of course. Knocked Le Bas out. Knocked him out cold.Nearly knocked me out too.’” (AW, 201). Stringham, although – or, perhaps, because – he is drunk on fiery spirits, seemingly unerringly names what Widmerpool has done: while “drunk with his own self-importance (AW, 192),” Widmerpool, with his words, has nearly killed Le Bas – and has nearly killed Stringham too.
Widmerpool’s supplanting of Stringham is a process he began long ago – perhaps as long ago as the day when he and his mother, on visiting day, toured Stringham’s mother’s country house. In telling Jenkins of this, Widmerpool reminds Jenkins that, while Stringham will not inherit the house, as it is only entailed to his mother for her lifetime, he will inherit her South African gold holdings (QU, 139). Yet, in truth, having sent Stringham to his death in the Asian theatre, it is Widmerpool who, through his new wife Pamela Flitton, Stringham’s niece, will inherit Stringham’s mother’s gold (MP, 203-5). By the beginning of the Old Boys’ dinner, however, Widmerpool has only gone so far as to make his influence felt at Donners-Brebner, where both he and Stringham have worked for Sir Magnus Donners, Stringham as one of Sir Magnus’s two personal secretaries. Given that Widmerpool has recently arranged for Donners’s other personal secretary, Truscott, to be “sacked” (AW, 46) from his job, one wonders if he might not have been behind Stringham’s departure, too, even if only in creating an atmosphere that would not have been amenable to Stringham. As Widmerpool once put it to Jenkins, “Stringham is leaving us” (BM, 271), his use of “us,” seeming to suggest his own assumption of authority, both within Donners-Brebner and over Stringham.

In any event, it must be admitted that whatever moves against Stringham Widmerpool does or does not make, he is neither the cause of Stringham’s already Hamlet-like shaky resolve, nor the first to attempt to remove him from his birthright. Jenkins, when still at public school, lunches with Stringham and his mother at their home in London, where he also meets his mother’s husband, the naval officer Buster Foxe. In recounting this visit, Jenkins says, “I came in time to regard (Stringham’s) circumstances as having something in common with those of Hamlet. His father had, of course, been shipped off to Kenya rather than murdered; but Buster and his mother were well adapted to play the parts of Claudius and Gertrude” (QU, 73). At luncheon, Stringham, who has just left public school, complains that he does not wish to visit his father in Kenya, as his mother has decided he must do. Stringham’s apprehensions about visiting Kenya turn out to have been prophetic. It is on this visit to Kenya that he suffers the fall from his horse (BM, 171) that is symbolic of what turns out to be his protracted descent from hereditary power.

Jenkins does not just lag behind Stringham in his comprehension of what Widmerpool is like; he also lags behind him in inveighing against Widmerpool. Although the reader experiences Jenkins’s ridiculing of Widmerpool as taking place simultaneously with Stringham’s, it nevertheless is delivered retrospectively, after Jenkins has learned of Widmerpool’s death. As Jenkins recounts it, until he discovers that Widmerpool knowingly has sent Stringham to almost certain death, there is a diffidence to his willingness, or ability, to acknowledge Widmerpool’s true nature. Jenkins even confides at
various points in his narrative that he has had an impulse to protect Widmerpool’s reputation. At times he adds that he is not sure why this should be so. Soon after Widmerpool becomes engaged to Mildred Haycock, Jenkins is entertained to tea at the home of Mildred’s elder sister, Bertha Conyers, who is avid to learn more about her sister’s fiancé. Jenkins reports her to be “enchanted” to hear that he knows Widmerpool rather well, and so may tell her, as she says, “‘what (Widmerpool) is like’” (LM, 70). Frederica Budd soon joins the tea party, and, upon hearing that Jenkins was at school with Widmerpool, urges him, “‘Oh, do tell me what (Widmerpool) is like’” (LM, 82). Jenkins’s inner response to their entreaties is to “fear(…) that (he) might, if pressed, be compelled to admit some hard things about Widmerpool” (LM, 83). As Widmerpool’s “old acquaintance” (LM, 83), however, Jenkins wishes to do him a good turn. Thus, he takes care to avoid mentioning that Widmerpool’s father made his living from liquid manure, realizing any mention of manure might seem joking or downright hostile, even if it were proffered as serious information about Widmerpool’s background. In addition, he implies to the women that Widmerpool’s family connections are more illustrious than, as far as he knows, they in fact are (LM 83-4).

Jenkins also exhibits concern for Widmerpool’s standing when, as a school boy, he persuades Stringham, who, together with Jenkins and Templer, is walking some distance behind Widmerpool, to stop imitating Widmerpool’s gait. Curiously, the reason Jenkins gives for begging Stringham to desist from mocking Widmerpool is what he terms his “unreasoning fear” (QU, 38) lest Widmerpool turn around, thus causing “embarrassment” not to Widmerpool, but to Jenkins himself. One wonders whether Jenkins is so kind-hearted that he does not wish to be implicated, in Widmerpool’s eyes, in making Widmerpool suffer shame; does he commiserate with Widmerpool in his potential shame, as if in accordance with Widmerpool’s admonition to him at the Leroy’s a few years later that, “‘When a man’s self-esteem has been injured, he is to be commiserated with’” (QU, 154)? Or is Jenkins’s response born out of self-interest, as if he had a dim premonition, both of Widmerpool’s latent power and of his will to do harm to those who have antagonized him? While, at first, he may understand Widmerpool less well than does Stringham, Jenkins’s tentativeness in assessing – and deriding – Widmerpool may be what saves him from suffering as Stringham suffers, at Widmerpool’s hands.

Throughout Dance, even when Stringham’s appearances are predominantly sad, they are nevertheless comic, because he – like Jenkins - is so witty, often at Widmerpool’s expense. Widmerpool’s appearances in the first eight of the twelve volumes of Dance, before he has sent Stringham to death in the Asian theatre, are, like Stringham’s, humorous, but hardly because he is a wit. Widmerpool’s pronouncements are comic because, as represented by Jenkins,
they seem to come from the mouth of a pompous monster who only – and rather ineptly - plays the part of a human being. With his thick lips and pudgy body dressed in too-tight clothes, he resembles a bloated fish\textsuperscript{14} — or, as Rosie Manasch tells Jenkins at the Huntercombes’ dance, “the Frog-Footman” (BM, 60; also BDFR, 101; 102). In addition, Widmerpool uses words as if he did not understand that, to paraphrase H.D., they conceal as much as they reveal.\textsuperscript{15} As Colin Donald has observed, Widmerpool “lives a life without irony or humour, in which language is a commodity with which to outbid competitors” (Donald, 45). His conversation is mainly designed, as in “A Buyer’s Market” at the dinner at the Walpole-Wilsons’ that precedes the Huntercombes’ dance, to advance his aims. At the Walpole-Wilsons’ he spends the first part of dinner treating his fellow guests, as Jenkins observes, as his audience (BM, 39). Although he is not the host, he takes it upon himself to introduce the first topic of conversation at the dinner table: the question, currently in the news, of the form a monument to Field-Marshal Haig should take. He then argues the matter in a condescending way with his fellow guests who, despite their seeming boredom with the subject, nevertheless, politely play along with him. While some of the guests hold that, in his memorial statue, Field-Marshal Haig should not be depicted as riding on horseback, Widmerpool responds to one young woman’s comments as if there were no question in anyone’s mind as to whether a horse should make up part of the monument: “‘We are all agreed that he used to ride (a horse),’ said Widmerpool, indulgently this time. ‘And that, if commemoration is to take the form proposed, the Field-Marshal should certainly be represented mounted on his charger. I should have supposed there was no doubt upon that point’” (BM, 41).

Widmerpool’s manner of holding forth at the Walpole-Wilson’s dinner provides a foretaste of his delivery of his impromptu speech at Le Bas’s annual dinner for Old Boys. This speech (part of which is quoted above) is an imposition upon the assembled people, who are not present for the purpose of being made into his audience. In addition, it is designed to admit of no potential contradictory responses from its enforced audience. Throughout it, he repeatedly uses such phrases as, “No one would deny…” or “I need not remind you that the universally accepted…” (AW, 193-4).

One wonders whether it may be Widmerpool’s self-serving conversational and speech-giving style as much as his facial characteristics and physique that inspire Rosie Manasch to nick-name him “the Frog-Footman.” As noted

\textsuperscript{14} Quesenbery, 13. Widmerpool’s appearance is compared to a fish’s in the following passages: QU, 47; 49; 51; BM, 29; 52; 60; AW, 170; LM, 43; 184.

\textsuperscript{15} “(B)ut if you do not even understand what words say/ how can you hope to pass judgment/ on what words conceal?” (H.D., from Trilogy, “The Walls Do Not Fall,” part 8).

136
above, Jenkins often describes Widmerpool’s appearance as fish-like or amphibious, and Rosie Manasch, who had been present at the Walpole-Wilsons’ dinner and taken part in the discussion about the memorial to Field-Marshal Haig, even bestows on him a name from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, “The Frog-Footman.” In Carroll’s book, a fish-footman shares the stage, so to speak, with the Frog-Footman. Thus – if it is not too literal-minded to say so—one might wonder why Rosie does not call him “The Fish-Footman.” Of the two footmen, in fact, it is only the Frog-Footman with whom Alice carries on a conversation of sorts, from which it appears that attempting to converse with the Frog-Footman is a more extreme form of attempting to converse with Widmerpool. The Frog-Footman has his own purposes in mind, and does not even make a pretense of acknowledging that Alice may, as well (Carroll, 99-102). As Alice tries to elicit information from the Frog-Footman, he shows some awareness of her plight, but no actual concern for it. He responds to her questions, in part, by repeating “variations” on the same phrase – “I shall sit here on and off, for days and days,” a phrase that has no bearing on Alice’s predicament (Carroll, 100-101).

The Frog-Footman’s interaction with Alice calls to mind Jenkins’ description, in the early pages of “A Question of Upbringing,” of Widmerpool’s bodily gestures, which, he says resemble those of “an automaton of which the mechanism might be slightly out of order” (QU, 37). In “The Kindly Ones,” too, as Jenkins accompanies Widmerpool, who is now an army officer, to Lady Molly’s house, he records, even if not in so many words, that his manner of walking tended toward that of an automaton – in this case, a clockwork soldier: “Widmerpool, his leather-bound stick caught tight beneath his armpit, marched along beside me, tramp-tramp-tramp, eventually falling into step, since I had not taken my pace from him.” When, a moment later, Jenkins says something that annoys Widmerpool, “he stiffened, strutting now so fiercely that he could almost be said to have broken into the goosestep” (KO, 224).

Indeed, Jenkins often describes Widmerpool’s movements as “jerky.” In “A Buyer’s Market,” Jenkins says that “Widmerpool made one of those awkward

16 Quesenbery, 13.
17 Jenkins also describes Donners, Widmerpool’s one-time boss and mentor, as resembling a mechanical being: “In the seven years or so since I had seen him, Sir Magnus Donners had grown not so much older in appearance, as less like a human being. He now resembled an animated tailor’s dummy, one designed to recommend second-hand, though immensely discreet, clothes (if the suit he was wearing could be regarded as a sample) adapted to the taste of distinguished men no longer young. Jerky movements, like those of a marionette—perhaps indicating all was not absolutely well with his physical system—added to the impression of an outsize puppet that had somehow escaped from its box and begun to mix with real people, who were momentarily taken in by the extraordinary conviction of its mechanism” (MP, 206-7).
jerks of the body which Stringham used to imitate so deftly” (BM, 31). In this same volume of Dance, Widmerpool’s car, too, is prone to making “awkward jerks.” Jenkins portrays Widmerpool’s mishap with his car at Sir Magnus Donners’ residence, Stourwater—with his car, Widmerpool knocks over an urn in Donners’ garden—in such a way that the car seems to be a misbehaving wind-up toy that serves as an extension of Widmerpool’s destructive ego.

Widmerpool’s physical complaints are worthy of one of Aristophanes’ comedies. Stringham, in first describing Widmerpool to Jenkins, tells him that Widmerpool has suffered from “contortions of the bottom” (QU, 10), which, just as though he were indeed a fish, rendered him unable to stand upright: As Stringham says, as a result of these contortions, “(Widmerpool) was carted off” (QU, 10). Widmerpool also suffers from boils severely enough that he takes time out from what he impresses upon Jenkins is his busy schedule in order to spend some time in a nursing home (CCR, 103). The puffy and fluid nature of boils seems fitting to the generally fish-like state of Widmerpool’s physique. While keeping close company with his fiancée-for-a-time, the domineering Mildred Haycock, however, he deflates, so that his clothes, usually too tight, “h(a)ng from him in folds” (LM, 184): Jenkins, chancing upon Widmerpool and his then-fiancée Mildred Haycock at a nightclub, notices that Widmerpool “has an air—almost literally—of being a fish out of water” (LM, 184). Several years of marriage to Pamela Flitton apparently also has a physically-reducing effect upon Widmerpool: In Temporary Kings, upon Widmerpool’s arrival at the Bragadin Palace in Venice, Jenkins observes that his suit “h(a)ng(s) about his body in loose folds” (TK, 104).

Widmerpool, in all his ungainly flesh, does not appear in “The Valley of Bones” until that volume’s final few pages, when he is revealed as Jenkins’s new superior officer at Divisional Headquarters, to which Jenkins has just been transferred. Encountering him on the fifth-to-last page, Jenkins becomes disoriented as he grapples within himself with the question of what Widmerpool is “like.” Jenkins’s disorientation has, in fact, been foreshadowed on the two occasions earlier in the volume when Widmerpool’s name is mentioned, as well as through details Jenkins notices on his journey to Divisional Headquarters, and to Widmerpool’s office there. Before the fifth-to-last page of “The Valley of Bones,” Widmerpool is mentioned by name in that volume only twice, both times as if in admonition to the man who would aspire to succeed in the army and in business, as Widmerpool himself by this time has begun to do. That these references to Widmerpool are admonitory—and, indeed, that they amount to astute commentary on Widmerpool’s character—is, however, shrouded by the fact that Jenkins reports them as part of conversations he holds with people—including Widmerpool, himself—whom he considers to be at best naïve, at worst
sententious or obtuse. Jenkins tells how his Company Commander, Rowland Gwatkin, informs him of the reason why one of their mutual charges, Sergeant Pendry, has become morose and distracted: Pendry has learned that his wife, in his absence, has been having an affair. Gwatkin expresses his disapproval of adulterous women, while adding that, “‘It’s different for a man…Unless he gets mixed up with a woman who makes him forget his duty’” (VB, 88). Gwatkin’s sentiments are melodramatic, Jenkins decides, in keeping with Gwatkin’s romantic notions of what it is to be a soldier; they are also trite. This conclusion leads Jenkins to recall an occasion when Widmerpool once expressed himself in an equally hackneyed manner on the subject of women with siren-like powers: After having been manipulated by Gypsy Jones, he had announced to Jenkins that he himself would never again permit a woman to take his mind off his work (VB, 89). Gwatkin is an unworldly figure, caught up in fantasies of soldiering that are partly inspired by his favorite story – the one about the Roman Centurion – in Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill*, while Widmerpool is outwardly a buffoon (VB, 58-9). The scene Jenkins recalls in which Widmerpool informs him of his decision never again to permit a woman to take precedence over his work is remarkably humorous and strange (BM, 203-210): Widmerpool’s seemingly disembodied face appears before Jenkins through a grille above a cellar stairway at Widmerpool’s then-boss Sir Magnus Donner’s home, Stourwater Castle; from the perspective of the reader who has read the whole of *Dance*, it is as if Widmerpool were haunting Jenkins who, at that moment, is, by chance, alone. Widmerpool takes advantage of this fortuitous – from his point of view - meeting with Jenkins to unburden himself of his troubles concerning Gypsy Jones. The manner of Widmerpool’s unexpected arrival and his maladroit behavior toward Jenkins on that occasion make Jenkins reminiscence appear, on the surface, to have no point other than to portray Widmerpool as laughable. As one realizes by the end of “The Valley of Bones,” however, Jenkins the narrator – or should one say Powell the narrator – is making a pointed contrast between Widmerpool and Gwatkin.

Much like Pendry, who, in the end, is undone because he cannot stop brooding about his wife’s adultery, Gwatkin is demoted thanks to his obsession with the local barmaid Maureen. In fact, his demotion is owing not so much to his having allowed thoughts of Maureen to distract him from his duties as to his having permitted his preoccupation with her to cause him to lose a grip on his power over others and, therefore, on his military ambitions. As is intimated at the end of “The Valley of Bones,” and as is made clear in the next volume, “The Soldier’s Art,” Widmerpool, as the DAAG of Divisional Headquarters, to which Jenkins is transferred at the time of Gwatkin’s demotion, is as much distracted from his own actual military duties by his program of self-promotion as was Gwatkin by his interest in Maureen – an interest on Gwatkin’s part, it is worth pointing out, that held no likelihood
of leading to his own improved status. Unlike Gwatkin, however, Widmerpool, despite having antagonized his superior officer, General Liddament, through his scheming, meant less to win the war than to advance his own career, nevertheless manages to retain his status and, even, to advance in rank.

The other such direct mention of Widmerpool in this volume forms a warning of the danger inherent in, as Jimmy Brent puts it, “rub(bing) up (Widmerpool) the wrong way” (VB, 119): Jenkins finds himself at the same military training session as Brent, who shares with him that – as Jenkins already has heard – Widmerpool had caused Bob Duport financial difficulties. Duport himself already had reported this to Jenkins who, at the time, reluctant to speak ill of Widmerpool to Duport, informs him that “(Widmerpool) and I rub along all right” (KO, 167). Brent also remarks to Jenkins something Jenkins even then does not yet fully and consciously comprehend: that Widmerpool is “not a man to offend” (VB, 119). At the time, Brent’s insight into Widmerpool’s character does not have the force it might, either for Jenkins or for the reader; for its effect is blunted by Jenkins’s view of Brent as dim-witted.

At Divisional Headquarters, Jenkins is to report to a DAAG who has so recently arrived there that his name is as yet “unknown” (VB, 222) to the officer who instructs Jenkins on his new assignment. As Jenkins, a passenger in an Army truck, travels across the Northern Irish countryside to his new post, he passes two pillars, apparently, as he tells himself, remnants of a demesne - a home of one of the English colonizers – of which no other discernible material trace remains, so that he experiences the pillars as forming a gateway to “Nowhere” (VB, 237). One wonders, however, whether, within Jenkins’s mind, some intangible trace may not remain of a demesne. Inasmuch as a demesne would amount to a sign of England’s imperial past when someone like Stringham would not have succumbed to an upstart like Widmerpool, one wonders whether, at the very least, Jenkins may not retain a belief in a demesne’s fitness; for a demesne’s boundaries would delimit the countryside in a way so as to make it comprehensible to Jenkins. His seeming underlying awareness in this passage of England’s now nearly lost empire perhaps adds to his sense of being “Nowhere.” Furthermore, his sense of being “Nowhere” prepares the way for his disorientation when he discovers that the “unknown” DAAG to whom he has been ordered to report, and who is to be his new superior officer, is none other than Widmerpool.

When Jenkins, newly arrived at Divisional Headquarters, first sees Widmerpool, he seems to have almost unaccountable difficulty in recognizing him. This difficulty appears to be an outward symptom of Jenkins’s inward grappling with the question of what Widmerpool is like, and with his own reluctance to accept that Widmerpool is as dangerous as Jimmy Brent has
taken him to be. Approaching what turns out to be Widmerpool’s office, Jenkins notices that the nameplate on its door bears the name of the former DAAG; thus, the name of the DAAG to whom he is reporting remains “unknown.” Entering the office, he finds that the DAAG’s back is to him; nor does the DAAG, who is intent upon a task, immediately turn around. Jenkins initially reports two things to the reader, but without providing a commentary on them: He states that “the DAAG’s back was fat and humped, a roll of flesh at the back” (VB, 238) and that the DAAG was dictating a letter. Jenkins quotes a part of this dictation, which is made up of bureaucratese of a type seemingly designed to be nearly impossible to understand. The reader knows by now, and presumably Jenkins does, too, that both these things - the unsightly, bloated physique and the impenetrable, over-inflated, bureaucratic language – are typical of Widmerpool. Jenkins, however, is so preoccupied with analyzing the DAAG’s “mode of speech,” which, he notices, in “timbre and inflexion” (VB, 239) is patterned after Churchill’s, that he fails to notice that, even without his correct nameplate, even with his back turned, even if imitating the “timbre and inflexion” of Churchill’s voice, Widmerpool is difficult to mistake as anyone but himself.

Once Widmerpool turns around, thus revealing his face, Jenkins is further confounded. He feels “enormously happy” to see him – not on Widmerpool’s own account, as he himself does realize, but because Widmerpool represents for Jenkins his own, cherished past, before the War had consumed his life as an artist (VB, 113; 169). As a chronicler, Jenkins prizes his memories; he would not, as Widmerpool once did, seek to eradicate the memory of former loves from his – and from collective - history (LM, 56); rather, he places value on the people, including Widmerpool, who have made up a “part of (his) autobiography” (AW, 180). 18 Earlier in Dance, pondering the unexpected sight of Widmerpool at Lady Molly’s, Jenkins remarks: “As an aspect of my past, (Widmerpool) was an element to be treated with interest, if not affection, like some unattractive building or natural feature of the landscape which brought back the irrational nostalgia of childhood” (LM, 45). Widmerpool, although dismissive of writing as a profession, nevertheless serves Jenkins, the chronicler, not just as a repository of memory, but also as a stabilizing force in his ordering of his memories. Chancing upon him as a young man at the Walpole-Wilsons’ dinner, Jenkins had reflected, “I did not…as yet see (Widmerpool) as one of those symbolic figures, of whom most people possess at least one example, if not more, round whom the past and the future have a way of assembling” (BM, 28).

18 This quote is in reference to his former schoolmaster, Le Bas, about whom Jenkins says, “I was aware of a feeling of warmth towards (Le Bas) that I had never felt when at school; perhaps because he seemed to represent, like a landscape or building, memories of a vanished time. He had become, if not history, at least part of one’s autobiography” (AW, 180).
At Divisional Headquarters, Widmerpool adds to Jenkins’s befuddlement by telling him that, when he selected Jenkins’s name from a list of possible candidates to be his “junior officer” (VB, 241) he had, for once, allowed the ties of acquaintance-ship to prevail. Presumably, in acting thus, Widmerpool was motivated not by friendliness but by a wish to demean Jenkins; but such behaviour is so at odds with Jenkins’s assumptions of how old school-fellows ought to treat one another that he cannot, at first, see it for what it is.

It is not until the end of the second war volume, “The Soldier’s Art,” by which point Widmerpool has done his best to bring about Stringham’s death, that Jenkins comes to understand that Widmerpool is malevolent, and to appreciate how dangerous it is to antagonize him: Unlike Jenkins, who, out of a sense of collegiality, had refrained from telling Bertha Conyers and Frederica Budd anything condemnatory about him, Widmerpool treats his “old acquaintance” (SA, 189) Stringham callously, transferring him to a unit he believes to be bound for the Far East. Jenkins, in his understated way, remarks that “This was certainly arbitrary treatment of an old acquaintance” (SA, 189). By the end of “The Valley of Bones,” however, Jenkins still has only a nascent dread of what that volume’s Introduction obliquely foretold as he found himself in the thrall of Valéry’s line, “La mer, la mer toujours recommencée”: that he, Jenkins, is “in Widmerpool’s power” (VB, 243). As the reader comes to understand from reading Dance’s epilogue – and as Jenkins himself may also by then understand - Jenkins has been “in Widmerpool’s power” not only while serving as a soldier under Widmerpool’s command, but also in his life as a writer who is compelled to memorialize and, in so doing, to ridicule, Widmerpool’s ways and deeds. Jenkins, whose self as a writer was called into being by Widmerpool’s obtrusive presence, is, more even than Stringham, Widmerpool’s “inexorable accessory.”

Works Cited

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


AD Powell and the Transactions of the Radnorshire Society

by Dr Keith C Marshall

Anthony Powell’s deep fascination with genealogy is well documented, not least by Powell himself.¹ What is not so well known is the extent to which he investigated the Powells of Radnorshire and the Welsh Marches going back to at least the time of the Norman Conquest. Over most of his adult life, with apparently little respite even during the war years, Powell searched out the surviving documents relating to this branch of the Powell family – his ancestors – in the Public Record Office (PRO), National Library of Wales (NLW), Bodleian Library, etc. In doing so he must have unearthed mountains of material.

Powell published much of the results of his researches in papers, and the occasional letter, to the Transactions of the Radnorshire Society under the by-line AD Powell.² While many are of themselves not of huge interest in isolation, as Powell himself says in several of the papers he has made the information available in the hope it will be of assistance to other researchers and that this seems preferable to it sitting unused in his files.

This paper gathers together, for the first time in a single place, information on all of Powell’s publications in the Transactions of the Radnorshire Society. This is a quite significant corpus of work comprising as it does some 38 papers and letters published over a period of 47 years from 1937. The papers range from something less than half a page to one which runs to 25 pages; a total of 279 whole or part pages.

I am indebted to John Powell, Anthony Powell’s younger son, for providing 26 of the 38 papers listed as reprints from the collections at The Chantry.³ A further 11 were discovered by searching through George Lilley’s invaluable, although now sadly dated, bibliography of the whole of Powell’s publications.⁴ A further small item, number 7 on the list below, was discovered and is the only item here listed which appears to have been overlooked by Lilley – hardly surprising as it is the smallest, and perhaps least significant, of this body of work. Obtaining copies of the 12 papers not supplied by John Powell was significantly eased in that the National Library

---

¹ See, inter alia, the opening two chapters of Infants.
² In order to avoid confusion and “Powells before the eyes” the abbreviation AP has been used liberally throughout this article, and in particular in the listing of papers, to refer to Anthony Powell, aka (Mr) AD Powell.
³ John Powell, private communication, 2 July 2009.
⁴ George Lilley, Anthony Powell – A Bibliography (St Paul’s Bibliographies, Winchester, 1993)
of Wales have made the whole of the Transactions of the Radnorshire Society through to volume 74 (2004) available online; not just the indexes; every article is scanned and the complete contents are available free of charge;\(^5\) this should be an example to all libraries. Printed copies of this complete set of papers are also now in the Archive of the Anthony Powell Society.

In his letter of July 2009, John Powell reports that several of the file copies of the reprints, especially item 2 on the list, are “covered in corrections” and “much corrected with notes by ADP”. As those with experience of Powell’s manuscripts etc. will know this is typical of his working method. Everything was viewed as continuing work in progress and thus subject to correction and improvement – and why should his genealogical works be any different from the novels?

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the detailed content of the listed papers, however it is worth stopping just for a moment’s reflection.

The papers numbered 17 and 18 in the listing are worth more than a passing glance. These two papers, taken together, make an interesting case-study and demonstration of the genealogical method (indeed of research method in general) in the absence of good documentary evidence such as parish records and (modern) birth, marriage and death registration. The papers are sufficiently detailed that one can follow the logical imperative of the narrative without getting totally swamped in extraneous detail and medieval documents.

While many of the referenced papers relate to the Powells of The Travely and of Brilley or to the line through Llewelyn Crûgeryr and Rhys Gryg (this was after all Anthony Powell’s ancestral line) quite a few do not. Indeed a small number appear to bear no obvious Powell connection at all. Given Powell’s aim of making what he has found available to others this should perhaps not be surprising for he must have had numerous occasions when in unravelling the knitting together of his family he must have been led up the wrong path. It seems so typical of the man that he had the courtesy to make all this work (even his apparently wasted work) available for others of like mind.

Taken as a whole these papers provide a fascinating picture – although one which will be found somewhat dry by those with no genealogical or historical inquisitiveness – of the piecing together of an ancestral line prior to the 18\(^{th}\) century. In the process they provide some, perhaps slightly surprising, insights into the life and social history of the rural Welsh Marches in pre-industrial times – the citizenry of Radnorshire seem to have been no strangers to thuggery and bribery.

\(^5\) [http://welshjournals.llgc.org.uk/browse/listissues/llgc-id:1191402](http://welshjournals.llgc.org.uk/browse/listissues/llgc-id:1191402)
The documents surveyed in these papers may also have provided some of the names used by Powell in *A Dance to the Music of Time* with, *inter alia*, Ada Leyntwardyne (yes, a real person with a walk-on part in item 26), Blanche, Gwatkyn and Jenkyns having been spotted.

Finally by way of introduction, just a note about the listing which follows. Where the description refers to a “transcript” or a “list” the paper contains just that – a transcript or list – with little or no introduction, explanation or accompanying gloss, unless this is also mentioned. Whilst irritating for those with a thirst to know more, this is Powell fulfilling his stated aim of making what information he has available to other researchers so they may have fast access to the originals if further detail is required.

And so we come to the listing …

### Papers by AD Powell in the *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Brief Description of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Powell Family, Disserth</em> 7 (1937), 10</td>
<td>Questions about the identity of Philip Powell, Evan Powell and Harmer Powell in Disserth during 18th century.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>The Powell Family of Llowes and Clyro in Radnorshire; and Brilley in Herefordshire, 1581-1800</em> 9 (1939), 62-76</td>
<td>Describes eight generations of male descent from Roger ap Powell of Brilley commencing in 1581. John Powell reports the file copy at The Chantry is heavily annotated with corrections and additional notes by AP.⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>The Powell Families of Radnorshire</em> 12 (1942), 49-53</td>
<td>List of every (male) Powell in 17th and 18th century Radnorshire, at least those identified by AP at this time. Also the Powells listed in 1802 Electoral List.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁶ John Powell, *op. cit.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Volume (Year), Pages</th>
<th>Brief Description of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Radnorshire and the Commonwealth and Protectorate (1649-1660)</td>
<td>12 (1942), 54-56</td>
<td>I. Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum (1647-1660). Names of individuals employed as commissioners in Radnorshire, plus five judges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>II. Names of two Radnorshire men who each supplied 100 men for the King circa 1644.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>III. Names of 60 persons signing the Humble Address from Radnorshire to King William III on the death of Queen Mary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Galliers Family of Stapleton Castle</td>
<td>13 (1943), 51-53</td>
<td>Unproven line of descent for William Galliers, born circa 1634, died 1740 at Leintwardine. Notes on the possible origins of the name Galliers and a blazon of their arms. List of some eighteen 18th and 19th century Powell wills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Test Acts</td>
<td>13 (1943), 38-39</td>
<td>List of some 28 Radnorshire persons and how in 1687/8 they answered the three questions put by the Test Acts of 1673 and 1678.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Extracts from Narcissus Luttrell’s ‘Brief Relation of State Affairs’</td>
<td>16 (1946), 56</td>
<td>Three snippets of Radnorshire news from 1681, 1683 and 1685. This item is not listed by Lilley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Radnorshire Clergy Dispossessed during the Civil Wars</td>
<td>16 (1946), 57-59</td>
<td>Names of 21 clergy dispossessed during or shortly following the Civil War; with scant details of each. Names of five “itinerant preachers” sent by Parliamentary authorities to replace the dispossessed clergy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Commissioners for the Land Tax in Radnorshire, 1768</td>
<td>19 (1949), 51-54</td>
<td>List of 111 names of commissioners (probably about 1% of the male population of Radnorshire) with scant notes about the antecedents and residence of 58 of them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Lilley, op. cit.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Volume (Year), Pages</th>
<th>Brief Description of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Two Eustace Whitneys</td>
<td>20 (1950), 31-38</td>
<td>An attempt to discover which of two contemporaneous persons named Eustace Whitney was the overseer of the will (proved 1594) of Roger Powell of Brilley. Includes a transcript of the Inquisition following the death of one Eustace Whitney and the will of the other. Also name drops Queen Elizabeth I, Shakespeare, Sir Walter Raleigh and Dr John Dee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Will of William John Prosser of Brilley, Hereford, PCC 84 Narvey</td>
<td>22 (1952), 53-54</td>
<td>Transcript of the described will. This article is printed under the byline AN Powell but is assigned by Lilley to AD Powell(^8) probably following guidance from AP himself as this was amongst the reprints provided by John Powell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Some Further Notes on the Powell Family Formerly of the Travely in Llowes</td>
<td>23 (1953), 54-59</td>
<td>Attempts to disentangle the relatives of Roger Powell (died 1594) and other Powells of The Travely and Brilley. Also excursions into 16(^{th}) century Welsh usage of names.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Notes on Some Individual Powells and ap Howells on the Radnor-Hereford Border in the 16(^{th}) Century</td>
<td>27 (1957), 27-32</td>
<td>Genealogical and biographical information on several Powells and Howells not related to the Powells of the Travely (AP’s line). Specifically four named in Henry VIII’s “Commission of Array” of 1538/9. Taken from and quoting transcripts of PRO documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Proceedings in Star Chamber in 1615 Regarding Connections of Richard Powell, Esq. and Lands in Brilley, Clyro, Gasnant and Bryngwn</td>
<td>28 (1958), 41-54</td>
<td>Transcript of the Star Chamber records of an inquisition to clarify and tidy up the affairs of Richard Powell of Brilley (died 1575). Note: this is the Star Chamber acting as a court rather than an interrogator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^8\) Lilley, op. *cit*, 154
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Volume (Year), Pages</th>
<th>Brief Description of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Some Lawsuits about Brilley and Huntington in the 16th and 17th Centuries</td>
<td>29 (1959), 31-44</td>
<td>Transcripts of records of lawsuits regarding property in Brilley and Huntington during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>John Probert and his Law Suits</td>
<td>30 (1960), 42-50</td>
<td>Transcripts and extracts of three Jacobean lawsuits of John Probert of Cabalva (a house which appears to have belonged to the Powells of Brilley). The first and third centre around allegations of internecine thuggery and bribery; the second is about unpaid debt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The Powell Descent from Llewelyn Crûgeryr and the Princes of Deheubarth</td>
<td>31 (1961), 3-17</td>
<td>Documenting the line of descent from Gwriad (<em>circa</em> 8th century) through Rhys Gryg (Rhys the Hoarse, died 1237) and Llewelyn Crûgeryr (15th century) to Roger ap Howell (or Powell) of Brilley who is an ancestor of AP. Tabulated genealogy with descriptive introduction detailing evidence for some linkages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Some Notes on the Descent of Llewelyn Crûgeryr from Rhys Gryg</td>
<td>32 (1962), 44-53</td>
<td>Detailed genealogical corrections and additions to item 17, mostly 14th century and revolving around Llewelyn Crûgeryr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>John Probert and his Lawsuits II</td>
<td>33 (1963), 11-35</td>
<td>Transcripts of the records of two further Jacobean lawsuits. The first is very long and detailed. The second although much shorter is described as a “short extract. Very long and involved suit, closely written Bill, very faint in parts”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The Brilley Remembrance, 1590</td>
<td>34 (1964), 23-30</td>
<td>Transcript of a document from the Hereford City Library. Notes and guidance for the steward when checking rentals of the Brilley estate; followed by notes and details of leases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Abstracts from Miscellaneous Star Chamber Cases of the Radnor-Hereford Border</td>
<td>35 (1965), 36-42</td>
<td>Transcripts of 15 Star Chamber court cases between reigns of Henry VIII and James I. Mostly a mix of murder, thuggery and property matters, with at least one major riot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Brief Description of Contents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The Loan to King Charles I in Radnorshire, 1625</td>
<td>A bare list of 55 names of persons of Radnorshire contributing to the loan made by the country to King Charles I in 1625 (although the forced loans to the King appear to have been in 1626-7). Each person contributed £10.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 (1965), 43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Miscellaneous Early Chancery Proceedings about Radnorshire and the Marches ca. 1538-1639</td>
<td>Transcripts of 29 documents held by the PRO mostly concerning the dispersal of property following death intestate. Many having no immediately obvious Powell connections.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36 (1966), 25-41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>The Powell Family of Castleton, Priory Wood, and Dorstone, Herefordshire</td>
<td>Detailed genealogical attempt to connect the Powells of Castleton to the Powells of the Travely, starting in 1086 and ending in the early 18th century. Also the Powell of Castleton pedigree for five generations from Thomas Powell of Brunent (died 1726/7).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38 (1968), 54-60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Trailly and Travely: The House in Llowes</td>
<td>Detailed attempt to (dis)entangle the (de) Traveley and (de) Trailly families in 11th to 14th centuries and their relationship to the house called the Travely in Llowes – this house being owned 1638 to circa 1868 by the Powells.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 (1970), 56-60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Miscellaneous Ministers’ Accounts, etc., for the Radnorshire Area. 13th-15th Centuries</td>
<td>Lists of people and places mentioned in divers documents with little additional associated information or gloss.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Volume (Year), Pages</td>
<td>Brief Description of Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td><strong>Radnorshire Powells in America</strong></td>
<td>42 (1972), 62-77</td>
<td>Biographical information on William Powell (1716-62), William Powell (born 1741/2) and the latter’s third son Thomas Joseph Powell who emigrated to Virginia in 1817 and moved to Ohio in 1819. Also information on Thomas Howells Powell (son of Thomas Joseph). Nine pages of descent and genealogical information from William Powell (born 1716) detailing the line in America. Thomas Joseph Powell is brother-in-law of Joseph Howells (emigrated 1808) who is father of author William Cooper Howells and grandfather of novelist William Dean Howells (1837-1920).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td><strong>A Note on Radnorshire Powells in America</strong></td>
<td>44 (1974), 52</td>
<td>A very brief note adding further information to that contained in item 27 above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td><em>Miscellaneous Documents of the 16th Century – Dealing with Radnorshire and the Marches</em></td>
<td>45 (1975), 50-56</td>
<td>More transcripts of PRO documents, often of only a few lines. A long inquisition into lands of William Shippenham (in 1546) following his hanging for murder. Others from “Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic” of Henry VIII; also documents from reigns of Mary Tudor, Elizabeth I and James I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Volume (Year), Pages</td>
<td>Brief Description of Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Powells of the Travely and Withington: A Possible Connexion</td>
<td>47 (1977), 75-80</td>
<td>Four generations of descent from Roger Powell of the Travely starting in 1654 as they relate to Withington. Four generations of descent from John Powell of Withington commencing 1746. Discussion of how these two Powell lines may connect. A good example of genealogical detective work based on little evidence and thus inconclusive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>A Further Collection of Miscellaneous Documents Relating to Radnorshire and the Marches</td>
<td>48 (1978), 67-74</td>
<td>As with all these collections a variety of transcripts of six PRO documents. These range from 1264-5 (Henry III) to 1549 (Edward VI). Includes details of fines, rents, fees and mentions a vast array of people with apparently little or no connection to Powells.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Will (NLW) of the Revd Francis Powell, Rector of Rogiet, Monmouthshire</td>
<td>51 (1981), 29</td>
<td>Transcript of important details of the said will from the collections of the NLW with half a dozen lines of biographical information about the subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Volume (Year), Pages</td>
<td>Brief Description of Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>An 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Century Change in Powell Ownership of the Travelly</td>
<td>53 (1983), 65-68</td>
<td>Genealogical and biographical information on Patrick Powell (married 1646 and again 1665), his son Paul Powell (born 1669) and grandson Patrick (born 1715). Patrick Powell the elder was apparently a friend of both John Aubrey and Samuel Pepys. Patrick is reported to be such an unusual given name at this time and place that AP recorded no other usages of it in all his Radnorshire researches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Radnorshire Records Among the Archives of Balliol College, Oxford</td>
<td>54 (1984), 38-40</td>
<td>Balliol College, Oxford owned lands in Radnorshire during 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; and 19&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; centuries – and perhaps earlier. This is a list with brief details of some 13 documents – or more often collections of documents – held by Balliol College and relating to these lands.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dance for Everybody? Teaching and Living Powell’s Fiction

by Nicholas Birns

This piece is reprinted from the foreword to Dance Class: American High School Students Encounter Anthony Powell’s Dance to the Music of Time, edited by John A Gould (iUniverse; 2009; ISBN 1440129037)

In 1964, Anthony Powell, in the course of what the US Embassy in London denominated as “informal lectures to Ivy League colleges” stopped off, in the company of a friend, at Phillips Academy, Andover, a boarding school in Massachusetts. Among his observations was that the student writing showed evidence that the study of Latin was long since renounced. The essays by Andover students on Powell in this volume give inferential evidence that this is no longer the case. Their wide and precisely employed vocabulary indicates that some at least have studied Latin assiduously.

But this slight re-classicization, as it were, in US student prose styles is not the point of this collection. The point is that there is a place in the world where the fiction of Anthony Powell has been taught regularly. That this is happening is laudable; that it should happen is necessary. Powell has always had a profusion of fans. But, though many of these are in academia, very few have taught Powell. Much of this has to do with the academics being likelier to be historians and classicists and social scientists and even paleontologists or mathematicians than teachers of modern literature; some of it has to do with the struggle of getting a still too little-known author into an already overcrowded canon; some of it has to do with the difficulty of teaching the long novel in an era when even specialists in Victorian studies feel self-conscious about teaching a long Victorian novel – a Middlemarch, a Little Dorrit, a Vanity Fair – to even talented college undergraduates. But still the effort must be made to teach Powell. Admirers of Powell’s work often live in an artificial cocoon as to the popularity of “their” author. The people committed to Powell’s work are so committed, as witnessed by the four or five prominent critics who mention his name in their writing at every conceivable opportunity, that we are apt to forget that it is teaching that keeps a book alive. All of the books deemed literary classics are so largely because they are taught as such. Kept with a milieu of fans, Dance will wither on the vine. Taught to students who can transmit their knowledge forward, Dance will live, as it deserves to live.

Gould challenged this last difficulty by proudly labeling his course (solecistically) “the Longest Novel Ever Written.” This had the merit of making an asset out of a liability. It also transcended the entire issue of putting Dance in context or finding a context for Dance. Free to concentrate on the novel itself Gould got down to the nitty-gritty of teaching. And
nobody is a more ideal candidate to do this than Gould. John Gould knows literature inside out, has written literary fiction, memoir, grammar textbooks, and familiar essays, and has the intimacy with the written word that can only come from persistently teaching it and dwelling upon it. He is also one of Anthony Powell’s most dedicated and reflective readers, and Gould’s insight into Powell is evident not only in his own introduction but in the insights of all the students included who have been taught and nurtured by him.

As the essays reveal, the students are ordinary American kids with no especial access to Powell’s world. They are as at sea as most Americans would be to the idiolects of the British aristocracy, military, and educational system. And the great delight of these essays is these students read Powell without any preconceptions. Freshly regarding the work, they see Powell’s world as it is, not as it is so often characterized to be. And it is this straightforwardness which should suggest to any high school teacher, at whatever level, in whatever milieu – even in say an inner-city public high school – that their students can learn from Powell. And to college teachers as well. On both levels, we have foreclosed options to our students by underestimating their intelligence and adaptability. As a later British cultural product (one connected to Powell through Constant and Kit Lambert) put it, “the kids are alright.” Seeing Powell through the eyes of this, students should make all of us who are teachers jettison whatever excuses or fears we have about not teaching them and proceed to offer our students access to the treasure Gould has unlocked for those fortunate enough to study with him. The distinguished Australian critic David McCooy, an admirer of Powell’s, once said that Dance is not for everybody; Gould gives the strongest argument for the opposite point of view.

Part of the benefit for reading any texts with students is not teaching it to them, but having them teach it to you; better yet, having the entire class achieve a collective, pluralistic reading of a text. We see the results of this at the very beginning of Dance Class with Corey Simpson saying that Nick Jenkins “possesses an odd combination of accurate observation and wild imagination.” The Jenkins family trust is compared by a student to his own – how Powell would have loved the practical applicability of a background complication mentioned en passant. Travis Pantin highlights what a failure Jenkins seems at the end of A Buyer’s Market, something important for understanding the narrative arc of the sequence. One wishes an adult critic would write a full-fledged article about the tolerance towards homosexuality so rightly pointed out by Mike Donelan, and so missed by people who would characterize Powell as a “conservative” in US terms. Nathaniel Miller’s delicious description of Erridge as “ironically executive” and James Yang’s stress on the fundamental mystery about Jenkins’s love for Jean Templer (given ballast by Luke Spears’s parallel observations) crystallize insights that might have otherwise lain on the cusp of the Powell reader’s awareness.
Thankfully, not all the papers are expository. We have pithy poems and mordant haiku, Matthew Cranney gives us a Gypsy’s-eye view of the deflowering of Nick Jenkins, Alex Svec’s hilarious pastiche of Julian Maclaren-Ross, William Koven’s play on Matilda Wilson/Moreland/Donners, who might well have been a character better suited for an drama (or opera) than the novel-sequence in which she plays a minor role. Equally, not all the essays are “literary” – Jason Myung’s decoding of the economic references in Widmerpool’s speech, Kim Sugarman’s primer on the “quota quickies,” Niek Anschuetz’s welcome briefing on Ezekiel 37, James Seman’s conspectus on the canals of Venice. Erica Blake on World War II in Ireland (a thumbnail sketch of a topic assayed at far greater length by Clair Wills’s That Neutral Island). Nicole Lee’s piece on Katyn pinpoints what this dark historical episode meant to Nick Jenkins, and to his creator. Foster Furcolo, the former governor of Massachusetts who wrote one of the first books about the Katyn Massacre, would be disappointed that a student in his state did not mention his book, but, as I also failed to do so in Understanding Anthony Powell, Governor Furcolo will have to forgive two of us in the afterlife. This weave of real life and fictional life, fact and whimsy, is what makes it so fascinating when a range of readers comment on the same book. For instance, Katherine Leonard’s diagnosis of Dependent Personality Disorder in Maclintick might well have convinced General Conyers, had he met Maclintick and had he lived to the supercentenarian age his natural lifespan might well have given him.

Yet, despite the accomplishment and merit of every essay contained herein, this book is more than a collection of student work. Gould’s introduction and notes also make it of use as an overall guide to Powell; this book can take its place on the shelf along with Spurling, Barber, and the various introductory critical books as a ready reference for the Powell fan and scholar. The cast of characters in each scene adds an element even Spurling does not provide, and reminds us that, if one takes at his word Powell’s continual pronouncements that the sequence is one giant novel broken up into twelve individual books for the sake of convenience and the publishing industry, then the chapter actually becomes the key unit, in terms of narrative syntax, of the overall work.

And how better than to see the overall work plain than through young eyes? As Madeleine Fawcett says, “my dance continues.” I write this as someone whose reading, and rereading, of Dance will always be irrevocably conditioned by the fact I first read it at age thirteen. How pleased I was to know what the Ada Leintwardine title I Stopped at a Chemist meant without having to wonder about it; figuring this out made me feel as if I had acquired the key to all hidden meanings. Though the experiences - literary and otherwise - of the first twenty years of life have a fullness and an intensity that subsequent ones cannot match, even those days characterized by what
Wordsworth – not one of Powell’s favorites, yet a poet he concedes was great – termed “the still, sad music of humanity” can gain from having experiences of great art associated with them. Gould, as he mentions, first read *Dance* in his twenties; we both know people who first read *Dance* in their seventies and are acute and gifted readers of the sequence. I am as happy to have first heard Khachaturian’s Violin Concerto, as performed by David Oistrakh, at age 43 as I am to have read *Dance* at thirteen. But reading *Dance* so early will give these young women and men important gifts to have at their disposal throughout their lives, a gift that will never stop giving. They will have a stock of archetypes with which to associate acquaintances. When they have to talk about current politics as a way of breaking the social ice, they will reap the humor of the resemblance to uttering “It seems the nationalists have reached Peking” in 1928. They will learn how to deal unflappably with the wide range of preposterous situations, all the while facing melancholy ones with poise and resolution, having been partially made immune to the depredations of the world’s Blackheads and Widmerpools and Pamelas and Murtlocks, and made receptive to the joys of the world’s Stringhams, Morelands, Barnbys, and Umfravilles. *Dance* is a great work of literature; it is also a *vade mecum* to life. And part of the pleasure of reading these students’ essays is knowing they will have it as such

John Gould has put together a book full of ready reference for the reader of *Dance*; Anthony Powell put together a book that yields generously as a ready reference for human beings as they are conducted through time’s steps. The reader should be heartily thankful for both achievements.
BOOK REVIEW

Deirdre David

Olivia Manning: A Woman at War
Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, £25.00/$45.00, 405 pp

Eve Patten

Imperial Refugee: Olivia Manning’s Fictions of War
Cork University Press, Cork, 2011, £35.00/$55.00, 234 pp

Reviewed by Jeffrey Manley

Olivia Manning (1908-80) was a novelist and literary journalist who was Anthony Powell’s close contemporary. Like him, she made her reputation by writing a series of novels (The Balkan Trilogy and The Levant Trilogy). But her series was limited to the war years, whereas his covered the 20th century up to and including the 1960s. Moreover, her trilogies take place entirely outside of Britain, whereas with few exceptions, Powell’s are limited to the British Isles. Indeed, Manning’s novels are perhaps unique in that they explore the wartime experience of English civilians outside Britain who are stranded by the war.

She and Powell knew each other from before either of them had begun writing their series of novels. She became an active admirer of Powell’s Dance novels, acquiring them as they appeared and presenting them to him for signature. He reviewed (more favourably than not) two of the novels she wrote before starting her trilogies, but makes no mention in his memoirs of her war novels. Given their subject matter and structure Powell must surely have read them, but during the period they were being published (1960-84) he was not reviewing fiction. He did briefly comment in his Journals that he thought her war trilogies “lacked form after the beginning.” J90-91, 26. I would have to agree that the second trilogy is inferior to the first, but the first is a masterpiece. Manning for her part was an active reviewer in postwar London literary circles but never seems to have reviewed any of Powell’s books.

They corresponded from time to time (in many cases in connection with Manning seeking his signature for her volumes of Dance). The Braybrookes (authors of Manning’s first biography, published in 2004) comment that Powell kept all of her letters but don’t say what happened to his side of the correspondence. Moreover, they would have met each other in person at literary social gatherings if only because for many years they shared the same publisher (Heinemann). Powell mentions her in his Journals but she left no comprehensive autobiographical record—at least none that has been published.

After her death and the posthumous publication of the final volume of The Levant Trilogy, Manning was largely forgotten, although there was a renewal of interest in 1987 when the BBC produced the well-received 7-part TV film
of her war trilogies (*Fortunes of War*). Perhaps encouraged by that, a biography was written by a couple (Neville and June Braybrooke) who were close friends of Manning but who both died before it was completed. A final version was edited and prepared for publication in 2004 by another close friend, Francis King. Her centenary year passed in 2008 without much notice. Now for some reason not immediately apparent, she has become the subject of two book-length studies, one by an Irish and the other by an American academic.

The book by Deirdre David (Professor Emerita at Temple University in Philadelphia) is in the traditional “life and works” category. She starts from the Braybrookes’ biography and adds research from archival materials at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Tulsa. This is primarily correspondence between Manning and her friends. (It appears that Manning may have sold her papers to the HRC at the University of Texas before she died (271) so they may not have been available to biographers living in England such as the Braybrookes.) David also interviews friends and associates of Manning. The result is a fairly detailed mixture of biographical material together with descriptions and summaries of most of Manning’s books. Since her books often closely reflect the events of her life, this approach risks repetition but David manages that quite well. Her plot summaries are well written and useful, particularly of those books outside of the trilogies which have not been widely reprinted.

David also offers useful summaries of the critical receptions of Manning’s work but provides relatively little critical analysis of her own. The trilogies were widely accepted as among the best fictional descriptions of what it was like to live through WWII, and are considered by many the best of that genre written by a woman. Manning’s other works received a more mixed reception, but David makes a good case that certain books such as *School of Love, A Different Face, The Doves of Venus* and *The Rain Forest* deserve more attention that they have received. Powell’s assessment of the first two would seem to support her judgment. *School for Love* was, according to Powell, a “story distinctly out of the ordinary and one which approaches its characters in a direct, and often very entertaining, manner.” *TLS*, 12 October 1951, p. 641. In reviewing her next novel, *A Different Face*, Powell (although characterizing the book as “less unusual and compelling” than her previous one and “somewhat depressing”) described Manning as “one of our best contemporary novelists [and one who writes] with feeling and a real ability. Bombed Coldmouth, in the immediate post-war period, is admirably conveyed.” *Punch*, 9 September 1953, p. 331.

Manning was at her best when she turned her life into fiction. Her most outstanding characters all seem to have been based to some extent on people she knew, much as is the case with those of Powell. And although her books are more driven by plots than are Powell’s, it is the characters that one
remembers. In at least one case, they each made a memorable character out of the same person. There has never been any mystery that Powell based X. Trapnel on the writer Julian MacLaren-Ross. It turns out that Manning also used certain features of Maclaren-Ross as the basis for what is one of her most memorable characters, Prince Yakimov in The Balkan Trilogy.

There is nothing in their fictional lives of these characters to link them. Yakimov was the son of a seedy Russian prince and an Irish mother. He showed up in Bucharest after his latest meal ticket had turfed him out. Trapnel’s life seems to parallel that of Maclaren-Ross. The two characters do share certain characteristics, however. Both are always out of money and always looking for a drink, a meal and a place to sleep. They both had worked out numerous ways of scrounging from friends and avoiding creditors. They also shared a tendency to make fetishes out of material belongings such as Yakimov’s overcoat that may have once been given his father by the Tsar and a Hispano-Suiza motorcar that was an attention-getter on the streets of Bucharest. These might be compared to Trapnel’s greatcoat and sword stick. But Yakimov, unlike Trapnel, had no ambition to write or engage in any other profession, although he does possess some talent as an amateur actor. And he had no interest in sex, at least once he had reached Bucharest.

Manning knew MacLaren-Ross through his employment at the BBC by her husband, Reggie Smith, who was a program producer in the post-war years. Smith commissioned various scripts from MacLaren-Ross and hung out with him in the pubs around the BBC such as the George on Great Portland Street, W1. Unfortunately, David misses this connection, although it was picked up by MacLaren-Ross’s biographer (Paul Willetts, Fear and Loathing in Fitzrovia, Stockport, 2003, p. 328) and noticed by Patten in her book (40). Manning in a 1966 letter to Francis King declined to provide him with Yakimov’s source “because the original is still alive and is as big a scrounger as ever, so I can take no risks with him.” (cited in David, 261, n. 17.) MacLaren-Ross died in 1964 so perhaps she had in mind another of Yakimov’s sources and was trying to throw King off the scent. Reggie claimed that Yakimov derived from vintage car collector (and former racer) David “Bunty” Scott Moncrieff (Idem.) and Patten (40) also mentions Derek Patmore (1908-1972: a “high-society designer and writer” who was living in Bucharest at the same time as Manning) as another possible source. But Maclaren-Ross was certainly one of the contributors.

Both Powell and Manning seemed to have thought it best to get rid of their MacLaren-Ross inspirations. Yakimov is gratuitously shot by a policeman in Athens for lighting a cigarette in a black-out at the end of The Balkan Trilogy, and Trapnel dies off stage in TK outside a Fitzrovia pub in one of Powell’s best comic passages. In both cases their disappearance from the story seems regrettable. Yakimov rather redeemed his bad behaviour in Bucharest when
he fetched up in Athens, and Trapnel, if he had survived his apotheosis outside the Hero of Acre, seemed capable of producing more laughs in Powell’s novels. But perhaps the authors both concluded that it was best to kill them off rather than risk their taking over the stories.

Whether the two novelists were aware of the common source of these characters when they wrote their respective books is less clear. Yakimov appears in the first volume of The Balkan Trilogy (which Manning began to write in about 1955, prior to X Trapnel’s appearance in BDFR) and snuffs it in the last one (1965). Powell probably started to write BDFR in the late 1960s and so may have been aware of Yakimov when he created Trapnel. According to Patten (195), Manning wrote to Powell (Letter dated 18 March 1971, about a month after publication of BDFR) regarding Powell’s use of MacLaren-Ross as a character source. Manning had made the connection between MacLaren-Ross and Trapnel and pointed out to Powell that she knew MacLaren-Ross through Reggie.

In his Journals, Powell comments negatively on the Yakimov character as portrayed in the 1987 BBC TV film as “dreadfully boring” and “immensely unfunny.” J87-89, 56-7 and J90-92, 26. That may have had more to do with the part as written for TV or the actor portraying that part than the character as written in the novels. In fact, you could make the same statement about the portrayal of X. Trapnel in the Channel 4 TV series of Dance (one of the more disappointing performances in that series) as compared to the character as written by Powell. In any event, it would appear that Powell either missed the connection or missed the ideal opportunity to mention it. Meanwhile, MacLaren-Ross has recently contributed something besides a bit of his name to the literary detective, James Ross, in D. J. Taylor’s mystery novels. He seems to have had a greater success in modeling for other writers than he did in shaping his own life and career.

David’s book makes clear that Manning was a difficult person. She seemed to suffer from some form of persecution mania. No matter how well received her works may have been, she was disappointed that she was not enjoying more praise and attention. Powell referred to Manning in his Journals as “the world’s greatest grumbler.” (J87-89, 57) Even her close friend Francis King gave her the nickname Olivia Moaning. She was almost maniacally jealous of women novelists she considered to be her competitors, particularly Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing and Muriel Spark, all of whom received what she thought was unfairly generous press coverage. On the other hand, she maintained cordial relations with other successful women novelists such as Ivy Compton-Burnet, Margaret Drabble and Beryl Bainbridge. She became so convinced that Heinemann was not sufficiently promoting her books that she switched publishers for her last three novels, The Levant Trilogy. She later confessed this to have been a bad idea.
Powell himself seemed to be another writer she admired but even he occasionally ran afoul of her paranoia. While Powell was literary editor of the *TLS*, Manning apparently prevailed upon her friend (and possibly lover at the time—a point which David disputes), novelist William Gerhardie, to write a favourable article about her postwar novels. Gerhardie did so in a long article containing effusive praise of Manning’s work and in 1952 offered it to Powell. Powell put him off for a time, suspecting a lack of objectivity, but the article finally appeared on 4 October 1953, by which time Powell had left the *TLS* and taken up his post at *Punch*. In the article, Gerhardie describes Manning as a “genius” who is “brilliant and successful” and writes “without a blemish.” He goes even further over the top by claiming, “Every original writer displaces to some extent, as an ocean liner displaces by her volume of water unanchored craft, adjacent reputations still afloat…” Jeremy Treglown, “Anthony Powell at the *TLS,*” *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 January 2006.

Several years later, in a BBC TV interview by Malcolm Muggeridge in 1966, Powell was asked what he thought about women writers. He responded, “I don’t think any of them mean a great deal to me.” Manning did not see the program but, when told about it, took it as a personal affront. When she sent Powell the latest *Dance* novel for his signature, she included a letter taking umbrage at his having such a low opinion of her work. She felt that all of his previous supportive comments were misleading and said his remark had caused her considerable pain and shock. He returned the book with a friendly inscription, as usual, and explained that what she had been told about the interview “was deliberate malice on some one’s part and a lie.” After that exchange, their friendship resumed. Powell later explained to the Braybrookes that, in the context of the interview, he was referring to 19th century women writers such as Austen and Eliot as compared with Dostoyevsky and Proust. Neville & June Braybrook, *Olivia Manning: A Life* (London, 2004), pp.161-62. Oddly, that same interview continues to cause problems for Powell. In 2011, the BBC put together a compendium of TV interview footage on writers called *In Their Own Words*. The only footage of Powell that was included was this same clip from the Muggeridge program *Intimations* placed in a context that made Powell appear to be the spokesman for anti-feminism.

Eve Patten, a Professor of Eng. Lit. at Trinity College Dublin, has written a book which complements rather than duplicates that of David. Instead of recounting Manning’s life and writings, Patten’s book is an extended critical analysis of the core of Manning’s work. She examines the two war trilogies as well as the two earlier novels about Palestine (*Artist Among the Missing* and *School of Love*) in light of other writings about the war. She considers other critical writings where they comment on Manning’s themes but basically sets down her own analysis of Manning’s work.
Patten sees Manning’s works as influenced by her reaction to two major forces arising from the war: (1) Britain’s decline as a world power (i.e., the end of empire) and (2) the plight of refugees in a world at war. The first theme builds in the trilogies. In Romania, the Pringles arrive just as Britain has ceased to be a reliable source of support, and the Romanians are suspicious of British interests such as the British Institute of which Guy Pringle is a part. Meanwhile, as the Germans advance, Romania is flooded with refugees from other areas (such as Poland) and then the Romanians themselves (especially the Jews) become refugees as Romania’s own fascists begin to rise and the Soviets to annex territory. The Pringles also become refugees when they flee to Greece in advance of the German occupation. Here, according to Patten, the waning of British influence becomes even more pronounced despite the long-term Romantic and political interest Britain had historically taken in that country. The English community is characterized by self-serving, sycophantic individuals of little use to the Greeks (or to furthering British interests in general for that matter). There are periods of exhilaration that were missing in Romania as the Greeks put up resistance to the Italian invaders but then all collapses as the Germans take over the occupation. Again, the English community (this time joined by the military) become refugees, in the case of the Pringles on a ship of questionable seaworthiness, to make their flight to Egypt. Patten later discusses the “ship of death” theme which crops up frequently as a refugee subtext in various of Manning’s writings.

In the Levant Trilogy, the end of empire theme looms even larger. Manning constantly brings up evidence of Britain’s loss of esteem among the local Egyptian population, even as it finally begins to win the war after El Alamein. Cairo is described as a dumping ground for refugees of all ranks from the occupied territories of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. They jostle up against each other as well as the British troops who are now fighting in near proximity. Patten describes favourably Manning’s device of introducing Simon Boulderstone as a participant in the military action in an effort to add a voice with first-hand knowledge of battle scenes that would have been unavailable to Harriet Pringle. Whether the Boulderstone character and the battle scenes are as successful as the descriptions of the lives of civilians and refugees is a point that can be debated. They read more like scenes from an historical novel (albeit a good one) than the passages in which Harriet appears and which are informed by first-hand experience. At the end of the trilogy Harriet herself becomes a refugee from both Guy and her other British contacts as she travels through Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. The latter country is another case of lost British influence as Manning describes how the mandate comes unraveled. And the continuous arrival of Jewish refugees, over British (and Arab) objections, foreshadows the troubled future of that region.
Of course, Manning began to write the trilogies in the late 1950s after the empire had indeed all but ended in 1956. But Patten thinks Manning manages to reflect accurately the attitude to the empire as it existed in its waning days during the war because she was an eyewitness. David, on the other hand, thinks that Manning was influenced in writing the trilogies by the pressures and anxiety of the Cold War and was anxious to remind her readers of the horrors of the war as one who had experienced it just ahead of the invaders in constant flight to stay alive. Whatever may have been her motivation, Manning’s novels (particularly the trilogies) make a major contribution to the literature of the period and should be widely read by future generations of readers.

Neither book makes much of an attempt to compare Manning’s war novels to those of other writers of war sequences such as Powell or Evelyn Waugh. Manning had completed her first war trilogy in 1965 before Powell wrote his own war novels. Patten briefly identifies the various “sequence” novels written about the war (including Powell’s) but devotes little space to any comparison (35-38). She believes that Manning may have been influenced to write her story in the form of a sequence of novels by the *Orchid Trilogy* of Jocelyn Brooke that was completed in 1950. Powell also thought highly of those novels and contributed an introduction for a Penguin reprint, but they are not widely read today.

Powell and Manning sought advice from each other in correspondence. The Braybrookes offer an example of Powell reverting to Manning when *BM* received a less favourable critical reception than *QU*. She consoled him by noting that the critics had failed to appreciate what he was doing in his series. She described the complaints of these critics

as those that might arise if a large painting were cut into squares and exhibited one square after another. There may be some complaints about this way of giving your books to the public – but what else can you do? In time they will have it all.

At that point (c.1952) she had not yet started her own sequence of novels but must have been thinking about it. As noted above, she frequently complained to Powell about her own novels not receiving the attention she thought they deserved. But whether they consulted each other about issues arising from the process of writing their war sequences is not mentioned.

---

Which book recommends itself to Powell readers is difficult to say. If one has already recently read Manning’s trilogies, Patten might be the better choice. If, on the other hand, one is curious to know more about Manning’s writings before deciding what to read, then David might be a better place to start (although the first two chapters of Patten’s book offer by far the best short introduction to Manning’s work). Both books are well written and edited, although David’s book is occasionally marred by long and convoluted sentences that could easily have been broken up into shorter more intelligible ones had someone taken the trouble to recommend that. She also has a tendency to be less than rigorous in pursuing her research; for example, at some points she complains about the former policy of the TLS to confer anonymity on its reviewers and at others she reveals their identities for reviews of the same period.

If there is a paperback edition of Patten’s book, an edit on p. 39 might be considered where Professor Hugh Seton-Watson is identified as a model for David Boyd in the Balkan Trilogy but is inaccurately described as a “Marxist historian.” At the time the F.O. sent him to Romania in 1939/40, Seton-Watson may well have been briefed to prefer the Romanian leftists to King Carol as the best chance for avoiding a takeover by the fascist Iron Guard (198-99). He is reported by the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography [accessed 18 June 2013] to have been sympathetic to the Soviet Union at that period, a typical position that “was justified by his generation on the grounds that Stalin was Hitler’s only opponent.” But when he later made his reputation as an historian, Seton-Watson was an outspoken opponent of the Soviet Union’s actions in Eastern Europe and would no doubt be surprised to see himself described in the terms applied in Patten’s book.
BOOK REVIEW

DJ Taylor

At the Chime of a City Clock: A Thriller
Constable & Robinson; 2010; 256 pages; £12.99; ISBN 1849010242

Reviewed by Jeffrey Manley

DJ Taylor’s latest novel is his third to be written in the style of a previous popular genre. This one is in the form of a pre-war mystery thriller. His next previous, Ask Alice, was a rags-to-riches adventure and the one before that, Kept, a Victorian mystery. City Clock takes place in 1931 at the time of the financial crisis and the end of the gold standard. As with Ask Alice, it contains copious allusions to other writers and their works. In City Clock, however, there are fewer references to the works of Anthony Powell than in some previous Taylor novels. (See, for example, Robin Bynoe, “Captain Beefheart and Lady Sophie Huntercombe”, APS Newsletter #37, Winter 2009, 10, and Jeffrey Manley, “Let the Dance Resume”, Secret Harmonies # 1, October 2006, 41.)

The story revolves around the planning and execution of a jewel heist in the City financial district. The hero, James Ross, is a struggling writer who must work at odd jobs to make ends meet, and in this case he becomes a door-to-door salesman peddling bottles of a patent carpet cleanser. The villain, Rasmussen, is a successful and fairly high-end thief and fraudster who has worked himself into the margins of English high society. The two of them become connected through Ross’s love interest in Rasmussen’s “secretary”. Ross becomes a police informer after seeing Rasmussen’s photo in a police magazine and sends what he intends to be an anonymous tip to the police in which his own identity and address are unintentionally revealed. He is then dragooned into becoming a police undercover agent by a rather seedy specimen of the police force who threatens him with prosecution for various fiddles in which he has engaged if he doesn’t cooperate. Always behind in his rent and looking for a little extra of the ready, Ross is willing, if not anxious, to go along.

The point of Taylor’s novels is not only the stories but how he uses them, as did Powell in his novels, to weave in literary, musical, social and historical references from the times in which they are set. In this novel, once again, Taylor doesn’t disappoint. The main character, James Ross, is obviously inspired by Julian Maclaren-Ross (“JMR”). As if Ross’ surname, his troubles with his landlady and his girl friends, and his job as a door-to-door salesman did not suffice to make the connection, Taylor has him frequent JMR’s favourite Fitzrovia pub, the Wheatsheaf. Moreover, Taylor formally recognises his debt to “J M-R” in his acknowledgments, no doubt meaning to include not only his life story but also his 1947 novel of door-to-door
salesmanship, *Of Love and Hunger*. JMR is also well-known as the inspiration for Powell’s character X Trapnel. Powell covers that part of JMR’s life that began after the war when he had established himself as a writer and left door-to-door salesmanship behind. But JMR, like both Ross and Trapnel, never ceased to be in arrears on the rent or changing girl friends.

*City Clock’s* 1931 setting also coincides with the flowering of the Bright Young People (“BYP”) about whom Taylor wrote in his study of that title published in 2007. The BYP also populated a major subplot of Taylor’s last novel, *Ask Alice*. In this novel there is further development of some characters or other themes only briefly mentioned in that previous novel. For example, there is a character named Maltravers who publishes a smart literary magazine known as the *Blue Bugloss*. These are given only a passing reference in *Ask Alice* (234), leaving one to think that this may be the same Maltravers who is a major character in Powell’s prewar novel *Agents and Patients*. But in *City Clock* it turns out that the *Blue Bugloss* is a rather lofty literary journal that is bankrolled by Maltravers and edited by a friend of Ross, Jimmie Carstairs. Although Powell’s Maltravers was a man about London at this same time, Taylor’s character of that name doesn’t sound much like Powell’s Maltravers who was more interested in motor cars and scraped a living from script writing for films in the early 1930s (1). He was hardly in a position to bankroll a literary magazine. The financial and editorial arrangement of *Blue Bugloss* is, however, reminiscent of *Horizon* (edited by Cyril Connolly and backed financially by Peter Watson), where some of JMR’s earliest works were published. That journal in turn inspired Powell’s *Fission* in *Dance*, where X Trapnel’s works were published. So both *Fission* and *Bugloss* appear to share the same source. Perhaps to underscore the connection to *Horizon*, Ross is told by Carstairs when he visits the *Bugloss* offices that he will not assign Ross to review a book Ross spots in a pile because it is promised to “Cyril”. Carstairs reverses his decision when he later recalls that Cyril is about to leave on a trip to Toulon.

Ross ends up at a high society country weekend by impersonating Carstairs, whose invitation he filches when he visits the *Bugloss* offices. He is asked by one of the BYP who is present, an alcoholic *cum* drug addict, why the magazine doesn’t publish more of the poetry written by “Brian”, apparently meaning Brian Howard. He dodges the question, either not wishing to commit himself while impersonating Carstairs or failing to make the connection with a poem by “Brian”, one of the “Oxford lot”, which Carstairs had read to him during the office visit and said he would, in fact, publish. The weekend guests also include several other fugitives from *Ask Alice*, including Mrs Antrobus (the hostess), Lady Llanstephen, Rev. Chatterley, Mrs Reginald Heber and Mr Burnage.

The party is also attended by Mr Rasmussen, which is why Ross himself wants to be there – both to report any suspicious activity by Rasmussen to the
police and to meet with Rasmussen’s secretary who happens to be Ross’ present love interest. Indeed, it seems as if Rasmussen may be an alias for a rather shadowy character from Ask Alice, Mr Schmiegelow. The latter, like Rasmussen, is a foreigner who hangs around upper class and BYP social functions and, like Rasmussen, sets up a gramophone shop on High Holborn which turns out to be a business fraud. The shop closes in both books, leaving a large number of gramophone machines missing but unpaid for. And in both books, they each prowl around the country house to which they have been invited, looking closely at the paintings and other valuables. In City Clock, Rasmussen makes off with a few paintings (as well as his “secretary”) whereas Schmiegelow does not seem to have stooped quite that low. And at the end of both novels, these characters are each seen cruising down the Thames estuary on a liner accompanied by a “secretary”. In City Clock the liner flies the flag of one of the new Baltic states, so Rasmussen’s destination may well be Venusberg.

In both of Taylor’s recent novels, CB Cochran, the West End revue impresario is mentioned. In Powell’s Dance, one of “Cochran’s young ladies” is taken on what turns out to be a disastrous date by Hugh Moreland, at least as recounted by Nick Jenkins by Ralph Barnby. Also in both of Taylor’s recent novels there are discussions by some of the characters of lower brow writers. In City Clock, Hastings, the supervisor at the carpet cleanser company, asks Ross what he thinks of JB Priestley and Ross responds that he “liked The Good Companions… but thought Angel Pavement went on a bit”. When they later discuss Warwick Deeping, Ross confesses to have read Sorrel and Son, “like everyone else” and Hastings responds that it was a “bit middlebrow for my taste” (2). This reviewer recalls no mentions of Priestley or Deeping in Powell’s novels, although Cedric Winterwade’s The Welsons of Omdurman Terrace in Wheel and certain of St John Clark’s works in Dance may be intended as exemplary of their oeuvre. Two reviews by Powell of Priestley’s novels during his tenure at the TLS were not exactly glowing, although nor were they condemnatory. In one he joined Ross in thinking Priestley went on a bit (3). The name of Mrs Antrobus’ country house is Newcome Grange, an obvious allusion to Thackeray, whose biography Taylor wrote. In Dance, Nick Jenkins thought Sunny Farebrother reminded him of Colonel Newcome.

Rasmussen frequents something called the Pegasus Club in Soho which seems to attract a Bohemian membership. On the way to the club he gave “threepence to an accordion player with one eye and a row of medals”. That’s probably the same one-eyed street musician whom Moreland passed about ten years later on the way to meet Jenkins at the Café Royal in The Soldier’s Art (4). The Pegasus Club is distinguished by its interior decoration in the form of a surrealist painting which makes it sound a bit like the Gargoyle Club which was in the same neighbourhood and was decorated with
paintings by Matisse. In his memoirs, Powell recalls being taken by Evelyn Waugh to the Gargoyle for lunch to celebrate the conclusion of the deal under which Duckworth (to which Waugh was introduced by Powell) would publish Waugh’s first book. On the way, they met Inez Holden who was invited by Waugh to join them. They lunched “under the large picture by Matisse that hung in the Gargoyle’s dining-room, lending an air of go-ahead culture to the club” (*Messengers of Day*, 23). Inez Holden went on to make a major contribution to the character of the beautiful Roberta Payne in *What’s Become of Waring*.

Taylor, unlike Powell, is a sports enthusiast, having written a book on sportsmanship – *On the Corinthian Spirit: The Decline of Amateurism in Sport*. Indeed, one of his earlier novels, *English Settlement*, is a comic description of the takeover of a no-hope football team as part of a business fraud, and Norwich City supporters play fairly prominent roles in another (*Real Life*). In *City Clock* there is at least one allusion to professional sport (aside from racing). As Rasmussen leaves a warehouse he maintains for the instruments of his trade in “a remote and desolate part of Islington” on the afternoon before he commits his Saturday night break-in, he hears “a roar of human voices… and he realized that he was in earshot of Highbury football ground, where the Arsenal game would be coming to an end” (5). If Powell had been a sports enthusiast, this is the sort of allusion we would no doubt find scattered throughout his novels.

Taylor, like Powell, keeps track of historical events occurring at the time his story is unfolding. In Powell’s case he used such events as the slump, the abdication crisis, the Spanish Civil War, the Munich Agreement and various WWII events to mark the time in his novels. Taylor’s story takes place in a much shorter time frame but he marks its progress by referring to increasingly gloomy press reports leading up to the end of the gold standard. This takes place just before Mrs Antrobus’ country-house party and many of the guests are quite distraught by the news, although it seems to have had nothing to do with the suicide of a BYP who more likely had overdosed on one of her multiple addictions.

*City Clock* is subtitled a “Thriller” just as Taylor’s earlier novel *Kept* was subtitled a “Victorian Mystery”. This seems to be intended to distinguish these books from Taylor’s more ambitious “Novels” such as *Ask Alice*. This is something like Graham Greene’s categorization of some of his lighter works as “Entertainments”. It is hard to think that Taylor’s thrillers are going to compete with the big names in that genre, however. This is not a book that keeps you on the edge of your seat, nor will your fingernails be at risk.

Indeed, the high point of suspense – the jewel heist – turns out, with something of the irony typical of Taylor’s novels, to be rather a damp squib. Rasmussen is more banal than he is evil and one does not feel particular
disappointment at his escape. And James Ross is more of a writer than an amateur detective and has little real vocation as a police informer. He seems unlikely to spawn a new series of literary detective novels. *City Clock* would be a good book to read on a transatlantic plane flight or a wet weekend and offers more to Powell fans than a thriller by a less accomplished writer. But it is not (nor is it intended to be) a literary novel in the same sense that *Ask Alice* or some of Taylor’s earlier novels were.

**Notes**

1 One of the barflies in the *Wheatsheaf* (Old Parkinson) tells Ross’ girlfriend that he once made a living writing quota quickies down at Teddington, as indeed did Nick Jenkins and his creator.

2 It turns out both Hastings and Ross are public school old boys. The former went to Marlborough and the latter to St Pauls.

3 “Festive Mood” (review of *Festival at Farbridge*), *TLS*, 11 May 1951, 289. See also “Behind the Footlights” (review of *Jenny Villiers*), *TLS*, 13 December 1947, 641.

4 By the time he appears in *The Soldier’s Art*, the one-eyed street musician has acquired a peg leg and is playing a fiddle. But when first recorded by Powell in his *Writer’s Notebook* (85) the accordion was his instrument of choice so Taylor seems to have taken him back to his roots. In both the *Notebook* and *The Soldier’s Art*, Powell has him playing “Softly Awakes My Heart” by Saint-Saëns. Rasmussen probably does not care enough about music to have noticed the tune.

5 In *Ask Alice* Ramsey Macdonald is reported in a newspaper story to have met the Duchess of Westminster at the “43” and said to her “Up the Arsenal!” as a result of which Mrs Meyrick, owner of the “43”, was released from prison. The report is written in the form of various moves in a party game called Consequences.
BOOK REVIEW

Craig Brown
The Marsh-Marlowe Letters
Prion Books; 2001; 156 pages; £8.99; ISBN 1853754617

Craig Brown
The Lost Diaries
Fourth Estate; 2010; 404 pages; £18.99; ISBN 0007360606

John Crace
Brideshead Abbreviated: The Digested Read of the Twentieth Century

Reviewed by Jeffrey Manley

Craig Brown is probably England’s most popular contemporary parodist. He has been publishing parodies since the 1980s in several newspapers and literary journals, but most notably in Private Eye, where he wrote a Diary column purporting to be snippets from the diaries, memoirs, letters, etc., of various writers and celebrities, including Anthony Powell, who became one of his favourite targets. He has published over a dozen collections under various names. One of his earliest was The Marsh Marlowl Letters, first published in 1984. In an introduction to the 2001 Prion Humour Classics edition, he explains that he began it as something of a lark after being given a set of The Lyttleton/Hart-Davis Letters by Hugh Massingberd. These contained a correspondence between George Lyttleton, a retired Eton classics master, and Rupert Hart-Davis, a publisher who had been his pupil. The collection appeared in several volumes and spanned the years 1955-1962. Brown found the letters “distinctive and parodiable” and couldn’t stop writing until he had amassed his own collection. Unlike much of his other work, these “letters” apparently did not appear in periodicals before being published in book form. Brown describes them as a sort of novel. This description would be based primarily on the narrative told in the letters of the marital difficulties of the two correspondents, which actually become intertwined at one point.

Powell is mentioned frequently by both Marsh and Marlowe. The correspondence dates from the 1980s, after Dance had been completed, and mentions of Powell usually begin with a reference to his writing followed by what becomes a catch phrase: “(still read today, I wonder?).” One comic context in which Powell features is Gerald Marsh’s interest in notable middle lines of novels, as opposed to the usual fascination with famous first and last lines. Gerald (the retired school master) proposes a sentence of Powell’s taken from the exact centre of the middle novel in the Dance series, here identified by Gerald as A Spot of Varnish:

Hogwash entered the room, and, having entered, decided, upon entry, having viewed all there was, and some of what was not, to
be seen, to remove himself, once more, from the room by the same route through which he had, so recently, entered.

Harvey Marlowe (the publisher and former pupil) responds that, although that is splendid as a middle sentence, he prefers other books in Powell’s cycle such as *The Problem with Boaters* or *The Upright Art* which he finds to be “drier”. He also identifies his favourite middle sentence to be that from Norman Mailer’s *The Executioner’s Song*: “‘Yes, I guess I did’ which, in context, carries the same kind of punch as the celebrated fifth paragraph in chapter two of *Northanger Abbey.*” (19-22) At another point Harvey offers a rambling circumlocution, as if written by Powell, trailing over half a page and described as how Powell would have put “the tired old proverb ‘It never rains but it pours.’” (35-6). The two of them agree (105) that Powell’s spelling is admirable and responsible for such a dedicated league of readers as was commanded by “A Dance to the Music of Tim.” (sic).

Harvey, the publisher, mentions that he was trying to help one of his authors find a phrase from Shakespeare to use as a book title. Chancing upon a phrase “which, while not first or even second class, at least had the quality of having [been thought to have had] No Previous Owners… we are caught short by none other than Tony Powell (still read today, I wonder?) who bags the blessed quote - *O, How the Wheel Becomes It!* - for his new yarn.” Powell’s book by that name (surely his worst title) was published in June 1983 although Harvey’s letter is dated in April of that year. Indeed, Harvey had quoted the same line in another context in an earlier letter, not mentioning Powell. (36) Brown has something of a field day with fictitious book titles in much the same way Powell had done in his own books. Harvey received admiration for his editing of *Roy Hattersley’s Love Poems* and Gerald quotes a reference to aging taken from the twelfth volume of Malcolm Muggeridge’s autobiography, *My Infernal Egotism*. Perhaps the best of these is the working title given by Harvey to a memoir by Mother Teresa, *Nun Too Good*, or that proposed by Gerald for his life’s work *Pass the Fruitcake, Iris: A Collection of Catchphrases and Gaffes from the Golden Age of Music Hall Assembled by Gerald Marsh, Esq.*

This short book is well worth reading on a wet afternoon or moderately long train journey. It can easily be read at one rather long sitting. Although it was published during Powell’s lifetime, when he was still writing his *Journals*, there is no reference to his having read it, although he must have been told about it. If he did read it, he must surely have enjoyed it.

More recently, Brown has published a collection of his parody diary columns written for *Private Eye* and other periodicals. These are purportedly written by various authors, politicians, and celebrities from the worlds of show business, journalism or other lesser fields of endeavour. The premise of the title of the collection, *The Lost Diaries*, seems to be that they were entries
which had been left out of the published versions of the writers’ diaries, letters, memoirs, etc., but, if so, the opportunity is missed for some further satire when no effort is made to explain how the “editor” managed to “find” these entries. Brown says that these were written over a period of 21 years which would date them from having first begun to appear in about 1989. They are arranged by month and day but the year of their publication is omitted. In many cases they contain information relating to the month and day under which they are collected (e.g., 9/11, Christmas, etc.), but it is often necessary to know what year they appeared to understand fully the context of the humour. For example, there are references to the “Prime Minister” in some entries but, without knowing the year in which they were published, the identity of the particular holder of that office cannot be known. In another instance, there is an entry from the “diary” of VS Naipaul on 28 March in which he says he has “heard of the death of Anthony Powell. This was not an easy entry for me to write. I was the man’s friend for many years. But now that he is dead I find he has nothing more to say to me.” Powell died on 28 March 2000, but it seems unlikely that this entry was published in that year as it would have been somewhat tasteless in that context. More likely, it was written and published after 2007, the year in which Naipaul’s memoirs (A Writer’s People) appeared. These included his dismissive opinion of the writings of Powell, among many others.

There are several entries from Powell’s “diaries” as well. These seem to be intended as a send up of Powell’s Journals which were being published during the period Brown’s cod diaries were appearing. The first volume of Powell’s Journals was issued in 1995 and it would be interesting to know whether Brown’s parodies of Powell appeared only on or after that date. One suspects that they were, but Brown may also have taken aim at Powell’s memoirs. Since the writing in the Journals often sailed recklessly close to self-parody, they would have been easy targets for Brown. Most of the Powell entries relate to his assessments of a writer’s work after he has reread it. Perhaps the best of these is the entry for 2 July:

Reread Hamlet by Shakespeare, a competent but unreliable author, though now rather dated and always prone to wordiness. Never to my mind managed a novel. Hamlet is a not uninteresting play, but the plot is flawed. The Danes are really extremely minor royalty, even by Scandinavian standards, scarcely worth a lengthy play… Prince Hamlet wouldn’t have lasted long in Pratt’s where Danish royalty is taken with a fairly hefty pinch of salt. ‘Hamlet,’ a peculiar name - any relation one wonders to the Fotherington-Hamlets of Much Hadham?… I would guess Shakespeare stole many of his more notable lines from the immortal titles in my own ‘Dance to the Music of Time’ sequence. But I should hate to pass judgement.
This manages to press several buttons in Powell’s *Journal* entries - literature, genealogy, clubland snobbishness, assuredness of his own stature in relation to others. A similar swipe is taken at Graham Greene (“Pretty thin stuff. Deeply unpleasant fellow… highly conceited: he loathed handing out praise to his contemporaries, retaining all his warmest approval for his own works”). In this case, however, Brown’s parody is so close to Powell’s own assessment of Greene and his work as to risk merging into it. The entry continues, however, in a manner that rescues its identity as a send up:

   Later reread various fan letters confirming that I am the leading novelist of my generation. Why is it, one wonders, that my fans are so unusually percipient? Or is it the other way round, and do the unusually percipient tend to be my fans? One of life’s deeper questions. Must explore further.

There are also several Powell one-line literary reassessments: *Huckleberry Finn* is “very American;” Yeats’ poetry is “very Irish;” Dostoyevsky has “no light touch.” There also recollections of a dinner party and a Buckingham Palace reception that ring very true to descriptions of such events in the *Journals*.

Powell’s friend VS Naipaul is one of Brown’s most frequent targets. His entries (one of which is quoted above) usually begin with a reference to the anniversary of the death of another artist or historic figure followed by Naipaul’s usually clueless dismissiveness of that that person’s accomplishments in contrast to Naipaul’s own. Joan of Arc was “ruthlessly ambitious. She would do anything for immortality. It was she who built that bonfire, climbed up on it and set it to light. A typical attention-seeker, with nothing to show for it.” Perhaps the best is Jane Austen: “What small success she had didn’t last. She never married, whereas I have been married twice. She is little read except by sodomites.”

Brown also particularly enjoys sending up Powell’s niece Antonia Fraser and her husband Harold Pinter. Their entries are among the most numerous as well as the funniest in the book. Fraser is usually in a position of explaining away some example of Pinter’s bad behaviour. On a trip to Cuba, Pinter complains to Castro that the American press has refused to publish his poem “Crap” and cites that as an example of the American suppression of free speech. Antonia joins in, “I adore free speech, don’t you?” … So much better than expensive speech, especially at a time when things are so pricy! My new Jean Muir culottes coat me £600 - and that was in the sale.” Pinter is usually given a slow build in a poem or speech or even, in the December entries, a Christmas carol, in which he ends with some inflammatorily profane denunciation of US policy. Here is a typical example:

   The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea
   In a beautiful pea-green boat.
They took some honey, and plenty of money
Because they were fucking Yanks
Sucking the shit out of the arse of the poor.

Other diaries that may be of interest to Powell fans are those of James Lees-Milne (particularly the ones in which he describes his arrival in heaven as though he was inspecting a property for the National Trust) and Cecil Beaton (who finds almost every place and person he visits below his standards). The diaries of Martin Amis, Clive James and Christopher Hitchens (all of whom happen to be admirers of Powell) are also worth a look in. And don’t miss the diaries of the royal family and its hangers-on, as well as the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. George Lyttleton and Rupert Hart-Davis also get another mention similar to their satirisation in *The Marsh Marlowe Letters*. Finally, Brown’s versions of Isaiah Berlin’s correspondence brilliantly send up his pious duplicity.

These “diaries” are enjoyable to read, especially if one is familiar with the works of the target. There are, however, many diaries for “celebrities” who are not primarily writers but TV, film or political personalities. Many of these will be unfamiliar to North American readers (such as this reviewer). Who, for example, are Gyles Brandreth (is he related, one wonders, to the Eton-educated Dr. Brandreth?), Max Clifford, Katie Price, Liz Jones, Nicholas Haslam, and Janet Street-Porter? Without knowing more about their personalities or why they are celebrated, the parodies of their writing fall rather flat. At nearly 400 pages, this is not a page-turner in the sense as the *Marsh Marlowe Letters*. On the other hand, browsing is not facilitated by the way the book is organized. One cannot, for example, easily read all the Powell or Naipaul or Fraser-Pinter entries together. An index might have helped, but there is none. Still, the parodies are no less funny for all that and will produce their intended laughter from most readers.

Another take on parody is in the recent collection of John Crace’s digested classic columns from the *Guardian*. These are published as *Brideshead Abbreviated*, although Waugh’s novel is only one among the 100 that are included. Crace set out to digest the 100 “classic reads” of the 20th Century as well as to parody them. In many cases his offerings are more digest than parody. But even in those where he does not parody the style of the writer in question, he offers satirical comments on that style or the characters and plot of the novel in question. He selects ten classics for each decade of the century, and they all seem to fall into an acceptable canon except for the last 15 years where canonization is perhaps a bit premature. Oddly missing from the list is anything by Graham Greene, David Lodge, Norman Mailer or Gunter Grass.

Crace offers a digest of Powell’s *A Question of Upbringing* as one of his 10 classics of the 1950s. He manages to include a decent summary of the book in three pages (the usual length for most entries). But this is one where he
doesn’t attempt to parody the novelist’s prose; instead he offers wry comments on the work. He poke fun at Powell’s conceit in not naming his school (“there is only one so I need not be so vulgar as to name it”) and university (“there are only two”). He also satirizes Powell’s narrator as lacking any character of his own: “it might have been better if I had learned the value of having an emotional exterior world or anything approaching a personality; … I had no thoughts of my own on the subject but continued my impression of a parasitic *tabula rasa*; … to someone of my great sensitivities - not to mention lack of charisma - this was a major life event.” In summarizing the France chapter, the narrator concludes that “I - like you, I suspect - had long since tired of such a dull episode.” And he offers an ironic comment on Sillery’s tea parties, “Quite why I was considered interesting enough to be invited was never entirely clear.” A similar approach is taken to the digests of *The Great Gatsby*, *Brideshead Revisited* and *Lucky Jim*.

Perhaps the best entries are those where the summarization is itself a parody. In Henry James’ *A Golden Bowl* he describes “sentences of breathtakingly meaningless construction, a construction given over to a detailed deconstruction of every nuance in each regard, a regard to which anyone else in their right mind would not have devoted more than a second.” That is a comment on James as if written by James himself. Crace takes the mickey out of John Buchan’s *The Thirty Nine Steps* by emphasizing improbable coincidences (an approach he might have artfully applied to later novels in Powell’s *Dance* cycle): “I had unwittingly stumbled on to enemy’s lair. I quickly found some explosives, blew a hole in a wall and hid in a dovecote before running 20 miles to the derelict cottage of a roadman I had befriended earlier… I could sense my exploits would already have stretched the credulity of a 9-year-old…” Sometimes he seems to morph into a writer for BBC TV comedienne Catherine Tate as in his digests of *The Catcher in the Rye* (“I wasn’t that bovvered what I did…”) and *A Quartet in Autumn* (“What a fucking liberty,” repeated by one of the elderly women characters).

As with Brown’s *Lost Diaries*, Crace’s collection is not something to be read cover-to-cover. But it is easier to browse than Brown’s collection because it has a table of contents that facilitates selective reading. I recommend starting with the books you’ve read, then moving to the ones familiar from having read another work by the same writer or through dramatization and then, if you’re still enjoying it, you can proceed with those about which you know relatively little. Of the three collections under review, the one most rewarding for Powell fans is likely to be *The Marsh Marlowe Letters*, which is also a good place to start if you’ve read nothing else by Craig Brown.
Notes on Contributors

Dr Nicholas Birns
Nick Birns is Associate Teaching Professor at Eugene Lang College, the New School, New York, where he concentrates on general humanities, fiction in English from 1700 and literary theory. His book Understanding Anthony Powell appeared from University of South Carolina Press in 2004; his co-edited Companion to Australian Fiction Since 1900 appeared from Camden House in 2007. The latter was named a CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title for 2008. His book Theory After Theory: An Intellectual History of Literary Theory Since 1950 appeared from Broadview in 2010. 2010 also saw the publication of Vargas Llosa and Latin American Politics, which he co-edited with Juan E de Castro and is a book of essays on the recent work of the Peruvian Nobel laureate. Essays or reviews of his have appeared in New York Times Book Review; Australian Literary Review; Australian Book Review; Arizona Quarterly; Exemplaria: Studies in Romanticism; Symbiosis; College Literature; and European Romantic Review.

Prof. Edwin Bock
Ed Bock is Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Maxwell Graduate School of Syracuse University and President of The Inter-University Case Program, a non-profit research organization. After military service in Europe and civilian officialdom in the US occupation bureaucracy in Tokyo, he lived in London from 1946 to mid-1952 as a graduate student, Fulbright fellow, and very junior instructor in the Government Department of the London School of Economics. During this period he resided in Chelsea and, like Nick Jenkins, spent lifetimes in nearby cinema queues with attractive young women. He was co-author of Americans in Glass Houses, a necessarily pseudonymous, New Statesman-twitting satire published in 1948 by Falcon Press, a firm that might have added colour to Books Do Furnish a Room. His academic interests include the career patterns of higher civil service officials. Between 1960 and 1990, he combined teaching with work as adviser or researcher in Washington, India, Southeast Asia, Britain and Europe. He is also author of the play Waiting for (Dr) Belkin or Four Powell Characters in Search of a Coincidence, 2009.

Prof. Vernon Bogdanor
Formerly Professor of Government at Oxford, Professor Bogdanor is now Research Professor at the Institute for Contemporary British History at King's College, London. He has written a number of books on the British Constitution and political history. He is a frequent contributor to TV, radio and the press. He regards A Dance to the Music of Time as the finest achievement of English fiction since the war.

Colin Donald
Colin Donald has a degree in English Literature from Exeter University and a
Masters degree in International Relations from Cambridge University. He is currently Business Editor of the Sunday Herald in Glasgow. Formerly a literary journalist, he worked for five years as an associate professor of International Relations at Baiko University in Shimonoseki, Japan, and was Tokyo correspondent for Business AM. Married with two children he lives in Stirling, Scotland.

Prof. Mark Facknitz
Mark Facknitz is Professor of English Literature at James Madison University. His interest are 20th century American and British literature, the history of literary theory; and creative non-fiction.

Grey Gowrie
Lord Gowrie has held several government posts, including a period as Minister for the Arts. Educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford he was a lecturer in English Literature at Harvard University and University College, London before entering politics. He is also a former Chairman of the Arts Council and of Sotheby’s. His Third Day: New and Selected Poems was a Poetry Book Society recommendation in 2008. A friend of the Powells, he has long been a devotee of Dance. He is a Privy Counsellor and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

Ashley Herum
Ashley studied English Literature at the University of Washington. She lives in Seattle.

Dr Peter Kislinger
Peter Kislinger was born in 1954 in Vienna (Austria). He studied English and German language and literature at the University of Vienna, and in 1980-82 was Lecturer for German language and literature at University College London. In 1993, he earned his doctorate with a thesis on Anthony Powell’s A Dance to the Music of Time. His thesis – Some Truths seem almost Falsehoods and some Falsehoods almost Truths – engaged with narrative technique, mise-en-abyme and intertextuality, constructive irony and the truth of fiction in Dance. Since 1993 he has been lecturer in the Department of English, Vienna University, conducting literature seminars, translation and teacher training courses. Also since 1993 he has been a freelance broadcaster for ORF/Radio OE1, (as writer, presenter and producer, mainly in the music department) and for BBC Radio 3. Peter’s main interests as a journalist include music from the UK and Nordic countries.

Jeffrey Manley
Jeff Manley has been active in both the Anthony Powell and Evelyn Waugh Societies since their foundations. He has written for the publications of both societies and presented at several of their conferences. He also headed the group that wrote Dance Music: A Guide to Musical References in Anthony
Powell’s *A Dance to the Music of Time* recently published by the Anthony Powell Society.

**Dr Keith C Marshall**  
Keith Marshall originally trained in spectroscopy but now works as an IT project manager. Introduced to *Dance* in the early ‘80s he has been Hon. Secretary of the Anthony Powell Society since its inception. In his non-existent spare time he has wide-ranging interests including science, photography and family history. He lives in London with his wife, two cats and an uncountable number of books.

**Gabriella Waldfridson**  
Gabriella Walfridson is currently finishing her degree in English literature, gender studies and comparative literature at Lund University. The article included here is based on her master’s thesis on Powell and the politics of friendship. Her research interests besides Anthony Powell, includes English middlebrow fiction, Barbara Pym, 1950s Swedish crime fiction – especially Maria Lang – and general aspects of genre writing.

**AN Wilson**  
Novelist, biographer, critic, journalist and popular historian, AN Wilson has been a lively and forceful presence in English literary life for three decades. He has written more than 40 books, including a five-volume novel sequence, *The Lampitt Chronicles*. His 1988 biography of Tolstoy was reissued in 2012.
Society Merchandise & Membership

SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Jeff Manley et al.; Dance Music. A 150-page guide to the musical references in Dance; compiled in the style of Spurling’s Handbook.  
UK: £7, Overseas: £10.50

Collected papers from sixth biennial conference at the Naval & Military Club, London.  
UK: £8, Overseas: £14

UK: £11, Overseas: £17

UK: £7, Overseas: £13

UK: £6.50, Overseas: £10.50

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

UK: £4, Overseas: £7

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Violet Powell; A Stone in the Shade.  
Fourth & final volume of Lady Violet’s autobiography covering mostly the 1960s. Includes many of Lady Violet’s coloured travel sketches. Hardback.  
UK: £24, Overseas: £29

Paperback: UK £16, Overseas £19.50  
Hardback: UK £26, Overseas £32

Anthony Powell, Caledonia, A Fragment. The 2011 Greville Press reprint of this rare Powell spoof. Now publicly available in its own right for the first time.  
UK: £8, Overseas: £10.50

John Gould; Dance Class. American High School student essays from John’s two teachings of Dance at Philips Academy. Many fresh and perceptive insights.  
UK: £12, Overseas: £17
JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

*Secret Harmonies: Journal of the Anthony Powell Society.* Back numbers of issues 1 to 4/5 available. **UK: £5.50, Overseas: £9 each**

*Newsletter Centenary Issue.* 120-page celebratory Centenary *Newsletter* (issue 21; December 2005). **UK: £5.50, Overseas: £9**

AUDIO

*BBC Radio Dramatisation of Dance.* Originally broadcast on BBC Radio 4 between 1979-82. 26 one-hour episodes. Single CD containing 26 MP3 files. *For copyright reasons available to Society members only.* **UK & Overseas: £10 (£5 + minimum £5 donation)**

POSTCARDS & POSTERS

*Society Postcard.* B&W postcard of Powell with his cat Trelawney. Pack of 5. **UK: £2, Overseas: £3.50**


ORDERING

The prices shown are the Society members’ prices as of May 2013 and are inclusive of postage and packing. **Please note the different UK and overseas prices** which reflect the additional cost of overseas postage. Non-members will be charged the appropriate member’s price shown plus postage & packing at cost.

Please send your order to:

**Anthony Powell Society Merchandise,**
76 Ennismore Avenue, Greenford, UB6 0JW, UK
*Phone:* +44 (0) 20 8864 4095  
*Fax:* +44 (0) 20 8020 1483  
*Email:* merchandise@anthonypowell.org

Payment may be by cheque, Visa, Mastercard or PayPal. If paying by credit card please include the card number, expiry date, 3-digit secure code, and the billing name & address. Cheques must be payable to the *Anthony Powell Society*, for UK funds and drawn on a UK bank. PayPal payment should be sent to secretary@anthonypowell.org. You may also order through the Society’s online shop at [www.anthonypowell.org](http://www.anthonypowell.org).
## Membership Form

### Member Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of membership (please tick):</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Overseas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Members</td>
<td>□ 22</td>
<td>□ 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Members</td>
<td>□ 33</td>
<td>□ 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Members</td>
<td>□ 13</td>
<td>□ 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>□ 100 minimum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

® **Buy 5 years membership for the price of 4** (any grade)

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

**Full Name:**

**Address:**

**Postcode/Zip:**

**Country:**

**Email:**

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

### Payment Information

**Number of years membership being paid:**

1 / 2 / 3 / 5 years for price of 4

**Total amount payable:** £ ______

(No. of years x membership rate)

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

® Please debit my Visa / MasterCard

Card No.:

Card Expiry:

3-Digit Security Code:

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

GIFT AID (delete if not applicable)

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

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

Signed:          Date:

Please send the completed form and payment to:

Anthony Powell Society Memberships  
76 Ennismore Avenue, Greenford, UB6 0JW, UK  
Phone: +44 (0) 20 8864 4095  Fax: +44 (0) 20 8020 1483  
Email: membership@anthonypowell.org