SECRET HARMONIES

Journal of the Anthony Powell Society

NUMBER 8
SUMMER 2017

Edited by Stephen Walker
CONTENTS

The War Horns of Cunedda: AP and Welshness, Clive Gwatkin Jenkins .................................................. 7

Borage and Hellebore: the Many Sides of Anthony Powell’s Art, Nicholas Birns ........................................ 41

Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant, Stephen Lloyd ......................... 52

Sustainable Austerity: Powell, Cather, Manning and the Imaginative Effect of the Great War, Nicholas Birns .......... 76

Architecture in Dance, Harry Mount .................. 91

Agents, Patients and Talking Picture: Two Old Etonians in late-Weimar Berlin, Jeffrey Manley ......................... 98

What’s the Bleeding Time? Tom Miller ......................... 12

Anthony Powell’s Secret Harmonies: Music in a Jungian Key, Margaret Boe Birns ........................................ 135

Understanding Widmerpool, Michael Henle ......................... 146

Lady Violet’s Autobiography ........................................ 158

A History of Chantry, David Rawlins .......................... 168

Notes on Contributors ........................................ 180

Correction .......................................................... 182
Abbreviations

AP Anthony Powell
References to the AP’s 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. Most other works are cited in full.

Works by Powell, including edited works

A&P Agents and Patients (London: Duckworth, 1936)
AM Afternoon Men (London: Duckworth, 1931)
Aubrey John Aubrey and His Friends (London: Heinemann, 1948)
AubreyBL (ed), Brief Lives and Other Selected Writings by John Aubrey (London: The Cresset Press, 1949)
AW The Acceptance World (London: Heinemann, 1955)
Barnard (ed), Barnard Letters 1778-1824 (London: Duckworth, 1928)
BDFR Books Do Furnish a Room (London: Heinemann, 1971)
BM A Buyer’s Market (London: Heinemann, 1952)
CCR Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant (London: Heinemann, 1960)
Dance A Dance to the Music of Time (London: Heinemann, 1951-75)
Faces To Keep the Ball Rolling: Faces in My Time (London: Heinemann, 1980)
FK The Fisher King (London: Heinemann, 1986)
FVD From a View to a Death (London: Duckworth, 1933)
HSH Hearing Secret Harmonies (London: Heinemann, 1975)
Infants To Keep the Ball Rolling: Infants of the Spring (London: Heinemann, 1976)
KO The Kindly Ones (London: Heinemann, 1962)
LM At Lady Molly’s (London: Heinemann, 1957)
Messengers  To Keep the Ball Rolling: Messengers of Day (London: Heinemann, 1978)

MP  The Military Philosophers (London: Heinemann, 1968)


Plays  Two Plays (London: Heinemann, 1971)


QU  A Question of Upbringing (London: Heinemann, 1951)

SA  The Soldier’s Art (London: Heinemann, 1966)

Strangers  To Keep the Ball Rolling: The Strangers All Are Gone (London: Heinemann, 1982)

TK  Temporary Kings (London: Heinemann, 1973)

TKBR  To Keep the Ball Rolling (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983)


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

WBW  What’s Become of Waring (London: Cassell, 1939)

Wheel  O, How the Wheel Becomes It! (London, Heinemann, 1983)

Other works referred to


Editorial

Welcome to Secret Harmonies issue 8. Once again an apology follows the welcome. In issue 6/7 I said that we intended to publish this issue in Spring 2017. We are a year late. I, the Publisher and the Trustees apologise for the delay and the frustration caused to both readers and contributors. Readers of the Newsletter will be aware of the existential changes taking place in the Society.

You will find that the wait has been worth it. As you can see there are lots of choice items in this issue. At last we have been able to clear the backlog. We are now up-to-date with the annual lectures. Three more are included in this issue, by Nick Birns, Harry Mount and Stephen Lloyd and very good reading they make too. Nick Birns’ mother, Margaret Boe Birns, who is still teaching at New York University, contributes a fascinating piece that was originally published in the The Literary Review.

John Powell kindly supplied some notes from his mother about her autobiography which is exactly the sort of original material that the Society wants to preserve. We have also at long last been able to do justice to an absorbing piece by David Rawlins on the history of the Chantry. This is valuable material from someone who knew both the family and the house well.

We have not just been clearing out the attic. We include four new contributions: Clive Gwatkin Jenkins writes with an insider’s sensibility and scholarship about AP’s Welshness, Jeff Manley writes on his Berlin-ness and Michael Henle investigates his greatest legal creation, Kenneth Widmerpool. Finally another former solicitor, Tom Miller, shares his experiences with one of AP’s contemporaries, Kingsley Amis.

We hope to be sending you Secret Harmonies issue 9 in Spring 2019. In the meantime all comments and suggestions are welcomed. Please email them to me at editor@anthonypowell.org.

Happy reading!

STEPHEN WALKER Editor
The War Horns of Cunedda: AP and Welshness

CLIVE GWATKIN JENKINS

In important respects Anthony Powell was not really Welsh but an upper-class Englishman of Welsh descent, comparable to another publisher, Harold Macmillan: one of Gaelic, Highland descent.

His great-great-grandfather, Philip Lewis Powell (1775–1832), died in Pembrokeshire; but his most recent forebear actually to live in Wales – a boyhood in Pembrokeshire – was the latter’s son of the same name, AP’s great-grandfather, and he spent little time there, following his father into the navy aged twelve, but not back to Pembrokeshire on retirement. Invalided out early with the rank of commander, Philip II (1805–1856) settled in Jersey.

On the other hand Philip’s wife was a Miss Eliza Sophia Galliers from the Powells’ ancestral berceau: the Radnor/Hereford border.1 Hence Powell’s grandfather, Dr Lionel Lewis Powell (1848–1911), though he never lived in Wales, was Welsh on both sides by blood. More pertinentiy, AP proudly regarded himself as Welsh,2 taking a flattering interest in the land and its history, not least in his own ancestry, which produced what one reviewer of Infants of the Spring termed the “cloudy genealogy” which starts the volume off.3 He claimed descent from Rhys Ap Gruffydd, “The Lord Rhys” (1132–1197), patron in 1175 of the first recorded Eisteddfod, “last effective native ruler of the South Wales kingdom” of Deheubarth, although it tottered on in some form into the thirteenth century; then through him via the “cloudy

genealogy” from Radnorshire gentry of the later middle ages into the eighteenth century.⁴

AP worked away to dissipate the clouds for decades and the fruit was what must be the least known and least readable of his oeuvre: he contributed 38 articles to the Transactions of the Radnorshire Society between 1937 and 1984; partly on his own ancestry, others on local history more generally⁵ about convoluted lawsuits over land. Hardly “broadening out”: all these articles are scholarly in a narrow and desiccated nineteenth-century style, ranging over the High Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. They strike one as wholesome feed for the broader, multi-layered historical articles of today⁶.

But they were outcrops of AP’s own impressively broad overview: a knowledge of “Dark Age” Wales from “Arthurian” AD 500 when the country per se emerged running through the High Middle Ages and indeed into the seventeenth century, as his study of John Aubrey shows.⁷ In Infants of the Spring⁸ he quotes, in the original, the eulogy to a Radnorshire ancestor of his, John ap Ieuan ap Llewelyn by the bard, Lewis Glyn Cothi (c.1420–c.1490):

Like several of his close relations, John ap Llywelyn (who died in 1499) is celebrated in a personal ode by Lewis Glyn Cothi (roughly contemporary with Villon), liveliest and most charming of the Bards, if not the greatest:

Bont Llyr Cruc Eyr i dan goron Loegr

Bont legat kerdorion
Bont bric dar dros Gymaron
Bont gwraid Maeffyueid yw Iohn.

⁴ Infants, pp. 2–10.
⁵ See the obituaries in the Transactions of the Radnorshire Society, 2000, Vol. 70, pp. 12–14 by R. W. D. Fenn, followed by a list of the articles; and in the Telegraph, op. cit.
⁶ For a detailed introduction to and listing of these articles see Keith C Marshall AD Powell and the Transactions of the Radnorshire Society in Secret Harmonies Number 6/7 Autumn 2016 pp184-95.
⁷ Anthony Powell, Aubrey, passim.
⁸ Infants, p. 6.
Under the Crown of England isn’t John the Lear of Crûgeryr?
Is he not the legate of musicians?
Is he not the oak over Cymaron?
Is he not the root of Radnor?

The ode goes on to praise John ap Ieuan ap Llywelyn for his generosity, wide possessions (Cymaron is another Radnorshire castle), his bright armour, the nine varieties of wine he brought to the country. Lewis Glyn Cothi was of course singing for his supper, but it must be agreed as incontrovertibly smart to be compared with King Lear a century or more before Shakespeare standardized the story.

AP is obviously proud not only of his ancestor’s having been patron of such a talent but of the lofty social standing such patronage denotes: perhaps nostalgic about the latter. The bards went around the houses of the great singing their praises (Y cwrs clera) receiving hospitality and, in later times, cash in return. This tradition is first documented in the Dark Ages, but may well go back to pre-Roman Britain – and it did not peter out until the eighteenth century.9

It was then patchily, effortfully, and transiently revived in the nineteenth century by such South Wales magnates as Lady Llanover10 and the Marquises of Bute. Naturally the quality of bardic output varied: much verse is simply gross flattery, even sycophancy. But Glyn Cothi is generally ranked among the best of them; and the University and the National Library of Wales have co-operated in publishing a new edition of his work – hefty tomes – in recent decades.

---


AP implies – heavily – that he is familiar with Cothi’s work in the original, that he could at least read Welsh himself, and mediaeval Welsh at that; highly useful for his scholarly specialism. And his son, John Powell, has confirmed that he could indeed do so “in the historical context”\(^{11}\) This is an impressive achievement. Mediaeval/early modern manuscripts are formidable enough given their initially unfamiliar script and frequent physical deterioration whatever their language. But of the rest of the tangle of tongues of the Marches—mediaeval Latin and French, and from the fifteenth century, English—AP had been schooled in the classical\(^{12}\) and modern versions respectively of the first two while his mastery of modern English needs no comment. But when and from whom did he acquire the basics of Welsh? Nor are they easily acquired: the Celtic languages plus Basque lack the Latin or Germanic essence which offers a ramp for English speakers to all other languages of Western Europe.

Such competence bears comparison with that of another famous Powell: Enoch (1912–1998), of more recent Welsh ancestry from the same border region who learnt the tongue well enough to co-edit a mediaeval legal text: *Y Llyfr Blegywryd*,\(^{13}\) but then before politics enveloped him, linguistic scholarship was Enoch’s stock-in-trade. Anthony did not go that far: “his knowledge of Welsh was inextricably linked to his historical and genealogical researches”. When it came to “Welsh odes and poetry...he was always willing to avail himself of translations” to set beside and compare with his own readings. This is entirely understandable: poetry is far more nuanced than the register of the documents of his own “much more down to earth”research\(^{14}\). Thus in the *Transactions* he thanks the Welsh mediaevalist, E D Jones,\(^{15}\) for permission to quote from his translations of Glyn Cothi. Overall AP’s acquisition of mediaeval Welsh shows impressive dedication.

And this interest in Wales of yore was lifelong: on a visit to Carmarthen Museum in the late 1960s, he found to the mutual amusement of the curator

\(^{11}\) John Powell email to Stephen Walker 6 August 2017.
\(^{12}\) Mediaeval Latin is in any case simpler than its classical precursor.
\(^{14}\)John Powell op cit.
and himself that a recent addition to the collection were the cuff-links of his late acquaintance, Dylan Thomas; but what he had really come to see was the Vorteporix Stone: the earliest (sixth-century) surviving monument to any British ruler, but whose very existence goes largely unsuspected outside the ranks of specialists: a situation of which Powell was fully aware. 16

AP, therefore, could pride himself on a grasp of Welsh history far superior to that of most Welsh people. Conversely, he lacked until middle life any acquaintance with those self-same Welsh people of his own day. (Dylan Thomas does not count: acquaintance with that thirsty, esurient young bard was ineluctable in the London literary scene of the 1930s/40s. And both his genuine talent and his camping up his Welshness rendered him untypical. 17)

This is unusual. The English tend to be sadly indifferent to Welsh history and antiquity: “cloudy genealogy”. Hence those who do have such knowledge are usually directly Welsh, brought up yn y hen wlad, or else of recent Welsh origin. They know therefore the generality of their compatriots well enough and have to harden themselves to the mass of the Welsh not exemplifying or even sharing their own rarefied interests.

AP’s own upbringing and young adulthood, by contrast, marked him as one of the South-East English broad elite: of the dominant class of the dominant region, soaked in the milieux – social, artistic and professional – which made possible both his publishing career and the bulk of his writings but were hardly replicated in contemporary Wales. Then in 1939 he joined the Welsh Regiment and encountered a representative sample – if males only – of the majority of South-East Walians of the day.

Given his romantic, antiquarian vision of his ancestral land, constructed lovingly and laboriously under a bell-jar, such a crash course in the contemporary reality could have proved deeply disillusioning: it can be hard to sustain a romance of this genre when there is no distance to lend enchantment to the view.

AP might have felt something of what was to be given intemperate expression by Hugh Trevor-Roper whose own family had more recently let


17 Faces, pp. 28–32.
slip a small estate on the Welsh Border, although HTR himself was never the
direct heir:

And yet did I not behave outrageously? I recollect yielding
suddenly to a gust of English nationalism (an emotion I
utterly reprehend), denouncing the Welsh, or at least the
Black Welsh (the distinction is important, and desperate
social solecisms can be committed by those who disregard
it), the nation of King Arthur and the Holy Grail and those
exquisite Metaphysical Poets Herbert and Vaughan and
Traherne, – but the nation also (for I feel a black dionysiac
passion overcoming me) of Lloyd George and that
disreputable demagogue Aneurin Bevan, now (O ecstasy!) cast
into outer darkness, and Lord Trefgarne, alias Mr Garro
Jones MP, whose private finances will shortly, it is supposed,
provide an interesting scandal, and Mr Emrys Hughes MP,
and … But I must stop (if I can): you see how overmastering
these passions can be. Do you entertain them, in respect
perhaps of the Estonians or the Letts, who I suppose are a sort
of welsh [sic] of the Baltic shores?  

HTR is not comparing like with like but evokes legend and literature, i.e.
works of art and imagination, to imply an idealised past, then switches
abruptly to the alleged shortcomings of politicians who had to grapple with
the reality: the social and political problems of the early and mid-twentieth
century. This is meretricious in anyone, let alone a distinguished historian.
The reality of the Arthurian fifth century offered endemic mayhem in a blend
with multiple deprivation and yawning social inequalities. The last two
features endured into the seventeenth century of the metaphysicals
punctuated by the episodic mayhem of the Civil War: evils indeed enduring
for centuries to come, which Lloyd George and Aneurin Bevan for all their
flaws did a good deal to redress.

Robert Graves in a situation closely comparable to AP’s encapsulates the
same sentiment briefly and minus the histrionic excess. He served in the
First World War mainly in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, for whom the spelling
“Welch” as opposed to “Welsh” was a regimental fetish:

---

18 HTR to Elizabetta Mariano, 25 April 1951, in Richard Davenport-Hines (ed.), Letters From
‘Welch’ referred us somehow to the archaic North Wales of Henry Tudor and Owen Glendower and Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the founder of the regiment; it dissociated us from the modern North Wales of chapels, Liberalism, the dairy and drapery business, slate mines, and the tourist trade.\textsuperscript{19}

Again dubious history: both Glendower (Glyndŵr) (mid-1350s–?1415) and Henry Tudor, who reigned as Henry VII from 1485 to 1509, lived long before the regiment’s foundation. Even allowing for that, Owain Glyndŵr was hardly the prototype of a loyal general but an outstanding rebel against the King of England of the day. Henry VII spent hardly any time in his ancestral North Wales. His boyhood was perforce spent in the South, in Gwent and Pembrokeshire, which rendered him the sole King of England to speak fluent Welsh: the dairy and drapery business, slate mines, and the tourist trade gave the natives of the North a better standard of living than their ancestors had enjoyed in the times of those remote titans.

In any case the modern North Wales was the one with which Graves had to deal; many of the men and his fellow officers hailed from there. And, pragmatically, misplaced nostalgia (inaccurate chronologically and otherwise) was soon shelved. Graves appears to have got on well with most of his Welsh fellow officers and men. A comparison of Graves’s and AP’s descriptions of their Welsh comrades-in-arms in their respective wars would be an interesting exercise in itself but is beyond my scope here. Their emphasis differs sharply: Welshness is in Graves a minor motif; he is concerned overridingly with active service on the Western front. The ethnic or geographic origins of your comrades pale into insignificance except in so far as they help or hinder their melding together into a fighting unit which will give every individual member of it the best chance of surviving in desperate circumstances. And his pre-war experience was the opposite to AP’s: his mother had a holiday home in Harlech, so he and his siblings knew something of the countryside and its people from their youthful ramblings. Conversely they had no Welsh blood so “we felt little temptation to learn Welsh, still less to pretend ourselves Welsh, but knew the country as a quite ungeographical region” (whatever the latter clause means).\textsuperscript{20} As regards Wales, Graves was devoid of AP’s dreamy, slightly mystical ancestor

\textsuperscript{19}Robert Graves \textit{Goodbye to All That} (1929; Penguin reprint 1967), p. 75; hereafter \textit{GTAT}.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{GTAT}, p. 34.
fixation; *his* mysticism came to be focused elsewhere: on *The White Goddess*.

Rather touchingly, AP for his part tries to synthesise via reverie the dreary contemporary experience of being stationed in a small, rain-soaked Pembrokeshire town with the earlier perceptions of Wales he holds dear: his own ancestors’ residence in that county around 1800 and the remote incursions there of the Brythonic warlord Cunedda (*fl.* fifth century), the progenitor of the royal house of Gwynedd. At least he is back in Deheubarth. But then reality intrudes:

Kedward came smartly to a halt at the entrance of this tabernacle. The Sergeant-Major and I drew up beside him. A gale began to blow noisily up the street. Muffled yet disturbing, the war horns of Cunedda moaned in the frozen wind, as far away he rode upon the cloud.\(^{21}\)

AP, the producer of works of art and imagination, puts the historian Trevor-Roper and his rant to shame. He is elegantly and elegiacally bidding farewell to dreams of the evaporating Cunedda and acknowledges the brutal side of this Dark Age titan in any case. Kedward, not Cunedda, embodies the genre of reality to which Powell like Graves before him must buckle down. He adapts with pragmatism: keen observation is his keynote, not revulsion. His battalion of the Welch Regiment were in 1939/40 training/exercising, not actually fighting, which gave him scope to observe and get acquainted with these contemporary Welshmen in circumstances not yet desperate.

AP does try to cling on to fragments of his beloved romantic history to contextualise the present but it gets in the way: Gwatkin rightly – if for the wrong reasons – brushes aside Jenkins’s raising the legend that his name descends from the legendary fifth-century Vortigern.\(^{22}\) It is, prosaically, a mediaeval cymricisation of the Norman Guallter – English form, *Walter* – as AP knew full well from his genuinely scholarly delvings.\(^{23}\) His notion that


\(^{22}\) *VB*, p. 188.

\(^{23}\) See for example his “Notes on some individual Powells and Ap Howells on the Radnor-Hereford border in the sixteenth century”, in *Transactions*, Vol. 27 (1957), pp. 27–32. On p. 27 a Richard ap Hoell Gwatkyn is listed in a document of 1538/9, and the name Gwatkin recurs in these articles.
the Welsh descend in *recognisable* lines from the fair haired Celts, the Brythons – examples are that ill-fated\(^{24}\) duo Sergeant Pendry and Jones D\(^{25}\) – or from the “dark Iberian” aboriginals on whom the Celts imposed their language and culture – examples Corporal Gwylt, diminutive, frolicsome, priapic\(^{26}\), and Lance-Corporal Gittins\(^{27}\) – was outdated, over-simplified nineteenth-century ethnic theory. How can one know that the undocumented Iberians were predominantly dark-haired or that the Celts were predominantly fair-haired? There is more evidence that they contained a high proportion of *red* heads, extrapolating from the high incidence of that trichological tendency in Ireland, Scotland and Wales today. In any case 2,500 years is ample time for the various strains to be thoroughly compounded; and for subsequent *advenae* to contribute to the stew. He also traces contemporary Welsh forms of social hierarchy back to the “free tribesmen of Cambro-British society” in an attempt to explain the good relations in the battalion between officers and men.\(^{28}\) This seems far-fetched. A more likely explanation lies in the there and then: in all ranks being, as peacetime Territorials, volunteers not reluctant conscripts. The officers coming from the same society and region understood the men. The latter, though good soldiers in their place, were largely not emulous, not keen on promotion and so not jealous of superior ranks. A prominent example of this is the able Gittins who resists pressure to progress up the ranks of the NCOs, preferring his cosy autonomous niche in the Stores.\(^{29}\)

But on balance, in his attempt to understand his Welsh companions – both as novelist and newcomer – AP seems quickly to have realised that his previous perceptions of Wales (whether in the sixth century or the sixteenth) were not much help. The Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff were home to a newish industrial and urban society unprecedented in Wales, in 1940 still less than a hundred years old. They had something of the contemporary European settlements in the Americas or Australasia about them. The Valleys were

\(^{24}\) Pendry probably commits suicide when faced with his wife’s infidelity; Jones, seconded to a front line unit, is killed in the retreat before Dunkirk: *V*, pp. 198–202 and pp. 195–6.

\(^{25}\) *VB*, pp 6, 8.

\(^{26}\) *VB*, p. 41.

\(^{27}\) *VB*, p. 52.

\(^{28}\) Faces, p. 99.

\(^{29}\) *VB*, p. 52.
settled by immigrants from the rest of Wales especially from the adjacent West, AP’s “Deheubarth”, with English and Irish infusions. And these found the inheritance from their rural backgrounds of marginal relevance now that they had to adapt to the conditions generated by the constraints of their new, dangerous, stygian, but well-paid occupation. The Valleys and Cardiff, if hardly the natural resorts of the smart set, had been a core part of the mainstream economic life of Britain since the later nineteenth century. In recognition of that, the depression there of the 1930s at least attracted widespread concern and publicity, notably from the briefly reigning Edward VIII himself, whereas endemic poverty in remote rural Meirionnydd passed unnoticed: “always with us”. South-east Wales was not isolated. Powell encountered no equivalent of Graves’s “very Welsh Welshmen from the hills, who had an imperfect command of English”. Young Kedward’s esprit de clocher might seem parochial, but it was grounded in a strong sense of community which gave South Walians the confidence to reach out to newcomers visiting on business or settling. There was an outward-looking dimension from which AP must have benefited, but little continuity with what had gone before. AP could have found more of it had he, like Robert Graves, been cast among Welshmen from the mainly rural rest of Wales to the West and North of Glamorgan, his beloved Radnorshire included. But had he encountered “very Welsh Welshmen” from Meirionnydd, communication would have been impeded. With Valleys English, there was, if anything, too much of it.

Jenkins’s appreciation of the Wales of yore – romantic, scholarly, genealogical, somewhat self-obsessed – seems lost on his Welsh comrades-in-arms. This is brought out in his long conversation with Gwatkin, whom he attempts to engage on the latter’s ancestry and his possible kinship with Lord Aberavon (d. 1900), who was also plain Roland Gwatkin before ennoblement: exactly the kind of connection which AP savoured in his own regard. But Gwatkin is not interested. Although a romantic, his illusions focus on the here and now – on the army and on Maureen, the Irish barmaid, both to disastrous effect. Gwatkin’s young successor, Kedward, his betrothed apart, does not seem romantic at all, but ambitiously practical. And

---

30 In Auden’s baleful summary: “Glamorgan hid a life grim as a tidal rock pool’s in its glove-shaped Valleys.”

31 GTAT, p. 70.

32 VB, pp. 186–9.
Jenkins’/AP’s wider range in literature and the arts ring few bells either. Gwatkin has read Kipling’s tale of the Roman centurion\textsuperscript{33} and \textit{A Song to Mithras}\textsuperscript{34} which fire his imagination by giving a romantic historical dimension to soldiering, and he raises them with Nick as one whose literary knowledge means he may understand what attracts him. But when Nick tries to open out the discussion it transpires that Gwatkin had not taken to the rest of the book, let alone broached other works of Kipling.

His articulation of Gwatkin’s seeing soldiering through a romantic nineteenth-century haze comes from him not from the man himself.

I suspected he saw himself in much the same terms as those heroes of Stendhal – an aspiring, restless spirit, who, released at last by war from the cramping bonds of life in a provincial town, was about to cut a dashing military figure against a backcloth of Meissonier-like imagery of plume and breast-plate: dragoons walking their horses through the wheat, grenadiers at ease in a tavern with girls bearing flagons of wine.\textsuperscript{35}

But Gwatkin’s romanticism probably \textit{does} owe much to nineteenth-century perceptions of military life, although it would have been far less elaborated and without the embellishment and detail of cultivated invocations of Meissonier and Stendhal. The nineteenth century’s great industrial and imperial expansions with concomitant propaganda had shaped the early twentieth century and had created the Valleys themselves. And in 1940 it lay only forty years in the past. From this recent past most people’s traditions and overview of the world came.

The men’s \textit{Laus Perennis} of song, both sacred and profane, probably does have ancient Celtic roots, but in its present form dates back no further than the oddly paired nineteenth-century chapel and music hall. Minus the latter, the same goes for the rhetoric beloved of all ranks. Gwatkin delivers a pep-talk on rifles to the company which Jenkins considers too high flown for the

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{VB}, pp. 58–9.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{VB}, pp. 90–1. For both centurion and Mithras, see \textit{Puck of Pook’s Hill}.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{VB}, p. 13.
purpose: everybody else thinks it is just the ticket – except Kedward.\footnote{VB, pp. 66–8.}

Ancient traditions seem immanently transmuted to the tastes of the day, not systematically acquired as antique garb. AP brings this subtle process out strikingly when he is not distracted by a naive quest for relics of societal antiquity surviving unchanged, alive and well like coelacanths.

Even so, his empathy and authorly observation had its limits. There have been several recent articles on this. J M Lewis notably treats of AP’s rendition of South-Welsh \textit{English} in \textit{The Valley of Bones}.\footnote{Newsletter 49 (Winter 2012), pp. 8–10.} Lewis elaborates on the “awkwardness of the dialogue given to the Welsh other ranks”: no faithful rendition of the fluent garrulity which characterises the Valleys. In his memoirs AP himself responds to Lewis’s precursors, invoking the authority of the \textit{echt} Welsh playwright, Alun Owen, who assured him that it was fine to render what one felt one had heard even if it was not what was actually articulated,\footnote{Faces, pp. 100–1.} which is questionable.

AP also says that none of his fellow soldiers spoke Welsh.\footnote{Faces, p. 100.} This is unlikely: in the 1940s a substantial minority of Valleysmen still would have, at least in rough and ready form; AP probably just did not hear their doing so, and thus may have missed the most important living link with the days of Cunedda. Hence there is no equivalent for the beginning of the war of the rollicking Breton officer Kernével, who at its end discourses \textit{inter multa alia} on his family’s grasp of his ancestral tongue.\footnote{See MP pp. 237–42. The character is drawn from Powell’s encounters through liaison role with the foreign forces which he grafts on to Nick Jenkins.} Graves’s experience was in several ways the opposite to AP’s: he spent a little of his time with the Welch Regiment (South Wales-orientated) but most of it with the Royal Welch Fusiliers (North Wales orientated), and he overheard \textit{South Welsh} troops speaking the old tongue: a generation earlier admittedly.\footnote{GTAT, p. 84.} Did some of AP’s comrades know far more about their country’s heritage than they let on? Quite likely: they would have been taught something of Welsh history and traditions, cultural and otherwise, in school – the officers would have been to
a secondary school as well as an elementary one. The schools, churches, chapels, and choirs (although essentially conduits with a nineteenth-century take on traditional Welsh culture) variously kept something of it going, organising for example the eisteddfodau which descend, like AP himself, from The Lord Rhys, and celebrating St David’s Day which still sails indestructibly on. How much was absorbed depended on the individual. They had been exposed to all this since early childhood and would have taken to it with varying degrees of enthusiasm and assimilation: hence they would lack the convert’s enthusiasm and application. It is entirely possible, however, that AP’s comrades did not mention these things to him because, ironically, they assumed that as essentially an Englishman, he would not be interested.

Even without such highly specific Welshness, however, AP (and his alter ego Nick Jenkins) felt he had encountered a culture with its own distinct, sometimes unfamiliar character.

A powerful factor in this new existence was the ambience of the South Welsh (as distinguished from the North Welsh, almost a different race), a people by nature talkative, good-natured, witty, given to sudden bursts of rage, unambitious, delighted by ironic situations.42

Individuals, of course, vary, but some broad selection from this generous slew of adjectives and epithets rings true for large numbers of the South Welsh, as does the divergence between Northerners and Southerners. At Divisional HQ, AP was assured by the Orderly Sergeant, a North Welshman, that the porridge that morning was “really very good”. Powell was used to the often unsubtly ironic banter of the South, verbal fooling around of which the irrepressible Corporal Gwylt is a convincing exponent. Hence he assumed the opposite; but putting the matter to the proof, he found that the “Northman” was both sincere and accurate.43 The arrival of a newcomer to the outfit furnishing a pretext for a convivial session44 is a reaction not unknown in South Wales to this day. Such perception and portrayal outweighs failure to render regional dialogue as truly as it might have been. Jenkins’/AP’s

42 Faces, p. 98.

43 Faces, p. 107.

44 Faces, p. 97.
discovery of an unfamiliar culture is a dominating theme of much of VB to excellent effect.45

How well AP can realise a character drawn from a background and region hitherto unfamiliar to him to the acclaim of a South Welsh native – me – is illustrated by Kedward. This achievement is all the more impressive as Kedward is untouched by the striking traits or sad fates which compel the reader’s attention of other personae, major and minor: Gwatkin, Bithel, Gwylt, Pendry, the two padres, and, outside the Welsh laager, Stevens. Once the initial impression of youthful naïveté (largely sustained by his narrow Valleys-bound vision and inexperience) has been absorbed, Kedward settles down as rather a bore, with a touch of the prig to boot, given his Greek-chorus comments on Gwatkin’s character, moods, and shortcomings. While his comrades approve of the stock Welsh rhetoric Gwatkin employs about rifle maintenance, for example, he objects to it as windy. But in this latter trait lies his salvation. He is not simply the endearingly naïve lad of the outset who deems the Valleys in effect the whole world. Kedward is slow fuse: he gradually reveals himself as less pleasant than at first impression, and also as able, effective at the soldier’s art. He is pragmatic and practical, knowing how to adapt and select from the rules governing a military exercise, as opposed to Gwatkin’s slightly neurotic time-consuming literalism, going by the book. This is fortified by well-directed spare-time application to military surveying of the nature of the local terrain. Of his taking over the company, one might say that with hindsight you can see it coming.

The war trilogy is rich in characters with ambition – Gwatkin, Widmerpool, Farebrother, Stevens – but theirs is overweening and leads to disaster for themselves or for others. Kedward’s ambition seems realistic because it is narrower, with clearly defined obtainable objectives: indeed it is fused with his general narrowness of outlook. Unlike Stevens’, it does not entail breaking away from his unit or from his home town (which indeed he eulogises). Instead he intends to capitalise on the existing strengths these give him, focusing on the job in hand, whether in the army or back in Civvy Street. His world may seem amusingly narrow to the metropolitan Nick, but it is coherent and he knows how to operate within it. So narrow vision

becomes an asset, not a deficit, and this is complemented by his lack of restlessness.

Gwatkin by contrast has reservations about banking, the banality of his home-town existence, and his marriage. Stereotypically it should be the subaltern, Kedward, ( naïve, inexperienced, but fancy-free) who falls for the barmaid, but AP deftly makes it Gwatkin, the company captain, married and in his thirties. It is Kedward who sets the example of emotional stability or at least complacency. He is looking forward to his impending marriage (whose date he has pencilled in) and especially to having children, an ambition he has achieved twice over by the time Nick meets him again near the end of the war. What should one make of his not recognising Nick then or even recalling him until Nick reminds him in detail? This could be a calculated snub beneath Kedward’s impeccable politeness to a now superior officer; but I do not think Kedward is so subtle. More likely he has genuinely forgotten Nick, an irrelevance discarded long ago after a finite period of collaboration as no use to his plans for the company. Kedward had never seemed impressed (unlike Gwatkin and – sycophantically – Bithel) by Nick’s superior cultivation, if indeed he had taken it in. It is he who politely terminates their conversation; there is work to be done.

Back in 1940 Kedward’s final talk with Nick when a newly promoted captain is the reverse of endearing: he gratuitously “sacks” him when in any case Nick is being transferred; officially temporarily but it is generally assumed he will be reassigned. Kedward is graceless, and ungrateful too, given Nick’s covering his night duty for him when Kedward wanted to survey the Castle Mallock terrain. But there is continuity with the naïve welcoming youth of their first encounter who had exhibited self-assurance and clarity of purpose because he feels content with the hand fate has dealt him. He is the Company Captain now and so can put into effect plans in which Nick does not figure.

As all this indicates, Kedward is drawn in more detail than his fellow subalterns, Breeze and – a fortiori – Craddock and Pumfrey. And so he steps off the page as – to me – a familiar type. I find it easy to visualise a Kedward in early middle age as a 1960s bank manager in my own home town of Cowbridge. Or, to turn it the other way round, I can visualise some of the fathers of my schoolmates and their middle-aged compeers who had climbed to a modest local eminence as resembling the wartime Kedward when around twenty years earlier they had, in contrast to Stripling in WW1, been doing
their bit.\textsuperscript{46} Would Kedward have stalled as a bank manager in a small market
town? That he was still a captain after nearly five wartime years indicates that
his abilities like his ambitions were finite, but I may be over interpreting. Perhaps Kedward would have progressed to manage a major city bank in
Cardiff or even to the bank inspectorate,\textsuperscript{47} a lofty career peak of which he was
aware. Either way, he would have lived in Cowbridge – “More upmarket, you see” – and been a pillar of Rotary and a member of the golf club. Time would
have vanquished his naïveté and lack of experience: war service itself would
have been searingly effective there. Peacetime would have brought promotion and creeping affluence for which he would have acquired a taste. Altogether he would have built up a comfortable life and an outlook which
now ranged more widely than the Valleys; but not \textit{that much} wider. Kedward might have moved from the Valleys to the Vale,\textsuperscript{48} but his arena
would still have been south-east Wales where he could be a bigish fish in a
medium-sized pond. In south-east England he would have been divorced
from his regional network, and in London itself he would have been
swamped. His youthful aversion to the prospect of working in the capital
would probably have been maintained. Certain massive Valley \textit{motifs},
however, receive no mention. The two chaplains in the bar on Nick’s first
evening are Anglican and RC,\textsuperscript{49} but these were minority creeds in the Valleys
which shared the chapel culture with the most of the rest of Wales – Graves
notes it for the North. But perhaps the Nonconformist chaplains do not
appear in the bar which sets the initial scene because they rarely drank.

Politically the Valleys, originally Liberal, had in 1939/40 been blanket
Labour since the early 1920s and still are. (See the recent General Election of
8 June 2017.) The only possible rivals were the Communists then and are the
Welsh Nationalists now. And they were a political hotspot. This had in part
been catalysed by their industries being grievously hit by the great inter-war
slump. Admittedly the situation had eased in the years immediately before
the war, and with its coming the coal and steel industries were revalued to the

\textsuperscript{46} QU, pp. 80–84.

\textsuperscript{47} VB, p. 12. Kedward prophesies maliciously that Gwatkin has no chance of reaching that – to
a bank employee – Olympian height.

\textsuperscript{48} The Vale of Glamorgan is the nearest Welsh equivalent to Surrey.

\textsuperscript{49} VB, pp. 19–23.
extent that some of the battalions’ miners could have been discharged as in a reserved occupation.

Although such “elephants” seem too big to ignore, AP was probably exercising legitimate authorly selectivity because they were somewhat *sub rosa*. In the army, political or religious fervour would be discouraged as divisive or subversive, corroding the essential *esprit de corps*, while if these soldiers ever had been unemployed they were not so now.

The ability to empathise with and understand the views, character and situation of people distinctly different from oneself are the familiar talents of a novelist or playwright: perception usually melded with a capacity for quiet observation. But in the immediate term Powell had to use such gifts on his own account – to fit in.

AP had followed his father into The Welch regiment – but, he says, fortuitously.50 Once in, the differences between this metropolitan, elite, literary sophisticate – married to the sister/daughter of earls – and his lower-middle-class fellow officers, mainly bank clerks, he claims, could have been glaring: *a fortiori* with the other ranks, who were mainly miners. But any potential problems were more likely to have arisen not from the men who would have to accept as inevitable being bossed around by officers of a superior social class but from his junior officer colleagues, with whom he was expected to socialise on equal terms. Lady Violet Powell did come to stay in Wales for a while from September 1939, to spend her pregnancy in less lethal circumstances than the anticipated blitz on London, but this was at Dynevor Castle, Carmarthenshire – Lady Dynevor was Violet’s aunt – and AP visited her there while on leave. His colleagues were unlikely ever to have met a member of a comital family, let alone have stayed with one, while marrying one would have seemed a remote fantasy. For Gwatkin, the late Lord Aberavon is only relatively less remote than Vortigern.51 Paradoxically, however, such unfamiliarity may have eased their acceptance of AP. Regional characteristics transmuted and blurred what might otherwise have been an unadorned encounter between social classes, and so helped ward off the danger of a social clash.

50 *Faces*, p. 93.

51 *VB*, p. 187.
Simon Barnes draws upon that other famous portrayal of bank staff at war, *Dad’s Army*, in order to compare the relations between its Home Guard Captain/bank manager, Mainwaring and his sergeant cum chief cashier, Wilson, with those between Nick Jenkins and Widmerpool in wartime.\(^5^2\) I am not concerned with Widmerpool here. A closer parallel is Mainwaring/Wilson with Gwatkin/Jenkins. And significantly it is a contrast. Gwatkin is a far more nuanced and layered character than Mainwaring – *Dad’s Army* is a TV comedy with its roots in the burlesque of the music hall – but both their civilian and military roles are comparable. Mainwaring, now with two callings to harness to his social and professional striving, sometimes feels his rightful ambitions are frustrated by the entrenched upper middle classes and gentry of the Home Counties. Wilson, his number two in both the bank and Home Guard, comes from an upper-class family. And Mainwaring openly resents this – foolishly from any perspective – and, paradoxically, because Wilson *ipso facto* is a mild failure, not one of the dominant local elite; and, not personally snobbish, plays his background down. But it is, of course, ingrained, and so is bound to be apparent.

Gwatkin also has his military ambitions, which are rather more romantic than Mainwaring’s. But in his dealings with his upper-crust subordinate, Nick, he completely lacks Mainwaring’s chippiness. He is once unjustifiably angry when Nick turns up late with his platoon on an exercise, but, on reflection, apologises handsomely.\(^5^3\) He invites Nick to share his quarters and makes him his confidant. He seems to appreciate rather than resent the manners and cultivation Nick derives from his background, even though he does not want to draw upon the latter to any great extent. Nor is such chippiness found in Nick’s equals in rank, the young subalterns.

Mainwaring should have landed a bank in Treorchy, as bank staff in the Valleys were unlikely to suffer from his South Coast *ennuis*. In the mining towns, the upper middle class appeared rarely, and the gentry not all. The latter were to be found in such rural peripheries as the Vale of Glamorgan, the Usk/Wye Valleys of Gwent, and Southern Breconshire, but would rarely have been encountered, let alone the bulk of the Anglo-Welsh gentry. Pardoe and his house on the Borders lay far to the North, in Radnor or Shropshire; the real-life “Widow” Lloyd, the erstwhile “Hypocrite”, was in

\(^{52}\) *Newsletter* 63 (Summer 2016), pp. 28–9.

\(^{53}\) *VB*, pp. 85–92.
Montgomeryshire, the Dynevors in Carmarthenshire.\textsuperscript{54} In consequence the numerically limited, modest middle class with bank staff at their core filled the vacuum forming the thin Valleys upper crust. Bank managers were among the local kingpins. The yardstick for bank clerks would be the tough, relatively impoverished life of the immense majority of their fellow citizens, the miners, which they counted themselves lucky to have escaped. Because they were hardly encountered, individuals of the richer classes need not be personally resented. Michael Barber, in his life of AP,\textsuperscript{55} incorrectly states that whereas the men, mainly miners, naturally lived in the Valleys’ townships, the officers, almost inevitably bank clerks, lived in Cardiff, which offered a relative diversity and sophistication. In fact AP says that most of them lived within a few miles of Cardiff,\textsuperscript{56} i.e. they lived in the small Valleys’ towns as well. Gwatkin worked part of the time in Treorchy; Kedward’s cherished home town was “not all that different” from the small Pembrokeshire town where they were presently stationed. This had restricted his social experience. Thus he, able, ambitious but young and inexperienced, puts Jenkins down as a middle-class Englishman with a flattering interest in his Welsh roots. But he lacks nuance: he has no idea how posh Jenkins is. Trying to fit him in to his narrow framework, he assumes that Jenkins is a fellow employee one of The Big Five (retail banks), to the latter’s brief puzzlement. This is not a mistake that a London or home-counties bank clerk would have been socially naïve enough to make: they would have placed Jenkins rapidly.

Nor is young Kedward toxic with envy \textit{vis-à-vis} Jenkins’s London life. He had enjoyed his two visits staying with an aunt in Croydon, but would not like to live and work there: he was put off like many provincials by the capital’s Brobdingnagian scale. “I like it where I was born” and “I believe you’d like it where my home is”.\textsuperscript{57} There is no evidence for the latter: Kedward is generalising his own case; but it expresses contentment. Indeed

\textsuperscript{54} AP himself was of course familiar not only with the Dynevors but also with other Welsh gentry of his and our own time. In considering this strangely neglected topic, the following is illuminating: Tom Lloyd (Wales Herald of Arms Extraordinary), “The Old Welsh Landed Gentry and their World; Does Extinction Beckon?” (the June Gruffydd Memorial Lecture in association with the Montgomeryshire Society, published in the \textit{Proceedings of the Society of the Cymmrodorion} for 2013).

\textsuperscript{55} Michael Barber, \textit{Anthony Powell: A Life} (Duckworth Overlook, 2004), p. 127.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Faces}, p. 96.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{VB}, p. 14.
he is content with all the main elements of his life: his betrothed, with offspring to follow; his banking career to be resumed post-war; his present military career to be brought to its full potential. Kedward’s lines have been cast: he just has to progress along them. If he is exceptionally self content – or at least fairly confident of achieving his highly conventional goals – he seems more typical of the unit in this than the striving but strained Gwatkin. And this contentment deflects envy and jealousy from the outsider Nick. What is there to be jealous about? Military rank and prowess are of predominant importance now, and Jenkins/AP is no threat there. His age, 34, is considered old for a second lieutenant, and the experience he has accumulated in civilian life is irrelevant. His fellow subalterns like Kedward and Breeze are senior to him militarily, have had (through the Territorials) more training and – in their early twenties – are the right age for their rank.

In generating self-assurance, civilian and battalion life reinforce each other. The bank fuses with the battalion for the officers; the mines for the men. For the latter, close relations and friends abound to boot. As Territorials they are not sullen conscripts but volunteers from the just-vanished peacetime who joined for, among other things, the extra money, the change of scene, and the camaraderie. They have little reason to be discontent. Things are more serious now obviously, but the peacetime ethos lingers in the phony war, and they are still on home territory in training, not yet facing death on the front line. Life is not idyllic. There are personal tensions and worse: Kedward is critical – behind his back – of Gwatkin both as company commander and bank official.58 Gwatkin reciprocates, but his main reservations focus on another subaltern, “Ianto” Breeze. He also thinks, understandably, that Bithel is a disgrace to the battalion.59 Far worse, Nick’s platoon sergeant, Pendry, originally a tower of strength, goes downhill, then probably commits suicide when faced with his wife’s infidelity back home.60

Otherwise tensions are modified. Gwatkin’s counter-animatedersion on Kedward is slight; Bithel is not in Gwatkin’s company, which deflects and delays any crisis until near the end of the novel, and his fellow subalterns do

59 VB, pp. 49–50, 68, 198.
60 VB, pp. 88–90, 92–3, 98–102.
not share the captain’s aversion for this shambolic figure, but tolerate him amiably.\textsuperscript{61}

But much of this arises as within a large clan or close-knit small town. Gwatkin’s coolness towards Breeze really stems, according to Kedward, not from any military shortcomings (merely the pretext), but from Gwatkin having been in love with Breeze’s sister, who turned him down.\textsuperscript{62} Kedward’s criticisms of Gwatkin as a bank official emanate from Lyn Craddock, the messing officer of the company, whose father had been Gwatkin’s branch manager.\textsuperscript{63} Individuals know each other perhaps too well. But this has a positive side, an underlying camaraderie so essential for facing danger down the mine and on the front line. To Jenkins, the battalion seems quasi-familial: “its peculiar sense of uniformity, ... its homogeneous character in itself offered a certain cordiality, rather than the reverse, to an intruder”.\textsuperscript{64} This was displayed immediately: AP was naturally worried about the reception an outsider would get but – with rare effusiveness – says it could not have been warmer. On his first day he was swept off to the pub by his fellow subalterns for a convivial evening.\textsuperscript{65} So he learnt at once that his new comrades were hospitable and friendly if they were not rubbed up the wrong way.

Paradoxically, AP’s natural reserve probably helped here: let the Welshmen do the talking – they are good at that. But he seems to have avoided reserve tumbling over into perceived standoffishness. A more naïve character might have tried to ingratiate himself by emphasising his Welsh roots through invoking his descent from the ancient Kings of Deheubarth and the relatively more recent gentry of the Marches. Given the Valleys’ radical slant, this would have provoked perhaps annoyance, more likely derision; boasting about grand social connections would go down badly. Although AP was unlikely to be so crass, there was a danger that he would let too much slip. If Jenkins’ approach is modelled on his own, he displayed shrewd forbearance and tact which went beyond mere eschewal of name-dropping. He did not admit to being an author, which might have gone down as a mix of the exotic

\begin{footnotes}
\item[61] \textit{VB}, p. 68.
\item[62] \textit{VB}, pp. 17–18.
\item[63] \textit{VB}, p. 12.
\item[64] \textit{VB}, p. 180.
\item[65] \textit{Faces}, p. 97; Barber, p. 127.
\end{footnotes}
and the precarious, but said that he was a journalist, which indeed he was as well. This was a recognised way of earning a living: there were plenty of local, indeed pan-Welsh, newspapers in South Wales. His fellows could put him down as a man who earned a modest salary like themselves. And this was also true even if the milieu whence he derived it would have appeared exotic to the South Walians. In 1939 AP, though up-and-coming in the literary world, had not yet accumulated a great reputation and considerable fortune. Indeed his income had recently been precarious: a bank salary would have been solid and more dependable. He would not have been a household name to modestly educated people with no inordinate love of literature. He was social-connection rich but cash poor. So, aided by this genuinely modest side of his life, his financially precarious position, AP played the exotic and grander parts of it down.

It seems to have worked. Breeze invited Nick to the pub on his first evening: young Kedward confided in him from the outset, often indiscreetly, although this may be in part a literary device to disseminate information. Soon he also becomes the confidant of Gwatkin, who suggests Nick shares his living quarters; and this culminates in Gwatkin’s introducing him to Maureen, asking for his opinion of her over several drinks in Maureen’s pub. He senses that Nick, a man of about his own age in contrast to the twenty-somethings, unpretentiously cultivated and from a wider world, could be a fit companion for him; but he does not want to draw on Nick’s cultivation to any great extent. Gwatkin treats it at one remove as an ingredient which went to form Nick’s congenial character. This is a far cry from Pennistone’s pleasure in finding a fitting collocutor for high-brow conversation on the night train to Aldershot.

So Nick drops his attempt to discuss Kipling beyond “A Centurion of the Thirtieth” and “A Song to Mithras”. Likewise he concludes that “pointless, even hopelessly pedantic, would be a brief exegesis explaining that the Roman occupation of Britain, historically speaking, was rather different from

---

66 *Faces*, p. 73; Barber pp. 109–10.
67 *VB*, pp. 18–19.
69 *VB*, pp 103–13.
the picture” in Kipling’s book.\textsuperscript{70} Later he is quick to perceive that his attempt to link the Gwatkin ancestry with Vortigern, Hengist, and Horsa had left Gwatkin cold and he had merely “deflected [Gwatkin’s] flow of thought by ill-timed pedantry”.\textsuperscript{71} As an author and a companion he should not get in the way.

And Nick mentions that he had already been for a drink in that small Irish town with Kedward,\textsuperscript{72} giving the impression of easy social integration. Good naturally he “often undertook Kedward’s tour of duty” as that ambitious youth spent much of his spare time “exploring the neighbouring country with a view to marking down suitable sites for machine gun nest and anti-tank emplacements”.\textsuperscript{73} At the outset he is “gratified” that Kedward treats him “as if we had known each other all our lives” despite the disability of Nick’s great age of 34.\textsuperscript{74} But when Kedward takes Gwatkin’s place and is promoted captain at 22, he speaks frankly to Nick about his shortcomings as a platoon commander. He is frankly relieved by Nick’s sudden and immediately subsequent posting to HQ, saying that he does not want him back: he can put his own man of his own age in now, preferably Craddock.\textsuperscript{75} This, however, is probably not seizing a chance to express coddled resentment at someone older and from a higher social class; simply this youngster is trying to assert himself as a new broom. Under his command the company will be better than under Gwatkin’s. And there was a consensus which included Jenkins/AP himself that he was not cut out to be an operational subaltern.\textsuperscript{76}

Five years later near the end of the war, the pair meet again where Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany intersect. Kedward is very polite and calls Nick “Sir.” The boot is on the other foot: Nick is now a major; Kedward, implausibly after nearly five years, still a captain. But Kedward cannot recall him until reminded several times. Taken at face value, this implies that if

\textsuperscript{70} VB, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{71} VB, p. 188.

\textsuperscript{72} VB, p. 179.

\textsuperscript{73} VB, pp. 168–9.

\textsuperscript{74} VB, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{75} VB, p. 120.

\textsuperscript{76} See for example Barber, p. 128.
Nick was not adored during his time with the battalion neither was he a loathed memory: simply inoffensive. But AP’s intentions are hard to read. The encounter may be no more than a device to give Nick news of his old unit, of Gwatkin above all, grounded on no real life original conversation.77

From his side AP retained some fond memories of the unit. The singing of the men caught his imagination, of Cwm Rhondda especially, which he quotes several times and which was sung at his funeral.78 On a training course in Aldershot, Nick winces at the poor quality of the singing of the troops there, instantly nostalgic for his Welshmen.79 More broadly he quickly took to the battalion, respecting it professionally as well as taking to certain individuals in it. At the outset the Anglican chaplain, Popkiss, who had seemed ill at ease in the pub the night before, once in the pulpit “orated with the ease and energy shared by officers and men throughout the Battalion”,80 delivering the sermon from which the title of the novel is derived: Jenkins’s first taste of Welsh rhetoric. A “scene” between a private and a sergeant of another contingent at Castle Mallock “would have inconceivable ... amongst ... our men”.81 Overall he gives the impression of pride in a company in general well run with good morale. Years later (1990) AP regrets having to turn down through infirmity an invitation to meet Neil Kinnock “as he might have reminded me of the chaps in my platoon at the beginning of the war”. From the other side AP was disconcerted to find his batman giving him a friendly smile from the front row when he was inspecting the platoon.82

An outsider of rebarbative character from his background could have provoked a very different reaction. Selina Hastings, a recent biographer of Evelyn Waugh, says that her predecessor, Christopher Sykes, exaggerates in

77 MP, pp. 173–7. AP did meet members of his old unit at that time and place, but I doubt whether there was a close real-life model for that specific conversation.
78 E.g. VB, p. 102; Barber, ix.
79 VB, p. 134.
80 VB, p. 37.
82 Barber, p. 129. Any Proustian evocation via Kinnock who was 48 at the time would have been very general. And as a graduate and leading politician he would have been too evolué to be much like one of the other ranks. He could have struck the aged AP, however, as resembling one of the young lieutenants grown middle-aged.
stating that Waugh’s “greatest enemies were the men he commanded”; but
concedes “it is true that he was not interested in other ranks, they knew it and
disliked him accordingly”. Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography*
(Capuchin Classics, 2013), pp. 400–1.

Sykes, however, not only knew Waugh but was a friend of his and elaborates on his “total incapacity for establishing any sort
of human relations with his men. The latter were working class people and
Evelyn had (I regret to say) an instinctive distaste for the working classes”.
Even-handedly Waugh also offended many of his fellow officers and was
generally disruptive. These shortcomings inspired his commanding officer
at any one time to pass him on.

A great contrast with AP: such global offensiveness was not his vice. It must
have helped also that he was a soldier’s son and so familiar at one remove
with the army’s ways from an early age, knew what to expect, although he
early concluded that he was not suited for professional soldiering. His father
was in the Welch Regiment to boot, although AP never records having met
Welsh officers and men specifically in his early days.

AP knew that “soldiering was a job like any other” to which one had to apply
oneself. This involved working cordially with one’s fellows if one possibly
could. But the Army was also a world of its own with its own hierarchy and
distinctions. Those of civilian life did not apply and should not be
gratuitously intruded. This realistic approach blended with a more patriotic
and romantic one: a respect for anyone prepared to do the decent thing and
serve in wartime which is even extended to the unprepossessing Jimmy Brent
whom Nick encounters on a course at Aldershot. And this is despite Brent’s
having “unaccountably” displaced him as Jean Duport’s lover years before,
although Brent himself remained unaware of that aspect of the matter.
But the main beneficiary of Nick’s underlying approach to the military is another
member of that course, the subaltern “Odo” Stevens. He bears close
comparison with the young Welsh subalterns from whom Nick was
temporarily detached, coming from an equivalently modest background and
equivalently unfashionable locale, Birmingham. He reminds Nick somewhat

85 Barber, p. 124.
86 Barber, p. 128.
87 VB, pp. 115ff.
of Kedward, who is much of an age. But he finds Stevens “more forceful” and (presumably in a non-gay way) “more attractive too”. Stevens is certainly more fun than the narrowly predictable young Welshman: lively and entertaining as chancers often are. In short, Nick does not just accept him with a pragmatic laying aside of snobbery but thoroughly takes to him until the bounder starts an affair with his married sister-in-law, Lady Priscilla. This rapport with Stevens is an intensified version of Nick’s lower-key and unassuming camaraderie with the Welsh officers. He is “flattered” when Stevens takes him into his confidence; “glad” to be “housed next to someone who appeared agreeable”: a close echo of Nick’s response on meeting Kedward. And they stem from the same situation. AP as a boy had experienced the constant uprooting leading to alienation which characterised army life when he and his mother had followed his father to various homeland postings; but thereby he had an idea of what could be done about it this time round: establish good relations with one’s fellows as rapidly as possible for both social and professional reasons and perhaps cultural, given his interest in the Welsh people. When he had arrived in Pembrokeshire he was in a minority of one and was naturally pleased rapidly to get on good terms with members of the host tribe. Having achieved that with the Welsh officers, he was now uprooted again and sent to Aldershot where there was not even a host unit offering potential esprit de corps, just atomised individuals like himself from all over the army whose sole and ephemeral point in common was the course.

Consistently the advantage lies with Stevens. He owns a car, albeit a “broken down” one, and so when they have a weekend’s leave he can drop Nick off at the house of another of the latter’s shoal of sisters-in-law, Lady Frederica, where Nick’s own pregnant wife is staying along with other assorted members of the Tolland clan. Invited in for a drink, Stevens “seems perfectly at ease” in this comital throng and indeed puts the Honourable Robert, still a Lance Corporal, at ease when the latter very properly addresses him as “Sir”, matily telling him to drop that vocative when they are off duty. And, of course, he gets rapidly on good terms with Lady Priscilla, who shows herself no snob when it comes to an adulterous liaison.

This episode turns out to be Stevens’ entrée not just to Nick’s family but to his general circle where he remains, collaborating (or in Farebrother’s case

---

88 VB, p. 140.
illegally conspiring) with the men and having affairs with the women; the ill-fated Lady Priscilla is just the start. Eventually years after the war AP, tiring of the character, marries him off to the last of that line, the wealthy widow Rosie Manasch and he fades out. But *ipso facto* by then Stevens has succeeded in his aim of establishing himself among the upper crust, and also of becoming a recognised writer.

K Edward probably succeeds post-war in *his* ambition of becoming a bank manager back on home turf, but this is unrecorded. Gwatkin has no option but to retreat to his pre-war life, and his death is at least noted in the 1960s shortly after he has retired from the bank but is still a pillar of the local British Legion. Stevens’ ambitions help explain his contrasting staying power in *Dance* but in this he is more typical than the Welshmen who simply resume their pre-war grooves away from its mainstream. Farebrother, for example, pops up again in wartime after twenty years. The Welshmen, like the cast at La Grenadière, where Nick and Widmerpool resort as recent school-leavers to improve their French, never do, with the exception of Bithel, who appears more grotesque than ever.

And even during the war itself they do not interact with any of the rest of the *galère*. Gwatkin must be the only major character who does not. They remain discrete in time and place: updated Aristotle, faithfully reflecting AP’s own experience when he was with them for a mere seven months secreted in the camps of Britain’s far west. Nick enters their world; they do not enter his, making *VB* the most self contained novel of the series. So we can never know how Gwatkin, K Edward, or Breeze would have interacted with the metropolitan artistic/literary set or with the comital in laws, although they would probably have been received by the latter cordially enough. They show, however, Nick’s capacity for camaraderie with those of different background shorn of the elaborations and then the disillusion it leads to in Stevens’ case.

So relations and therefore memories seem to have been good. None the less this detailed fitting in is that of Nick Jenkins in the novel. A little dovetailing

89 *TK*, pp. 159–65.

90 *HSH*, p. 134.

91 Ibid., e.g. pp. 142, 211–12, 224, 226, 233.
SECRET HARMONIES 8
evidence is given by AP for himself. Hence it probably reflects what he himself had achieved or thought he had achieved. Barber thinks that AP and Jenkins “are never closer in thought, word and deed than on active service”.92 But one cannot be sure. Has anyone ever researched what his comrades in arms did think of him? It is too late now: practically all his comrades are dead and the youngest of the rare survivors is about 96.

Through the war AP added a contemporary dimension to his antiquarian knowledge of Wales. He was confident enough to praise his protégé Kingsley Amis’s That Uncertain Feeling for its adeptness “at recording South Wales behaviour and diction. The sense the book gives of understanding the South Welsh ... also evident in Amis’s poems.” This friendship also helped AP not to become rusty on the subject as he visited the Amises in Swansea.93

Nonetheless his romantic, sporadically inaccurate approach to Wales and its past did not evaporate post-war: in his study of John Aubrey he refers to “the red earth of Glamorgan”. Wrong: that is Gwent next door. The soil of Glamorgan is muddy brown – or in the coal measures often black. But to be fair he was misled by Aubrey himself.94 Plangently, this allegedly red earth was “among those Welsh lands won with an admixture of force and prudent marriage by ancestors from whom the generations had left him separate and strangely remote”:95 a hint of fellow feeling with his forerunner of Marches stock from long ago.

Inferentially AP hankered for what might have been, had his family not lost what remained of their land in Radnorshire in the late eighteenth century.

---

92 Barber, p. 128.
93 Strangers, p. 160. Amis, a noted mimic, strikes me as having the edge on AP when it comes to South Welsh diction and register. But then he lived and worked in Swansea for twelve years 1949–61 socialising copiously with the more bibulous natives. He continued social somewhat drink sodden visits there for the rest of his life: result The Old Devils (1986).
94 Aubrey (revised edition Hogarth Press, 1988), p. 243. Aubrey (1626–97) is in 1696 staying with his cousin at Llantrithyd Place in the Vale of Glamorgan and is quoted as remarking “Here is a fine red earth but not deep” in which he hopes to be buried. Today the soil of Llantrithyd is boringly brown and it seems unlikely that it has changed colour over the last three hundred years or so. Aubrey may, however, have been using a different, long obsolete, classification of colour. In traditional Welsh glas, for example, denotes both blue and green; and coch both red and brown.
95 Ibid., p. 246.
This was natural enough: he was surrounded by people who still boasted country estates. The rather banal character of Pardoe, another rare Welsh name, does not resemble either AP or his father in most respects. But then he does not need to coruscate. He has inherited a Jacobean house plus estate in the Marches with enough money to keep them up; he is an officer like the elder Powell/Jenkins but in a smarter regiment, the Grenadier Guards, and annoyingly he marries Barbara Goring, granddaughter of Lord Aberavon, no less, from the same region, on whom Jenkins had been keen. Pardoe’s assets rub the Powell family’s losses in.

AP did contemplate moving to his ancestral Marches when he bought a country house at last, but dismissed this as being too far from London. So he never established himself in Wales as a member of the county set as he might have done, adopting perhaps the model of his Oxford acquaintance, John “the Widow” Lloyd (1900–1978), who after an undergraduate career too louche to have gone down well in his native Montgomeryshire, next door to Radnorshire, re-established himself there, carving out a career as an antiquarian and of more general paternalistic public service to the extent of becoming a member of the small but powerful Welsh establishment. In his later years 1960–74 he became a lay preacher in the Churches of his shire, bequeathing the manuscripts of his sermons to the Bodleian where they now repose within easy distance of the site of the Hypocrites Club. But Lloyd’s Welsh roots did not have to be re-wrought; AP’s did. He need not have bothered: as he observed, the Welsh are quickly absorbed at all levels into English society.

AP’s two brands of Welsh experience never fuse, and neither fuses with the mainstream of the life depicted in the Dance, in his earlier novels, and in his memoirs. His antiquarian, historical, and genealogical interests are a private hobby which (with one obvious exception) leave only a few allusive traces in his writings. Nick is in his ancestral Pembrokeshire because the army has coincidentally sent him there, not of his own genealogical volition. Now that

96 BM, passim.


98 Faces, p. 99.
AP has encountered a bunch of contemporary Welshmen, however, he rises to the occasion and produces a lasting novel focussed on them, despite their lack of antiquarian allure (although he sometimes seeks to graft it on to them). But the late and bizarre re-emanation of Bithel apart, the novel is self-contained, an impressive one off, and parallel in that way to the study of Aubrey whose own focus is far from exclusively Welsh. After the war (the sole point of intersection) these Welshmen disappear. They return to their world and AP/Jenkins to his. And these worlds do not overlap, geographically, culturally, or socially. I find it easy to imagine Kedward as a leading light in 1960s Cowbridge; impossible to imagine him at all in the metropolitan literary swim. And this implies its obverse: AP’s involvement with contemporary Wales was limited confined to occasional visits. He made no regular forays there to keep in touch with his old comrades: he was, after all, busy working for decades part-time directly in publishing and higher journalism in addition to the little matter of his own capacious output. He must have known two or three generations of the worthies of The Radnorshire Society with whom he corresponded. Indeed many of them were leaders of Radnorshire society such as it is. In contrast to the wartime Valleysmen, they were more his bracket socially and culturally, and shared his interests. But neither they nor (except marginally) Radnorshire itself appear in the novels. Hence Welsh characters are not strewn around the Dance outside the pages of VB. They are confined to Pardoe who may just scrape into the category and Bithel, an unexpected revenant in the very last of the series who I think is in any case dragged in there by the heels. Nor does AP apply his antiquarian interests to the writing of historical novels. They do fuel and are probably fuelled by the exception, his study of John Aubrey.

None the less his genealogical interests could have influenced the concept and structure of the Dance at a deeper level: both involve a ramifying cast of characters stretching to infinity, some compelling and some mysterious. So in atomised form does Aubrey’s Brief Lives. And this scholarly, through-the-study-window approach to Wales endures, far outlasting AP’s direct association with contemporary Welshmen. All but one of the articles in the Radnorshire Transactions appear post-war: usually one per year from 1957 until 1979. He reverts to his pre-war approach to the country, which is deeply rooted when compared with his wartime encounter.

Such industry on top of his other activities attests to the sincerity of AP’s Welsh interests, even if they are grafted on. It is unclear what drew him to
them early while he was at Oxford and kept him interested with such application for decades. His own Welsh ancestry was relatively “far away”, like Cunedda receding on the cloud. There had been no recent Welsh infusion from the female lines: neither his paternal grandmother, his mother, nor his own wife were Welsh. AP’s grandfather (died 1912) who was resident in the East Midlands was, as far as we know, not interested, while his father “was positively affronted by family history”. Barber plausibly suggests that this encouraged AP, “a gesture of defiance” against his often tiresome parent.99 But that would hardly have sustained his interest for the ensuing seventy years, long after he had slipped the paternal leash.

More broadly, England teems with people of slightly distant Welsh descent: AP’s category. Notable examples include Sir Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958), AP’s fellow Hypocrite, Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard (1902–1973), who became a distinguished anthropologist, the present Countess of Wessex, and surprisingly, Mrs Thatcher (née Roberts). But they usually make little of it: Vaughan Williams is celebrated as the quintessentially English songwriter and composer, although he occasionally evoked his Welsh ancestry; Evans-Pritchard preoccupied himself with the Sudan not Swansea; while Mrs Thatcher’s policies were inimical to the majority in her ancestral land, which led to a mutual lack of acclamation. There is no parallel to Harold Macmillan’s exploitation in Scotland of his Highland descent. She came across as something of an English rather than British nationalist, aided in this by her solidly English married name and her extreme eastern shire upbringing in Lincolnshire, an immediate provenance she shared with AP’s mother. By contrast AP assiduously worked at his hybrid of scholarship, antiquarianism, and mythology. It was something he wanted to do. And he offered his own explanation in terms which manage to be both detailed and general:

Unlike my father, I have always found pleasure in genealogical investigation. When properly conducted it teaches much about the vicissitudes of life; the vast extent of human oddness. To dismiss the subject with one of those arch (though not necessarily uncomplacent) generalisations would on my part be hypocritical, concealing the manner in which I have spent a good deal of spare time.100

99 Barber p. 59.

100 Infants, p. 2.
Some interest in one’s family tree is very usual but is often narrow in scope. As this passage indicates, AP went far beyond that, devoting an unusual amount of time and effort to building up a broad knowledge to which his own genealogy was the entry point.

And so he lent his prestige to Welshness, Cymreictod, stressing the antiquity of the nation, its culture, and its traditions against the perpetual tide of English indifference. He should be given credit for that.

Notes:
The catchment areas for AP’s battalion
See Faces, p. 96. The map brings out that the battalion hailed from the Eastern Valleys of Glamorgan. The core towns which usually have administrative districts named after them are in italic. Treorchy in the Rhondda is included because Gwatkin was regularly deployed there to operate a makeshift bank.

Lord Aberavon
Aberavon on Swansea Bay is not in this cluster. The first Roland Gwatkin – died 1900 – took his title from there. Why? And see the following from AW:

Through french windows behind Lord Aberavon
stretched a broad landscape, possibly the vale of
Glamorgan – in which something had also gone
seriously wrong with the colour values (AW, p. 109).

Lord Aberavon’s portrait by Isbister was in the late 1920s in the house of his son-in-law, Sir Gavin Walpole Wilson.

Roland Gwatkin, like his WW11 namesake, hailed from the Radnorshire/Shropshire/Herefordshire border, which is very accurately observed – the northern tip of the Gwatkin heft. And like many from the Middle Marches he went north, not south, to seek his fortune – to a shipping office in Liverpool. Then, a fortune once achieved, he bought an estate on his native heath. So what was he doing with a southern title and painted against a southern landscape? It is possible that he diversified to the shipping centred on Cardiff and Swansea, which was an upstart compared with the well-established Liverpool trade and which expanded mightily after 1860. But AP does not say so. He may well have been flinging Welsh place names around indiscriminately – forsaking accuracy. Perhaps he was influenced by his
recent work on John Aubrey, who often freeloaded on his cousin and namesake at Llantrithyd, Vale of Glamorgan.
In early 1991, as Anthony Powell was listening to BBC Radio, he heard an advertisement for an Alan Bennett adaptation of an episode from Marcel Proust’s novel *A la recherche du temps perdu*. “On the whole, the best-known one” the announcer intoned. Powell waggishly wrote this down in his journal, as of course Proust published no other novel than his great seven-book sequence, his earlier, unfinished autobiographic work, *Jean Santeuil*, only being published posthumously. But would the same be true of Powell? Would “on the whole, the best-known one” be an understatement?

As impressive in heft as *A Dance to the Music of Time* is, we should realize that Powell wrote and published more books that were not *Dance* than were. Moreover, the first twenty-three years of his publishing career, and the seventeen or so of active writing of Powell’s post-*Dance* career, are together longer in duration than the nearly quarter-century required to achieve *Dance*. Mere bulk does not determine anything of course: but those figures are suggestive, and to my mind make plausible this reassessment of Powell’s non-*Dance* work. I will divide my discussion into three categories, non-*Dance* fiction, nonfiction, and non-detached.

One can see that, as compared to *Dance*, and notwithstanding their individual differences, the five prewar novels are similar. All are short (less than 250 pages), with only *What’s Become of Waring* having a first-person narrator. All feature protagonists about Powell’s age at the time but are only indirectly novels of maturation or growing up, and, though they are not without a point
of view, perhaps, they do not seem to have a philosophy of life. *Dance* is not simply longer—and anyone who has read *To Keep The Ball Rolling* remembers Powell’s observation about wanting to write a long novel so he could keep characters in play rather than perpetually reinvent them—it is different. Whereas the prewar novels stay on one temporal plane *Dance* is from the beginning suffused with retrospection. *Dance* is full of long, discursive passages and allusions to art, literature, and society, all of which are either lacking or highly stylized in the prewar novels. Moreover, the vocabulary of *Dance* is more formal, more Latinate, less colloquial; in a way less spontaneous, less what Powell termed (speaking of *Afternoon Men*) ‘lyrical’. This non-subjective lyricism can be seen in this passage, after Susan Nunnery has abandoned Atwater:

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

The repetition here captures both clinical distance (as in the manner of Hemingway and even Gertrude Stein) and melancholy abandonment, as this is just how someone suddenly desolated in love would muse and mourn. In *Dance*, this would all be filtered through the bemused retrospective prism of Jenkins’s sensibility, and be more refined, but less frank.

The key differences are elsewhere, though. First of all, *Dance* is consistently, laugh-out-loud funny. Even today, having read the sequence several times over, alas, several decades, I laugh repeatedly, at things ranging from comic incidents between the characters to amusing names to witty turns of phrase to ironic citations of cultural and artistic references. There are very funny incidents in the prewar novels—Pringle’s reappearance in *Afternoon Men*, Major Fosdick’s sartorial and reading habits in *From A View to a Death*, the séance in *What’s Become of Waring*—but overall the atmosphere of the prewar novels is quirky rather than funny. The *Dance* Powell is, like the early Waugh, Dickens, Thackeray, and Meredith, a novelist whose humour is one of his major strengths; the prewar Powell is a writer who can be funny but first notices the oddity and particularity of human situations rather than the humour that can be glimpsed in them. Although even some critics at the time, such as G U Ellis, saw Powell was a fundamentally more important
writer than Waugh, few would put any of Powell’s prewar novels in terms of humour alone up against *Decline and Fall* or *Vile Bodies*.

The prewar novels are also highly discontinuous from previous English fiction. This is an effect of Powell’s being of a new and fresh generation, and also of the disruptions of war and modernism, but it is not inevitable. In 1935, at the Los Angeles premiere of George Cukor’s film version of *David Copperfield*, Hugh Walpole, who had helped write the script, gave a special address, as if to represent to the gathered Hollywood elite that the tradition of Dickens was alive: we may not have Dickens now, but we have someone who, though not as good a writer, is in that tradition. J B Priestley, a figure we know Powell derided as pompous and officious, was also involved. The prewar Powell, even though he was in Los Angeles at about that time, could not fill this role at all, the gap between him and Walpole or Priestley as wide as between Nicholas Jenkins and St. John Clarke. Yet the *Dance* Powell avows the same Galsworthy it satirizes as a part model, and—as I tried to point out at the conference at the In and Out last September—several of the names, and much of the sequence’s trajectory indicates a clear awareness of *David Copperfield*. It is not surprising to see the Powell who had just completed writing *Dance* concur with C P Snow that, even though Dickens is not a personal favorite, one can think of no better novelist in English than Dickens. It would be hard to see the younger Powell saying this. Some readers might find that the humour and politics in *Dance* get in the way of the clear-eyed if idiosyncratic view of the world presented in the earlier fiction. While the early point-of-view characters are Powell *manqué*, all lacking some spark that made their creator what he was, the lack of a Jenkins-style surrogate may let the reader encounter the writing more directly.

The prewar novels are also not concerned with politics. At times politics comes in around the edges—the aristocrat versus arriviste issue in *From A View*, the entire Baltic-state setting of *Venusburg*—but the overall social history and the slight though discernible political point of view present in *Dance* are absent in the prewar books. This alone has made them more congenial to some, such as the late Sir Frank Kermode, who, when I tentatively proffered a copy of my Powell book to him on re-encountering him in Cambridge in 2005, averred that he thought the later Powell a bit of a snob but thought the early novels—and, perhaps, the war trilogy in *Dance*—worth a look. Kermode had different politics and class identification than Powell, and he preferred the books where he sensed the writer’s perspective
the least—the place where their sense of experience was the most common. The prewar novels, in an odd way, may speak to a wider constituency precisely because they leave out the particularities in which Dance—rewardingly for most of us—is so enmeshed. They also seem very detached, possessing little of the personal motivation one can see visible in Dance. This may be least true of Waring, not so much because of the obviousness of the first person narrator but because the send-up of the derivativeness of T T Waring’s writing has something to do with AP’s feeling about his own talent versus that of his contemporaries.

One might see the two modes as linked to different phases of Powell’s life, the staccato ironies of the prewar books representing the younger man trying to find his feet in literary London, the languorous and learned mode of Dance representing the mature wisdom of the sage of the Chantry. Yet when Powell, to the astonishment of many who thought his Memoirs were the equivalent of Sillery’s Garnered At Sunset, published a new novel in 1983, it was basically a return to the 1930s mode. The only thing differentiating O, How The Wheel Becomes It! from its 1930s predecessors were the role of memory, necessary in order to have characters like those in the earlier fiction function in the present-day world, and some of the literary and political references: the title from Shakespeare, the reference of Gaddafi—an aspect in which the book is happily no longer timely—and the satire on academia. But the core relationships, between Shadbold, Winterwade, and the former Isolde Upjohn are straight out of the interpersonal dynamic of, say, Agents and Patients. That Powell, after a forty-three year absence from writing stand-alone novels, settled back so seamlessly into his earlier mode indicates that this was not just a function of age, but of genre. This is not to say that the prewar kind of book was the only sort of short novel he could write. In my final section, I will discuss The Fisher King, which seems to me an altogether different sort of book.

For now, though, I want to look at the second part of the non-Dance Powell: nonfiction. Powell’s first book, the edited Barnard letters, and his last—no matter how one counts that, as A Writer’s Notebook, Journals 1990-92, Some Poets. Artists, and a Reference for Mellors, or even The Acceptance of Absurdity—are both nonfiction. Intriguingly—and hence the title of this discussion—the one book of Nicholas Jenkins’s actually mentioned in Dance, Borage and Hellebore, is nonfiction. Jenkins is mentioned as a novelist. In what is still the episode in Dance that makes me laugh as hard as anything, St.
John Clarke even mentions him in a long list of novelists he provides as part of an article on the current British scene for a New York newspaper. But no specific book title is ever mentioned, nor do we get an idea of the content of Jenkins’s novels. But we do know Jenkins has written a nonfiction book on Robert Burton. The immediate purpose of this is to allude to or parallel the real-life Powell’s real-life book on Aubrey. But the Burton book has a thematic significance in *Dance*. This is to establish a parallel in English prose for this garrulous, learned melancholy narrative, a way, to go back to my earlier point, to make it not Dickens, not (to General Liddament’s disappointment) Trollope. It also tells us, as much as anything in the book, what kind of person Nicholas Jenkins is.

Does Powell’s Aubrey book do the same for him? *John Aubrey and His Friends* is a more academic book than any of the books devoted solely to Anthony Powell—including my own. It is the kind of book that if an American academic had written it,—not so much Russell Gwinnett but Grover Rasch in *The Rest I’ll Whistle* or Professor Kopf in *The Fisher King*, would be dismissed as ponderous with a light joke in the British press. This is not at all meant as criticism of the book, but as high praise. Powell might have written a chatty, gossipy book whose lack of depth would be explicable on the basis of his being a great novelist, but he sat down and did the job, as completely and competently as anyone alive, in or out of academia, then was capable of doing. No one knew more about the literature and culture of seventeenth-century England than the Powell who had researched this book, and the sheer cognitive backbone of it all surely was essential to *Dance*. I would like to read aloud a passage from the Aubrey book to show its academic quality:

> It would not be an easy task to decide, from out of the mass of names of contemporaries with whom he was familiar, who should be considered Aubrey’s ‘friends’, had he not himself composed a list of ‘amici’. This register is in itself of some interest, because although any biographer might have marked down more than half of those inscribed—from the warmth or frequency with which they are mentioned in Aubrey’s writings—the remainder include names impossible to guess that he considered in such a light, some indeed scarcely mentioned by him elsewhere in his papers. That Aubrey felt it possible to draw up a list of this kind
shows that he regarded neither death nor prolonged absence as altering the relationship; any more than daily or close contact with other persons turned them necessarily into friend.

What is academic here is not just the learning but also the determination to get it right, to not bypass the subtleties. There is some dry wit in the reference to death, but this is not prose written merely to entertain. Even Powell’s most ardent admirer might agree with Graham Greene when he said it was a bloody boring book anyway. (Characteristically, Powell registers this episode in the acknowledgments, but masterfully pulls his punches, saying “Mr. Graham Greene made valuable comments after seeing the manuscript.”) But Powell took a calculated risk here: he was willing to be boring if doing so meant being accurate and scholarly, (he took the same risk in his memoirs). In both cases, the books seem bland on first reading but repeated rereading show how much subtlety and equipoise the writer has distilled into these works.

Yet Powell might well have written the Aubrey book differently had he written it later, after he had more experience writing nonfiction. For, even though he wrote reviews before the war, it was after the war that he reviewed extensively, for the *TLS, Punch*, and the *Telegraph*. At first, he mainly reviewed contemporary fiction, but as he grew older he moved from writing nonfiction about fiction to nonfiction about nonfiction—reviews of biographies, writers’ letters, histories, memoirs that often referred to fiction but through a double filter of nonfiction. If books do furnish a room, many of the books on the shelves of the Chantry were nonfiction, as witness the two I bought at Heywood Hill some years ago, General Mannerheim’s memoirs and Desmond Seward’s biography of François 1er. Given that we have just observed the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Lady Violet Powell, it might be apt to observe that Lady Violet’s prolific and, to my mind, too little recognized literary production was all nonfiction, and that after she began to publish such the nonfictional emphasis in Anthony Powell’s work became even more pronounced. I do not offer this as dispositive, but perhaps indicative. Contrast this nonfiction emphasis to the reported reading habits of Powell’s old school-friend and fellow experimental novelist Henry Green. Green was reported, in later life, to have read a novel a day, although this begs the question of what sort of novels, and to what extent Green’s sobriety, or lack thereof, influenced his enjoyment of the fiction. Powell was always
reading a book, but from the evidence of the *Journals* this was basically split between fiction and nonfiction.

One sees in Powell’s shift from reviewing fiction to nonfiction not just, as Powell averred, feeling out of touch with current fiction as younger generations took over, but a fundamental chafing against the conventions of fiction, its narrative tricks and traps, in favour of the more unadorned *and* more reflective quality of nonfiction. Powell, after all, read history at Oxford, and people who praise *Dance* speak as much of its historical as literary eminence. (It has always been a particular favorite of practicing historians). Much like his (supposed) friend V S Naipaul, Powell was deft at telling a tale—deft er than Naipaul, in fact—but saw advantages in the clear-eyed perspective of nonfiction. Powell’s book reviews are what they are. Their short length and journalistic origin meaning they can hardly serve as a comprehensive body of critical thought, although Powell’s lightly dropped remarks emerge as surprisingly probative whenever one has recourse to them. Ths occurs, for instance, in his memorable review of A N Wilson’s book on Tolstoy, which when I read it at the Century club in New York in 2009, caused two Tolstoy scholars (who unbeknownst to me, were in the audience) to fume. I was actually trying to give a tribute to Tolstoy, and so was Powell, although this tribute took the form of asking hard questions and pointing out ironies:

> After the abortive revolution of 1905 there was an aftermath of civil disturbance in Russia. Marauding peasants cut down 129 oak trees on the Yasnaya Polyana estate, taking away the timber. Then a night watchman was murdered. The property had by then been made over by Tolstoy to his wife, who called up the police. The Governor came over to see what he could do to help. It was rather embarrassing because Tolstoy’s son was having an affair with the Governor’s wife. All most unTolstoyan.

Some of the reviews are extremely funny, such as the one on the painter Degas, where Powell points out the surname was originally Flemish: “De Gas.” Powell wrote superbly in short expository form—the review, the genealogical essay (some work needs to be done on the somewhat different
writing style he adopted as A D Powell, genealogist), and, as we see from The Acceptance of Absurdity, in letters.

We all know about the Journals—how wonderful they are, how even though he did not start keeping a journal until the age of seventy-six they are up there with other diarists of his generation such as James Lees-Milne and Frances Partridge, how they in effect institute not just a sequel to the Memoirs but a sequel to Dance. One has not read Powell unless you have read the Journals, and they are the first books I would recommend for readers who want a taste of Powell’s style without having to plunge into the lives of hundreds of interlocked fictional characters. People have talked about them in terms of being gossipy, about the upper crust, and snide about other writers. I would rather think of them as uninhibited and coruscating, as in this excerpt from 1987 on the TV adaptation of Alison Lurie’s novel Imaginary Friends:

Film suffered from incurable English theatrical tendency to make everything comic, even farcical, also began badly, perhaps inevitable difficulty of American academic life bring so different from British institutions and personnel.

Alison Lurie was a good friend of Powell’s, and as said before Powell was a quintessentially English figure, so what is striking here is his willingness to see things as he sees them, without intervening prejudices. As Martin Seymour-Smith memorably said of Powell’s work, the events of life are there seen for what they are, “without even such feelings about them as Powell, himself, possesses.” The spirited reflectiveness of the Journals is infectious. Admittedly, the Memoirs are not as fun to read as the Journals. They are drier, more matter-of-fact, and more official, more like the Aubrey book. Notwithstanding this, I always enjoyed reading them—and prize the abridged version especially because the author himself abridged. Some parts of the Memoirs—the Monkey Temple scene, Michelangelo’s snowman, Basil Hambrough’s observations of Powell’s father on the drilling-field, Sir Maurice Bowra’s profane exclamation on the malfunction of a Maltese funicular, the harrowing evocation of George Orwell’s funeral are not scenes the reader of Powell would easily lose. But the way I read the Memoirs nonetheless changed once I read the Journals. I began to see the Memoirs as ‘scripts for the pageant,’ an extended set of dramatis personae that set the
ground for the more anecdotal and livelier doings of the Journals. In operatic terms, the Memoirs are the recitative, the Journals the aria. It is interesting, incidentally, how much musical analogies come up in talking about Powell’s writing style. I think of how music was linked with mathematics in the medieval quadrivium, and that both were seen as nonfictional, objective. In the Journals, particularly, one can see this sense of research, of looking curiously and objectively at the world, unfettered by the gimmicks or plotlines necessary to a well-crafted and satisfying novel. In addition, whereas Powell foreshadows Jenkins’s ageing and death at the end of Dance, unless we believe Jenkins dies as he is closing the novel (something which the “wintry silence” might well mean) as depicted he is a hearty and hale sexagenarian. By the end of the Journals, Powell reaches extreme old age, and we see infirmity and weariness setting upon him, in one of the most honest and forthright depictions of growing old—and, appropriately enough, one of the least self-pitying—recorded in world literature. In both Memoirs and Journals, Powell used nonfiction to tell the truth as he saw it about himself, and, more empathetically, the world.

Now we go to the third and perhaps most interesting part, non-detached. I was dismissive of Powell’s plays in my book, and, even worse, was so just to make a cheap joke about Powell’s non-lucrative venture into drama not changing his work as that of Henry James did. But I now see I was wrong, and it took the dramatization of The Garden God at the College of Arms to make me see this. After seeing the staged reading, I reread both plays—both original plays, that is, as there is also the dramatization of Afternoon Men. What struck me at the College of Arms—and several other member of the audience as well—was the similarity with The Fisher King. Not just in terms of the cruise ship—although Fisher’s cruise is in the North Sea, Garden God’s in the Mediterranean—but in the clearly humanistic agenda, the concern with seeing characters be happy, happy in love but in general be fulfilled, realized individuals: the two plays and the Fisher King might have in common the assertion of Le Bas’ bane, Oscar Wilde, in De Profundis, “Whatever is realized, is right.” The courtship of Kent and Lucinda in Garden God is reminiscent of Robin Jilson’s and Barberina in Fisher. This is indeed even more emphatic in The Rest I’ll Whistle where the putative liberation of the daughter, Ankaret Ludlow, from the father’s clutches is very much portrayed as a stepping-forward into autonomy and self-determination.
The portrait of the 1960s generation gap is, by the way, more positive in *Whistle* than in *Hearing Secret Harmonies*, as it is the traditionalist father—the Laius who here successfully foils the American Oedipus—who is the warped figure, not the Ankaret whom Powell himself described as a 'hippy'. Powell was able to vindicate traditionalism in the last book of *Dance* by having earlier seen its potential hypocrisy and exploitaton in *Whistle*. Ankaret’s reabsorption by her (supposed) father at the end is seen as a curtailment of her aspirations, not a setting the world to rights in the mode of Passenger’s triumph over Fosdick and Zouch in *From A View*. *Whistle* powerfully testifies even in absentia to the idea of moral freedom (I use this phrase in the sense that Iris Murdoch uses it in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*.) For most writers, this would be unremarkable, but we have to remember how detached the prewar books were. Moreover, for all the greater narrative perspective of *Dance*, it is apparent that one of the great virtues of the sequence is tolerance. This trait of Powell’s is the one I have heard mentioned again and again by all sorts of readers—male and female, rich and poor, old and young, British, American, Australian, and worldwide—that Powell looks at humanity broadly, that he is not prescriptive, not judgmental. The combination of the narrative’s acute observation and its lack of judgment are striking, and in many ways original and specific to Powell. But they necessitate a certain detachment in order to hold back. Jenkins may sympathize, but he does not cheerlead or promote specific outcomes. This differs in the two plays and *The Fisher King*, where positive emotional developments for individuals are endorsed in ways that would have seemed prescriptive within *Dance*. The key to *Fisher* is the liberation of Barbarina Rookwood from Henchman. Henchman of course represents the voyeuristic gaze; this is manifest in a malign way in the relationship of Widmerpool and Pamela. But it is also in a benign way in Jenkins’s own passive voyeurism. Powell famously characterized himself as a voyeur rather than an exhibitionist. In *Fisher*, the looking that is part of Jenkins’s love of art, and in a nastier way of Henchman’s photography, is seen as oppressive, and Barbarina’s escape from it is seen as a moral enlargement. Similarly in *Whistle* we might take Ludlow for a Powell spokesman, until we realize how awful he is. Not only is there this thematic similarity, but details in *Whistle* link it to *Fisher*, the mention of Excalibur, the general Celtic-medieval mood, and the similarity of Professor Rasch in that play to Professor Kopf in the novel, although the latter was reinforced by a new character model—one of the few of Powell’s whom I have met personally. All this confirms Powell as
a novelist of great depth and variety, whose talents were not restricted to one mode or rhythm.

As said before, one of Powell’s great achievements was to largely break with the previous tradition of English fiction (remarkably, he did this while still remaining quintessentially English in many ways). And the tradition of English fiction, from Fielding and Richardson through to George Eliot and even Galsworthy, emphasizes psychological reform and personal growth. Powell at first wanted to get away from all that, from the preachiness and old-fashioned predictability of it all. Powell wanted to show that even if the idea of self-improvement was not cardinal to his novelistic outlook, he still had it in him to depict it. Powell knew his limits and predilections as a writer, and his self-knowledge is part of the security of outlook that has caused so many to gravitate to him. But he also liked to do things he was not generally known for doing. He says, in his correspondence with the Holliday Bookstore’s Robert Vanderbilt, that he has never managed to write short stories, but then says *A Reference for Mellors* is close. He writes *Caledonia* as a one-off poetic satire, yet it is a poem that masters its conventions winningly, as do the pastiche-poems in *Dance*. Even in cooking his own curry recipe, Powell liked to show he was competent even at practices that were not his métier. The late theme of psychological growth, seen in the plays and *Fisher*, is a substantive example of this.

If—as we all hope is the case—there is a French serialized dramatization of *Dance* in a hundred years, *Dance* will rightly be spoken of as Powell’s *oeuvre la plus connue*. But, for all its glorious achievement, it is my contention that the sequence, for the reasons I have outlined, exemplifies but does not exhaust what a Spanish newspaper, in 1982, termed Powell’s "clairvoyance, reality and severity.”
Back in the 1950s any keen follower of the writings of Anthony Powell who had read the first four novels in the *A Dance to the Music of Time* sequence would quite likely have been rather surprised when beginning the fifth title, *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant*.

The first four had followed a chronological narrative as the early years of the narrator Nicholas Jenkins’s life unfolded, beginning with his schooldays, and with the fourth novel taking the reader up to 1934. However, on the opening page of *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant* we find Nicholas Jenkins, in post-war London, observing the bombed ruins of the pub where many years earlier he had first met the character he introduces in this novel, that of Hugh Moreland. It is rather curious that it is almost immediately made clear to the reader that this new character, Moreland, is dead. “As an accompaniment to Moreland’s memory music was natural,” we are told. Yet Moreland does not die in this novel, but we have the feeling that this person, clearly associated with music, is of some special significance to Jenkins, if not to Powell himself.

While *A Dance to the Music of Time* is not, of course, strictly speaking autobiographical, there are autobiographical and biographical elements, and many of these are to be found in *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant*. Nicholas Jenkins is of course Anthony Powell and it is no secret that Hugh Moreland, usually just Moreland, is based to some extent on Powell’s great friend, the composer and conductor Constant Lambert. How close a friend he was I hope will become evident this evening, as well as trying to show how *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant* holds a very special place in the Dance sequence, quite possibly the one novel of the twelve that meant the most to its author.
1. The Mortimer

The novel opens, as I said, in post-war London with Jenkins gazing at the bombed remains of the pub in which he first met his friend Moreland. Anthony Powell has left no account of which London pub it was. Did he have any particular pub in mind? He mentions “a cheerless Soho sky” and there are two pubs, not strictly in Soho, that might be contenders as their clientele at differing times included writers, musicians and intellectuals in general. The first could be The Fitzroy Tavern, in Charlotte Street, that was frequented by such artists as Nina Hamnett, Augustus John and Jacob Epstein, and heavy drinkers like Dylan Thomas. Lambert was occasionally found in the Fitzroy but as it grew popular it became a rather noisy pub and many of its regulars moved elsewhere, and more often it was The George not far away in Great Portland Street that Lambert frequented.

"The Gluepot"

This was a short distance from the Queen’s Hall and was a convenient pub for the musicians playing there. It became known at The Gluepot because, as Sir Henry Wood remarked, many of his orchestral players tended to get stuck in there. A hall with remarkably good acoustics, sadly it was bombed in the war, and with the BBC Symphony Orchestra moving out of London first to Bristol and then Bedford, The George became less of a gluepot. Nevertheless, the composer Elisabeth Lutyens once remarked that if a bomb had dropped
on The George during the war it would have wiped out much of the musical profession. After the war, especially with the formation of the Third Programme, it was much used by writers, poets and musicians working at the BBC. So even if it was not the pub in which Lambert and Powell first met, it was the one with which Lambert was most associated.

But there is one possible reason for The George being the pub in Casanova - and that is its name - The Mortimer. Powell used fictional names for the various restaurants and drinking places he mentions, like Foppas, The Strasbourg, The Hay Loft, and so on. We are told in the first two lines that this bombed-out pub is on a corner (as is The Fitzroy). And The George is on the corner of Great Portland Street and Mortimer Street, hence possibly its name The Mortimer.

The George was not bombed in the war and I have not been able to find out if it had one of those mechanical piano slot machines that Moreland (and Lambert) were so fond of, something that preceded the juke-box, but anyway I propose it as a likely candidate for The Mortimer by virtue of its placing.

Incidentally, Powell makes a strange chronological slip when, in describing their first meeting in The Mortimer he adds that it was ‘now rebuilt in a displeasingly fashionable style and crowded with second-hand salesmen’, something that could have only occurred in a time frame long after the story’s post-war opening.

2. The Kashmiri Love Song

One special feature of the opening to Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant that makes it so marvellously atmospheric is that while Jenkins is describing the ruined pub, over the rubble comes the voice of a woman singing, the same voice we are told that Jenkins and Moreland heard years before, soon after their first meeting. As the narrator says, “The repetition of a vocal performance so stupendously apt was scarcely to be foreseen.” This is what Jenkins referred to as a “natural accompaniment to Moreland’s memory”. A blonde woman on crutches is singing a once-popular song from which Jenkins quotes the first two lines:

Pale hands I loved beside the Shalimar,
Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell?
These lines are from the *Kashmiri Song* (which Powell, or Jenkins, later refers to by name). The *Kashmiri Song* was composed in 1903 by the Chile-born composer, Amy Woodford-Finden, wife of an Indian Army brigadier, setting words by a Gloucestershire-born poet, Adela Florence Nicolson who also lived in India and, under the pen-name of Laurence Hope, wrote poems about loss and unrequited love. The *Kashmiri Song* is actually the third of four *Indian Love Lyrics* and it became extremely popular, much popularised in connection with the 1921 silent film *The Sheik* starring Rudolf Valentino who actually recorded the song himself in 1923, one of only two songs that he ever recorded, and his recording can be heard on *YouTube*.

Jenkins also quotes the first two lines of the last verse, and while they are discussing the possible meaning of the song, Moreland quotes yet another line. Such is the apparent significance of this woman’s singing and of the song that the occasion is also recalled near the end of the next novel in the sequence, *The Kindly Ones* where two more lines are quoted by Moreland:

> Whom do you lead on Rapture’s roadway, far,
> Before you agonize them in farewell?

The key word there is ‘farewell’ but I think it is the second line of the song that seems to me the most significant:

> Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell?

This line is surely an allusion, not to Moreland, but to the person who inspired that character, Constant Lambert. ‘Where are you now?’ the poet asks. Lambert had been dead nearly ten years when the novel appeared, a respectful distance, and he is now transformed into the character of Moreland. “*Who lies beneath your spell?*” Powell wrote of Lambert as being “one of my greatest friends”, and he dedicated his second novel, *Venusberg* (1932), to Constant and his wife Florence. In the early years of their acquaintance Powell and Lambert, “saw a great deal of each other”, and if, later on, circumstances contrived to make their meetings less frequent than they would have wanted, during the last year or two of his life Lambert “used to ring up most weeks and talk”.

One has only to look at Powell’s four volumes of memoirs, *To Keep the Ball Rolling* – or even more significantly, his three volumes of *Journals* from 1982 to 1992 when Lambert was no longer alive – to see the number of
references to him in each of these seven volumes. Even Neil Brennan, in his study of Powell, writes that “years after Lambert’s death Powell continues to quote his judgements” and he quotes Powell as calling Lambert “an old and close friend of mine . . . of tremendous brilliance”. This can only speak of a person who made a strong impact on Powell. It would not be too fanciful therefore to suggest that he came under the spell of Lambert’s strong personality and intellect. Perhaps he understood what was meant by the phrase to “agonize in farewell”.

One interesting fact is that, according to Powell, such a person as the blonde singer did actually frequent Gerrard Street in which Maxim’s Chinese Restaurant, in part the model for Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant, was to be found.

Before we turn to examining Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant and the character Moreland, while I am sure Anthony Powell needs no introduction to you all, I suspect that Constant Lambert will be much less known, so a few words of introduction might be helpful.

3. Constant Lambert

Constant Lambert was a composer, a conductor – chiefly of ballet and arguably the greatest ballet conductor this country has had, a writer and journalist (chiefly on music) and a broadcaster. Today he is probably remembered mainly for two things – a book called Music Ho! published in 1934 which was a marvellous and often very witty survey of musical trends in the ’20s and early ’30s, and The Rio Grande, a lively work for solo piano, chorus and orchestra, that gained popularity partly because of its jazzy elements, and still today creates quite an impact in a concert programme.

Constant’s grandfather, George Washington Lambert, was born in Baltimore and had been one of a group of engineers involved in the construction of the first railways in Russia. It was there that he had met his second wife, the first having died. George then began to have some heart trouble and later they went to London to seek advice. His wife, however, had to make a speedy return to Russia where their fourth child, a son, was born in 1873, while George sadly died in London. This son, Constant’s father, another George, George Washington Thomas Lambert, had an unsettled childhood, moving from Russia to Germany, then England, and finally Australia. There his artistic talents began to show, combined with his love of the bush. In due
course he went to Sydney Art School, met his future wife, Amelia – or Amy as she was known - and they worked together on the *Australian Magazine*, she as a writer and he as an illustrator. George then won a travelling scholarship and, ever an impulsive and self-centred man, he married Amy two days before sailing for Europe. They first stayed in Paris where their first son, Maurice (who became a notable sculptor), was born in 1901, but Paris proved too expensive so they moved to London where Constant was born in 1905.

In England George Lambert, besides teaching at the London School of Art, made a name for himself as a portrait painter and was often away on commissions. Nevertheless, he used all his family as the subjects of many of his paintings, and even painted some striking family groups. One of the best known of these is *The Blue Hat*. This grouping is unusual because it includes Maurice (then about 8), Amy, the 4-year-old Constant at the centre, and a fellow Australian artist from the Sydney School of Art, Thea Proctor, who appears in three of these ‘family’ portraits and in several of George’s other portrait studies. She, with her mother, had followed George to England for further study in London, and was a frequent visitor to the Lambert home and George gave her some instruction. Despite what one might expect, theirs seems to have been only an artistic relationship, whatever Amy might have made of it, especially when Thea was a strikingly beautiful woman and very much outshone her in those family portraits.

Thea Proctor was a skilled artist in her own right and was especially known for her woodcuts and lithographs, and in 1915 she did a delightful lithograph of *Mother and Son*, with Amy and Constant reading. They often read French together and before long Constant’s fluency in that language exceeded Amy’s.

That same year, when Constant was 10, he was sent to Christ’s Hospital School in Horsham, Sussex. There his brilliant start was interrupted with serious medical conditions. Before he had finished his first year there, he was admitted to the school’s infirmary with what was later identified as streptococcal septicaemia. His condition was extremely serious and his parents were put up by friends and stayed close to the school. After three operations during which he nearly died, Constant eventually recovered. He had operations to his left ankle and right knee which regularly had to be drained of infection, and he had an abscess in his right ear from which he
became permanently deaf. After about a month he was sent to the Royal Bathing School in Margate that had pioneered thalassotherapy with indoor salt-water baths. He stayed there for six months. He returned to school after an absence of 5 terms – and then six months later had to be taken to Middlesex Hospital with appendicitis. Later, he had two more operations, and in June 1920 one final operation on the right leg to prevent him from living with permanent disability. In later life Lambert generally walked with a stick. Even at home things were not as they had been. For his first Christmas at home for two years, in 1917, his father was absent as an Australian war artist in Egypt, Palestine and Turkey.

At Christ’s Hospital Constant was understandably a somewhat solitary figure, having been absent for so long, and, at a public school, not being able to play games marked him out. However he used the time to develop his musical ability, absorbing literature, and proving himself in school debates. Although not a popular figure, he had an all-round ability and knowledge that amazed his fellow pupils. Then, in one holiday break, he was taken to see Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes which opened a new world to him and was to shape his future course. The knowledge that he had gained, largely self-taught, in the three arts of design, music and literature would make him an exceptional conductor of ballet.

While at Christ’s Hospital he studied the piano, and in his last year he received the Associate Board gold medal for gaining the highest marks in the highest grade exams. Then in 1922 he enrolled at the Royal School of Music. The previous year his father, who clearly put his own artistic ambitions before family, had sailed for Australia for good. Neither Maurice nor Constant was to see their father again. (In 1926, when her sons seemed safely established, Amy sailed out to Australia to see George but three years later she returned home alone.)

At the Royal College, Constant’s chief interest was in writing ballets and his turn of luck came through his friendship with the composer William Walton who was then living close by in Chelsea as a protégé of the Sitwells to whom Constant had one day introduced himself. When Walton composed the entertainment Façade, setting to music nonsense poems by Edith Sitwell, Constant - at his own suggestion - soon proved to be the ideal reciter.
SECRET HARMONIES 8

But the turn of luck came when Walton had the opportunity of playing a potential ballet score to Diaghilev, and Walton had asked Constant to come along, perhaps for moral support. Diaghilev had suffered considerable financial loss in 1921 with the failure of his staging of *The Sleeping Beauty* in London, and he was now seeking support from the rich newspaper barons. He thought a ballet on an English subject, with an English composer and an English designer would do the trick, but unfortunately Walton was no pianist and Diaghilev was unimpressed by what he heard, not surprising as the work was *Portsmouth Point* which in the hands of a less able pianist could sound a complete mess. However, Lambert had brought with him a ballet that he had recently finished called *Adam and Eve* and Diaghilev asked to hear it. Probably because it was written in short movements and therefore more easily adaptable to a different subject (and with Lambert being an excellent pianist), Diaghilev accepted it, crossed out the title and wrote instead “Romeo and Juliet”. It was premièred at Monte Carlo and, further luck, when instead of an English artist Diaghilev chose Ernst and Miró as designers, there was a riot at the first Paris staging of *Romeo and Juliet*, in protest that these surrealists should be working with a capitalist like Diaghilev! Lambert’s name was made.

Constant had hoped that the designer would be the young artist Christopher (or ‘Kit’) Wood but it was not to be. Nevertheless they met in Paris and Kit Wood did several paintings of Constant, the best-known of which is now at the National Portrait Gallery.

With the death in 1929 of Diaghilev (with whom incidentally Constant had fierce quarrels when he objected to certain changes that Diaghilev wanted to make with *Romeo and Juliet*), English ballet had an opportunity to establish itself without the direct comparison of the *Ballets russes*, and Lambert, with his wide knowledge of music, literature and art, soon proved himself a key figure in ballet, becoming conductor first of the Camargo Society, and then the Vic-Wells Ballet Company (or Sadler’s Wells Ballet as it became). With Ninette de Valois, Frederick Ashton and Robert Helpmann, he shaped the growth of English ballet. To that number was soon to be added another, the young Margot Fonteyn, and it is worth noting that such was Constant’s wide knowledge in the arts that Ashton, Helpmann and Fonteyn each individually approached Constant and asked him to “educate” them which he did by providing lists of books they should read, films they should see, paintings
they should study, and so on. Much later they spoke of their gratitude to Constant for the help he had given them.

Constant’s affairs and relationships, not unlike Hugh Moreland’s, were often secret. He had a fascination for coloured women and also those of oriental appearance. In 1931 he married Florence Chuter whose background and age were, to say the least, obscure, but she was reputedly a model from Java. She, too, Constant had to “educate”. But although they had a child it was not a relationship that endured, especially when in 1934 a rather oriental-looking dancer named Margot Fontes (or Margaret Hookham as she had been) joined the company. Within a year, as Margot Fonteyn, she was given significant roles and her long-lasting affair with Constant began. She was photographed backstage in 1935 with him before a performance of the ballet version of *Façade*.

This was the year when Constant’s marriage with Flo ended. They were both staying with the Hofmannstahls at their Austrian castle not far from Salzburg. This was a recipe for disaster because Flo had discovered that Alice von Hofmannstahl had allowed Constant and Margot Fonteyn the use of her cottage at Hanover Lodge in Regents Park as a love nest. (Constant would often refer to it as ‘Hangover’ Lodge.) During her stay in Austria, Flo created some outrageous scenes, and after several rows with Constant, she tossed her wedding ring in the castle lake. Eventually Raimund von Hofmannstahl, fed up with her behaviour, ejected her with her luggage, after which, as Cecil Beaton wrote in his diary: “The wife of a composer, upon being expelled from the castle, flounced out rudely exhibiting her behind.”

A photograph, in earlier and happier days, of Florence and Constant with Anthony Powell at Gerald Reitlinger’s Sussex home, appears in Powell’s memoirs *Messengers of Day*. Powell and Lambert had first met in 1927 when Powell was on his three-year apprenticeship with the publishing firm of Duckworth. Constant’s *Romeo and Juliet* was enjoying its second run of performances in London with the *Ballets russes*, and Constant had made his first public appearance as reciter of *Façade*, but was then known for little else. Powell was then living in Tavistock Square and Constant not too far away in a flat in High Holborn. (Although later he was often out of London, touring with the Vic-Wells Company, he always lived in London.)
It was soon after their first meeting that Powell suggested to Constant that he might contribute something of a musical nature to a series of essays by young writers that Duckworths were contemplating. Nothing came of the series, but a firm friendship was cemented. From the start they got on well. Although, on his own admission, Powell lacked a musical sensibility, it was their shared interest in books and pictorial art that brought them together, even if their individual tastes sometimes differed. Both happened to be cat lovers, but it was Constant’s unstuffy, unconventional attitudes that so appealed to Powell, especially when injected with a Rabelaisian wit. He came, he later wrote, “as a refreshing draught after Oxford self-consciousness about the arts.” Powell was particularly struck by the ease with which Constant could expound freely upon the three arts without any of the snobbery or affectation he observed in many of his contemporaries. As Constant was a voracious reader, they were never short of topics for conversation, whether the familiar or more often the obscure. The following June, to consecrate their friendship they held a joint house-warming at Powell’s flat. From then on they met quite frequently, in pubs, at parties, at eating places like Castano’s Italian restaurant in Greek Street and the Eiffel Tower, or they would just go for walks. Powell found Constant to be a great walker despite his lameness, and they went on some quite long walks together, not just in London, for one Christmas they roamed the streets of Paris.

Lambert and Powell "film-making"
There is some humorous evidence of how their friendship progressed. Not unlike the way you will remember those who were dining in *The Kindly Ones* had fun posing for photographic tableaux of the Seven Deadly Sins, so Lambert and Powell also played with the camera. One photograph they called “The Five Year Plan” and might resemble a scene from a Russian propaganda film. Another, perhaps in the style of silent movies, is “The Jealous Husband”, with a furious Constant catching Anthony with Flo.

Their sense of fun and humour is evident in another enterprise. When Powell was married in 1934, Constant arranged the music for his wedding, but he was not in a fit state to attend the actual service because he had overdone things at the party the evening before. But in the weeks before his wedding, during hours of insomnia from which he suffered at that time, Powell had been in the habit of writing verses of mock anti-Scottish satire in imitation of Burns’s *Merry Muses of Caledonia*. “They would be repeated,” he recalled, “sometimes improved, at the Castano luncheon table; Lambert writing the section on Scotland’s music.” As a wedding gift, a friend of Powell’s, who had access to a printing press, arranged for a number of slim copies to be privately printed, bound in orange tartan boards, with the title *Caledonia: A Fragment*. According to the introduction, these 154 lines, with their plea “Against the Land of Porridge, Scones, and Slate, Let us rebuild the wall, before too late”, were “suggested by the sound of a Pibroch or Bag-Pipe played at an early hour in a London Square by an indigent Scotchman wearing the Plaid or National dress of that country”. It also acknowledges the contribution by an “ingeniose graduate of the Royal College of Musick [Constant] for certain information herein contained and selected from the most approved and respectable musickal opinions of our time”. In some private copies Powell revealed Constant’s authorship of the following 12 lines:

```
In Musick’s Realm this Race (the bitter fact is)
Presume to teach an Art they cannot practice.
Their Rhapsodies and Rondos, which abound,
Pollute the Air with Academick sound;
But better their morose, pedantic Strain
Than those which to the sterner North pertain,
Where ev’ry puling Crofter’s lad of ten
Aspires to be a bartok of the Glen.
Belabour’d Blackamoor less harshly squeals
```
SECRET HARMONIES 8

Than Highland Lasses, dancing Highland Reels,
And Ears go numb when Scottish Neuropaths play
In Glasgow’s Town the Gaelick Snap or Strathspey.

Always one to milk a good idea, Lambert wrote an extended version of this poem which is published in my book on Lambert.

Two other passions in Lambert’s life should be mentioned. In 1923 while studying at the Royal College of Music he saw a revue called Dover Street to Dixie in which the star of the second half was the coloured singer Florence Mills, accompanied by Will Vodery’s Dixie band. This absolutely fascinated Constant who went to several performances, and when in 1926 Mills returned in a similar revue The Blackbirds, Constant again went several times to see her. Then when the following year she died at a tragically early age, he composed his Elegiac Blues in her memory. With his love of jazz much encouraged by these shows, jazz elements formed part of several works written at about this time, including The Rio Grande.

He became equally fascinated by the Chinese actress Anna May Wong and Constant went through a Chinese phase, going to Chinese films, eating at Chinese restaurants, drinking Chinese wine. He even dedicated settings of eight Li-Po poems to her, but when she was starring in a play in the West End and he approached her, he was, as the story goes, rejected.

Meanwhile his affair with Fonteyn continued through the war, but it gradually dissipated. Their respective careers were too involved with ballet, and Constant was not reliable marriage material, especially when he had become a heavy drinker, and Fonteyn had other attachments. In 1943 she has an abortion and in 1955, after Lambert’s death, she married the Panamanian Tito Arias whom she had first met in 1937 and this ended up as a very sad relationship, with Fonteyn’s income drained to pay for her husband’s extravagant life-style and for his medical care when he was left a quadriplegic after an assassination attempt. But in his last years Constant married. His wife was the artist Isabel Nicholas. While they shared interests in things French and art, they were both drinkers which did not improve Constant’s condition. He suffered from undiagnosed diabetes and it was this and drink that brought about his death in 1951 two days short of his 46th birthday.
Throughout his life he seemed short of money but took up journalism to increase his income. After the war he was associate conductor at the Proms for two years and he did much work for the Third Programme when it started in 1946. One of his greatest successes was taking Sadler’s Wells to America in 1949 where after the opening night at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York one of the critics hailed him as “the greatest ballet man in the business”.

Lambert, a fellow lover of cats, with his cat Captain Spalding, in 1951, photographed by Lola Marsden.

4. Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant

Returning now to Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant, in a memoir he contributed to the first biography on Lambert, published in 1973, Anthony Powell wrote: “We first met, so far as I remember about the spring of the year 1928, in a crowded pub”. But then five years later, in his memoirs Messengers of Day, he corrected the date to autumn 1927.

The reader’s introduction to Moreland is not, as one might have expected, when Jenkins first met Moreland, but instead, some five or six years later, on the day they first heard the singing of the blonde girl on crutches. Moreland is talking about getting married – marriage and its problems is a recurring theme in this novel and possibly the understatement of the book is when
Moreland says “Marriage is quite a problem for a lot of people”; both Jenkins and Moreland, and Powell and Lambert are married in the novel’s time-scale: Jenkins a year after Moreland, Powell three years after Lambert. We are also introduced to Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant, although Jenkins and Moreland decide against having tea there that day because their last visit hadn’t proved very exciting and anyway they could have Chinese tea rather more cheaply at Moreland’s flat because he happens to have a packet of Lapsang. The bottles of Tawney wine we are told on the first page they bought that day and which “even Moreland had been later unwilling to drink” must surely relate to what the author Peter Quennell (on whom it is generally agreed the character Mark Members is based) has described after visiting Lambert’s flat:

There was a row of bottles of Chinese wine, earthenware bottles with large paper labels embellished with Chinese characters, and I soon discovered that these bottles of Chinese wine had a special significance for him. He was at the time very much in love with a beautiful Chinese film actress called Anna May Wong who had recently made her debut in The Thief of Bagdad with Douglas Fairbanks. I don’t think that at that time he’d ever met Miss Wong but she was his sort of Princesse Lointaine and in her honour he used to drink Chinese wine – which he also allowed me to drink. It was extremely nasty and I remember that the taste was rather like the taste of embalming fluid – not that I’d ever drunk embalming fluid but that is how I imagined it would taste. It had an unfortunate effect on Constant’s metabolic system; in fact it made him extremely constipated and nevertheless he went on drinking it in Miss Wong’s honour.

In fact Constant eventually gave his Chinese wine to the wealthy art critic and heavy drinker Tommy Earp who was the dedicatee of Lambert’s Piano Sonata and in whose company Powell said he possibly first met Lambert.

Constant went regularly with certain close friends to Chinese restaurants, but Powell, as he has written in his memoirs, “only found Chinese food tolerable in Constant’s company because he justly regarded himself as an authority on Chinese food procurable in London.” All this is, I hope, sufficient to explain the significance of the word “Chinese” in the novel’s title.
It is a few pages on that Jenkins describes his first meeting with Moreland, at The Mortimer in the company of the artist and antique dealer Edgar Deacon who has, and Powell half-quotes Arthur O'Shaughnessy, “joined this little party of music makers sitting by their desolate stream”. Could Deacon, I wonder, bear any similarity to Tommy Earp – Deacon we are told speaks with “a high, caustic voice” and Earp, according to Powell’s memoirs, has a “thin trembling voice” – elsewhere a “piping voice”?

We can get a good idea of the year of this meeting from their conversation. We are told that the relation between Time and Space was a fashionable topic of discussion, and this probably alludes to J W Dunne’s 1927 book An Experiment with Time.

But more accurately we can pin down the meeting, as given in Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant, to 1929. At one point Moreland takes a newspaper from his pocket (Lambert invariably walked about with a rolled copy of The Times) and begins “to read a re-hash of the Croydon murder”. This was a sensational story in 1929 involving the poisoning by arsenic of three members of the same family over a period of about a year, murders for which no-one was charged. And the year 1929 is further reinforced by mention of the Delius Festival which occurred in October and November of that year at Queen’s Hall close by. We are told that Maclintick and Gossage, both music critics, leave The Mortimer to go on to the Festival. Delius was a favourite composer of Lambert’s.

So let us now look at the character of Moreland and see to what extent he approximates to Lambert.

5. Moreland and Lambert

As Powell wrote in his memoir of Lambert: “‘Moreland’, friend of the Narrator, is a musician, wit, sometimes exuberant, sometimes melancholy. Dark, rather than fair, he has the Bronzino-type features of Lambert’s Bluecoat portrait by his father. There the resemblance to Lambert fades, invention, imagination, the creative instinct - whatever you like to call it - begins; . . . the things that happen to ‘Moreland’ approximate to the things that happened to Lambert only so far as all composers' lives have something in
SECRET HARMONIES 8

common . . . In a thousand ways Lambert's career diverges utterly from that given to the character in the novel.”

Nevertheless, if we look at what Lambert and Moreland do have in common, there seem to be rather more similarities than Powell is ready to admit. Moreland is the same age as the narrator Nicholas Jenkins - Lambert and Powell were both born in 1905, Powell being just four months the younger. Moreland is introduced as a composer, conductor and pianist, all true of Lambert except that his main area of musical activity, ballet, is not alluded to. But we are told that the walls of his flat were “hung with framed caricatures of dancers in Diaghilev’s early ballets . . . Pavlova, Karsavina, Fokine” (although Fokine is actually more famous as a choreographer than a dancer). In *The Kindly Ones* we learn that Moreland is “working on” a ballet, this being in 1938, the year in which Lambert’s ballet *Horoscope* was first performed. Elsewhere we find Moreland saying: “Just one of those fascinating mutual attractions between improbable people that take place from time to time. I should like to write a ballet round it.” Which of course he does. That is *Horoscope* which he dedicates to Fonteyn. We are also told that he has written some film music. (Lambert wrote the score for one film, Alexander Korda’s version of *Anna Karenina*.)

Moreland, like Lambert, was brought up in Fulham and, like Lambert, displayed “juvenile brilliance - not an infant prodigy but showing alarming promise as a boy”. Both were “destined to make a brilliant career in music” and both went to the Royal College of Music. Neither of them at any time was comfortably well off. (“If I can raise the money” as Moreland says in *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant* could be typical of Lambert who sometimes borrowed money from friends.) Moreland shares Lambert’s strong dislike for Brahms, advising one companion: “I should certainly not go near the Albert Hall if I were you. . . It would be too great a risk. Someone might seize you and compel you to listen to Brahms”, to which comes the rejoinder: “Moreland, I wish to hear no more of your youthful prejudices – certainly no more of your sentiments regarding the orchestration of the Second Piano Concerto”. (In *Music Ho!* Lambert had disparaged “the drab shades and muddy impasto” of Brahms’ orchestration.) Lambert’s fondness for Sousa and his dislike of Hindemith are also touched on: “*Aut Sousa aut Nihil* has always been my motto in cases of that sort. Think if the man had played Hindemith. At least he wasn’t a highbrow”. Powell admits to scoring one
accidental bull’s-eye with Moreland’s liking of Chabrier - a detail that he had not realised was also true of Lambert.

There are one or two references to Moreland being, like Lambert, a critic, but another close parallel is found with each composer’s magnum opus. Moreland’s symphony is greeted with a poor attendance because of the coincidence of the Abdication crisis (December 1936). It is, we are told, “a success but not an overwhelming success”. In January 1936, the first performance of Lambert’s largest work, Summer’s Last Will and Testament, took place the day after the funeral of King George V, and at a time of national mourning its reception was understandably muted. Lambert was given a lavish party afterwards by Alice, Lady Wimborne, the amour and patron of fellow-composer William Walton for whom she laid on a party after the first performance of his first symphony. In Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant Mrs Foxe fulfils a similar aristocratic function for Moreland.

It is interesting that Moreland should echo the theme in the last paragraph of his book Music Ho!, “The artist who is one of a group writes for that group alone, whereas the artist who expresses personal experience may in the end reach universal experience. He must not mind if for the moment he appears to be without an audience” and in The Kindly Ones he asks: “If action is to be one’s aim, then is it action to write a symphony satisfactory to oneself, which no one else wants to perform?”

Moreland shows a number of Lambert’s characteristics – “a massive Beethoven-shaped head”, the habit of persisting “eternally with any subject that caught his fancy . . ; a love of repetition sometimes fatiguing to friends”, and being at times “almost hysterical with laughter which he continually tried to repress by stuffing a handkerchief into his mouth”. Just as typical is how Moreland and Jenkins, having “not met for over a year”, had been “exchanging picture postcards . . (that) dealt usually with some esoteric matter that caught his attention – a peculiar bathing dress on the beach, peepshows on the pier, the performance of pierrots – rather than the material of daily life”. When Lambert was on tour with the ballet, he would overcome his boredom of staying in a cheap hotel in some provincial town by sending to friends post-cards with some obscure cover photo that he would make fun of. Even more relevant, Moreland is blessed with Lambert’s love of the visual arts: he “liked painting and held stronger views about pictures than most musicians”, while Jenkins, like Powell, did not have the interest in music that
he had in writing and painting. Moreland has Lambert’s devotion to music, as he explains: “The arts derive entirely from taking decisions . . . Having taken the decision music requires, I want to be free of all others.”

When the narrator says that Moreland remained a hopeless addict of a “Princesse Lointaine complex” he is of course echoing, as I have already quoted, what Peter Quennell said of Lambert when he wrote that Anna May Wong was “his sort of Princesse Lointaine” and in her honour he used to drink Chinese wine.

The two had some similarities in their dealings with women. “Moreland could be secretive enough about his girls when he chose . . .”, just as Lambert was after first meeting the underage Florence who was to be his first wife, and as he had to be in the early stages of his relationship with Fonteyn. Although his affair with Fonteyn was common knowledge to his friends, it was not something that went into print – out of respect to Fonteyn even after Lambert’s death. In the excellent first biography of Lambert, published in 1973, its author Richard Shead does not mention Fonteyn by name but refers only to “a deep and passionate affair . . with a dancer”. One is hardly surprised to learn that Moreland “gravitated from one hopeless love affair to another, falling in love with women connected in one way or another with the theatre” and perhaps meriting the Casanova of the title. His stormy relationship with Matilda mirrors Constant’s fractious marriage with Flo. But there is a reversal of roles in their married lives. With Matilda being an actress, for a while she is the one who is absent on tour, while Moreland is left alone in London. But when it is his turn to be travelling with work, with some displeasure she calls him “Hugh the Drover”, possibly an intentional reference to the opera of the same name by Lambert’s teacher, Vaughan Williams. Matilda loses their only child (unlike Florence: their son was Kit Wood who became manager of the pop group The Who), and the break-up of their marriage disturbs Moreland so much that he might have “given himself up increasingly to drink” had not an excess of war-time musical work “kept him alive and busy”. Lambert, however, showed no such sorrow at his break-up with Florence. Matilda anyway differs considerably from Florence, being “a clever girl, with a good all-round knowledge of the arts: one who liked to be treated as a serious person.”

6. Why Moreland?
Having established that Hugh Moreland is Constant Lambert, to some extent at least, let’s now consider why he was introduced into Dance.

The first novel, A Question of Upbringing, appeared in January 1951 – and Lambert would surely either been given or he would have purchased a copy. He died in August of that year. Chronologically, his character, Moreland, should have been introduced in the second book, A Buyer’s Market, which appeared the following year. After his death there was talk of a book on Lambert being written. However, its planned author, Hubert Foss, who had been Lambert’s great friend and publisher at Oxford University Press, died in 1952 with some research done but nothing actually written. For three or four years various people were canvassed who might take over the task – at one stage even two books were being considered – but eventually it all came to nothing, partly because of problems …..what was tactfully described as “not causing offence . . .” to certain people through unwanted disclosure, Fonteyn probably topping the list for reasons I have already given. Powell, as one of Lambert’s closest friends, had offered Hubert Foss what help he could, but no doubt, as a non-musician, he felt unable himself to take on the book. He did, however, offer to write a memoir of some 3000 to 5000 words (and, as I have already said, he wrote one for the first book on Lambert when it eventually appeared in 1973). In that time he had written three more titles in the Dance series and it was probably only when he came to the planning of the fifth (which was published in 1960) that it seemed very unlikely that any book on Lambert would be written, at least for some while.

Lambert had by then been dead about eight or nine years (this figure of course varying as to when Powell actually started planning what became Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant), and it seems to me more than likely that Powell seized on the idea of introducing a character to some extent modelled on Lambert as a tribute to his friend. This would mean, of course, having to go back in time to establish their meeting, when he (or Jenkins) first met Lambert (or Moreland), and as we know, he skilfully goes both forward and backwards in time in his fifth novel to achieve this.

As I have already commented, it was perhaps curious that in Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant it is clear that the new character of Moreland is dead – although we are told nothing about his death – and Moreland is to “live on” in nearly all the subsequent volumes of Dance. I can only feel that knowing in Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant that the character has died it makes the book
seem more of a tribute to his memory. Having introduced Moreland, Powell’s problem was now, of course, how to continue with him and how to dispose of him, something he was more than likely reluctant to do. Saying goodbye to a friend even in fiction is surely not done without emotion. Moreland does not make a significant contribution to the remainder of the *Dance* narrative but when he does eventually die in the penultimate novel, *Temporary Kings*, his life has been extended by some eight years to late 1959.

Powell has, of course, not just introduced Moreland but also Moreland’s friends, particularly Maclintick who would seem to have been based to some extent on both the critic and composer Cecil Gray and the enigmatic figure of Philip Heseltine (or Peter Warlock), also a composer and critic, though the mix is biased more to Gray than to Heseltine. Maclintick’s dual personality is in itself a touch of irony as Cecil Gray who wrote the first biography of Heseltine was the first to suggest a split Heseltine/Warlock personality. With Constant’s father having gone to Australia and dying there in 1930, Cecil Gray was very much Lambert’s musical godfather and was as close to Lambert as Maclintick was to Moreland. “Moreland”, we are told, “had liked Maclintick; liked his intelligence; liked talking and drinking with him” just as Lambert had with Cecil Gray, and Lambert was “having an awful time about Maclintick” after his suicide just as Lambert was devastated by Heseltine’s death (like Maclintick, suicide by gassing), far more so than by the deaths earlier the same year of his own father and Kit Wood. Another detail - we are told that Maclintick knew someone who had been keen on Sibelius; Gray himself was one of the earliest supporters of Sibelius in this country, writing two books on him. Powell described him as “a plump bespectacled rather unforthcoming Scot” who “had a habit of putting away a great deal of whisky without visible effect” and Cecil Gray’s daughter seems to have accepted Maclintick as a representation of her father.

A more difficult question to answer is how much of Moreland is Lambert, or - vice versa - how much of Lambert is Moreland? Powell highlighted one of the main problems when he wrote: “If I have been skilful enough, lucky enough, to pass on an echo of Lambert’s incomparable wit, then ‘Moreland’ is like him”, and he was only too aware of the problem of trying to capture the brilliance of Lambert’s conversation, something that I think he achieves with considerable success.
However, while Moreland has many similarities to Lambert, he is not a character that one would immediately recognise as Lambert. His second wife described him as “a loner [who] hid behind a carapace of wit, sharp remarks and great vitality”. He had become a loner at Christ’s Hospital; his level of intellect marked him out as a solitary figure, and close relationships were often difficult. Throughout his life he seemed socially more at ease with people of a similar intellectual level and he had a small, select group of close friends, people like Cecil Gray, the artist Michael Ayrton, composers Patrick Hadley and Alan Rawsthorne, and Anthony Powell, whom he kept rather “in compartments” according to their profession. They were, like himself and two friends of earlier years, Philip Heseltine and Bernard van Dieren, eloquent conversationalists.

Moreland has little of Lambert’s brilliance; he seems to have inherited more of Lambert’s weaknesses than his strengths. There may have been a reluctance - perhaps a wise reluctance on Powell’s part - to create too strong a figure out of Moreland, one that was too close to him – if that were possible. But he was surely a creation more for Powell’s private satisfaction than for public enjoyment. He had to be careful not to upset the balance of the sequence of novels and would too strong a Moreland have distracted from the delightfully obnoxious character of Widmerpool?

If, like the Gilbert and Sullivan Savoy operettas, A Dance to the Music of Time had to be given a sub-title, I often think it should be ‘The Rise and Fall of Kenneth Widmerpool’. Lambert is quite the opposite to Widmerpool; he is everything that Widmerpool isn’t, and Widmerpool airs the pomposity that Lambert would have despised. The two I think only meet twice. In Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant Moreland and Jenkins by chance bump into each other at a nursing home where they are visiting their respective wives: Matilda is about to have a baby while Isobel has had a miscarriage. With a wonderful example of bathos, Widmerpool is there because he has boils. A philistine with no interest in the arts, he once brusquely commented to Jenkins in the narrow-minded, blinkered philosophy of “civil-servant speak”: “I don’t know about these things. If I don’t know about things, they do not interest me. Even if artistic matters attracted me – which they do not – I should not allow myself to dissipate my energies on them.” Afterwards Moreland asks Jenkins: “Who was the man in the dressing-gown with spectacles? . . . I can’t say I took to him.” When they meet again in The Kindly Ones, Moreland
SECRETS HARMONIES 8

asks Jenkins, “Who was that awful man?” “You met him once with me in a nursing home.” “No recollection.” And that really sums them up.

I remember when I was at school, science fiction stories and films seemed all the rage with time travelling, and I was fascinated by the idea that if you could travel back in time you would quite likely upset the present. I must confess to not having examined too closely whether Powell, in going back to the late ’20s and sneaking in Moreland and his friends, has left any contradictions to what had already been established in the novels before Casanova, especially At Lady Molly’s.

But it seems he might have caused a slight problem in having Moreland die as late as 1959. This means that the poor crippled singer who was first heard by Jenkins singing in the early thirties is still singing in the same spot post-1959 which not only makes it less likely for there to be a bombsite remaining in central London, but might make one doubt what Jenkins says about the singer – that she had hardly at all altered by the processes of time – perhaps a shade plumper. And this in the days before Botox!

7. Moreland’s death

Moreland dies, then, at the end of the penultimate novel, Temporary Kings, having made an appearance in almost all the intervening books. At a charity musical party, he has been conducting a Mozart opera and advising on its production. He is warned that he should not be allowed another drink before the curtain goes up as it isn’t good for him, and after the performance he has a blackout and a fall. When Jenkins sees him resting, he is surprised that he is drinking a glass of water, something that he had not seen him do before, apart from after a heavy evening the previous night. These are the only hints that Moreland, like Lambert, might be suffering from diabetes. Lambert had similarly been prone to blackouts, often thought to have been just because of drink when his diabetes had not been diagnosed.

As Moreland is waiting to be driven home that evening, the topic of conversation turns to antique cars, and he quotes Omar Khayyam:

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from His vintage rolling Time hath pressed,
But Powell does not complete the quatrain:

    Have drunk the Cup a round or two before,
    And one by one crept silently to rest.

Moreland’s death comes a few months later, in hospital. Jenkins enjoys one last, typically literary, chat with Moreland, and, without giving any details, he merely states: “That morning was the last time I saw Moreland.”

Powell is clearly not just bidding farewell to the character of Moreland but also to the spirit of Lambert. There is a telling sentence when he says: “It was also the last time I had, with anyone, the sort of talk we used to have together”, from which we can deduce that this was what Powell so valued in his friendship with Lambert, and what he had missed since his death in 1951. Near the end of Casanova Jenkins had written:

    ... our meetings had somehow lapsed. We had spoken together only at parties or on such occasions when other people had been around us. It was ages since we had had one of those long talks about life, or the arts, which had been such a predominant aspect of knowing Moreland in the past.

Just as Jenkins could have had very few other acquaintances with whom he could discuss, for example, Stendhal as he did with Moreland in The Kindly Ones (Stendhal was a favourite author of Powell’s), so Powell mourned the loss of such intellectual exchanges.

I thought it might be interesting to calculate how frequently Moreland actually appears in Casanova, not by the number of times his name is mentioned but by the number of pages on which he is referred to. Edgar Deacon, for example, appears quite frequently in A Buyer’s Market (the second book in The Dance series), on 95 out of 274 pages, making his frequency of appearance there 35%. You might yourself like to guess at a figure for Moreland in Casanova. You may be surprised to hear that it is 139 out of 215 pages, a frequency of 65%. I would like to bet that no other character, apart of course from Jenkins, appears with anything like that frequency in any of the 12 titles in The Dance.
As I suggested at the beginning, I feel sure that out of the twelve novels, *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant* was of particular importance to Anthony Powell. Here was embodied a tribute to perhaps his closest friend whose passing he mourned. Even Lady Violet Powell found *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant* “an infinitely touching memorial to Constant Lambert” who had left “an unfillable gap”. She went on to write (and I am most grateful to Hilary Spurling for bringing this particular piece to my attention),

The loss of Constant Lambert… was one Anthony felt irreparable & so it turned out to be . . . [He] had reflected before deciding that, as no biography of Lambert had yet been commissioned, the appearance of Hugh Moreland in *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant* could not only be accepted as a memorial to friendship but also as a tribute to genius.

All photographs reproduced with permission.
Sustainable Austerity: Powell, Cather, Manning, And The Imaginative Effect Of The Great War

NICHOLAS BIRNS
Keynote speech in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, October 13, 2014

The First World accelerated the shift from the rhetorical plenitude associated with the Victorian era to an austere and limited sense of insufficiency.

But the war accelerated these trends, as part of the letdown from the overblown patriotism and militarism that flourished on all sides was the sense of a needed deflation of rhetoric, as seen in this iconic poem of the conflict:

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs...
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est
Pro patria mori

Wilfred Owen saw high-flown language as a lie. In the wake of the war, literature became ironic where it had once been panoramic. What has been seen as a turn from realism to abstraction might be better seen as a curtailment of the exuberant attempts of realism to represent the entire world, an ambition now seen as being as incommensurate with the harsh realities of human experience as the patriotic rhetoric of war itself. Writers like Hemingway used simple syntax and clipped dialogue as a kind of token of severity, a signal that the toughened literary war veteran would no longer give in to rhetoric or sentiment. The plain style of the twentieth century, as seen in writers as different as George Orwell, Raymond Chandler, and Albert Camus, took its bearings from this disillusionment with high rhetoric.
As the example of Hemingway indicates, though, there are other issues than war and language here. The subject of war and even more the experience of it, relocated the field of imaginative experience from nature or domesticity towards the battlefield, and thus inevitably made it much more masculine, and contributed—whether in the work of Ernest Hemingway or Louis-Ferdinand Céline or Ernst Jünger—to modernism being in many ways a man’s game. For some—as in Claude Wheeler, the protagonist of Willa Cather’s *One Of Ours*—this all-male atmosphere was liberation, for others, such as Paul Baumer in Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*—translated into English by the Australian belletrist Arthur Wesley Wheen—the absence of women is part of the deprivation suffered on the battlefield. Though a writer like Virginia Woolf both registered the war in several of her great novels and resisted this masculinization, literary history often positioned the twentieth century as hard-edged, unsentimental, clipped, terse, objective. A thinker like T E Hulme, who, even though he died at thirty-four in battle on the Western Front in 1917, had a crucial influence on twentieth-century Anglophone aesthetics, denounced nearly all subjectivity as “spilt religion” and urged its elimination from art.

This aesthetic persisted through the Second World War, when this most famous of English poems about the conflict both protested against and registered a radical seductiveness in language prompted by war:

> To-day we have naming of parts. Yesterday,  
> We had daily cleaning. And to-morrow morning,  
> We shall have what to do after firing. But to-day,  
> To-day we have naming of parts. Japonica  
> Glistens like coral in all of the neighboring gardens,  
> And today we have naming of parts.  
> .....The branches  
> Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,  
> Which in our case we have not got.

But, soon after Henry Reed wrote this poem, it became clear that the reign of the hard-edged was unsustainable. Subjectivity, extravagance, linguistic confidence came back, as did femininity that even in the women writers of modernity, such as Cather, had often been exiled. Even as the world, hardly
released from the threat of conflict in the midst of the Cold War and in the aftermath of Hiroshima and the Holocaust, yet achieved a sense of renewed stability and the attenuation of crisis, poems such as *Plunder* by the American A R Ammons spoke again of confidence in the linguistic act:

poem that rejoices in the powers of language, vertiginous and ambivalent as they are:
I have appropriated the windy twittering of aspen leaves into language, stealing something from reality like a silveness

and ends

: meanwhile, everything else, frog, fish, bear, gnat has turned in its provinces and made off with its uses: My mind's indicted by all I've taken.

Here, the problem is language can be used so masterfully and to such effect by the human mind, not that language is pared-down and can only do so much.

Thus the lesson that the war-torn twentieth century hoped to teach literature—that concepts should not be multiplied beyond need, that language should not be rhetorical or exaggerated but precise, simple, transparent in a deliberate, sculpted way—was in danger of being lost altogether, simply because these traits had been urged, in for instance the poems of Owen and Reed, in so point-blank a way as to be unsustainable. As Adam Gopnik claims in an article published earlier this year in *The New Yorker*, “If the strong form of linguistic relativism were true, then not having the correct phrase or being forced to use a weird one would change our perception of what’s taking place.” The post-First World War idea of stripped-down language thought that keeping language taut and honest would prevent more of the terrible events of the twentieth century. But they did not end the human or at least the linguistic need for ambition, daring, and adornment.

This paper will deal with three writers of the First World War who, never as severe in their dismissal of the resources of language as Owen, forged a **sustainable austerity**, one that could incorporate aesthetics antithetical to it and thus not simply be a small and eventually whelmed islet in the sea of
SECRET HARMONIES

rhetoric. I say “of” the First World War, although only one actually fought in it—the Australian Frederic Manning (1888-1932). The other two were either civilians who wrote of the war from afar—the American novelist Willa Cather—or was a child during the war—the British novelist Anthony Powell. But all three wrote about the war, registered the war’s impact on their imaginative vision, and yet did not succumb to a linguistic purism so ascetic as to eventually collapse. Let me make clear that what I am concerned about here is not the linguistic austerity but the vulnerability of this austerity to collapsing and letting in the false, high-flown rhetoric of just the sort that Owen detested. These three writers, less stringent and more permeable on the surface, can yet resist being reabsorbed into the sort of verbal carnival that would forget that the war, and its disillusioning lessons with respect to nation, cause, and ideology, even occurred.

Frederic Manning, though born—in 1882, the same year as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf—and raised in Australia, was a major figure on the British literary scene in the 1920s and 1930s, and he fought on the Western Front in France with the British Army, not at Gallipoli or Palestine or Mesopotamia as so many Australians did. It is fruitless to look for specifically Australian aspects in Manning’s great war text, published in 1929 as The Middle Parts of Fortune and later in a trimmed and censored version as Her Privates We, (Shakespearean double-entendres that would have amused Anthony Powell, the last writer we will consider) is a fictionalized memoir of infantry life on the Western Front told through the third-person viewpoint of a soldier ironically named Bourne—because, as we all know, he is to die. Both of the alternate titles, as the literate Anglophone reader will know, are taken from Hamlet’s dialogue with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in act 2, scene 2, and flourish in the double entendre between “private”, as in the army rank, and the “private parts” of an allegorically female Fortune. The title thus denoted an ironic, earthy view of infantry life, and yet the irony is supplied by Shakespeare, someone who lived centuries ago, before modern war and mass death was even conceivable. Shakespeare, indeed, is a constant presence in Manning’s narrative, supplying every epigraph, but those epigraphs always being ascribed just to Shakespeare never to a particular play or passage. It could be that Manning, an editor and man of letters who was a literary rather than a popular writer, assumed an audience that would know where the references came from. But it could also be true that he wished to refer not to individual plays in a textual way but to the very idea of Shakespeare. This would be both to juxtapose the glories of the English literary past with the
deprivations of modern soldiering—what the late Paul Fussell memorably called in just this context, “stable irony”, and to show that Shakespeare always already knew it all.

Simon Catterson, in his introduction to the 2014 Vintage Classics release of *The Middle Parts Of Fortune*, notes that Manning does not have “the same anti-war bitterness” as the other canonical British war writers. Manning is not pro-war or celebratory of war, or anything but indicative of the basic duality of boredom and danger that characterizes the experience of warfare. But there is no self-pity in his work, or rage at the generals, nor doubt about the causes of the war or his nation’s military-political aims. There is instead a sense of what happened when violence becomes routine, when suffering becomes everyday:

...as though at some moment of ordinary routine; the restraint, and the haste that fought against it with every voice crying out to hurry. Hurry? One cannot hurry, alone, into nowhere, into nothing. Every impulse created immediately its own violent contradiction. The confusion and tumult in his own mind was inseparable from the senseless fury around him, each reinforcing the other.

Even in war, there is an impulse to live an ordinary life, to find the humdrum in the midst of the preposterous and unspeakable. But nothing makes sense; cognition cannot occur; and Manning’s prose, placing observation and irony over protest and elegy, not willing to divest language of its adjectival and adverbial resources to mirror an anti-ideal state of wartime severity, reveals this nonsensical state without being polemical or performativity about it. Indeed, it is by taking things as they come, remaining as unflappable as possible, which Bourne can remember who he is:

Bourne found himself again playing a game of his childhood, though not now among rocks from which reverberated heat quivered in wavy films, but in made fissures too chalky and unweathered for adequate concealment. One has not, perhaps, at thirty years the same zest for playing the game as one had at thirteen, but the sense of danger brought into paly a latent
experience which had become a kind of instinct with him, and he move in those tortuous ways with the furtive cunning of a stout or a weasel.

The understatement here is both comic and withering—as if the difference was whether one could play a game with the same zest as an adult than as an adolescent, not the difference between peacetime and wartime. But there is also the fascinating alignment between danger and play, as if danger, instead of making everyone act oh-so-seriously with its menace, bringing out a sense of vulnerability, which as in childhood can paradoxically lead to a carefree exuberance. This can be seen in a lyric of the Second World War, the American poet Samuel Menashe’s “All my friends are homeless”

Lie down below trees
Be your own guest
Give yourself up...
Under this attentive pine
Take your time at noon
The planes will drone by soon.

Both Menashe's poem and Manning’s narrative show the paradox of the strange pleasures latent in the danger of war. “Latent” as used by Manning is particularly apt, as he seems, by internal evidence, to have read Freud and taken up a Freudian sense of how surface and depth can trigger each other, and how part of the cognitive experience of being at war as an adult is channeling the vibrant feelings one had as a child. “The moral impulse is not necessarily an intellectual act,” thinks Bourne, and a Freudian sense of how instinct and morality are implicated in each other gives this First World War narrative a different anthropology than many others, as it understands humanity as not just innocent souls ruined by botched military planning but a bundle of appetitive drives multiplied, catalyzed, intensified by the shattering experience of war but not fundamentally born—Bourne—of them. This is not to say the “pleasure in daring” Bourne takes is meant to be cavalier or insipidly valorous.

Manning does not pretend every soldier is as introspective as Bourne, they are most likely “less reflective and less reasonable”; he does not make the mistake of rendering every soldier a philosopher. But Bourne yet "sees in himself the perplexities and torments of the mental processes out of which
action issues” while realizing that, in others’ minds, all that is visible is action itself. He may be Hamlet inside, but externally he is as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as the rest of the masses. Manning demonstrates how little non-wartime life comes up among the soldiers, though class lines—over and above distinctions in military rank—come up as soon as any sort of respite from battle permits them. War does not annihilate all contingency.

Manning also does not forget that the action takes place in France, and that war forces a confrontation with another language. It yields a kind of cosmopolitanism, though more the cosmopolitanism experienced today by refugees or detainees than the cosmopolitanism of mobile, privileged travellers. This leads to amusing philological interludes, as when Bourne, understanding that a French woman has misinterpreted “cushy” as in the sense of congenial with, to “coucher,” to go to bed with, hurriedly speculates that “cushy”, derived from India, has a cognate Sanskrit root with the French verb. Manning also uses the French women in the novel to editorialize in a way that neither he nor his surrogate Bourne can. A middle-aged French woman who feeds Bourne and his fellow officers was “perfectly clear that the Hun had to be defeated. The world for her was ruined and that was irreparable, but justice must be done”. Bourne sees the "uneducated" woman’s thought as nonetheless “clear, logical, and hard”, melding the desiderata of high modern aesthetics—taut, austere severe—with a sense that the war’s purpose and outcome was not utterly meaningless.

The narrative is nonetheless not at all triumphalist, and far from emerging as a vindicated patriotic hero, Bourne ends up dying. What is fascinating is that—and this is the benefit Manning reaps from telling the narrative in the first person—we actually see the scene after Bourne dies, and the other soldiers’ reaction to his death, as if to deflate any sense of residual egotism accruing as the result of the idea of a point-of-view character. Sergeant Morgan is “sorry about Bourne…more sorry than he could say.” Bourne was a “queer chap”, Morgan thinks, “there was a mystery about him, but then, when you come to think of it, there is a mystery about all of us.” The narrative ends with each man “keeping his own secret,” as if there is a personal idiosyncrasy, beyond Fussell’s “stable irony” of wartime, as if individuality has not been effaced entirely.

Compared to more canonical war narratives, Manning’s, for all its intensity, may seem less profound, less despairing; but it is remarkable for precisely
the way the continuity it sketches between the slaughterhouse of war and the perceptions and sensation of normal civilian life does not permit us to exoticize or pathologize war, which often happened with First World War literature with respect to modernism: it is acknowledged, moralized, reduced, and then the rest of twentieth-century literary history proceeds with nary a mention of it. Furthermore, though Manning does not mention Australia once, when Bourne speaks of his childhood with the rock-game it must be inferred this is an Australian childhood, and Manning, even though an expatriate, was never entirely accepted in Britain, was seen as an Australian, and was aware that, as with many countries in Eastern Europe, Australia gained in self-determination and international standing from its sacrifices in the war.

Manning wrote his narrative in the late 1920s, when enough time had passed for war literature to seem not just a continuation of last year’s news. Willa Cather (1873-1947) on the other hand, wrote her World War I novel, One of Ours, very early, before Hemingway, Erich Maria Remarque, and Robert Graves had published theirs for instance. Though One Of Ours won the Pulitzer Prize it was greeted with scorn by many of Cather’s peers and admirers. H L Mencken, who had hailed Cather’s previous works, resented what he saw, with, it must be said, some justice, as the book’s anti-German sentiments. Male writers like Hemingway thought it absurd that a woman who had not seen combat—had not, unlike her contemporary Edith Wharton—even volunteered in France helping to fundraise for refugees and had in many ways been at the front—could write a great war novel.

Cather’s cousin, G P Cather, was killed in the war, and the character of Claude Wheeler was based on him. Cather by this time had published four previous novels, three of them with strong female protagonists. The male vantage-point of this book was new for her, as was the book’s searing attitude towards a place that in other texts Cather had portrayed lyrically and elegiacally—the Nebraska where she had moved as a young child and stayed until her early twenties, which proved a place of sanctuary for so many European immigrants including the Slavs she portrayed so affectionately in My Antonia. Yet in this book happiness, for Claude, is Nebraska in a rear-view mirror. Oppressed by his selfish brother Bayliss and his vindictive, censorious wife Enid—who has the potential to kill everything that is bright and good in his creative soul—he finds in going to war an ideal that will annul the pointlessness and cynicism that he feels surrounds him. The war,
though, does not begin for Claude when he enlists in 1917. Long before the United States joins in, he is aware of what is going on through newspapers, reacts to every atrocity as if it matters to him, as if it is integrated into his being, or as if he lives in an integrated world where trauma in one land reaches the heart of a man in another, as seen in this episode where Claude and his mother watch the progress of the war through maps:

she began to move her hand about over the brightly coloured, shiny surface, murmuring, "Yes, there is Bordeaux, so far to the south; and there is Paris."

Claude, behind her, looked over her shoulder. "Do you suppose they are going to hand their city over to the Germans, like a Christmas present? I should think they’d burn it first, the way the Russians did Moscow. They can do better than that now, they can dynamite it!"

"Don’t say such things."

Whereas many thinkers regarded the First World War as either the outcome of or at least an outlet for capitalist aspirations, fuelling the coffers of war profiteers, Wheeler, and presumably Cather—Claude Wheeler’s initials invert Willa Cather’s—sees the war as a crusade against purely base financial motives, for idealism and altruism. Indeed, the war broadens the puritanical Protestantism of Claude’s mother, as she comes to hope for the safety of the citizens of Paris despite her Bible-toting beliefs that it is a wicked city.

It is the conniving Bayliss Wheeler, Claude’s brother, who is isolationist, wishes for there to be continued American non-participation so that the US can sell goods to all the combatants, wants peace and prosperity solely so prosperity can be abetted by peace. Cather comes dangerously close here to seeing war as purifying, ennobling, the way so many intellectuals had done at the war’s outset, before they knew its destructive reality. But Cather is, like Manning, telling the story through a limited third-person point-of-view, and Claude is more distant, more ironized, from the authorial standpoint than was Bourne. Moreover, Claude is seeking, and finding, something else in war. When he arrives in France, and meets his fellow soldier, the failed violinist David Gerhardt, it is not too strong a phrase to say that Claude falls in love. It is Gerhardt’s aesthetic and intellectual qualities Claude admires.
But he also cherishes a general feeling of being among men in a condition of bodily solidarity with them, freed from the mismatched and obligatory quality of his relationship with Enid. Cather, no admirer of what was then advanced thought, would have been overtly skeptical of Freud, but, as the late Merrill Maguire Skaggs points out, *One of Ours* is a Freudian Oedipal Drama, with Claude being particularly close to his mother, whose philosophical orientation and dissent from materialist pragmatism he shares. The battlefield is a place where Claude can be free, even unto death. Indeed the First World War saw, for the United States, not just a step towards self-determination as occurred for European and Asian countries, but part of a large-scale “rise to globalism”, (to use to the title of the famous volume of diplomatic history by the late Stephen Ambrose).

The novel’s most famous lines, near its end, are, “He died believing his own country better than it is, and France better than any country can ever be. And those were beautiful beliefs to die with.” This has been read as Cather’s endorsing a jingoistic, bellicose, and chauvinistic view of the war with one side representing the absolute right, and the opposition absolute wrong. But in reality the statement is much more qualified. Note that Claude dies fighting not just in France but for France; there is none of the sentimental camaraderie for Britain that was to emerge in the US during the second war; it was France we were fighting for, and Britain, given how anti-British feelings still at that time authorized so much of American identity, was a rather inconvenient ally. Also, France for Cather was a place of art, of architecture, or beauty; she meant France in imaginative not just political terms here. Thirdly, this is about Claude, not Cather, and Claude, while lionized and elegized in this book, is also somewhat pathologized. Cather’s famous early short story of a young gay man is called “Paul’s Case,” as if it were a psychiatric medical history, and *One of Ours* could in many ways be called “Claude’s case”. Though Cather supports Claude’s ideals over the grubbiness of Bayliss and the limitations of Enid, she understands, and lets the reader know, there were many things Claude had not worked out in life. Fourthly, these lines about the glory of France in fact occur in the thought of Claude’s mother, and is what she, her previously certain religious faith disturbed by her loss of her son, thinks, and, as the succeeding sentences make clear, she is fully aware of the disillusionment that shortly overcome the frenetic surge of patriotic feelings, once the war concluded, normal world politics continued and America, by rejecting the Versailles Treaty and relapsing into greed and contentment, showed it was not yet ready for the
world leadership that both Cather and Claude—unlike the money-grubbing isolationist Bayliss—wanted their nation to assume. There is also a stylistic issue here: Cather wanted the novel as a genre to be démeublé, unfurnished, and she was stylistically only slightly less stripped-down than Hemingway, yet her work retained vestiges of high lyricism and high rhetoric, and when she repurposed the poet Vachel Lindsay’s throaty and boisterous lines about the populist politician William Jennings Bryan, “Bidding the eagles of the West fly on,” she was ironically noting the redirection of the energies of the West from frontier democracy to solving the problems of the Old World, in a counter-Vergilian turn towards the evening lands, now re-placed in the morning lands of the old world. That Bryan, as Cather well knew, had resigned as Secretary of State after the sinking of the Lusitania due to his isolationist views, made the words yet once more ironic, but also retained some of their original ardour—as if Bryan’s cause was still matching on, back-trailing; to Europe, even though it is an interpretation Bryan the man would have fiercely opposed.

Thus Cather is not trying to talk away the very possibility of ideas, even if misplaced ones. By avoiding a melodramatic acme of disillusionment, she, unlike Hemingway, forestalls the effacement of that disillusionment by renewed, and far less self-ironized rhetoric of the later twentieth century.

As Roger Kimball asserts, it is sometimes said that the Great War, because of its body count, the tactics of its generals, the as-it-turned-out false promise that it was “a war to end all wars,” was therefore meaningless. The more the war is seen as meaningless, the more meaning, in reductive and menacing shapes, can return. If meaning is never entirely eliminated on the other hand, it cannot return so categorically, as it has in recent patriotisms, fundamentalisms, and exuberant rhetoric. Cather’s gossamer and self-undercutting idealism is an inoculant against this returned plenitude of meaning.

While Cather wrote several novels set in Nebraska, and they share many of the same thematic concerns, she did not have the same characters reappear in other books, nor was there a through-line encompassing all her Nebraska books. The British novelist Anthony Powell, who was born in 1905 and died in 2000, took a far more systematic view of his own fictional material, writing a twelve-volume novel sequence called A Dance To The Music of Time. This sequence, published between 1951 and 1973, encompassed events
taking place between 1914 and 1971 in the lives of a set of upper-class and upper-middle-class British bohemians, soldiers and dilettantes. The 1914 part is pertinent to this talk, but it should be said that the sequence does not start in 1911, but in 1921, with the narrator, Nicholas Jenkins, as a teenager in school. The 1914 part only occurs as a flashback in the sequence’s sixth novel, *The Kindly Ones*, published in 1962. This novel, whose name derives from the euphemism the ancient Greeks gave the Furies, the Erinnyes, calling them the Eumenides, the kindly ones, in order to placate them, is the capstone for the first half of the sequence and spans much of the twentieth century, with its initial section set in 1914, the final three sections being set in 1939, before the outbreak of the second war.

The 1914 section is set when the narrator is eight years old, living in Southern England in a rented bungalow called Stonehurst and receiving private lessons there as his father is stationed at the nearby military training center in Aldershot. Much of the drama revolves around the servants of the household; the maid Billson, is in love with the cook, Albert, but Albert’s interests in women, such as they are, lie elsewhere and Billson is beloved by another servant named Bracey whom she spurns. Albert indeed, is generally paranoid about women, and he spends much of his time in fear of suffragettes, bolting the window-shutters against them. By the end of the sequence, news has broken of the tragic events in Sarajevo of June 28, 1914. The furies of war have reared themselves up and the last line of the section is, “Albert’s shutters may have kept out the suffragettes; they did not effectively exclude the Furies.” Much as with Claude Wheeler femininity is pictured as a threat, a disruptive force. This is further heightened by the section’s climactic development: the maid Billson, unhappy with Albert’s rejection of her, appears naked in the drawing-room during a small social gathering held by Jenkins’s parents, announcing she is leaving their employment. The extreme indecorum, in Victorian terms, of a naked female, signifies both the arrival of a more sexually liberated modern era and the association of war with at once a disruptive violence that mimics the way the naked female sunders established proprieties, and the inevitable remasculinization prompted by war.

General Conyers, a wise friend of his not-so-wise father, had earlier rigorously questioned the young boy-narrator over the military occupations of his playmates’ fathers:
“And Mary Barber’s father?”
“He’s in the Queen’s. Richard Vaughan’s is in the “Twenty-fourth”—the South Wales Borderers.”
“What about the father of the Westmacott twins?”
“A Gunner.”
“What sort of Gunner?
“Field, but Thomas and Henry Westmacott say their father is going to get his ‘jacket’ soon, so he may be Royal Horse Artillery by now.”

This seemingly innocuous cascade of soldierly trivia is given only to set up this devastating addendum, transmitted to the reader after war has been declared:

“The Fenwicks’ father was killed, Mary Barber’s father was killed, Richard Vaughan’s father was killed, and the Westmacott twins’ father was killed.”

It is not only the mere news of death but also the terse, clipped, severe sentences in which the news of death has been unfolded. The linguistic severity of the twentieth century, attendant on war and remasculinization, has become necessary and inevitable.

Even though only this one section is devoted to the immediate years 1914-18, the Great War makes an impact all through the Dance sequence. When we first meet Jenkins and his group of male friends at school, they compare a poster of a wanted criminal to a picture of President Wilson. Even as these boys experience a normal upper-middle-class British childhood, they are aware that, most likely, the elder brothers of many of their classmates have been killed in the war. That so many of their immediate seniors have been eliminated opens the way for potentially great careers for these young men, as the initial books in the sequence show the dizzying possibilities in art, business, music, and social life available for a group of talented youngsters making their way in collective contexts desiccated by attrition, by the literal absence of those killed and the figurative absence of those wounded or traumatized.

Even as these tantalizing individual possibilities are offered to the generation of the main characters in the sequence though their world is forever blighted
not only by war and mass death but also by the rapid decline of the British Empire. The bungalow at Stonehurst contains much bric-a-brac from India, left there by the previous occupants; by the time of the end of the period the sequence covers, India will have left British suzerainty forever. One could easily expect the sequence to be nostalgic about this loss of privilege, and for its course to be an elegiac and self-pitying chronicle of decline. Indeed, Powell at one time was frequently read this way, as narrating the fall of the upper classes, as represented by the charming but doomed Stringham, and the rise of the uncongenial lower orders, as represented by the odious Widmerpool. This is far too reductive a reading. Indeed, Powell bears the hallmarks of the twentieth century in that he is too disillusioned to whine too much about disillusionment; loss is too ingrained in him to be lamented, and thus he avoids the melodrama and theatrical lament sometimes present in British writers a generation his senior. But, though it is unquestionable that Powell, a self-described traditional Tory, sees some good in traditional British upper-class values, there is one area about which he is not nostalgic from the get-go: Empire. Even though Powell was a great admirer of Rudyard Kipling, his attitude towards Empire is noticeably different; the recession of its tide is narrated without opinion, without sentiment. The “Raj nostalgia” trendy in the 1980s is totally foreign to the thematics and the historical consciousness of the Dance sequence.

Powell is ruthless in criticizing the various errors and debasements of twentieth-century ideologies; especially of the Left, but he wishes to live in no other time and accepts the changes that constitute his time. This is true in a larger geopolitical sense as well: while many of his British generational peers such as Evelyn Waugh or Graham Greene, were, whether from the Right or the Left, anti-American, Powell was guardedly and bemusedly encouraging of American entrance onto the world stage. Powell also took an interest in the newly independent countries of Eastern Europe, setting his second novel, Venusberg, in a version of Latvia, and visiting Budapest and Belgrade. Though the narrator makes occasional fun of the novel sequence’s figure involved in international relations, the veteran diplomat Sir Gavin Walpole-Wilson, he mirrors Sir Gavin’s fundamental acceptance of the Little Entente countries as state actors. Powell’s respect for the European nature of Eastern European states correlates national self-determination and the modernity of the twentieth century.
Moreover, even though Powell’s style is severe—Hemingway especially influences his dialogue—he also allows for the ambitious and sophisticated: for a large vocabulary, for a delight in the possibilities of language and the imagination. In his early novels, those not part of the Dance sequence such as Venusburg, Powell had written in an austere, unornamented style. In the Dance sequence, he integrated larger vistas of social background, cultural reference and linguistic extravagance, all without surrendering the discipline and self-control that modern literature emphasised. The problem with the assumptions behind much twentieth century war and postwar literature is that they renounced subjectivity and rhetoric to an extent which was impressive in evoking the horrors, and forced psychological truncations, of war, but was in the long term unsustainable. One can only ask humanity to give up so much, to cut back and harness our emotions and aspirations only to a degree. Powell, like Cather and Manning, found a way to register the traumas of war without making a vain attempt to denude us of the playful and the ambitious. Because they developed a sustainable mode of disillusionment, these three writers can be guides to resisting re-illusionment. Today, fundamentalisms, atavisms, and, narcissisms call at us from every quarter. The Bayliss Wheelers of the world continue to profit and not to care. Regressive stirrings proliferate. These three twentieth century writers give us just enough disillusionment to quell these regressive stirrings; the measure and moderation of their registering of trauma gives us a way forward.
A friend of mine once pointed out how strange the settings were for the Hercule Poirot TV series. David Suchet is very good, certainly, but, why, he asked, do the murders always take place in a 1920s or 1930s period house? That wasn’t Agatha Christie’s fault, of course – but it showed how TV directors, and many writers, do restrict their buildings to the period in which their books are set.

That’s one of the great characteristics of Dance – its tremendous variety of architectural settings. I do wish I’d been able to ask my great-uncle about it all. I certainly spent a lot of time at the Chantry as a boy. But I was a neurotic egomaniac of a child, unaware I was in the presence of greatness.

I tried to read Dance as a teenager – and was too young, I think. I read it again in my 20s – and was hooked. But by then it was too late to ask Uncle Tony – or AP, as I shall refer to him in this talk – about it. A blessing for him to be delivered from this duty, I’m sure.

Anyway, back to Poirot. Dance does touch on contemporary architecture – most famously on the 1933 Jensen swimwear factory, beyond Chiswick, on the A30, the Great West Road. It’s here that Nick Jenkins first kissed Jean Templer in The Acceptance World:

On either side of the highway, grotesque buildings, which in daytime resembled the temples of some shoddy, utterly unsympathetic Atlantis, now assumed the appearance of an Arctic city’s frontier forts. Veiled in snow, these hideous monuments of a lost world bordered a river of black,
foaming slush... The exact spot must have been a few hundred yards beyond the point where the electrically illuminated young lady in a bathing dress dives eternally through the petrol-tainted air; night and day, winter and summer, never reaching the water of the pool to which she endlessly glides. Like some image of arrested development, she returns forever, voluntarily, to the springboard from which she started her leap. A few seconds after I had seen this bathing belle journeying, as usual, imperturbably through the frozen air, I took Jean in my arms.

Not only did AP use a great variety of periods. He was also never clichéd in his discussion of them. With this art deco building, he went for none of the traditional art deco references – but brought in an utterly original simile.

He never gushed about buildings – quite the opposite, as we’ll see. But I think you can sense a leaning towards the classical, in particular the Regency and Empire periods. Those are certainly the periods he chose to live in, when it came to his houses: 1 Chester Gate, part of Nash’s lovely work at Regent’s Park; and the Chantry, such a fine bit of restrained classicism. I hope it doesn’t stretch the point to say, too, that AP’s moving memorial service, on 4 May, 2000, was also held at a classical building, the Grosvenor Chapel, Mayfair – albeit a much earlier classical building of 1731, with another very restrained touch, that Tuscan porch.

Much more powerful than architectural style in *Dance*, though, is architectural mood. And the overpowering mood is melancholy, strikingly when Jenkins returns to Oxford in *Books Do Furnish a Room* – appropriately enough, when he’s writing a biography of Robert Burton, author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*: “Returning to the university at forty, one immediately recaptured all the crushing melancholy of the undergraduate condition.” The two most repeated words in architectural descriptions in *Dance* are “melancholy” and “gloom”. Here he is on Eton in *A Question of Upbringing*: “Silted-up residues of the years smouldered uninterruptedly – and not without melancholy – in the maroon brickwork of those medieval closes.”

It’s interesting, by the way, that AP was brought up in Gothic – at Eton and Balliol – and chose to live in classical, at Chester Gate and the Chantry; but
also in his earlier bachelor digs in Shepherd Street, and at 33 Tavistock Square in Bloomsbury. You could hardly say he chose the classical style of the Duckworths building in Henrietta St, Covent Garden. But, again, it is classical, in the shadow of Britain’s first classical piazza – Covent Garden, designed by Inigo Jones in the early 17th century. In his memoirs, AP illustrated his office via Hogarth’s ‘Morning’ – the print of the market and Jones’s church features AP’s office buried away in the background.

It’s another sign of AP’s strong visual sense, one he must have hoped to hone in his printing course at Holborn Polytechnic after leaving Oxford; even if the course, he said, “expounded no more than the eternal truth that some layouts are more pleasing to the eye than others.”

He shared that visual sense with his Oxford friend, Evelyn Waugh. In fact, AP bumped into Waugh at the Polytechnic, where he asked him what he was studying.

“Carpentry,” said Waugh.
“Why on earth are you doing that?” said AP.
“Oh, Tolstoy and all that.”

A typical Waugh joke. But, still, it’s worth remembering that Waugh’s first full-length book, published in 1927, was a biography of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. His visual sense was keen.

Back to Dance. More strident than AP’s architectural likes are his dislikes. “Here was the Middle Age, from the pages of Tennyson, or Scott, at its most elegant: all sordid and painful elements subtly removed,” wrote AP, in A Buyer’s Market, of Stourwater Castle, based on 13th-century Hever Castle, Kent. The fantasy look of the restored, medieval Stourwater lends it the feel of a film set:

“Look, the castle,” said Isobel, “Nobody warned me it was made of cardboard.”
Cardboard was certainly the material of which walls and keep seemed to be built, as we rounded the final sweep of the drive, standing with absurd unreality against a background of oaks, tortured by their antiquity into elephantine and grotesque shapes….Stourwater seemed nearer to being an
architectural abortion, a piece of monumental vulgarity, a house where something had gone seriously wrong.

In *The Valley of Bones* (1964), AP was even less keen on Castlemallock, the neo-Gothic Victorian pile based on Gosford Castle, County Armagh, where AP trained in 1940. In the novel, the castle has become the Corps School of Chemical Warfare where Nicholas Jenkins was stationed:

There was an undoubted aptness in this sham fortress, monument to a tasteless, half-baked romanticism, becoming now, in truth, a military stronghold, its stone walls and vaulted ceilings echoing at last to the clatter of arms and oaths of soldiery. It was as if its perpetrators had recreated the tedium, as well as the architecture, of medieval times.

Another clear AP dislike is the grim monumental quality of pre-war government architecture, as symbolised by the Donners Brebner Building, on the other side of the Thames from Millbank:

The innate dejection of spirit of that part of London was augmented by regarding its landscape from this huge and shapeless edifice, recently built in a style as wholly without ostensible order as if it were some vast, prehistoric cromlech.

What shines through *Dance*, even more than a taste for the classical, is a taste for decay. Increasingly, *Dance* is almost a historical record of old, rundown London – a London I still remember in the late 1980s. At Westminster School then, I remember my never-ending maths lessons, staring out of the window for years on end as Westminster Abbey was gradually cleaned of centuries of soot. I’m not sure I didn’t prefer the old, blackened abbey to the split-new, dazzling white one. We’ve all read a million articles about how London is now the world’s megacity, capital of the gazillionaires’ planet and all the rest of it, but *Dance* was written when London was still largely blackened with soot, and everywhere was on its uppers.

Mr Deacon’s premises in Charlotte Street are “a sordid spot”. Chelsea, in *At Lady Molly’s*, “gave off that stubborn, musty smell characteristic of staircases leading to Chelsea flats: damp cigarette smoke: face powder”.

93
The Albert Memorial – which I remember being cleaned up 20 or so years ago - was also thick with soot in *A Buyer’s Market*:

> The Bedouin forever rests on his haunches in hopeless contemplation of Kensington Gardens’ trees and thickets, the blackened sockets of his eyes ranging endlessly over the rich foliage of these oases of the mirage.

Most magnificently gloomy of all are the environs of the Ufford in Bayswater, as described in *The Military Philosophers*: “The area was not yet so squalid as it was in due course to become in the period immediately following the end of the war.”

One of the problems I’ve had in putting the slides together for this talk is how spruced up London is now. It’s impossible to find a dingy modern photo of Bayswater. And so the gloom goes on. Here’s Tavistock Square, site of AP’s old digs: an area of “sad streets and squares, classical facades of grimy brick, faded stucco mansions long since converted into flats”. And, most memorably of all, Maida Vale, where X Trapnel lurks; where *Profiles in String* is dumped in the canal by Pamela Flitton:

> Before the war, the indigenous population, time-honoured landladies, inveterate lodgers, immemorial whores, long undisturbed in surrounding premises, had already begun to give place to young married couples, but buildings already tumbledown had now been further reduced by bombing. The neighbourhood looked anything but flourishing.

Here’s Pimlico in *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant* – “a vast, desolate region of stucco streets and squares upon which a doom seemed to have fallen. The gloom was cosmic.”

But the clever thing is there’s no gloom in the gloom, no melancholy in the melancholy. You don’t get down, reading *Dance*. There’s a sort of joy in it – as AP evokes in *Messengers of Day*, describing his bachelor stamping grounds in Shepherd Street, Mayfair.
As I reached the outskirts of Shepherd Market, at that period scarcely touched by rebuilding, I regained once more some small sense of exultation... The inhabitants, many of them existing precariously on their bridge earnings, or hire of their bodies, were... not without their own seedy glory.

There is a beauty in decay, too, as in the bombed House of Commons in *Books Do Furnish a Room* – “Cavernous alcoves were littered with paraphernalia of scaffolding and ropes, Piranesian frameworks hinting of torture and execution, but devised only to repair bomb damage to structure and interior ornament.”

A comedy, too, in the description of the bombed Mortimer, the Soho pub in *Casanova’s Chinese Restaurant*:

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’.

So many architectural writers forget that people live in buildings. Not AP – who is alive to how buildings are used by their inhabitants, not least pubs, like X Trapnel’s local, The Hero of Acre in Fitzrovia, as described in *Books Do Furnish a Room*:

The Hero, one of those old-fashioned pubs in grained pitchpine with engraved looking-glass (what Mr Deacon used to call a gin palace) was atomised into half a dozen or more separate compartments, subtly differentiating, in the traditional British manner, social divisions of its clientele, according to temperament or means: saloon bar; public bar; private bar; ladies’ bar; wine bar; off-licence; possibly others too.

Even with buildings AP clearly likes, there’s still a melancholy side. Take Decimus Burton’s Wellington Arch (1830) on Hyde Park Corner, with its whacking great 1912 sculpture of Victory in a chariot, the biggest bronze in
Europe. “Like a vast paperweight or capital ornament of an Empire clock, the
Quadriga’s horses against a sky of indigo and silver, pranced desperately
towards the abyss.” (A Buyer’s Market)

The Chantry is furnished with Empire pieces – a favourite of the Powells.
And yet, just because you like something, it doesn’t mean its presence should
constantly please you.

Architecture in Dance is architecture in real life. Yes, lovely buildings can
cheer you up. But, much more often, your moods determine how you feel
about your surroundings. That’s not to say gloom is always the order of the
day in Dance. At one moment, Uncle Giles suddenly appears in Shepherd
Market at 4 am, when Jenkins returns from a party. And the mood is
distinctly ungloomy:

Touched, almost mystically, like another Stonehenge, by the
first rays of the morning sun, the spot seemed one of those
clusters of tumbledown dwellings depicted by Canaletto or
Piranesi, habitations from amongst which arches, obelisks
and viaducts, ruined and overgrown with ivy, arise from the
mean houses huddled together below them.

Of course, Stonehenge is a world away from Shepherd Market in cold,
architectural terms. But, if the mood is right, such leaps make perfect sense.
AP’s favourite style might have been Regency classical; his favoured
architectural mood a Gothic gloom. That mood varies but it always triumphs
over the cold, hard details of architectural style.

© Harry Mount 2014
Agents, Patients and Talking Pictures: Two Old Etonians in Late-Weimar Berlin

JEFFREY MANLEY

1. Introduction

Berlin in the waning days of the Weimar Republic was not the cultural backwater it became after WW II and remains even today, despite its restoration as the political (if not the economic and cultural) capital of reunited Germany. In the late 1920s and early 1930s Berlin was very much a “happening place” (at least for a certain kind of popular culture). Its decadent night clubs, cabarets and sexual tolerance attracted writers, painters, musicians and performers as well as those from all over Europe just looking for a good time on the cheap. Moreover, it was a major base of motion picture production during the golden age of silent film in the 1920s.

The most well known depiction of late-Weimar Berlin in English fiction is in the writings of Christopher Isherwood: Mr. Norris Changes Trains (1935) and Goodbye to Berlin (1939). These were based on his experiences as a language tutor living in Berlin in this period. They were later popularized in a play and film by John Van Druten entitled I Am a Camera in the early 1950s and later still in a successful Broadway stage and Hollywood film musical Cabaret in the 1960-70s.

Anthony Powell made a small but interesting contribution to the literature of 1930s Berlin in his 1936 novel Agents and Patients. He also commented on Weimar Germany in his memoirs Messengers of Day (1978) where he describes the brief visits he made there with his friend John Heygate in 1929 and 1932. Heygate made more extensive comments on the Germany of this
period both in an autobiographical novel *Talking Picture* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934) and a fictionalized memoir *Motor Tramp* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), as well as in a later, more conventional memoir *These Germans: An Estimate of their Character Seen in Flashes from the Drama 1918-1939* (London: Hutchinson, 1940). He had lived in Germany (and Austria) for extended periods between 1926 and 1939. He spoke German fluently and found the German people sympathetic. Germany was a far more important part of Heygate’s life than it was of Powell’s.

This paper will explore and compare these works of Powell and Heygate relating to Berlin. In a sense, it is a sequel to the paper I delivered at the Eton Conference in 2013 where the writings of Powell and Heygate about Eton were compared\(^\text{101}\). In particular, this paper will attempt to identify those passages where Powell and Heygate are describing the same or similar characters, places or events in their real and fictional depictions of late-Weimar Berlin. In addition, where one of them includes matters of particular interest not covered by the other, this will also be mentioned to the extent relevant. It will also place their fiction in historical context and compare how the two authors reflect these contexts in their stories or memoirs. Where relevant, writings of others (e.g., Christopher Isherwood) will also be included in the discussion.

### 2. Memoirs: 1929 Trip

AP travelled to Berlin in the summer of 1929 with his friend John Heygate as a stop in what was planned as a three-week motoring holiday. They left London just after Heygate had alienated the affections of Evelyn Waugh’s first wife, although when they set out to Germany this was unknown to Powell, a friend of both Heygate and the Waugh’s. Powell describes the trip briefly in his memoirs (*Messengers* 126-29):

> Germany, in the summer of 1929, seemed on the surface all that was free and easy...Gallons of beer were drunk. If there were a pool in the village it was taken for granted you could bathe there. The *Wandervögel*, primitive hippies (if cleaner and better looking), wandered about strumming

guitars and singing sentimental songs... Berlin was then at the height of its Isherwood phase: Top-booted tarts equipped with riding switches; transvestite bars and nightclubs; naked cabarets (‘Zweite Klasse’ sagely warned the porter at our hotel, by no means first class itself, of this last form of entertainment, and he was right); all the sexual freedoms that now seem so humdrum. Nevertheless, infested with prostitutes of both sexes, beggars, pimps, freaks, eye-glassed duel-scarred officers, the macabre city presented a monstrous vision of life, the cast peopling the cartoons of George Grosz, the artist who has memorialized for ever the Berlin of that epoch.

Heygate for his part describes this trip in two memoirs. One is Motor Tramp — more memoir than fiction but fictionalized to a certain extent — in which the unnamed narrator (Heygate) and his friend Rightlaw (clearly based on Powell, as is explained later) set out from London in Heygate’s newly acquired sports car. On the way to Berlin, they slept in the car or beside it in fields. Rightlaw is obsessed with his own present love interest but doesn’t offer any clues as to who this may be. He is also interested in guidebooks, planning visits to the inside of every church and museum, but is otherwise insensitive to his immediate surroundings, including the motor car which to him is only a means of transport. He must see everything but is a “miserable sightseer,” preferring to drive past everything and then complain about what he has missed. Heygate enjoyed churches from the outside, motoring long distances just to be in his motor car with which he was infatuated (and to whom the book is dedicated, identified by registration plate “CG 1425”), and talking to anyone at all about any subject. They only thing they mutually enjoyed was pubs from the inside (24-25; 32-33). When they arrive in Berlin, Rightlaw, who is navigator, merely advises that they proceed to the cathedral which he reckons will be the centre. They run out of gas right in front of the Adlon Hotel (far over their budget) but Rightlaw asks the porter if they have a double room for 5 marks per night and is helpfully directed to a nearby kiosk where such accommodations are found for them. Heygate remarks that Rightlaw was always at his best in this sort of situation (33-35).

Heygate provides a more detailed description of the 1929 Berlin visit in his later memoir These Germans. In this book, he describes their unnamed accommodation as an “airless two-bedded room, at the top of an
unrespectable hotel in a side street off the Friederichstrasse, pornographic shop window of Germany’s shame.” They stayed a week in Berlin in “boilingly hot weather,” spending the first three days exploring the city’s fabled cafés and clubs (60). Viewed from what sounds like the Romanisches Café on the Kurfurstendamm, Berlin seemed “vulgar, new; art-styles borrowed from art-styles; self-conscious, crazy.” It reminded him of the Wembley Empire Exhibition (66-67). After determining that the well-known restaurants such as Horcher’s, serving delicacies like crayfish, tench *au bleu* or Rhine salmon *vom Rost* were beyond their means, they settle for a pair of frankfurter sausages in a beer-house with outside tables.

They then begin a three-night club crawl, starting at one of the “more immoral bars” where they had been told in London to contact a Jacki or Fritzi as a reliable “guide to the vices of Berlin.” He warns them off such well-known sites as the Eldorado, Silhouette and Jockey, as well as the Casanova and Femina with their “decoy girls” or any of the other places “with or without their inevitable table-telephones.” Their guide thinks that as writers they should visit “the real thing where the real people went.” (68-69) They end up in an unnamed club where there are “grimacing girls herded into tableaux, heroic orgies, spectacles of passion in which if you looked closely, you could see them whispering bored jokes to each other.” On either side of the stage, behind a thin muslin curtain, there were two young girls, “meager in body, but with good breasts ... and obviously engaged for this quality” who were posed on rotating pedestals until one of them lost balance and fell, at which point the curtain closed and the two young Englishmen were advised to retire downstairs where there was dancing and beer.

On the following nights, their crawl continued and included visits to the monstrous spectacles of Voodoo, the man-woman, and the perversions of the Potsdamer Platz with its famous scarlet-heeled or spurred grenadiers who meted out disciplinary treatment to their clientele. Heygate concludes that Berlin, as a result of Germany’s defeat, had become the “market of bodies” for the whole of Europe (70-72). During the daytime, they were driven from their room by the heat and found relief in nearby lakes where they encountered another facet of German culture they were seeking out in the form of nudist colonies (*Naktkultur vs. Nachtleben*).

After their week in Berlin (according to Powell’s account), they proceed southward, and when they reach Munich, they part. There is no mention in
either of Heygate’s memoirs of his receipt in Munich of instructions to return home and face the scandal he has helped create over the first Mrs Waugh. Powell does mention these messages, however. The first one he opened was a telegram which stated “Instruct Heygate return immediately Waugh.”

Heygate’s communications carried a similar message. According to Martin Stannard, Evelyn Waugh’s biographer and editor of the *Vile Bodies* volume of the *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh* (vol. 2, OUP, 2017, p. xxxv), the message was a bit milder than AP recalled: “please tell john return home immediately imperative. Evelyn”. This information became available when the Powell estate sold an archive of AP’s correspondence in 2016 and a copy of the telegram appeared in the Bonhams catalogue.

It was only when these messages were received that Powell, for his part, realized the seriousness of the situation. Powell comments: “It was clear that our trip together was at an end. The blow had fallen; crisis come” (*Messengers*, 128). After Heygate embarked for the Channel in his motor car, Powell says that he continued back by train via Frankfurt and Cologne. In *Motor Tramp*, Heygate merely returns to Berlin after Munich where he skips ahead three years to the events of 1932, avoiding any need to mention the Waugh’s divorce, his own marriage and its subsequent failure which had occurred in the meantime.

---

102 The image is from [www.bonhams.com/auctions/23576/lot/203/](http://www.bonhams.com/auctions/23576/lot/203/) 15 June 2016 Lot 23 WAUGH, EVELYN Series of forty-two autograph letters and cards…to …Anthony Powell, etc.
3. Fiction: Two Novels and a Film Studio

In addition to these memoirs, both Powell and Heygate wrote fictional versions of their Berlin experiences. These also overlap to some extent when Powell uses his second trip to Berlin as the basis for a chapter in his novel. Because Heygate was there considerably longer, his account (Talking Picture) takes up an entire novel.

Heygate’s novel about his Berlin experiences (Talking Picture) was published in London in May 1934 (three years before A&P appeared) and has never been reprinted or published outside the UK. This is a pity because it is an interesting, entertaining and amusing book and obviously influences Powell’s later novel that has descriptions of many of the same or similar events and characters in the film studio as well as the night spots of Berlin. Heygate’s novel and the background of its writing have recently escaped from obscurity in an article by British film historian Geoff Brown.°° What follows regarding Heygate’s film career and the technical background of the multi-lingual film production as reflected in Talking Picture is based to a large extent on Brown’s article.

Talking Picture (Heygate’s second novel following Decent Fellows which is discussed in “The Unsevered Chain,”°° , is effectively a memoir of his experience at UFA (Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft) at a pivotal time in the history of filmmaking as well as of Germany itself. UFA was considered by many as the leading German film studio in the Weimar years. It was responsible for the production of such silent classics as The Last Laugh (1924) directed by F. W. Murnau and Metropolis (1927) directed by Fritz Lang, as well as the early talkie The Blue Angel (1930) directed by Joseph von Sternberg. Its studios were located in a Berlin suburb (Neubabelsberg near Potsdam) and remain there to this day, having escaped serious damage in WWII. Sound film was introduced in 1929 and had become the Hollywood standard by 1932. UFA along with other studios outside Hollywood had been struggling to adapt in order to remain competitive. Before sound film, a foreign language film company such as UFA could distribute its products in

---


large English-speaking markets such as North America and the UK simply by translating the title cards or “intertitles” on which dialogue and plot linkages were printed. Adjusting films to different spoken sound tracks created a considerable challenge.

UFA’s solution to sound was to produce separate versions of the same film with different scriptwriters and separate casts speaking different languages. The producers, directors, technical crews and extras without speaking parts, as well as the sets and stories, were the same for each version. The idea was to shoot the same film in different language versions one after the other on the same sound stage with the same crews and sets but different scripts and actors. UFA even built a special building specifically designed to accommodate this multi-language format. It had several sound stages arranged around its perimeter which could simultaneously accommodate different language groups of actors rotating from one set to another of the same film being made in multiple versions. This business model was, however, short-lived because it was less efficient than foreign language
dubbing or subtitling for which the technology was soon perfected. Indeed, Heygate’s fictional description of the chaotic production process makes clear why it was doomed to failure.

Heygate was at a loose end after dismissal from his position at the BBC following his role in the 1930 divorce of Evelyn Waugh. After struggling as a freelance writer, he was hired in summer 1932 by the British-Gaumont Film Corporation as an English language supervisor on a series of four multi-lingual films to be produced in Berlin under an arrangement with UFA. Heygate was employed not on the basis of any film writing expertise but because of his mastery of German acquired from a 1926 course in Heidelberg which he had taken in an unsuccessful effort to obtain a job in the Foreign Office. Heygate refers to this experience in *Talking Picture* (p. 16) when the narrator recalls having “survived a viva voce examination for the Foreign Office until the examiner had invited a discussion of Hegel’s philosophy.” In his later memoir *These Germans*, he also describes in positive terms his sojourn in Heidelberg, during which he lived with a middle class German family.

According to Brown, the joint UFA/British-Gaumont films were not commercially successful in major English language markets, and no further films were made under that arrangement after the first four. There may have also been political reasons for the dissolution of the joint venture after the Nazi takeover in early 1933 since a Jewish family held a substantial interest in British-Gaumont. Joint German-French productions were more of a success in the marketplace, however, and continued to be produced even after the Nazis took over.

Heygate worked on two of the four joint productions under the UFA/British-Gaumont deal. The English version of the first of these was called *Early to Bed* (1933), which started production shortly after he arrived in summer

---

105 According to Brown (205), UFA was not the only studio making multi-lingual productions. The practice was pioneered by British International Pictures beginning with the introduction of feature length productions on sound film in 1927. This company later morphed into Associated British Picture Corporation which owned the ABC cinema chain.
1932. Heygate’s boss at the UFA studios, Robert Stevenson, wrote the script for the English version of this film and receives screen credit, but Heygate assisted him and ultimately took over his position as English language supervisor when Stevenson returned to England. According to Brown (207), in the novel Heygate used the story from this film as the basis for the fictional film described in his novel, where it is referred to as “Film 991” and its title is never mentioned. In both the real and the fictional versions, two working class characters fall in love. In the film, “without knowing each other’s identity they time share the same room in a Berlin lodging house. Meeting on the street, each thinks the other rich, but when the awful truth dawns it’s not so awful because by then they are both in love” (Brown, 207-08). In the novel, they live in adjacent rooms but manage to keep their lowly professions a secret. Powell may have been present during the production of this film in summer 1932. Yet, he refers to a “Napoleon film” (which sounds more like the plot for Heygate’s second film, The Only Girl) as well as a jungle film that resembles neither of the British-Gaumont/UFA films Heygate worked on.

The plot of Talking Picture begins with the summer departure for Berlin from Liverpool St. Station of its main character and narrator (John—obviously based on Heygate). There to see him off is a friend named Rightlaw who, according to Michael Barber is based on Powell himself. That is also the name that Heygate later applied to Powell in Motor Tramp, as noted above. Any doubt about Rightlaw’s identity is allayed by Powell’s tongue-in-cheek, extended mention of Rightlaw in his review of the novel (see below):

There will be few readers who will not succumb to Rightlaw’s charms, even though he appears for a few pages only. His considered brusque remarks about himself, followed by equally brusque questions about other people, make us feel that we have been privileged to meet a really delightful person, intelligent, sensitive and reserved. If there were more Rightlaws about, the world would be a pleasant place to live in; if there were more characters like Rightlaw in literature, novels would be a pleasure to read.

---

106 In German, this film was titled Ich bei Tag und Du bei Nacht (literally Me in the Daytime and You at Night).
There can be little doubt that Heygate got the message.

The chronology of Heygate’s novel tracks fairly closely with his own experience. After his arrival in Berlin, John reports for duty as English language supervisor for multi-lingual films at a studio called ATAG (Allgemeine Tonfilm Aktiengesellschaft) which is obviously UFA. Most of the novel is taken up with descriptions of how the multi-lingual production complicates the film-making process. Arguments over translation of the script, problems with scheduling arrivals and departures of three different sets of actors (not to mention different problems with multi-lingual actors appearing in more than one version) and frustrations in dealing with the new sound technology complicated by recording different language versions correctly are added to the usual difficulties of temperamental actors, directors and producers. It seems obvious from Heygate’s description of the inherently inefficient process why it was doomed to commercial failure.

Powell reviewed *Talking Picture* in the Summer 1934 issue of *Now and Then*, a book review issued by Jonathan Cape (publisher of Heygate’s book) to promote their products. Powell concluded that to describe Heygate’s book “as a novel is to stretch the definition of the term to its furthest and most autobiographical extremity. For the book is far more personal, something in much closer contact with life, than all but a few of the novels that pour each week from the press…” Since Powell was present during some small period of the action Heygate describes, his characterization carries considerable weight, although he does not cite his personal knowledge in the review. According to George Lilley’s bibliography, this review was the second that Powell wrote as a professional literary journalist. Among others writing reviews or articles for that issue were Malcolm Muggeridge, Herbert Read, Edmund Blunden and Winifred Holtby.

Powell’s own Berlin chapter is based on his trip in the Summer of 1932; he leaves no fictional version of the 1929 trip. Powell, uncharacteristically, in his *Journals* discusses the character models on which he relied in *A&P*. The two main characters are Peter Maltravers (based on Heygate) and Oliver Chipchase (based on Powell himself; *J87-89*, 121). Peter Maltravers, like

---

108 *Now and Then*, No 28, Summer 1934, p. 14; also quoted in Michael Barber’s biography.
Heygate, is fascinated with his motor car and is married to a woman (Sarah) with whom he seems to be having problems—although these are reduced to another comic theme in the story. Chipchase’s trip to Berlin hinges on the move to that city by Maltravers to take up a job in a German film studio. That trip in turn is based on the employment of Heygate at UFA.

Powell sets the scene in A&P for the movement of the action to Berlin by stressing that city’s Carnival atmosphere to some of the England-based characters who are contemplating trips to the continent. Oliver Chipchase tells Mrs. Mendoza (a character based on Dorothy Varda, well known in this parish) that Berlin has become a “far gayer” place than Paris (111). Once Maltravers has left for Berlin, Chipchase convinces Blore-Smith, the naïf whom Chipchase and Maltravers are offering to introduce to the wider world in exchange for relieving him of some of his inherited fortune, that a trip to Berlin is the logical next step in his education. Both Blore-Smith and Mrs. Mendoza separately take up these suggestions. When Maltravers meets Mrs. Mendoza in Berlin and wonders why she is there, she explains that “no one ever went to Paris now anyhow, and that Berlin was the only place with any gaiety left, and so we came here” (139). Mrs. Mendoza arrives in Berlin with her fiancé Commander Venables (based, according to AP, on Capt. Turle, RN) but leaves with Blore-Smith, who had come with Chipchase. Whether Dorothy Varda visited Berlin around the time Powell was there in 1932 is not mentioned in his memoirs.

Powell, whose knowledge of filmmaking and scriptwriting was second hand when he wrote A&P, nevertheless includes a few references to the film production process in his novel, which also seems to adhere fairly closely to the chronology of his own short visit. Chipchase and Blore-Smith arrive at the Zoo Station and are taken to the studio in the fictional Berlin suburb of Niebelheim. The studio consists of a number of “low square structures like aeroplane hangars…and on the horizon, the outline of Greek or Roman ruins stood out against the sky.” Powell names his studio Niebelheimnazionalkunstfilmgesellschaft, abbreviated to “N N.” Chipchase

---

109 Powell worked as a scriptwriter for Warner Brothers in Teddington under a six month contract starting in Autumn 1936 (following publication of A&P in January 1936) and after that job ended, made a trip to Hollywood in 1937 to seek work with a major studio. He has written that, so far as he knows, none of his work ever made it to the screen (Faces, p. 47) and he was unsuccessful in obtaining any employment in the US.
meets Maltravers in the studio where he is engaged in an argument with the director about a multi-lingual film set in Central Africa, and Maltravers seeks Chipchase’s advice on how to resolve a matter of musical accompaniment (127-28):

The hero is, in the German version, a Korps student who wants to be a soldier; in the French version a soldier who wants to be a poet; and in the English version an English gentleman who wants to be an English gentleman. All are thwarted in their desires and adjourn to the great open (or, to be accurate, the great enclosed) spaces where they meet another Korps student, soldier-poet and English gentleman respectively, who is living with a native girl. They quarrel over this woman and one of them is killed. As he lies dying while the surrounding tribes of cannibals advance towards the hut, the German says: “Muth verloren, alles verloren. Da wär as besser, nicht geboren.” The Frenchman says: “J’irai loin—bien loin, comme un bohémien, par la Nature, comme avec une femme.” The Englishman says: “Play up and play the game.”

‘There’s something you can’t improve on.’

‘While the oncoming cannibals croon the refrain of the “Boating Song” from the jungle over which night is falling.’

‘All of it?’

‘Only the first two and the last verses.’

‘Quite perfect.’

‘They say it will take too long because they will have to get the music from England.’

‘Absurd.’

Powell manages in this one paragraph to illustrate the difficulty of trying to film three different language versions of the same story (something Heygate does repeatedly and sometimes in excruciating detail in his novel) while also injecting another reference to their both being Old Etonians. 110

110 This scene contains the third reference to the “Eton Boating Song” in A&P. In the opening scenes, Chipchase and Maltravers witness a troupe of street actors in Soho where one is bound in chains and the other pleads for contributions before he is released. Chipchase comments (6): “Rousseau was right as regards chains” to
4. Fiction: Cast and Crew

There is a considerable overlap between the two novels in their description of the characters involved in filmmaking. Although Powell’s chapter is much shorter, he seems to have absorbed many of the characters also described at much greater length by Heygate. Moreover, Heygate is able to introduce many more filmmaking characters in his novel.

Brown explains in detail (205-08) how Heygate constructed the filmmaking characters in his novel from various UFA and British-Gaumont personnel. Sometimes he used a single film participant to construct a counterpart in the novel. This was the case with leading lady Virginia Hope in Talking Picture who was based on multi-lingual UFA film star Lilian Harvey (1906-68). She did not appear in Early to Bed but was the lead in Heygate’s second UFA/British-Gaumont film The Only Girl. Virginia Hope is a relatively sympathetic character among the film people in Talking Picture. The hero gets on well with her and she is given a genuinely heartfelt send off in the studio at the end of the novel as she departs for Hollywood. 111

Harvey is mentioned by Powell in A&P (143) as one of a triumvirate of film stars—Dietrich, Garbo and Harvey—who inspired the styles of a “steady stream of dolled up girls” who could be seen strolling along the

which Maltravers responds, “It certainly looks as if nothing will ever sever the one that is round him now.” Blore-Smith (not an Old Etonian) later remembers (22) the same performance, which he had also witnessed and where he perhaps overheard Maltravers’ reference to the Boating Song, when he decides that he too “would break away the chains that bound him.”

111 Virginia Hope’s story tracks that of Lilian Harvey. According to Imdb, Harvey was born in England to a bilingual family and was educated in Germany and Switzerland. After her success in UFA films (especially Congress Dances (1931)), she signed a contract with Twentieth Century Fox. But she made only a few films before dissolving that contract and returning to Berlin to appear in more UFA films (by then under Nazi-controlled management). She had a romantic attachment with one of the film directors at UFA, Paul Martin. He directed and she starred in Black Roses (1936), the other UFA film for which Heygate has writing credit. She found it difficult to work under the Nazi regime and returned to the US after being forced to flee Germany for helping others to escape. She spent most of WWII in Los Angeles, but despite her friendly contacts with others in the film industry, she was not given any work because of her associations with UFA films in the early days of the Nazi regime.
Kurfurstendamm. She must have made an impression on Powell, as he recalled many years later (J87-89, 203-04) her performance in the UFA multi-language film Der Kongress tanzt /Congress Dances (1931). A melody he heard at a wedding service and reception in 1989 reminded him of a song (Es gibt’s nur einmal) she had sung in the film.\textsuperscript{112} Powell says this “carried me back to Berlin in the 1930s with great vividness when I was there with the Heygates [sic].”\textsuperscript{113} John Powell explained (according to his father) that the song was the theme from Andrew Lloyd Webber’s “last show, only tune that was really any good.” Although in 1989 Webber’s latest production would have been the Phantom of the Opera (1986), that theme seems an unlikely choice for a wedding; more likely the song Powell heard and to which his son referred was Memory from the earlier Lloyd Webber production Cats (1981) (his last preceding production) which does, at least in parts, sound like the song sung by Lilian Harvey and is the only song in Cats that is “really any good,” at least in my opinion.\textsuperscript{114}

One of the characters who appears in both Heygate’s and Powell’s Berlin novels is the film director under whom Heygate was working at the time of Powell’s visit. In Talking Picture he is Baron Schneider, one of the book’s most sympathetic and comic characters. He has no interest in politics but is devoted to the art of film-making. He is nevertheless quixotic and known to stomp off the set when dissatisfied with his crew (including John). He speaks a kind of “Germlish” in which almost any sentence can end in “isn’t it?” even if it a categorical statement of his position. He also jokingly refers to John and his British-Gaumont superior Stirling as those “Bad Oxford Boys” for trying to encourage working class characters to speak with Oxford accents. In Powell’s novel this character becomes Herr Direktor Roth, a grotesque version of the director. He is about four feet tall, wears dark glasses and has a

\textsuperscript{112} The title of the song in English is Just once for all time but Powell remembered the German version.

\textsuperscript{113} The plural reference would suggest that Evelyn Heygate was also in Berlin with her husband. That is inconsistent with both Talking Picture (where no wife of the narrator is mentioned) and A&P where Sarah Maltravers is left behind in London to fend for herself while her husband is making films.

\textsuperscript{114} The music from Memory that tracks closely with a section from the Harvey song is that beginning “Every streetlamp seems to beat a fatalistic warning.” This is not the song’s primary melody but a sort of refrain, although each time it is repeated with different lyrics. That Powell made the connection with a film he had seen nearly 50 years earlier represents an impressive ability to recall musical phrases.
hook at the end of one arm, with which he ripped the seat out of one of the cameramen’s trousers when displeased with his work. Brown attributes (208) both of these characters to Dr. Ludwig Berger (1892-1969) who was director of *Early to Bed*. Like Baron Schneider, the real life UFA director “wants his musical numbers to arise naturally from radios, gramophones or street singers” as they did in Berger’s *Early to Bed*. There is no mention of any physical similarity between Berger and Powell’s Herr Direktor Roth but both were “fastidious, prickly and strong-willed.” (ibid.)

Another character that appears in both novels is an English actor: Charles Partridge in *Talking Picture* and Rowland Inglethorne in *A&P*. These characters are both said by Brown to be based on the actor Donald Calthrop (1888-1960) who appeared in over 60 films, including *Early to Bed* as well as three Alfred Hitchcock productions. (ibid.) In both novels these characters threaten to do a bunk for England in the middle of a production. According to Heygate, Calthrop was “inclined to board home-bound trains when the English supervisor wasn’t looking” (*These Germans*, 103). In *A&P* (134) Powell includes a satiric description of the English actor named Inglethorne which may make him more interesting than his real life counterpart:

> He was a thin man with hair going grey, who at one time or another had played every part from Hamlet to Widow Twankey…Although most of his time was spent in a *terrain vague* between these and other strongly contrasted roles, he was prepared for farce or tragedy at a moment’s notice. Lines from Congreve, Ibsen, Edgar Wallace, Pirandello were always ready. Inglethorne was a man absolved forever from being himself.

Heygate also includes another English character in *Talking Picture*, but he has no counterpart in *A&P*. This is Robert Stirling who is John’s superior as English supervisor when he arrives but who is called home without warning after the script is completed, leaving John in charge. According to Brown (207), Heygate based this character on two British-Gaumont employees—Angus MacPhail (a script editor) and Robert Stevenson (Heygate’s fellow English supervisor at UFA). Stirling seems to take on the personality and education of MacPhail and the job experience of Stevenson. Heygate’s descriptions of discussions between John and Stirling of how to adapt a German script into an English version and responsibility for the
temperamental English speaking cast members while in a foreign country provide a vivid understanding of the issues faced by those in their position. Stevenson, like Stirling in the novel, is called back to British-Gaumont, leaving Heygate as the senior English-language supervisor. He went on to a successful career as a film director whose credits include *Mary Poppins.* *Talking Picture* is dedicated to MacPhail and Stevenson.

Another important character in *Talking Picture* who does not appear in *A&P* is Rolf Prym. He is the production chief of UFA and the moderator of disputes between the film director and the English supervisors on script issues. This character is based on Eric Pommer who had experience as a successful film producer in Germany and the US dating back to 1915. As one of the many Jewish employees at UFA, he left the company and Germany shortly after the Nazi takeover in 1933. His last film for UFA was *The Only Girl.*

Minor characters in *A&P,* such as Maltravers’ protégée, Fraulein Grundt and the transvestites, Willi and Fritzi, may also have counterparts among the dozens of characters with walk-on roles in *Talking Picture.* Powell had the advantage of having Heygate’s novel in hand when he wrote *A&P* and could use it to refresh his recollection of the Berlin visit. So he may have been able to piece together some of his subordinate characters from those in *Talking Picture,* while adding bits from his own imagination or memory to their make-up.

5. Fiction: Berlin Settings

Both novelists provide descriptions of many of the same Berlin settings in their novels, and they each add their own comic or satirical overlays to many of these descriptive passages. As is the case with fictional characters, Heygate in his longer work has the opportunity to describe more locations and to describe some in greater detail than Powell.

In *A&P,* Chipchase and Blore-Smith put up at the San Souci Palast hotel located in pine woods near the film studio. This seems to be the same hotel where Rightlaw stays in *Talking Picture* which has a similar location but a different name—the Black Ship. Heygate’s narrator was living in the Black Ship during Rightlaw’s visit. The Black Ship was chosen not for its grandness but for its location convenient to the studio and for the fact that the other
film-workers had chosen to live elsewhere, providing John relative privacy. He describes the Black Ship (143) as a

hideous pseudo-modern inn in the middle of a pine forest...with no running water and seldom any hot water at all, although fitted with the latest taps and basins. The bedrooms were large and had originally been illuminated on the three strength system. But the other two bulbs had long ago been removed and very often nothing happened when one pressed the coloured buttons. There were more bedrooms than bulbs and...the son of the proprietress used to go around removing the remaining bulbs from the rooms of the guests he thought would object least and putting them in the more important visitors’ rooms.

Both novels contain a character who serves as a waiter at The Black Ship. In Powell’s version he is named Adolf, has a red nose and a moustache and obsessively collects coupons from a particular kind of cigarette which he plans to exchange for a one-way air ticket from Berlin to Munich. On his night off, he sits with Rightlaw and the other guests and torments his replacement. In Heygate’s novel this character is the un-named sad, red nosed waiter who pesters John constantly to know all the details about his girl friends (Freundinnen). This waiter’s obsessive curiosity eventually drives John away from The Black Ship.

In Heygate’s novel, Rightlaw/Powell also moves out of The Black Ship into the top floor of a late Victorian pension with a lift on the outside of the building providing the only access. There is no apparent reason given for this move except for the excuse to describe the extraordinary nature of the new accommodation and Rightlaw’s possible interest in the landlady’s daughter (TP 230-31). Nor does this correspond with any similar move mentioned on the part of Chipchase in Powell’s novel.

---

115 The hotel preferred by the other English film personnel had “modernist lighting which one switched on by pushing little coloured buttons for flood, diffused or concentrated light...” as well as ample hot and cold water supplies and a view of the nearby lake but its rooms were “little parallel slips of modernism” and it attracted large crowds from the city at weekends, all of which John found annoying (TP 142).
Heygate describes in some detail John’s acquisition of a furnished flat (*Wohnung*) in Berlin as an alternative to The Black Ship. He advertises for an independent, self-contained flat but instead receives hundreds of offers for “a couple of rooms with use of a bathroom and kitchen. Without regard for themselves or their children [Berliners] were prepared to hand over to me their best bedroom and sitting-room and only appear themselves when I was out” (*TP* 250). He finally locates a self-contained flat on the Kaiserdamm in the Charlottenburg district (between the studio and the center) that he describes (*TP* 251) as

’Squalor de Luxe’...In other words it was so small, having only one room, a passage and a slip of a bathroom that no British workman or working man’s wife would have considered it as a domicile. Yet its yearly rental would have purchased outright a decent cottage in England and within its one and a quarter rooms there were no less than seventeen electric light bulbs, eleven switches and several plugs for electric kettles, radio and extra table lamps...The building...was the newest and most fashionable in Berlin...with an exterior painted white and electric blue.

Indeed, the building proved sufficiently fashionable to induce Kati, the Berliner who is Virginia Hope’s extra and John’s latest girl friend, to move in (at least from time to time) and set up housekeeping.

One attractive feature of the new flat was its location “at the debouchment of the AVUS,” providing convenient automobile access to the studio. This is an abbreviation of the German for Automobile traffic and training road (*Automobil Verkehr und Übungsstrasse*). Both novelists describe the thrill of driving or riding in fast cars along this road on the way to and from the studio. Without naming the road as such, Powell describes the trip in Maltravers’ motor car as they left town “through fir forests on either side of the straight white road...[Maltravers’ assistant] Fraülein Grundt drove fast,

---

116 Heygate’s description of the room rentals on offer sounds quite typical of the sort of housing Christopher Isherwood’s narrators found for themselves as they perpetually moved around Berlin from one room to another, sharing flats with families or landladies of ascending or descending levels of social status depending on the relative financial success of the narrators’ private language lessons.
much in the manner of Maltravers himself, scarcely slowing up at all as they went by occasional clumps of dark red-brick villas." (A&P 124) In *Talking Picture*, John always refers to this stretch as the AVUS. It was completed in 1921 as a racetrack and test facility for motorcars, but it also served as a highway between Charlottenburg and the studio in Neubabelsburg. The road consisted of a dual carriageway about 12 miles long with sharply banked, hair-pin turns between the carriageways at each end when used as a race track. When racing, cars proceeded in a counterclockwise direction over the same carriageways as used by cars in a non-racing mode. The turns at each end were removed in 1999 after numerous accidents but the straightaways are still in use as Bundesautobahn 115. The modernistic, round race control tower (*Funkturm*) still stands (and is still in use as a motel and restaurant) at the north end of the road, along with a wooden grandstand.

Both Heygate and Powell also provide vivid fictional descriptions of Berlin nightlife that is similar to that provided in their memoirs, as discussed above. One such venue is the famous night club equipped with telephones on tables and pneumatic message tubes which the punters use for messages to other tables to pick up dates (or clients, as the case may be). This is the Resi (short for Residenz Casino) located on the east side of town near Alexanderplatz. John meets a sympathetic prostitute (Trudi) when she calls his table and they start a brief affair. Powell’s characters (Chipchase, Maltravers, Blore-Smith and Fräulein Grundt) give those establishments a miss when they engage in a pub crawl along the Kurfurstendamm. They start at the Eden Bar in the Hotel Eden. This was a hangout for artists and writers in the early 1930s but was notorious for being the place to which the Communists Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were taken in 1919 by their right wing captors and murdered. Chipchase & Co. then dine in an

---

117 In *Goodbye to Berlin*, Isherwood’s narrator refers (166-67) to the “black Avus” when he is transported by his Jewish friend Bernard Landauer to visit his family’s shuttered villa on the Wannsee. This trip, unlike that described by Powell, takes place at night: “Giant reflector signs glittered for a moment in the headlight beams, expired like burnt-out matches. Already Berlin was a reddish glow in the sky behind us, dwindling rapidly beyond a converging forest of pine. The searchlight on the Funkturm swung its little ray through the night. The straight black road roared headlong to meet us, as if to its destruction.”

118 In Isherwood’s *Goodbye To Berlin*, Sally Bowles meets her wealthy clients in the Eden Bar. She also aspired to obtain an acting job at UFA through a friend of hers.

115
establishment where one was “vaguely aware of the atmosphere of an aquarium;” this was probably Stoecklers on the Ku’damm that famously featured tanks of crabs and lobsters that were about to become dinners. They then move on “via every establishment on the Kurfurstendamm.”

The group proceed to a place Powell calls Real Berlin, which may be his name for the similarly Spanish-named Eldorado, the most well known transvestite venue in Berlin at that time. This was located not on the Ku’damm but a few blocks south; this is consistent with Powell’s description of the Real Berlin’s location (“just round the corner…through side streets”). (A&P, 135-36)

There they find their fellow A&P characters Mendie and the Commodore, and later a somewhat sinister character from the Paris chapters (Teape) also makes an appearance. This is an early example of coincidental meetings of Powell’s characters in unlikely locations. The Real Madrid employs a homosexual waiter named Herman who is introduced to Blore-Smith by Maltravers and offers to improve Blore-Smith’s wardrobe at a relatively low cost in the haberdasheries of Berlin. A waiter with a similar interest in English gentlemen’s fashions appears in Talking Picture in a transvestite bar named the Silhouette. After the Commodore is approached by a transvestite couple, Mendie quickly becomes bored with the place (except for chatting with Herman) and asks Blore-Smith to take her somewhere else. They quietly retire to the Romanisches Café, another well-known venue for the intelligentsia. Powell describes its location as back on the Ku’damm across the street from a gothic church, which is exactly correct.

One of the advantages of the Romanisches Café (to which Mendie and Blore-Smith retire) is that the outdoor tables are above street level avoiding contact with Berlin beggars. Both Powell and Heygate offer interesting descriptions distinguishing the beggar population of Berlin from other cities. Powell (144) describes Berlin beggars as

neatly dressed for the most part in gloves and plus fours…distressing but somehow repellent from the limitations and Germanness of their methods. Like all their countrymen they were hopelessly technique-bound.

John begins regular encounters with German beggars when he moves into his new flat which, it turns out, is in a building which offers relatively easy access to the street. His more detailed description explains what Powell meant by their being “technique-bound:”
They were not like English beggars, these young Germans. They were extremely well-dressed and never failed to produce something saleable in return for one’s money. If one did not buy it, they went away leaving one with the feeling that the loss certainly was not theirs...[T]hey combed Berlin with method, turning away the moment they saw...one’s purse unsatisfactory and tried the next doorbell. They were not the slightest put out by a refusal.

John makes the mistake of taking pity on one well-dressed beggar and invites him into the flat. The beggar does not feel sorry for himself but deems begging to be his profession, with regular hours and job standards. After John shares several drinks with him and finally turns him out into the street, he feels even sorrier than before since he got the beggar too drunk to continue his routine on a Sunday, the best day of the week for begging (TP, 253-56).

6. Historic Context

It was Heygate’s move to Berlin to work for UFA that provided Powell the context in A&P for transporting a number of his fictional (but mostly fact based) cast of characters to Berlin. This also offered Powell the opportunity to add his own fictional depiction of Berlin at one of the most critical turning points in the history of Germany (or for that matter, the World)—the takeover of power by the Nazi Party. In his Journals, Powell describes A&P as what “might reasonably be called a frivolous novel, even bordering on farce, I suppose, but not without its ‘serious implications...’” Among these was, of course, the Nazi takeover which was threatened at the time the action in the novel takes place (which coincides with Powell’s trip to visit Heygate in Berlin). This was in summer 1932 when the outcome in German politics was still in doubt. Indeed, by some accounts, at that point the Nazis appeared to have already peaked politically and were facing the prospect of diminishing support in future elections.

Powell described the atmosphere of pre-Hitler Berlin as “infinitely sinister.” (ibid.) And yet, one does not sense this impending doom from Powell’s novel. The frivolity and farce of the novel carry over from London to Berlin. Even such Nazis as are encountered are part of the fun. For example, a “stunted Nazi with galloping consumption” was selling what were probably
party newspapers outside of the Romanisches Café and two groups of Nazis pass each other on the street walking in Indian style as if about to “initiate a game of oranges and lemons” (*A&P*, 143, 149). Earlier, an encounter with Maltravers who is reading the Nazi Party paper, *Volkischer Beobachter*, elicits no comment one way or the other (131). And this seeming disinterest in German politics prevails despite the fact that *A&P* was written in 1935-36 after the Nazis were very much in control, the Weimar Republic was a distant memory, and war loomed ominously.

It is no surprise that Heygate spends far more time than Powell describing the historic context of the Nazi political takeover since he lived through most of it. His characterization of these events is more light-handed than most of those written later by his countrymen but is more serious than that of Powell. Heygate throughout *Talking Picture* tracks the advance of the Nazis and their quest for power and conflicts with the Communists. His narrator arrives in Berlin during the run up to the 31 July 1932 parliamentary elections. These followed the Presidential elections in March, in which Hitler came second to von Hindenburg, and the dissolution of the Reichstag, where there was no effective coalition. The July election is described by Heygate’s narrator as one that will decide whether Hitler will come or has come already and is on his way back (*TP*, 56). As it turned out, that election was the high water mark of Nazi electoral popularity in which they obtained the highest share of the popular vote and of the parliamentary seats (37.3%) but still not enough to form a government without a coalition. As Heygate’s narrator puts it, “The German voters had decided…that Hitler was not yet come but was well on the way” (76).

After the July 1932 elections, Hitler urged that he be made Chancellor but von Hindenburg, the President, and the other right wing party leaders refused to agree. One concession to the Nazis was made, however, in the form of lifting the ban on paramilitary activities of the SA and SS troopers. This had the effect, in Berlin at least, of increasing the incidence and intensity of the street fighting between the Nazis and Communists. Heygate’s narrator also mentions a general transport strike in Berlin during Rightlaw’s visit which “despite the mobilization of the entire police force had been a complete success. The Communists had the backing of most of the slum population and the nightly battles between them and the Nazis seemed likely to develop into open civil warfare” (225). If Heygate’s chronology is correct, this
activity would have been taking place at the time of Rightlaw/Powell’s visit, but there is no mention of it in Powell’s novel on in his memoirs.119

Later in the year, well after Rightlaw’s visit, there was another election. This was necessary because the minority parties were still unable to form a workable coalition. That occurred on 6 November, and on this occasion, the Nazis and the Socialists lost out to the Communists and Nationalists. That election has been described as the last free and fair all-Germany election before the Nazis took over. In the November elections, the Nazi share was reduced to 33%. Heygate’s narrator, after those elections, describes (257) the situation as even more desperate and embittered and the police more and more bewildered. As a rule it was the Communists they took away in their black or rather blue Marias. But now they contented themselves with arriving when all was over and merely picked up each side’s dead and dying. There were very few public houses in slum quarters that had not been bombed or smashed by one or the other party. And since the elections there was a good chance of the Communists getting the better of it.

It was at about this time that John moved into his flat and no longer had convenient access to hotel bars. He therefore has to find as a substitute a sympathetic stammlokale in his neighborhood. He points out that at this particular juncture most of these local establishments attracted punters adhering to one of the battling political movements—Nazis or communists—to the exclusion of the other, and it was these establishments that witnessed much of the violence he describes. John gravitated toward the Nazi pubs because he thought they served better beer.

Probably persuaded by the same considerations as those of Heygate’s narrator that the Communist tide was rising, the other party leaders were now willing (or less unwilling) to see Hitler made Chancellor, thinking he would be easier to control in a coalition, particularly given the diminishment

119 Heygate may have confused the timing of the Berlin general transport strike which took place on 3 November 1932. That strike was viewed as a success for the Communists and a warning to the right wing parties that may have contributed to their willingness to join in a coalition with Hitler as Chancellor a few weeks later.
of the Nazi share of the vote. Hitler took over the Chancellorship after joining a coalition with the Nationalists on 30 January 1933. On that day, John was in his final day at ATAG, finishing up the final film on which he had been English supervisor. The word of Hitler’s appointment to the Chancellorship or *Machtergreifung* (literally power seizure in Nazi parlance, although it wasn’t yet that, or not quite yet at any rate) was received with the regular delivery of the evening papers at the studio when there was generally a break to read the news. Many of the studio staff, including the production chief Prym, were Jewish. They had no doubt that this action ended any chances of their advancement or even retention at ATAG. Indeed, there are several mentions in the novel before this point that the Jewish film workers were under no illusions that they could continue to work in Germany should Hitler succeed.

John’s work at the studio was also finished (although this was not related to the Nazi advance), and after the film’s wrap up, he proceeded somewhat nostalgically through the studio lot to his car that would take him back to England. Some storm troopers stood near the car admiring it with no apparent malicious intention. When they ask John what the English think of Hitler, he answers somewhat equivocally, “I don’t really know. Very well I expect; you see I haven’t been in England for a long time.”

In *These Germans* (116-21), Heygate’s final work day of this first stint at the studio has a more dramatic ending. Somewhat at a loose end, he had secured a ticket to the premiere of a UFA film entitled *Morgenrot* that was to be shown at the UFA Palast-am-Zoo cinema, the studio’s grandest Berlin venue. This film was a secret project that was in its finishing stages while Heygate was at work on his multilingual films and involved a depiction of a German U-boat crew during the final days of WWI. In a breakthrough for such films, it was to depict their actions as heroic and praiseworthy rather than as defeatist as had previously been the case. Heygate was by himself and was perplexed because the audience was constantly applauding and cheering during the film for reasons he was unable to discern. Finally, he stood on his seat and was able to see, in white tie and evening dress

...on this evening of their first day’s work together and now standing in their box and receiving the plaudits of the people, none other than Franz von Papen, Hugenberg and the leader of the brownshirts, Adolf Hitler.
These were the leaders of the coalition that had just named Hitler as Chancellor. It was to last only a few weeks. Shortly after John’s departure, Hitler pushed through the Enabling Act in March 1933 which dissolved the *Reichstag* (Parliament), effectively making him dictator.

In fact, Heygate himself was prepared to give the Nazis the benefit of the doubt. At least, he felt they were better than the *status quo* where the factions were perpetually at each other’s throats and there was no effective government. The Nazis seemed to Heygate preferable to the alternative, which at that juncture would have been the Communists. He was in no doubt that the many Jews he met in the film industry would not flourish under the Nazis and understood that they were well advised to live elsewhere. But so far as ordinary Germans were concerned, he seemed to think that the Nazis were likely to make things better.120

120 Heygate returned to Berlin after the British-Gaumont/UFA venture had ended to write a script for a UFA film called *Black Roses/Schwarze Rosen*. This was a multilingual film (German, French and English) that was released in the UK in 1936 and distributed by Reunion Films. Produced and directed by Paul Martin, who also did the first UFA/British-Gaumont production *Happy Ever After* (1932), it starred in all three language versions the same leading lady who appeared in *The Only Girl* (Lilian Harvey), described above. *Black Roses* is outside the scope of Geoff Brown’s article which focuses on the four joint UFA/British-Gaumont films. It was produced by UFA, which released the German version (*Schwarze Rosen*) in 1935. Heygate must have returned to Berlin for this production after he finished writing *Talking Picture*. Reunion released the English version in 1936. According to Imdb, Reunion distributed 5 films in the UK between 1934 and 1936. Heygate was working on *Black Roses* when he was visited by novelist Henry Williamson in September 1935, and they attended that year’s Nuremberg rally. Henry Williamson, *Goodbye West Country*, London, 1937, p. 229. According to Williamson’s biography, Heygate was seriously ill with intestinal problems after his first stint with UFA involving the British-Gaumont films and returned to Berlin only after surgery resolved the problem. Anne Williamson, *Henry Williamson: Tarka and The Last Romantic* (Stroud, Glos., 1995, p. 187). Powell doesn’t mention visiting Heygate in Berlin during this later period. By then, Heygate’s marriage to Evelyn Gardner had ended, and he was courting the woman who became his second wife, Gwyneth Lloyd, a British film actress who also joined him in Berlin. They were married in 1937 in England, an event described in what may have been Heygate’s most popular novel *A House for Joanna* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937).
7. Conclusion

Heygate had much more than the average English novelist’s experience with late-Weimar Germany. His Nazi leanings are reflected in *Talking Picture* and are more pronounced in *Motor Tramp*. Indeed, in *Motor Tramp* the narrator at one point in the mid 1930s during the run-up to the *Anschluss* acts as a courier between Bavaria and Austria for the exiled leader of the Austrian Nazis then living in Munich. These political passages are probably what keeps these two books, as well as *These Germans*, out of print. This is a pity because they are much the best of Heygate’s work and far more readable than *Decent Fellows* by which he is primarily known.\(^{121}\)

The books provide a realistic look at what Germany was like for an upper class Englishman, written without the hindsight of what came later that characterizes most works about this period. Heygate recanted his support for Nazism after the war began. This retraction appears in *These Germans*, which was written mostly before the war but published a few months after it began. In that book, which has also never been reprinted, he reviews his experiences in Germany and Austria throughout the entire period between the completion of his education and WWII. Heygate forthrightly admits in this later book that he got it wrong about German politics, unlike his novelist friend and fellow Nazi sympathizer Henry Williamson. And yet Williamson’s rather plodding, unrepentant novels about this period were published after the war and have been reprinted, while Heygate’s have simply fallen off the shelf. The books are worth reading, not only for their associations with Powell’s life and work. They describe pre-war Germany from a different perspective than that of the left-wing Christopher Isherwood’s darker novels but are none the worse for that. One can only hope

\(^{121}\) Heygate wrote another novel that touches on some of the issues that are taken up in his three books discussed above. This is *White Angel* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934), which describes the unpleasant ski holiday of a bickering English couple in the Tyrolean Alps of Austria. The couple are suffering marital difficulties that may be similar to those occurring in Heygate’s marriage to Evelyn Gardner at or just prior to the time it was written. The book is largely forgettable except for the extensive passages about the resentment of the Austrian characters arising from the recent loss of the territory of the South Tyrol to the Italians following WWI. These passages may foreshadow the sympathy shown for the Austrian supporters of the Nazis in Heygate’s later books.
that some way can be found to bring them back into circulation, if only in electronic or print-on-demand format.

Powell’s novel and memoirs about pre-war Germany reflect more of a disinterest in German politics or indeed politics in general. Unlike other writers of his generation, he saw no particular need to take sides in the 1930s. Politics plays a more important, ominous and, in the end, decisive role in Powell’s earlier novel *Venusberg*, but even there the author and the principal character Lushington don’t particularly take sides between the feuding Communists and Fascists. In *Dance* during the 1930s, the characters take (and change) sides on international politics. For example, Uncle Giles thinks Hitler has some good points, but then dies just before the war begins. Widmerpool supports appeasement and ingratiates himself with other appeasers such as Mrs Simpson and company but readjusts after Edward VIII abdicates and war is declared on Germany. He becomes a fairly dedicated leftist through the remaining volumes. Given the identities of the two characters who hold these favourable views, this retrospective assessment offers a more negative, ironic comment on 1930s Germany than those reflected in *A&P*. But, as usual, Jenkins himself merely describes their attitudes and doesn’t judge them.

Powell’s friend and fellow novelist Evelyn Waugh was also basically apolitical (both of them were essentially Tories) but spoke out in favor of Mussolini and mildly suggested that Franco was better than the alternative. After the war, Waugh was outspokenly anti-communist. Those on the left such as Christopher Isherwood expressed opposition to the right wing movements which ultimately coalesced into the Nazi dictatorship. Still others like John Heygate and Henry Williamson openly sympathized with the Nazis. Powell’s writings, on the other hand, reflect no sympathy towards either the right or left wing political movements of the 1930s. Rather, Powell was interested in German politics only as it was reflected in his characters and found in it only another minor source of amusement in *A&P*. He commented on this in his memoirs but expressed no regret or reason to change his views.
What's The Bleeding Time?

TOM MILLER

IN THE course of numerous conversations with Kingsley Amis, Tom Miller learnt a great deal about the composition of the novel, and he seeks to set out what he absorbed from the novelist, with the work of Anthony Powell in mind.

In the autumn of 1977, I interviewed Kingsley Amis for the old Illustrated
London News, and the piece, that appeared in September 1978, has been used a source by scholars. I felt that I had made a favourable impression on the novelist, and my wife and I asked Kingsley and Jane Howard, to whom he was then married, to hear The Magic Flute at Glyndebourne. To our delighted surprise, they accepted, and a friendship was launched. I wrongly thought that I had a novel in me, and Kingsley volunteered to help with my endeavour, Judgment at Winchester, in which, as in numerous counterfactual novels, such as Philip K. Dick's The Man in the High Castle (New York: Putnam, 1962), I suppose the Axis powers to have won World War II, and, in my case, to have put the Anglo-American leadership on trial in a historic southern city.

Judgment at Winchester never achieved publishable standard, because, I believe, my writing lacks the texture achieved by a successful novelist, and that this is something that cannot be supplied from the outside. However, this doesn't matter, because I received in conversation an extraordinary education in construction and criticism. The Great Hall at Winchester, where the trial is set, thus became an intellectual gymnasium.

Kingsley thought very powerfully, but not very clearly. He was an anti-intellectual intellectual, and it would never have occurred to him to systematise his conclusions. Over a period of 18 years, during which I recorded 58 conversations, I had however plenty of opportunity to identify his theories, and to think them through.

The novel turns out to be more mathematical than I had imagined, and the writer has to mislead or confuse the reader, and work on his or her subconscious. If a character receives a letter, that character is identified as very important. An example is to be found in H. G. Wells' Ann Veronica (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909): the central character receives a letter from her father in section 4 of chapter 1, thus starting a conflict. The introduction of a name arouses an expectation, and that expectation must be fulfilled. I once reported to Kingsley that Ernest Hemingway had said (Time, December 13, 1954) that, "Raisin bread is all right, but plain bread is better", meaning that a novelist should not put in too many symbols. Kingsley agreed, saying that a symbol should only emerge from the subconscious.

It is a good idea to bring on an important character or feature in an unimportant way early on, thus hinting to the reader or filmgoer that the character or feature has to be looked out for later. Thus, in the film Titanic
SECRET HARMONIES 8
(20th Century Fox, 1997), when the liner is being loaded with baggage, stress is placed by the camera on a car, that is important later, being craned on to the ship. In Powell’s *The Military Philosophers*, heavy emphasis is placed, early on, on Pamela, quite correctly, to identify her as a major character. (Also correctly, she appears as a tiresome child in *A Buyer's Market* — Powell is signalling, good and early, that she is going to reappear as a nuisance.)

Kingsley refused to accept a distinction between 'literary' novels and any other type of fiction. The writer’s job was to entertain the reader (or the filmgoer — he thought that during the twentieth century scriptwriters had taught novelists a lot), so Iris Murdoch, whose work he thought pretentious and unreal, was inferior to P. D. James, who had no intellectual conceits.

There is nothing wrong with the idea of a political novel, but such a novel has to succeed as a novel, and the writer’s ideas, however brilliant, cannot compensate for bad writing. Kingsley wrote two overtly political novels, *The Alteration* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976) and *Russian Hide-and-Seek* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), but, interestingly, both books are set in fantastic situations. (He was tempted to agree with me that *Dance*, in a very small way, is a right-wing satire, and he pointed out that Widmerpool and Quiggin are entirely selfish, and don't care about the alleged sufferings of the masses.) In a Dystopia, a character must come on to defend the system. An example is Mustapha Mond in chapter 17 of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1932).

Everything, Kingsley thought, must drive toward the conclusion, because digressions bore the reader, though the writer must set the scene.

The story must come first. Someone may not come on just for his or her own sake. A character who seems at first glance irrelevant must cause a major character to do something significant. Thus, the episode in H. G. Wells’ *The History of Mr Polly* (London: Nelson, 1910) in which Polly meets (chapter 5) an unattainable beautiful schoolgirl, stimulates him into proposing (chapter 6) to the all-too-attainable Miriam. In *Hearing Secret Harmonies*, Scorpio Mortlock seems, to start with, to be a pointless character, but he turns out to be necessary, to effect Widmerpool’s downfall; and the Quiggin twins are needed to identify Widmerpool’s evolving masochism.

A Western film should be about appropriate conflicts: fights with bad men, or with dangerous animals, and should not also contain an irrelevant love
story—so *Shane* (Paramount, 1953) was condemned.

It is all right to use a real person as the base of a character, if he or she is exactly right in the role. This also applies to dogs, as in V. Sackville-West's *The Easter Party* (London: Michael Joseph, 1953), but one may not just put in a real person in order to attack him or her, because the reader will sense the self-indulgence. (The importance of the dog in *The Easter Party* is stressed by his appearance in a photograph used as a frontispiece to the book.) John Braine is right as the Pope in *The Alteration*, because he was the sort of man that the author wanted in the part. As a general rule, however, a character must be made up, since he or she must be strictly germane to the story.

A character therefore may even be based on someone who has never lived, but who might have existed: thus, in Kingsley's *Stanley and the Women* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), the central character, Stanley Duke, has a very difficult son, Steve, who, as Kingsley told me, with intense distaste for the imaginary person, is based on the son that he might have had with Jane Howard, always playing his parents off against each other. (Such a son, Kingsley reported, might have been called Piers.)

Powell only uses real people in minor roles, or to help to set the scene, such as Field-Marshal Montgomery in *The Military Philosophers*. Stringham, Quiggin and the other major characters are constructs, created specifically to help along the Dance. Widmerpool, the central character of *Dance*, is emphatically a construct, made up from everything that Powell didn't like. (An exception is Moreland, who is solidly based on Constant Lambert.)

(Kingsley once asked me if he could use me as a minor character. I agreed, but the idea was dropped, I suspect because my personality is insufficiently vivid, that is, I am too much like everyone else.)

Everything must be probable. Kingsley accordingly disliked Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* (London: Heinemann, 1938), that is, 'Stagy and cliche-ridden... Quite improbable... The end is not like real life'. Kingsley also thought that the ending of Aldous Huxley's *After Many a Summer* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1939) presented, “Too much sacrifice of plausibility”.

An improbable film is *When Worlds Collide* (Paramount, 1951). It is most unlikely that brilliant astronomer Larry Keating, who has rightly seen that
the Earth is threatened by a rogue star, would have been put in charge of a
Noah's Ark-type engineering project to save the species by sending selected
experts to a satellite presenting an environment suitable for human life.

A novelist cannot defend an improbable episode by saying, “Such an event
actually happened”, because the reader can say, “I still don't believe it”. A
highly improbable novel is Vita Sackville-West’s *The Easter Party*. I
reported to Kingsley that the central male character in the novel, named with
heavy symbolism Sir Walter Mortibois and based on the author’s husband,
Harold Nicolson, loves just two things: his dog and his house. He is told
(pages 157-159) that he has to give up his dog for medical research, because it
is the only one suitable for the desired experiments! Almost immediately
after this event, the house (pages 205-219) burns down! Kingsley was
horroried by these implausibilities. The novel was favourably noticed in the
*Times Literary Supplement* (February 6, 1953), so it may have merits that I
have failed to observe.

In George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Secker and Warburg,
1949), it is unlikely that O’Brien, a member of the Ministry of Love in full
uniform, would haunt the Ministry of Truth. (I made this point in the Orwell
Society’s Newsletter, June 2014, and no one objected. It would have been
better had Orwell turned round Parsons, and made him a police spy.)

Philip Larkin thought (letter to John Wain, August 10, 1985, at page 747 of
the *Selected Letters*, (London: Faber, 1993) that the postwar episodes in
*Dance* were bizarre, and that no man would put up with Pam Widmerpool,
so this part of the sequence is incredible, but I do not agree. Recent cases
involving prominent people show that eccentric sexual behaviour is
inherently unpredictable.

One must at all costs avoid equality of emphasis, that is, treating all events in
the same sort of way, because this tires the reader. For example, if one is a
describing a room in which a significant event takes place, one might put in a
sofa with a red cushion on it, but leave the rest of the room to the reader's
imagination, because a long description would constitute equality of
emphasis. This doctrine is true of all the arts: thus, a competent portrait
painter puts more paint on the canvas when painting the subject's face and
hands than when representing his pinstripe suit.

Kingsley once said that Jules Verne’s books are, “Only good when you are not
reading them. He was a great equality of emphasis chap. Thrilling things happen, but nothing is made of them. It's rather the same in Robinson Crusoe: the episode in which the footprint is discovered is one of the most exciting things in English literature, but nothing is made of it”. A strong example of Verne's equality of emphasis comes in Around the World in Eighty Days (first published in 1872; I am using the Folio Society edition of 1982): the travellers are crossing the North American snows by sledge, and are chased by wolves (pages 192-193), but nothing is made of this idea either!

A good way to deliver stress is to have one character make a point, for a second character to say, “So you really mean so-and-so?,” and for the first character to reply, “Yes, I do mean exactly that”. Another way to deliver inequality of emphasis is through the intelligent construction of paragraphs and sentences. Kingsley thought that Angus Wilson was inept in this respect.

A set-piece, for instance, some sort of entertainment, must be described partly in terms of what the performers are doing, and partly in terms of what the audience makes of what is going on. Thus, in films we get reaction-shots. Examples are presented in Singin' in the Rain (MGM, 1952), where there is a lot of audience-response to the films within the film.

Stories are of two types: one sort is the general narrative, and the other incorporates a struggle, that is, a plot — the central character wants to get something done, and faces opposition. Obviously, the line between the types is wobbly, because we may get characters confronting something inanimate, as in, for instance, Nicholas Monsarrat's The Cruel Sea (London: Cassell, 1951), where the Atlantic is the enemy, though the story is also partly a narrative of World War II.

Both types of story are to be found in C P Snow's Strangers and Brothers sequence. The New Men (London: Macmillan, 1954) is a narrative about the building of the first A-bomb, but The Masters (London: Macmillan, 1951) concerns a conflict between two groups of men over the headship of a Cambridge college. Another example of the contrast is the difference between Kingsley’s Lucky Jim (London: Gollancz, 1954), that has a plot, and the contemporaneous Hurry On Down (London: Secker and Warburg, 1953) by John Wain, that does not.

The film Genevieve (Rank, 1953) starts as a narrative about the Brighton veteran car run, but evolves into a race between two sets of motorists, and
SECRET HARMONIES 8

*Doctor in the House* (Rank, 1954) begins as a narrative about a medical school, but ends as a struggle between the student bodies of two hospitals.

Powell's cycle is partly a narrative of the life of Jenkins, but it is also the story of the drive of Widmerpool to acquire power, and of his ultimate self-destruction, so it is a novel of both types.

Kingsley pointed out that we don't hear much about Jenkins's marriage, but we get plenty about Widmerpool's marriage! We are rightly not told a lot about Jenkins, because he is required as a reasonable man into whom we can project ourselves as he observes odd goings-on. The need for Jenkins to serve as Man of Reason is shown reciprocally by the film, *Beat the Devil* (British Lion, 1953), with Humphrey Bogart: all the characters in the picture are bizarre, which is why it failed. In, contrariwise, *Genevieve*, the normal young couple, John Gregson and Dinah Sheridan, present a rational backdrop to the antics of Kenneth More and Kay Kendall, and thus get the cinemagoer into the film.

Another good example of getting the audience into a story is provided by the film, *Since You Went Away* (United Artists, 1944), that is set in World War II Home Front America. Claudette Colbert plays a housewife, with daughters Jennifer Jones and Shirley Temple, lamenting the absence of their husband and father, who is away at the war. Though the family is quite well off, the home does not contain a proper portrait of the absent hero, obviously because producer David Selznick wants female cinemagoers to project themselves into the action by imagining a picture of their husband or father in the house.

There seem to be two important ways of being funny in a novel or a film. The first of these is to have a character or characters make a mistake. I was quick on the uptake about this.

At Glyndebourne, Kingsley told me that *Russian Hide-and-Seek*, upon which he was then working, relied on the plot point that, in an England occupied by the Russians in 2035, well-meaning Russians try unsuccessfully to give the English back their culture. Later, I wrote to him to suggest that they attempt to revive Glyndebourne, but that, in a production of *The Magic Flute*, wild animals are used, disastrously. (Mozartians will recall that in the opera animals are entranced by Tamino's flute-playing, and that Sarastro makes a big entrance in a car drawn by lions —this scene would be hard to mount if real lions were employed!)
Kingsley replied (June 28, 1978), “But Glyndebourne is a fine idea. A climactic scene there...” The letter is published on page 850 of the *Letters of Kingsley Amis* (London: Harper Collins, 2001). He used the idea (at page 224), but not in a big scene. (Usually, he thought, friends cannot help a novelist much, because they cannot assess what he or she is driving at.) In the novel also, the Russians think that Duke Ellington (page 176) was an English nobleman!

In *Genevieve*, in an example that Kingsley liked very much, when John Gregson and Dinah Sheridan check in at Joyce Grenfell’s awful hotel, and object to the lack of a porter and of hot water, we are amused by their frustration, but we are being set up for the punch line: Edie Martin brings the house down by asking innocently, “Are they are Americans?” (The character thus gets things wrong, in a delightfully offensive way.)

Widmerpool is essentially comic, because he does not understand how one is supposed to behave, and therefore bungles things.

A second technique is to move the reader on to the wrong foot, by making him or her think that something is going to happen, and then arranging for something else to happen. There is good instance in the film, *Laughter in Paradise* (Associated British-Pathe, 1951), Alastair Sim has his reasons for wanting to be sent to prison, so he shoplifts some jewellery, in the most obvious possible way; he is noticed, as he hopes, by the store detectives, so we think that he will be arrested, but, when he is summoned to the manager's office, it is found that his pocket has been picked when he is leaving the store, so there is no evidence against him! We are also taken by surprise when Barbara Goring pours sugar over Widmerpool’s head in *A Buyer’s Market*, because we don’t expect an aristocratic girl to behave in this way.

In *The Military Philosophers*, it is funny when Major Prasad demands General Asbjornsen's hotel room (the only one with a bath), on religious grounds, because the request is unexpected; and it is even better when Asbjornsen meekly gives way, because we expect him to refuse, and maybe to have Prasad disciplined! In *Hearing Secret Harmonies*, it is amusing when the Quiggin twins surprisingly humiliate Widmerpool, and even funnier when, as we don’t expect, Widmerpool is delighted! There is no reason why both techniques cannot be used simultaneously, by a comic genius.

In *Doctor in the House*, we are led to suppose that Dirk Bogarde is a
responsible, serious medical student, as opposed to the wayward Kenneth More, Donald Sinden and Donald Houston. When consultant James Robertson Justice instructs the students over the body of anxious patient George Coulouris, More, Sinden and Houston answer questions wrongly. Justice then explains the concept of the bleeding time, but he notices that Bogarde, whom we expect to pay attention and to give the right answer, is distracted by a pretty nurse, Muriel Pavlow; so we get the immortal exchange,

“What's the bleeding time”

“Ten past ten, sir”.

Do I have a message? Yes. When reading a novel or watching a film, keep asking yourself, “Is this a mere chronicle of events, or do we have a plot?”, and, “Why are we being told this?”
Anthony Powell’s Secret Harmonies: Music In A Jungian Key

MARGARET BOE BIRNS

Although Anthony Powell never specifically mentions C G Jung’s theory of synchronicity in his work, it is a principle that is central to that mysterious level of life in Powell’s novels he has referred to as the “music of time”.

Powell’s music of time readily accommodates a Jungian key; in fact he hints at such an accommodation himself at one point in A Dance to the Music of Time when he makes more than passing reference to Jung’s theory of psychological types. But beyond Jung’s typology, it is Jung’s theory of meaningful coincidence that provides a key to the underlying vision of Powell’s novels. Both Powell and Jung found in the reality of coincidence a higher meaning, a sense that secret harmonies were being sounded beneath the clatter of happenstance. What Powell called the “music of time,” Jung developed into a theory he called “synchronicity”. But both took as their starting point the fact of coincidence - especially what Jung termed the “fascinating coincidence.”

Fascinating coincidences are indeed rife in all twelve volumes of Anthony Powell’s A Dance to the Music of Time. These uncanny “secret harmonies” suggest that transcendental forces are operating in the lives, brief and otherwise, of the characters who caper across the pages of Powell’s remarkable series of novels. After reading A Dance to the Music of Time, one comes away with a feeling that all has happened as it was somehow meant to happen, outside the realm of ordinary calculation and choice. Even when displaying his well-known good humor and good sense, Powell’s narrator and alter ego Nick Jenkins tends to be pulled out of the realm of the ordinary and autonomous and into supernatural directions, where fate plays a greater role than choice. It is part of Powell’s satiric style to make merry with the various mystics and necromancers that Jenkins encounters

122 First published in The Literary Review, 25(1) 1981
in his life - from Dr. Trelawney to Scorpio Murtlock - but at the same time Powell has not in any way turned his back on their otherworldly world, where life’s noisy chanciness is mysteriously rearranged into harmonic patterns. While the title of the final volume of Powell’s series, Hearing Secret Harmonies, is to some degree an ironic comment on the cults and occultism of the seventies, it is clearly and more strongly a phrase that sums up that sense of the mystical music of time that permeates the entire series.

It is obvious, of course, that from one point of view Powell’s narrative unfolds as a realistic, linear history. In Powell’s words, time is allowed to unveil the truth, and in his narrative, Powell seems to be able to wait time out with the patience of a geologist, confident that history will reveal its significance to the abiding and attentive observer. But the novels are not simply linear, or, even though the use of the seasons may hint at cycles, circular. The novels also operate within a “simultaneous” time scheme. Powell hints at this sense of simultaneity through his use of Poussin’s painting, A Dance to the Music of Time, as the major metaphor for his narrative structure. A painting, unlike a novel, does not unfold in time, historically, but lives in an eternal present, in which all time is experienced as an instant, or as a constant image. Time is, in Powell’s novels, not only a linear form of movement, but rests in a state of timeless equilibrium, in which endings and beginnings exist together simultaneously. On one level, events and characters do not so much succeed each other in A Dance to the Music of Time as coexist, as if on a space of canvas rather than in a period of time.

This suggestion of simultaneity points to the same metaphysic that gives rise to those fascinating coincidences which are so striking and often so hilariously funny in A Dance to the Music of Time. The coincidences are nearly always “meaningful” coincidences that fill us with “numinous” feelings - feelings that unseen, nonordinary forces are at work in the lives of Powell’s people. It is in this world that Jung’s theory of synchronicity becomes pertinent.

As in Jung’s concept of synchronicity, Powell’s use of coincidence allows us to feel that we are beyond the time-bound world of the personal and introduces a mythical or archetypal dimension to his work. As in Jung’s theory of synchronicity, Powell’s coincidences allow atemporal, archetypal aspects of events and characters to work their magic on the reader. By means of uncanny, fascinating coincidences, which seem to break through
ordinary history, Powell gives us a sense that powerful, transpersonal forces are afoot. Time becomes a canvas on which numinous forces can impress their mysterious patterns.

Jung used the term “synchronicity” to describe the way in which certain things seem to occur as if in sympathy with certain other things.\(^{124}\) Synchronicity describes a sympathetic falling together of an inner state of mind and outer events, or describes certain types of events that cluster together, or sympathetically cross-connect. Everyone has undergone experiences Jung would term synchronistic, and Jung himself was a storehouse of anecdotes illustrating the phenomenon. One that comes to mind concerns a patient of his, who dreamt of a golden scarab beetle; just as she was telling Jung this dream the rare insect appeared at the window. This is an example of a coincidence with a great deal of symbolic resonance; it begs to have something made of it. This sense that the coincidence somehow “means something” is, for Jung, an indispensible factor in synchronicity. Jung has even gone so far as to suggest that there is something he called a “formal factor” in nature that appears to us as “meaning”. But in any case the end result is that synchronicity provides us with a forest of symbols, to be apprehended intuitively by those whose psyches are in a state of readiness. For Jung, certain meaningful chance events arouse unconscious forces, which means that archetypes are activated and must be explored. These archetypes, which Jung saw as permanent residents in every human unconscious, bring a transpersonal dimension to experience, point to the presence of larger forces than those that reside in the personal ego.

The sixth volume of the series, *The Kindly Ones*, provides an excellent example of how Powell uses coincidence to forward symbolic or archetypal patterns. In the title of the novel and variously in the narrative itself, Powell introduces the motif of the Furies - entities that are not simply literary but which operate transcendentally as factors that penetrate and shape Powell’s temporal world. These agents (referred to ironically and also in traditional conciliatory fashion as “The Kindly Ones”) wreak the gods’ vengeance by spreading not only war and dissension, but also feelings of guilt, what Powell refers to in his novel as the “stings of conscience”.\(^{125}\) It is through two

---


important coincidences in *The Kindly Ones*, one at the beginning of World War I, the other at the beginning of World War II, that Powell makes us feel the impact of the archetypal Furies.

Powell builds to one of these significant coincidences in the first part of *The Kindly Ones* by creating a disturbing concatenation of events in the Jenkins household on the very day that the Archduke Franz-Ferdinand has been assassinated in the Balkans, precipitating World War I, and, in Powell’s words, “the birth of a new uneasy age”. As the archduke is being murdered on the continent, the Furies that seem to have impelled that historic event appear simultaneously in the person of the Jenkins’ maidservant Billson. While the Jenkins family is entertaining the durable General Conyers in the drawing room, their tranquillity is shattered when Billson makes an unexpected appearance, nude and essentially beside herself. She appears, coincidentally, not only at the mention of Liman Von Sanders, the German general inspector of the Turkish army, but even more meaningfully, her appearance has coincided, it is later learned, with the assassination of the archduke on the continent. While Billson’s breakdown triggers imagery of apocalypse in several Jenkins family members’ psyches, it is left to General Conyers to cope with Billson, just as civil authority will give way to military direction in the outbreak of macrocosmic irrationality on the continent.

Powell is pointing to a connection between Billson’s state of psychic turmoil and the outbreak of World War I, suggesting an acausal, nonrational principle that united them in one field of meaning. There is no causal connection between Billson’s psychic state and the external events in Europe, and in fact we require Nick’s intuitive and narrative capacities to provide the crucial element of meaning in this coincidence. Jung has called synchronicity a “modern differentiation of the obsolete concept of correspondence, sympathy and harmony” and certainly Billson’s insanity is just such a “sympathetic report”. Billson’s unexpected appearance in the drawing room of the Jenkins household comes as the culmination of a series of unpleasant incidents and varying tensions in the Jenkins household; her hysterical nude visitation makes the family feel as if all hell has broken loose in their tidy domestic world. In a variety of ways, Powell makes it clear that this domestic fiasco coincides meaningfully with the anarchy Nick senses is being loosed upon the world with the onset of World War I. For instance, Billson’s

---

appearance is an event Jenkins’ mother compares to the end of the world, and to a figure in an archetypal day of judgment. Later, Nick’s Uncle Giles refers to the death of the archduke as the “outbreak of Armageddon”, picking up the apocalyptic imagery employed by both Jenkins and his mother and applying it to the event that occurred simultaneously with Billson’s appearance. Powell has all along been preparing us for the Billson episode by a subtle interweaving of supernatural imagery with the reality of international politics, so that by the time we reach the climactic coincidence of Billson’s hysteria and the outbreak of war, it is clear that Billson has been possessed by those transpersonal agents that also worked their will in the matter of the archduke’s assassination - the unlovely Furies who have claimed the title of Powell’s novel. In Jungian terms, the meaningful coincidence of Billson’s madness and the madness in Europe announced the presence of an archetype - the unkind Kindly Ones.

The Furies’ appetite for havoc will not be satisfied by the Great War, however. They return to punish and disrupt again, later on in The Kindly Ones, pushing the world to war once more in 1939, and, on a personal level, punishing Nick Jenkins with “stings of conscience” that impel him to take his place in the armed forces. For many critics, while the impression of turbulence remains, the archetypal presence of the Furies - so apparent as a motif in the first half of the book - seems to be less noticeable as the novel builds to the onset of World War II. Often the Furies are perceived as simply fading into an abstraction rather than as having a more existentially felt reality. Once again, however, Powell employs the phenomenon of synchronicity to reveal the archetypal presence of the Furies, this time more subtly, not through an hysterical woman, but through the unlikely person of the ubiquitous Kenneth Widmerpool.

Widmerpool is throughout A Dance to the Music of Time a creature of the synchronistic laws of coincidence, those “secret harmonies” that suffuse Powell’s narrative. For instance, in A Question of Upbringing, it happens that both Widmerpool and Jenkins find themselves spending a holiday with the same family in France. Jenkins’ coincidental encounter with Widmerpool at Madame Leroy’s is presented as part of a cluster of difficulties that end in a distressing bout of nausea on Jenkins’ part. Powell here places the appearance of Widmerpool in a field of turmoil and illness; the coincidental encounter with Widmerpool is laced with upsetting significance. Whenever Widmerpool turns up in Jenkins’ life - and he does so, often - it will mean
mischief, a worsening of things, new difficulties, upset apple carts, a loss of some kind of balance. In *The Acceptance World*, for example, when Nick chances to meet Widmerpool at Stourwater, the vaguely sinister castle belonging to the vaguely sinister Sir Magnus Donners, it first appears to Jenkins that Widmerpool has been imprisoned by Donners in a medieval dungeon. This chance encounter becomes a symbol for Nick of a whole field of degradation and tyranny tied to Sir Magnus Donners; it takes on psychological import for Nick, and can even be seen as, mystically, a warning to Nick about the disturbingly medieval nature of Sir Magnus Donners and his world.

Later in *The Acceptance World*, Widmerpool is at the center of a more ambiguous coincidence. During an Old Boy Dinner, Widmerpool’s incandescently boring speech coincides with the sudden heart attack, at table, of the retired headmaster Le Bas. While Widmerpool’s speech and Le Bas’ illness are presented as coincidental on the face of it, there is in this case a strong impression that Widmerpool has nearly bored his old headmaster to extinction. Nevertheless, Powell also sustains a wider field of meaning for this event, for Le Bas’ indisposition during the speech reminds us of the uncanny way in which Widmerpool seems to turn up whenever things are about to go wrong. Le Bas’ heart attack also escalates the level of disturbance that seems to accompany Widmerpool, for, in the subsequent wartime books, Widmerpool’s coincidental encounters with Nick Jenkins are placed in the context of international disaster.

During the war years it is Nick Jenkins’ misfortune to find himself coincidentally encountering Widmerpool in situations that place him more and more in Widmerpool’s power. But later in the series Widmerpool himself becomes a victim of coincidence. As “chance” would have it, he marries Pamela Flitton, the niece of Charles Stringham, his old schoolmate. Widmerpool was indirectly responsible for sending Stringham to his eventual death in a Japanese labor camp. While his marriage to Pamela is on the surface just another coincidence, Pamela is in fact Widmerpool’s nemesis, almost a punishment from God. It is as if Widmerpool has become a victim of the field of escalating disaster through which he has been moving. Justice works through coincidence as well in the final pages of *Hearing Secret Harmonies*, the last book in the series. When Widmerpool comes upon yet another old schoolmate, Akworth, whom he had betrayed half a century earlier in *A Question of Upbringing*, their coincidental meeting becomes the
occasion for the fullness of time to bring Widmerpool to a deserved act of penance. Here, the forces that have accompanied the appearance of Widmerpool seem to have turned against him, are devouring him.

But it is in the novels pertaining to World War II that Widmerpool and the forces of coincidence conspire to bedevil others. It is these books - *The Kindly Ones, The Valley of Bones,* and *The Soldier’s Art* - that bring home to Nick Jenkins the mystical synchronicity in back of Widmerpool’s chance invasions of his life. In *The Kindly Ones,* Widmerpool is in fact the agent for the return of those archetypal Furies that launched World War II. Towards the end of his novel, he appears as a punishing force at the culmination of an evening in which various members of a dinner party given by the reprobate Magnus Donners are enacting the Seven Deadly Sins with the aid of that mechanical voyeur, the camera. Powell has prepared us for this next entrance of the Furies through the character of Peter Templer’s dotty wife Betty, whose hysterical outbursts call to mind Billson’s earlier derangement. But it is a less likely candidate who incarnates for Powell the archetype of the Furies:

> The door of the dining room, so recently slammed [Jenkins tells us] opened again. A man stood on the threshold. He was in uniform. He appeared to be standing at attention, a sinister threatening figure, calling the world to arms. It was Widmerpool.129

The spectre of Widmerpool appearing as if by magic at the culmination of Donners’ symbolically decadent parlor game brings home to Jenkins the absolute imminence and certainty of war, and he goes on to tie Widmerpool’s appearance to the archetype of the Furies in a subtle but unmistakeable manner:

> I had never before thought of Widmerpool as possessing physical characteristics at all feminine in disposition [Jenkins remarks] but now his bulky, awkward shape, buttoned up and held together by a Sam Browne belt, recalled

---

129 *KO,* 133.
Heather Hopkins got up as an admiral in some act at The Merry Thought.\textsuperscript{130}

The Furies have here, in other words, chosen to make their appearance “in drag”, but while their decision to cross-dress is devious, it should not disguise the fact that in Widmerpool Powell has carried forward from one world war to another the archetypal presence of the terrifying “Kindly Ones”.

The synchronistic appearances of Widmerpool do not always announce the intrusion of archetypal material into the narrative, however. He also operates, to extend the use of Jung’s terminology, as Nick Jenkins’ “shadow”. Basically, what Jung terms one’s psychological shadow are all those negative elements one refuses to allow to scramble out of the unconscious and into one’s conscious self. Widmerpool is everything Jenkins hopes he is not; they are linked together in an oppositional way, but joined they are. From schooldays onward, they encounter each other over the years in London, France, Italy and elsewhere, share innumerable acquaintances and friends, share a romantic attachment to one girl (Barbara Goring), and the sexual favors of another (Gypsy Jones). Widmerpool is, as Jenkins puts it in the first novel of the series, \textit{A Question of Upbringing}, one of those people with whom one is “inextricably linked in life”\textsuperscript{131}. Eventually, through yet another psychologically significant coincidence, Nick, in \textit{The Valley of Bones}, comes under Widmerpool’s tricky power by being dispatched to a certain army divisional command during World War II.

After a not particularly auspicious beginning with his chosen regiment in Wales and Northern Ireland, Jenkins is assigned to a new post with a new military superior. Nick walks into his new superior’s office, salutes, and finds that an officer, wearing major’s crowns on his shoulder, was sitting with his back to the door, dictating, while a clerk with a pencil and pad was taking down letters in short-hand’’\textsuperscript{132}. For a time, Nick only hears this major’s voice droning out exquisitely stupefying bureaucratic dicta. Eventually the clerk folds his pad and rises.

“Will you sign them sir?” he asked.

\textsuperscript{130}\textit{Ibid.}, p.134
\textsuperscript{131}\textit{QU}, 225.
“For Major General,” said the DAAG. I’ll sign them ‘for Major General.’” He turned in his chair.

How are you? He said.

It was Widmerpool. 133

Once again, we see Jenkins fated to find himself linked with Widmerpool - only this particular connection is the most sinister of all their various contacts and relations. And not only does this remarkable encounter signify a new and dangerous phase in Nick Jenkins’ life, it coincides with a new upsetting international development. “I saw that I was now in Widmerpool’s power,” Nick tells us at the very end of The Valley of Bones. ‘This,” he continues, “for some reason, gave me a disagreeable, sinking feeling within. On the news that night, motorized elements of the German army were reported as occupying the outskirts of Paris”. 134

The synchronistic pairing of Germany’s invasion of Paris and Widmerpool’s domination of Jenkins once again gives us the feeling that large, transpersonal forces are at work in these novels. And, of course, the continual pairing of Widmerpool and Jenkins points to the bond between them. Powell himself brings forward this oppositional twinning of Widmerpool and Jenkins in a rather odd and lengthy conversation between Jenkins and the aged General Conyers in the fourth novel of the series, At Lady Molly’s. Interestingly, it is a conversation that draws heavily on Jung’s psychological theories. While his fictional persona Nick Jenkins appears to be completely out of his depth here, Powell himself communicates his own knowledge of Jung’s typology through the medium of the aging and eccentric General Conyers. At Lady Molly’s inimitable salon, Conyers draws Nicholas aside and begins to pelt him with Jungian terminology Jenkins doesn’t really understand. Conyers makes a point of comparing and contrasting Jenkins and the ubiquitous Widmerpool. Widmerpool is characterized by Conyers as an “extraverted intuitive type,” whereas Conyers calls Jenkins an “introverted intuitive type”.

Jung’s idea of extraverted and introverted types is well known, but his further typology, in which the characteristics of feeling, thinking, sensation and intuition take on an introverted or extraverted aspect, is less familiar. According to Jung, the extraverted intuitive type, while often a successful

133 Ibid., p.239.
134 Ibid., p. 243.
business tycoon or politician, can also degenerate into an opportunist, ready
to ride the crest of change and rather frustrated by any state of equilibrium
or status quo. The extraverted types can become, in Jung’s words, “immoral
and unscrupulous adventurers”. 135 Thinking and feeling, Jung continues, are
largely repressed by the extraverted intuitive type, as he strives to manipulate
the external world. Although Powell himself does not elucidate what
Conyers means by his cryptic references to Widmerpool’s extraverted
intuitive personality, Jung’s description of the type is easily recognizable as a
good general description of Powell’s Widmerpool. Powell himself elected to
use a less expository and more dramatic and entertaining way to
communicate the essence of Widmerpool, retaining his tantalizing
references to Jung’s typology as yet another way to both unite and polarize
Widmerpool and Jenkins.

Jenkins is characterized by General Conyers as an introverted intuitive type.
According to Jung, the introverted intuitive type is a mystic, a dreamer, and
artist. 136 This type tends to remain aloof or detached from the hurly-burly of
life, preferring the richness of his inner life and for that reason can appear
enigmatic to an onlooker. Although Powell does not say this in so many
words, clearly Jenkins is just such an artist. While Powell gives Nick a
positivist, no-nonsense military man for a father, Nick’s mother, with her
visions of ghosts, her dreaminess and her interest in things spiritual,
represents intuitive values later vested in her son. Although Nick is on one
level a cheerful realist, his cast of mind is also deeper, more contemplative. His
is the kind of attentive, meditative mind unavailable to the calculative intellect,
who strives to dominate or manipulate situations. Jenkins’ mysticism is a
Heideggerian resting in being, a mode of consciousness which can suspend
calculative activity and, sniffing eternity in the air, can patiently bide its time.
Even Jenkins’ humor partakes of this art of waiting, of letting be. He can
plant the seeds of a comic situation in one book and wait for at least several
volumes for it to ripen. In fact, there are elements, humorous or otherwise,
in the first novel of the series, that are not fully realized until the final volume.
There is a strikingly self-effacing quality about this patient waiting. Nick’s is an
unselfish attentiveness, a Heideggerian Achtung, which allows him to sense in
things a second, somehow ultimate level. In this essentially mystical mode of

p.369.
136 Ibid., p.401.
consciousness, all the clamor and clutter of life are resolved into a series of archetypal patterns - spiritually significant and emotionally satisfying harmonies.

On a less exalted level, this attentiveness to “the music of time” also gives Nick certain parapsychological gifts. Nick seems to have special luck, for instance, with the planchette at Peter Templer’s house party in *The Acceptance World*. Although many hands are on the planchette, Nick himself admits that it was only he who could have directed the planchette to write, mystically, the upsetting words, “Karl is not pleased”. This pronouncement synchronistically coincides with the sudden illness of St. John Clarke, lately an improbable convert to Marxism. These words are taken by some members of the house party to represent an urgent message by an ectoplasmic Karl Marx. It is clear, however, that Powell is taking a higher mystical road, whereby Nick’s intuitive personality constellates synchronistic coincidences - in this case the blending of the planchette’s words with St. John Clarke’s illness. In a classic Jungian way, Jenkins’ telepathy is a product of his ability to tune into a preternatural psychic field, where there are no accidents and where coincidences are in reality important moments of truth.

Nick’s flashes of precognition are only one aspect of his intuitive gifts, of course, but they do dramatically emphasize his almost uncanny sensitivity to “the music of time”, that synchronistic level of being, cut off from those who seek merely to dominate and manipulate events and situations. Nick’s introverted intuitive capacity allows him to ferret out synchronistic events, and also to intuit his own destiny. He can “know” at once for instance, that he will make Isobel Tolland his wife; or, he immediately “knows” that Germany’s invasion of Russia will be his country’s salvation. This second sight is always glamorous in its own right, but on a metaphysical level, this precognition is a function of a system of simultaneous time wherein past, present and future are all part of a unified field. Jung posits such a metaphysic as the basis for synchronistic phenomena, and his introverted intuitive personality type does not simply tell fortunes, but is attuned to a reality that moves beyond the linear and temporal and into a simultaneous, atemporal order of things. This view of time infuses Powell’s narrative with its mystical undercurrents, its archetypal patterns, its “secret harmonies”. In this way the amusing coincidences in the novels seem to strike a deep chord, sustained within an intuitive flow that transforms the inconsequential into the mysteriously momentous, giving time its ulterior music.
Understanding Widmerpool

MICHAEL HENLE

I had always felt an interest in what might be called the theoretical side of Widmerpool’s life: the reaction of his own emotions to the severe rule of ambition that he had from the beginning imposed upon himself: the determination that existence must be governed by the will. (LM, 46)

Kenneth Widmerpool is bitterly disliked by many readers of Dance. By its many characters as well. His personal failings and social defects are so numerous and overwhelming that, as Nicholas Jenkins puts it, in the opening pages of the novel sequence,

an element in Widmerpool himself had proved indigestible to the community. (QU, 5)

Why is Widmerpool universally disliked? Supposing his faults admitted, what can possibly be said in his defence?

Kenneth Widmerpool, depicted by Mark Boxer on the cover of At Lady Molly’s, London: Fontana 1977.
Is Widmerpool autistic?

Every individual on the autism spectrum has problems to some degree with social skills, empathy, communication and flexible behaviour (from HelpGuide.org, a website devoted to childhood psychological problems).

This sounds like Widmerpool. His outsider status at school (QU, 4-7) suggests poor social skills. His treatment of Stringham and Bithel during the war (SA, 183-190) is definitely un-empathic. The uncomfortable lunch with Nick (LM, 50-62) exhibits his awkward communication style. And his consistent unwillingness to bend rules shows inflexibility. Does this mean Widmerpool is somewhere along the autistic spectrum?

We first examine “the theoretical side of Widmerpool’s life”, asking whence comes “the severe rule of ambition” that he imposes on himself, then return to this question.

Problem-solving style

Life presents everyone with problems. As soon as one is solved (or disposed of temporarily), another more-or-less immediately takes its place in our minds. We can easily become obsessed with this problem-of-the-moment. In this way our personal, problem-solving style is the stage upon which much of our mental life is played out.

Before acting on a problem, we must gather information. So we consult references, uncover facts, conduct experiments, find out what others did under similar circumstances. All such research requires interaction with entities outside ourselves. For lack of a better term, call this sensing. An alternative strategy, diametrically opposite to sensing, is simply to look inside ourselves for the information we need, relying on accumulated experience and what our sub-conscious contributes. Call this intuition.

Both kinds of information-gathering – the external and the internal – sensing and intuition – are necessary for good problem-solving. Many people naturally prefer one over the other. Their preferred mode of data collection is one aspect of their problem-solving style.

At some point it’s time to do something. The problem demands action. There are two, opposing, ways to decide what to do. We may apply rules,
principles, and precedents, in other words, we may think through our choices methodically, using systems of ideas outside ourselves – as a judge employs the law in deciding a case. Alternatively, we can look inside, putting ourselves in the place of those who will be affected by our actions, using empathy or our feeling for the situation. Good decision-making involves both thinking and feeling. Once again, an individual is likely to prefer one over the other. Here is a second aspect of problem-solving style.

In summary: problem-solving, as here conceived, involves a series of steps: first gathering information, then acting on it. These steps alternate (sometimes quite rapidly) until the problem is solved (or we give up). A good problem-solver must have skill with both kinds of step and with four antithetical processes: sensing and intuition, thinking and feeling. A person likely has a preferred information-gathering style and a preferred decision-making style.

In addition, problem-solvers often prefer one kind of step, information-gathering or decision-making, to the other. Someone who likes to take action rather than continue to gather data is said to prefer judging; someone who likes data-gathering and resists moving on to decision-making is said to prefer perceiving. This third preference completes, for our purposes, an individual’s problem-solving style.

These ideas come from Jung’s work Psychologische Typen (Zurich, 1921) which appeared in English translation, as Psychological Types, in 1923. The particular terms used are arcane and inadequate but also enshrined in tradition.

The validity of Jung’s theory – more specifically its elaboration by Myers and Briggs (1940-45) and the industry they spawned – is controversial. At issue is whether a real person has a stable problem-solving style, and, if so, whether it can be reliably measured. Applying Myers-Briggs ideas to a character in a work of fiction doesn’t require these assumptions, however. A fictional character is not a living person but instead is caught in the author’s text, like a butterfly pinned to a board. A fictional character may well exhibit a precise, fixed, problem-solving style. They are fair game for this kind of analysis.

**Widmerpool’s problem-solving style**

*Sensing or Intuition?*  Widmerpool likes data. Consider, for example, the way he rattles off stock movements at Sir Magnus (KO, 136), or crams
economic theories and facts into his speech at the Old Boys’ Dinner (AW, 192-194). During the war, he shines as DAAG and later as a military private secretary because of his ability to master huge amounts of detail, eg. the traffic movements during exercises in Northern Ireland (SA, 55). In problem-solving terms, Widmerpool prefers sensing to intuition. He uses intuition only occasionally, displaying, for example, an instinctive interest in Tompsitt at dinner with the Walpole-Wilsons (BM, 51-54). Mostly he prefers facts and is willing to do the work required to get them, for example by repeatedly interviewing the quarrelling Scandinavians (QU, 153-157).

Nick Jenkins, in contrast, prefers intuition, though the evidence for this is not as strong as in Widmerpool’s case. On at least one occasion, indeed, Nick is praised for his mastery of facts: when reporting to General Conyers on the regiments of the fathers in the neighbourhood of Stonehurst (KO, 51). On other occasions his command of detail is questionable. When about to represent Finn’s section at a meeting of Widmerpool’s committee, Finn tells him sternly,

‘Have all the information at your fingertips. Plenty of notes to fall back on. We want to deliver the goods.’ (MP,9)

At the meeting itself, Widmerpool expresses concern:

‘I have the necessary stuff here.’

‘I hope you have.’ (MP,16)

This is not the first time, of course, Widmerpool criticises Nick’s work. He finds him disappointing in various ways as a subordinate (SA,192-3). Nick is also an unsatisfactory platoon commander. Kedward speaks frankly about his inattention to detail:

There are one or two points I shall want altered in your own Platoon, Nick. It is far from satisfactory. I’ve noticed there’s no snap about them when they march in from training. That’s always a good test of men. They are the worst of the three platoons at musketry, too. You’ll have to give special attention to the range. And another thing, Nick, about your own personal turn-out. Do get that anti-gas cape of yours properly folded. The way you have it done is not according to regulations. (VB, 220)
Thus, as far as information-acquisition is concerned, Widmerpool and Nick have opposite problem-solving styles. This is particularly clear comparing their mastery of foreign languages. Learning a language requires many skills. Principal among these is command of a large body of detail in the form of vocabulary and grammar. This requires proficiency with sensing. Nick is less successful than Widmerpool at learning French. The latter actually works at it at Madame Leroy’s (QU, 127-128). Nick’s aversion to sensing gives him grief later (SA, 103). Still later (BDFR, 81) Widmerpool has obtained a smattering of German as well.

[A brief note. General Conyers appears to contradict this analysis. He associates Widmerpool with intuition, not sensing, calling him an intuitive extrovert (LM, 230). The General, however, is working with Jung’s original formulation of type. In those terms his analysis is correct. We use the current, Myers-Briggs version.]

**Thinking or Feeling?** When it comes to decision-making, Widmerpool loves rules and regulations – whether formulated by Le Bas for his house at school or promulgated by Murtlock for his cult. Throughout Dance, Widmerpool defends rules.

Early on he is upset with any conduct at variance with social norms. The young Bertram Ackworth’s infatuation with Peter Templer (QU, 13) disturbs him enough that he exposes it. He is shocked by news of Le Bas’ arrest (QU, 47-48), and even more shocked when Stringham’s role is revealed (QU, 129). He is quick to criticise Nick for speaking English at Madame Leroy’s (QU, 118).

Widmerpool by then is articled to a firm of solicitors. A legal career is perfect for someone who is rule-oriented. At Stourwater, when telling Nick that he helped Gypsy with her “problem”, he expresses horror even of “technical offences” (BM, 206). Later, when engaged to Mildred Haycock, he talks of his dislike of “anything irregular” (LM, 62). His difficulty with Mildred, by-the-way, has several sources, to be sure, but one of them is that romance is an arena where there are no fixed rules. Later, Gypsy’s radicalism is one of several sources of his discomfort with her (KO, 229).

During the war, Widmerpool is hard on Bithel and Stringham, callous in fact, in part because they don’t treat the Army’s rules with the respect he thinks they deserve. He is utterly lacking in feeling or empathy for either of them. Much later, when he rebels against the rules of British society, he does so by adopting opposing sets of rules: first communism (TK), then
“counter-culture”, then Harmony (HSH). To the end he strives mightily to equal Scorp in knowledge of Harmony (HSH, 267). All this makes Widmerpool a quintessential advocate of thinking, as opposed to feeling.

Nick, on the other hand, often makes decisions based on feeling. He is obviously empathic, extending sympathy to many characters including ones he actively dislikes, like both Maclinticks, and Gypsy and Bob Duport. He even expresses sympathy for Widmerpool on occasion.

As decision-makers, as well as data-gatherers, Widmerpool and Nick are again opposites.

A telling example is the way each decides what to do about their infatuation with Barbara Goring. At issue is whether marriage with her is possible. Widmerpool thinks this through, though his considerations are bizarre:

‘Gwatkin was Lord Aberavon’s family name. The peerage was one of the last created by Queen Victoria. As a matter of fact the Gwatkins were perfectly respectable landed stock, I believe. And, of course, the Gorings have not produced a statesman of the first rank since their eighteenth-century ancestor – and he is entirely forgotten. As you probably know, they have no connexion whatever with the baronets of the same name.’

He produced these expository facts as if the history of the Gorings and the Gwatkins offered in some manner a key to his problem. (BM, 80-81)

Widmerpool’s reasoning is undoubtedly funny yet by thinking he reaches a sensible conclusion: marriage with Barbara is impossible. Nick’s treatment of the same question, based on feeling, is equally amusing but inconclusive.

I could not even make up my mind – should anything of the sort have been practicable – whether or not I really wanted to marry her. Marriage appeared something remote and forbidding, with which desire for Barbara had little or no connexion. She seemed to exist merely to disturb my rest: to be possessed neither by lawful nor unlawful means: made of dreams, yet to be captured only by reality. (BM, 25)

Judging or Perceiving? General Conyers says,
Widmerpool strikes me as giving himself away all the time by his – well, to quote the text-book – purely objective orientation. If you are familiar with tactics, you know you can be up against just that sort of fellow in a battle. Always trying to get a move on, and bring off something definite. Quite right too, in a battle. (LM, 233)

In other words, Widmerpool prefers *judging* (= taking action) to *perceiving* (= gathering information).

Widmerpool really comes into his own during the war where he manages to obtain positions in the army where he can be an active decision-maker in many areas at once. Even at the very end of *Dance*, he continues to set active goals for himself (eg. apologize to Sir Bertram, lead a naked run) and so stays in action in his own terms despite being in thrall to Scorpio Murtlock.

Among other things, the early volumes of *Dance* tell the story of Nick’s gradual realization that Widmerpool is a man of action. The moment Widmerpool catches hold of Barbara at the Huntercombes’ dance (*BM*, 69), his taking up with Gypsy on the rebound, the respect accorded him by Peter Templer, his daring speech at the Old Boys Dinner, his success getting Stringham home and into bed (*AW*), his engagement to Mildred Haycock (*LM*) – and later to Pamela (*MP*). Each successive accomplishment astonishes Nick. Why is Nick so dense about Widmerpool?

Nick has trouble understanding Widmerpool partly from the habit of looking down at him acquired at school, but also because his own inclinations oppose Widmerpool’s. Nick avoids decisions. Nick prefers *perceiving* to *judging*.

A preference for *perceiving* is required for the kind of laid-back, easy-going life-style that Nick likes. The down side is that he can be indecisive, even ineffective. He is unable, for example, to do anything about his crush on Suzette, postponing action until the end of the summer at the Leroy’s’ [*QU*, 148-150, 162-166]. Later, he is equally ineffective with Jean, letting his relationship with her slowly disappear,

that charming love affair, which had formerly seemed to drift to a close through my own ineffectiveness, had, in reality, been terminated by the deliberate manoeuvre of Jean herself
for her own purposes, certainly to the detriment of my self-esteem. \(KO, 180\)

Despite this self-serving, post-hoc analysis, Nick was ineffective with Jean. Widmerpool, if he’d ever been involved with her – admittedly it is quite a stretch to imagine this – would not have let her disappear from his life easily.

Nick is capable of action. One of his triumphs in this arena is to urge Kucherman to consult Sir Magnus about employing the elements of Belgian resistance late in the War.

Thinking over the incident after, it was easy to see how a taste for intrigue, as Finn called it, could develop in people. \(MP, 195\)

But normally Nick prefers inaction.

**Confirmation?**

Have we really captured the essence of Widmerpool by identifying his so-called problem-solving style? We can judge the accuracy of this analysis and how deep it goes by reading profiles of people with the same style. There are many sources for such descriptions. To consult them, we first complete Widmerpool’s *personality-type* with the addition of one more element to his problem-solving style.

*Personality-type* is the term-of-art for problem-solving style plus *introversion* or *extroversion*. In Widmerpool’s case, this is simple. He is an *extrovert*, meaning his primary focus is outside himself. He displays his exterior orientation (vs. the interior orientation of an *introvert*) by his constant concern with his place in the world, *ie.* rank, position, acquaintances, accomplishments, and so on.

In the symbology of personality-type, Widmerpool is an ESTJ (E = *Extrovert*, S = *Sensing*, T = *Thinking*, J = *Judging*). Below is a typical description of persons of this type. It comes from *Truity.com*, one of many websites devoted to personality-type.

ESTJs command a situation with the sense that they know how things should go and are ready to take charge to make sure that it happens. They are task-oriented and put work before play. Confident and tough-minded, the ESTJ appears
almost always to be in control. ESTJs appreciate structure and often begin to organize as soon as they enter a room. They want to establish the ground rules and make sure everyone does what they’re supposed to.

ESTJs are often involved in institutions: clubs, associations, societies, and churches, where they usually take a leadership role. They typically connect with others through sharing ritual and routine. Social interaction for ESTJs often means following an established tradition to engage with others in a structured way. ESTJs tend to respect and seek out hierarchy. They want to know who’s in charge, and will assign levels of responsibility if none exist. Once a structure is in place, ESTJs typically trust authority figures and expect obedience from people of lower rank.

All these traits fit Widmerpool. In particular, note the reference to ‘ritual and routine’. This resonates with Widmerpool’s own words,

Amazing how long it took me to understand the ritual side of sex. Although I never enjoyed sex much myself, I’d always supposed you were meant to enjoy it. Now I know better. I see now that, even when I was young, I was reaching out for the ritual side, to the exclusion of enjoyment. (HSH, 224-5)

A remarkable moment of self-understanding for Widmerpool.

And Nick? If we complete his personality type – classifying him as an introvert, as he does himself [LM, 235-6], then he is an INFP (I = Introvert, N = iNtuition, F = Feeling, P = Perceiving). Here is the description from Truity.com.

INFPs may initially seem cool, as they reserve their most authentic thoughts and feelings for people they know well. They are reflective, often spiritual, and often interested in having meaningful conversations about values, ethics, people and personal growth. Typically curious and open-minded, the INFP continually seeks a deeper understanding of themselves and of the people around them. They are passionate about their ideals, but private as well; few people understand the depth of the INFP’s commitment to their beliefs.
INFPs are sensitive and empathetic, and engage themselves in a lifelong quest for meaning and authenticity. The mundane aspects of life are of less interest to this type, and they are more excited by interesting ideas than by practical facts. They typically accept others without question, and may take special interest in offbeat points of view or alternative lifestyles. They often have a special affection for the arts, especially the avant garde, as they love experiencing new concepts in self-expression.

All this applies to Nick. Note that an INFP is fundamentally difficult to get to know. They don’t reveal themselves, and this is exactly what bothers many readers about Nick. The ‘spiritual’ is mentioned above. It is a distinct presence in Dance in a variety of ways. And doesn’t the phrase “seeks a deeper understanding of themselves and of the people around them” exactly describe Nick’s purpose in writing Dance? Is not Nick engaged in “a lifelong quest for meaning and authenticity”?

Many others have pointed out that Widmerpool and Nick are opposites. This analysis simply amplifies this conclusion, unpacking it into the three aspects of problem-solving style, each of which impacts, in a different but specific way, what makes Widmerpool and Nick who they are. Ironically both are disliked by substantial groups of readers precisely for their opposed character traits.

Let us be careful not to claim too much for personality-type. It largely concerns how a person appears to others. It certainly doesn’t get at all aspects of Widmerpool’s or anyone else’s psychology.

**Where does Widmerpool’s ambition come from?**

Widmerpool’s ambition, his development of the will, stems, at least in part, from his preference for judging, the third aspect of problem-solving style. At some point in his life he decided that action is more important than understanding and he became a bit of a risk-taker. His personality type “wants to know who is in charge” and “begins to organize as soon as they enter a room’. His ‘decision to be governed by the will’, for that is what these phrases describe, are a consequence of his preference for decision-making, from a deeply felt need to be in action.

This is not truly a very satisfactory explanation of the source of Widmerpool’s ambition. Like many answers to behavioural questions, it
merely shifts the context. For where did Widmerpool get his preference for judging? How did he acquire what General Conyers calls his “objective orientation”.

In the end, there can be no satisfactory answer. Widmerpool is fiction. We can’t interrogate him, draw a sample of his blood, or sequence his DNA. The crucial factors – childhood trauma, genetic make-up, whatever makes him what he is – are ultimately out of reach.

So, is Widmerpool autistic?

Probably not. Widmerpool has some autistic qualities but lacks significant others. He is not, for example, super-sensitive to sound (to touch perhaps). He does not spontaneously repeat any pattern of gestures. He does not withdraw from social situations. These are some traits of individuals who are strongly autistic. He might be very mildly autistic.

More likely Widmerpool is simply an extreme specimen of an ESTJ.

Why ask the question, if you can’t answer it?

If Widmerpool were autistic, readers would react to him very differently. Autism would explain and to some extent excuse his behaviour. Readers might dislike what he does and says, but lurking in the back of their minds would always be the caveat, “He’s autistic. He can’t help but be that way.”

Autism is not a well-defined condition. It is an amalgam of symptoms using which a diagnosis can be made but it lacks a generally understood cause. Personality-type similarly is a mixture of behaviours for which, like autism, there is no accepted explanation.

Widmerpool may not be autistic – but he has a personality! He is an ESTJ, in particular a person who relies on thinking so exclusively that he is almost without empathy for others. As Nick puts it,

His manner of asking personal questions was of that kind not uncommonly to be found which is completely divorced from any interest in the answer. He was always prepared to embark on a lengthy cross-examination of almost anyone he might meet, at the termination of which – apart from such details as might chance to concern himself – he had absorbed no more
about the person interrogated than he knew at the outset of the conversation. (*LM*, 51-2)

Without empathy, he is left with an intense concentration on himself. This makes it difficult for him to obtain the sympathy of others. Nick explains,

> I felt in some manner imprisoned by his own self-preoccupation. He positively forced one to agree that his own affairs were intensely important: indeed, the only existing question of any real interest. At the same time his intense egoism somehow dried up all sympathy for him. (*LM*, 56)

Thus Widmerpool ends up universally disliked, condemned to an existence of toil and abnegation lived apart from the daily life of the tribe. (*QU*, 5)

And yet he is no more able to alter who he is than an autistic person can shed their autism.

Personalities are universal. Everyone has one; everyone finds it difficult to be anything other than who they have become by age 21 or so.

If we cut autistics some slack, why not everyone else? Why not Widmerpool?
Lady Violet’s Autobiography

John Powell has kindly sent us some pages of notes which were not included in Lady Violet Powell’s autobiography *A Stone in the Shade*.

**Maud and Philip Powell – a Difference in Age**

*Anthony Powell was born on 21 December 1905 at 44 Ashley Gardens. His mother Maud Wells Dymoke was born 9th Oct 1867; his father Philip Lionel William Powell was born 21st April 1882.*

This discrepancy in age did not affect the happiness of AP’s parents’ marriage, but inhibited their social activities. In her younger days Maud Mary Wells Dymoke gave solo performances on the banjo at charity concerts in Brighton Pavilion. These were encored and photographs show her to have been delicately pretty. In later life, as her son writes, she disliked drawing attention to herself, perhaps because the consciousness of “cradle snatching” was in the background. She had to subscribe to her husband’s disappointment in his military career, but did admit that the responsibilities of a General’s wife was one of her nightmares. She showed a limited interest in regimental matters and concentrated on making the shifts of army life as comfortable for her family as was feasible.

Anthony Powell has described the circumstances which led to his parents renting a spacious flat opposite the Albert Memorial. Conceivably this was the happiest period in his mother’s life.

Philip Powell had a job detached from his regiment without the threat of being ordered overseas, or, hardly less frightful, to Catterick. I have often applied to Maud Powell a song from St. John Rankin’s *Dramatic Sequel to Patience*:

> Twenty married ladies we,
Living now at
Aldershot

Every morning
fervently
Wishing, wishing we were not.

Twenty
married
ladies we

And our
fate we may
not alter

If we dare
to mutiny
They will send us to Gibraltar.

Maud had often told her son that her own father had lived his life with his first wife. He seems to have taken a detached view of his second wife, who developed hypochondria. Edmund Wells Dymoke went to the trouble in 1868 of registering his arms at the College of Arms when taking the double-barrelled name. His second wife Laura Jefferson had borne him two daughters, Cicely and Maud, and he probably hoped for an heir. He was disappointed. His third and ultimate daughter, Violet, was a bit of a handful, but definitely a female handful.

There is a photograph of the three girls in the garden of their home in Tonbridge Wells. Their dresses may have been better when in colour but the sepia photographs of the 1870s only emphasised a plethora of buttons and bows. Their mother, Laura, had been attractive in youth, but she had then relapsed into a rather gloomy cast of countenance. Equally grim was the face of Fräulein who was educating the pretty little girls.

Probably in pursuit of Mrs Wells Dymoke’s elusive health, the family moved to Brighton in the 1880s, although Mr Wells Dymoke had had an anonymous letter warning him against this move. The warning was unheeded, and Maud made her debut at a ball in the Royal Pavilion. Small, and piquante, it is easy to believe that she danced every dance. She did, indeed, preserve a programme which is evidence of her popularity.
In the meantime her future husband – she possibly saw him in his cradle – had reached the age of four. Philip Lionel William Powell had been intended for the Royal Navy, but his eyesight failed to pass its rigorous standards. His education was dealt *ad hoc*. He preferred to list it as “privately” in *Who’s Who* but he was coached at some establishment with enough efficiency to enable him to pass into Sandhurst. From there at the age of 19 he went with the Welch Regiment to the South African War.

Arriving in South Africa shortly after Queen Victoria had died in January 1901 he qualified for the King’s rather than the Queen’s Medal. It would, perhaps, be unfair to consider this as the first disappointment of his military career, but it was the first in a history of grouses. Long years later he remarked to his son, then himself a serving soldier, “you can tell me nothing about rotten jobs in the army.”

Philip’s relations with his mother [were coloured] by his conviction that he graded third in her affections. First came Lynette, daughter of her father’s medical partner “Baba” McCraith, who was rumoured to be his mother’s lover. Next Katherine (Kitten), Philip’s elder sister, who mopped up any surplus affection, and then Philip himself was way down the course.

This grading did not prevent Jessie Powell putting on a *mater dolorosa* when that seemed to be required. Anthony remembered his extreme embarrassment as a young man when his grandmother described her feelings when Philip left for the South African War. “I was crying on the bed”, she said, “and you went downstairs, saying, “Go up to mother. She’s not crying like a woman cries. She’s crying like a man cries.” Anthony’s father looked embarrassed, as well he might.

---

137 John Powell adds: An additional note of interest is that AP’s reference to McCraith in *Infants* elicited two very detailed letters in 1990 from Patrick Murphy whose grandfather was brother in law and 1st cousin of Baba McCraith. AP ascribed Baba McCraith’s Smyrna connection to his having a Greek Wife. In fact the Greek wife was the consequence of his Smyrna connection, McCraith’s father being a surgeon in charge of the hospital at Smyrna, Patrick Murphy says. These letters add a lot of colour and detail to what was already an exotic if mysterious family episode.
Before going to the wars, Philip, at 19, had committed himself to what turned out to be a life-long relationship. At the Elms, the imposing house at Melton Mowbray where Philip’s father had his consulting rooms as well as his hunting stables, breakfast was a strung-out meal. The family and guests, some of these stayed indefinitely, could call for fresh food as and when they came down. One morning, Philip complained that “someone had been eating a banana”. It was not known whether he objected to the smell of the fruit or the sight of the skin, but then he discovered the culprit was Maud Wells Dymoke, a connection but not a blood relation. This led to a remorseful declaration of love and a correspondence between Philip and Maud in South Africa.

Maud, as has been said, believed that her father had “lived his life” with his first wife. It would almost be true to say that she repeated the pattern in her own life, abandoning her contemporaries and not replacing them with those of her husband. Before, however, marriage was to be achieved, there were family problems to be solved.

Maud’s father had died in 1892, her mother in 1899. Recognising that Maud was the repository of sense in her family, Mrs Wells Dymoke had left the injunction “look after Cis” with her second daughter. Cicely was known to be rather slow witted, though from photographs a pretty fair haired girl. Their mother might equally have asked Maud to “look after Vi”, because if Cis was too passive, Vi was always too active.

In a letter to Maud from South Africa, Philip enclosed a paper stamped with the office stamp of a native chief, a curiosity to Philip but impeccably bureaucratic. When the fighting had ended, Maud made a surprising step towards consolidating her position. With her companion housekeeper, Pavey, as a chaperone, she sailed to South Africa on a visit to Philip. It would be difficult to believe this drastic step if there had not survived a tiny photograph of the couple dressed for a ride across the Veldt. It would be interesting to know what Philip’s brother officers made of the arrival of this charming lady, not exactly young, visiting a twenty-year old subaltern. It is possible that the fact that Maud’s father had, at one moment, been brother-in-law to Philip’s grandfather might have passed off the visit as cousinly.

In the meantime, Maud’s sister Violet had been causing trouble. The story is hard to follow, but it seems that Violet had made a “marriage quite
unsuitable”. This union was broken up, but not before Maud was obliged to take Violet on a European tour, sending affidavits back for whatever process was necessary to set Violet free. She was then able to marry Guy Moore of the 2nd Madras Lancers. It is to be speculated that if Violet’s “first marriage” may not have been a euphemism for being cited as a correspondent in a divorce case.

The problem of Cicely remained unsolved, until, almost miraculously, the Reverend Oscar Worne, Vicar of Stanway, home of the Charteris family, asked for her hand in marriage. Oscar Worne makes a brief appearance in Lady Cynthia Asquith’s (née Charteris) autobiography. After the Wilde trial, with its unhappy revelations, Cynthia Asquith wrote, the name of the Stanway Vicar, Oscar, became an embarrassment and a number of dogs found themselves rechristened.

Philip’s parents, though fond of Maud, were not well disposed to the marriage. When, however, Cicely had married Oscar with all the conventional trimmings, Maud took a different path. She and Philip went to Barmouth where they were married on 20th December 1904, with, to quote Maud, no one except the vicar in the church (she must have forgotten the two statutory witnesses). They then went to the Elms, where the fait accompli was welcomed.

The end of Oscar Worne’s stay was not so happy. Always anxious to have a baby, Cicely gave birth to a still-born son. Not too soon afterwards she died from convulsions in another pregnancy. Her husband, according to Maud, made a rash vow not to replace her, but it was no surprise when he married again.

Violet’s story was more complicated. She was for some time in India with Guy Moore. His chief characteristic was an appalling slowness in preparing and dressing himself for any occasion. Anthony remembers his mother telling his nurse “Mrs Moore is changing her name and I don’t think it is for the better”. Her second husband, who came from Northern Ireland, was not a change for the better, but to his own family Violet was a bad fairy who had entrapped a naïve young fellow. During the Second World War, Philip and Maud found themselves in a hotel where they were recognised by the then deceased Guy Moore’s second wife. Neither party showed signs of wishing to carry matters farther.
Engagement anecdote

On Sunday 30th Sept. 1934, Anthony and I became engaged. The fiançailles was concealed until, I think, Tuesday when Anthony had an impulse to tell his parents with whom he would have been dining that night. He told his mother on the telephone and asked to bring me to dinner. As it happened his father had rung earlier from his club “The Rag” (Army and Navy) to say it was such a filthy night, which indeed it was – a heatwave having broken that evening – that he expected to dine there. The Powells had been married for thirty years, during which time Maud had never shown any objection or demonstration when her husband decided to dine away from home. This was, she felt, not unreasonably, an exceptional occasion. She rang “the Rag” with an urgent message for Colonel Powell, who only returned after we had left.

The next day, when he met me with an equally warm welcome, it was explained that the club staff had failed to find him. It was only later when the matter was discussed, we did agree that no one would have stayed to dine out because it was “a filthy night”, and that Colonel Powell was such a familiar figure it was unlikely the staff could not have found him. Two months later the first guest at our pre-wedding party was, we thought, the heroine with whom Colonel Powell was dining way from home.

AP and Lady Violet on their wedding day 1 December 1934.
In his memoirs, Anthony Powell has described his father’s reaction to the approach of World War 2. At the time of Munich a contemporary had sent him a note “My dear Philip, I haven’t forgotten you.” This from the Military Secretary to the Chiefs of Staff was reassuring. I had, myself, always doubted the wisdom of Colonel Powell’s congratulations to his friend on this appointment. A facetious letter, “I have always wanted to kick a Military Secretary and now is my opportunity” received a friendly reply, but I cannot feel that the letter was actually helpful to my father-in-law’s prospects of re-employment at a level he would feel appropriate.

He quoted Dickens on the subject of “showing himself” at his club “The Rag” and I believe explored various possibilities to no avail. He did, however, baulk at approaching ARP with the shrewd idea that he would find its set-up uncongenial if not positively offensive.

My birthday falls on 13th March. In the two years before war broke out it was marked by particularly unattractive crises, the Anschluss, uniting the Third Reich and Austria (1938) and the invasion of Czechoslovakia (1939). At the Anschluss, I thought it a wise precaution to join the local ARP. At that date Germany was known to be training school children to protect themselves from gas attacks. The obvious deduction was that gas would be used in air raids. Lectures were given on the varieties of gas to be expected to fall from the air.

These lectures included mnemonics as *aide-memoires*. For example, Nasal Gas could be recognised by Neuralgic pains in the jaw, Aching of the frontal bone of the head, Sneezing and sometimes Vomiting, Acute depression, Loss of faith in respirator; an image of life as a friend remarked.

Colonel Powell, who had listened to endless lectures during his military career, thought it would be simpler to learn ARP second hand filtered through me. What I supplied was basic. I could only boast that when I came to unseal the room which I had gas proofed it was still warm in the bitter winter of 1941.

Everyone was on the move after 3rd September 1939, when darkness was assessed to fall devastatingly from the air. In early pregnancy, I was taken in
by my kind aunt and uncle in South Wales. I spent three months in bed and three months gingerly moving. I have infinite gratitude for six months of luxurious care, but I like to think that my aunt did enjoy my company as my uncle’s deafness made for difficulties.

Meantime the household at Chester Gate ran as usual until Anthony was called up, largely through a coincidence that one of the officers in charge of the list on which Anthony’s name occurred had a wife with whom our two Siamese cats were boarded.

His parents had retreated temporarily to a friend’s house in the country. This was a step many people had taken and best described by someone who, when asked what was her war work, said firmly “I am staying with friends”. Anthony’s parents moved into Chester Gate, where our two maids had not yet been called up. (Their war work eventually took the form of marrying two policemen from the Albany Street police station across the road).

Then the Powells returned to their own house 3 Clarence Terrace on the West Side of Regent’s Park. In the autumn of 1940 my parents-in-law again started on a peripatetic hotel existence which lasted to the end of their lives.

The Story of Pansy, One of the Fiercer Animals

Sometime in the early 1930s my sister Julia and I gave our mother a Winnie the Pooh Birthday Book as a rather facetious birthday present. Our only excuse was that we had visited the brown bear original of Winnie at the London Zoo. Leafing through the birthdays of her family my mother found that 18th May, on which day her eldest daughter Margaret Pansy Felicia had been born, was devoted to Tigger in the Pooh menagerie. The legend read, “One of the fiercer animals”. My mother found this distinctly appropriate to her daughter, always known as Pansy. Less than eighteen months separated the birth of Edward Arthur Henry, the eldest of the family, and that of Pansy. The triumph of producing a son and heir after three years of marriage in which her husband had served two spells of duties in the South African War, rendered birth pangs of less significance. Her daughter’s birth was less happy. “Tom tried to comfort me, but it did no good,” was my mother’s desolate note in her diary.
SECRET HARMONIES 8

Whether a subconscious resentment of her hard travail had influenced her mother, their relationship as Pansy grew up was far from easy. The earliest photographs of Pansy gave promise of her later prettiness, but the fashions of the day were unbecoming. For he first years of infancy it was an unshakeable rule that white should be worn, not only white but starched white. Bonnets dominated infant brows which can only be described as starched cabbages. There is a picture of Middleton Park in 1904 that perfectly illustrates the fashions of the Edwardian era.

Lord and Lady Jersey were famous for their family parties which in those days were far from limited to parents and children. Their daughters, safely and suitably married, brought their own ladies maid and a valet for their husbands, who doubled his role as a loader when they went out shooting. The daughters with children [had] a nanny and a nursery maid. At Christmas 1904 this would have meant that 21 souls had been gathered under the patriarch’s roof.

As it happens, Pansy was the youngest in the group, seated on her mother’s knee [with] all the starched frills that fashion dictated. Arthur Villiers, the adored younger son of Lord and Lady Jersey, an undergraduate of 21, looked cheerful but detached. Even more detached was his elder brother who had, he telegraphed, been delayed by fog and so was inserted in a cut out. Viscount Villiers was already leading a smart life in racing circles. I have often wondered if he had used a “London Particular” as an excuse to avoid a family party.

My grandmother still wore a bonnet but her daughters wore motoring caps, flat muffin-like objects. Very unlike her later behaviour, my mother was bare-headed, her carefully waved fringe exposed to the dull Oxfordshire air. My parents in fact dominated the group, Edward in white coat and cap standing on my father’s knee. My father was in fact a large man and his leather gaiters were formidable. The elder grandsons Charles and Elwyn Rhys were of staggering beauty. When they were pages at their Uncle Villiers’ wedding, Prince Francis of Teck remarked, “Now I know what seraphim look like.” It should be explained that this minor royalty, a black sheep brother of Queen Mary, was also thought by some to be the father [of] Lord Villiers’ bride, the enchanting Lady Cynthia Needham.
Pansy was painted in her bridesmaid’s dress at the same wedding by Mr Millar, who was a long way after Sir Joshua Reynolds and even longer in talent. Mr Millar painted many members of my family but he was happier with my cousins than with my brothers and sisters. Pansy was shortly followed by Francis Aungier (Frank) which meant that my mother had achieved three children in less than three years.
A History of Chantry

AP lived with his family at The Chantry, in the village of the same name, near Frome, Somerset from 1952 until AP’s death in 2000. This account of the history of the village and the house was drawn up by David Rawlins, M.B., B.S. in 2003.

The ecclesiastical parish of Chantry was formed in 1846 from parts of the parishes of Whatley, Elm and Mells. In those days the parish of Elm was in two separate parts; Great Elm, where the church is, and Little Elm, some two or three miles distant. It is now part of the civil parish of Whatley and some fields to the north are in the civil parish of Mells.

Several hamlets went to form Chantry: Little Elm, Stoney Lane, Dead Woman, Railford, Bulls Green and the houses round the church at Chantry, together with two outlying farms, Bangle and Pool House.

The driving force for the formation of the parish were members of the Fussell family, who were prominent in the district, being factory owners producing edge tools, such as sickles, scythes etc. They had two works in Chantry, at Stoney Lane and Railford, powered by the Whatley stream, which was dammed to form two lakes, the upper of which is still in being.

In about 1820, Chantry House was built, probably by Pinch, with stables and a lodge. The house is shown on Greenwood’s map, published in 1822. It is likely that this was on the site of a previous house, which was probably used as building stones for the lodge and stables and in the grounds.

The area has been inhabited since pre-historic times. There are the remnants of a Neolithic/bronze age camp (about 5000 years old) just to the north of Castle Hill Wood. The quarry which was probably used to build this camp can be seen just below it in the steep escarpment leading down to the stream.

There was a Roman villa on the Whatley/Nunney border just outside the parish dating to the middle of the 4th century AD.

The Domesday Book does not mention Chantry directly. Chantry was formed out of a number of manors mentioned in Domesday: Middlecote - later French House Manor, Mells, Whatley and Elm. Later the manors of Samuels and Haidon were formed and parts of these became Chantry.
The Horners of Mells owned Mells, Middlecote, Haydon (there are several spellings) and Samuels manor. The borders and bounds of these manors were not coterminous with the parish boundaries. The Dead Woman estate was part of Middlecote manor. The history of the manors of Elms and Whatley is even more obscure: not many documents survive. For a period the main part of the village was known as Little Elm, although some of it was in the parish of Whatley.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the Fussell family started to buy property in Chantry to build their ironworks and house. It is not clear from whom the land was purchased. Some came from Rudge Common, which was enclosed and was on the Frome side of Stoney Lane. Their property was to the east of the parish. The Chantry House was built on the hill overlooking Whatley brook, also called Fordbury water. The lower lake has disappeared but the upper is now rented by a fishing syndicate. The stables have now been converted into a house. There was possibly a previous house on the site of The Chantry; this may have been a manor house. Just across the river, Manor Farm still exists.

In the nineteen-fifties, near the possible site of a demolished house, part of a carved stone was discovered, commemorating the aqueduct on the Coleford coal canal. It is dated 1801 and was presumably never erected, as the canal enterprise collapsed in 1802. James Fussell IV was an active promoter of and investor in the canal. He must have had property in Chantry at the time and was possibly living here.

**Description of Chantry**

Chantry is situated on the eastern Mendips, about five miles west of Frome. It is built on limestone shales and old red sandstone with an overlay of andesite (related to basalt), especially in the area of Bangle Farm. The andesite is the result of a lava flow from the volcano at Stoke-St.-Michael, (which is being quarried at Moonhill by Wainwrights) some sixty million years ago when the area was under the sea. To the north and south of Chantry are beds of carboniferous limestone, which is extensively quarried for aggregate for road building etc. There are four active quarries closely surrounding the parish – Halecombe and Colemans, each extracting about one million tonnes annually, Torr Works at Merehead and Whatley Quarry, both extracting up to five million tonnes of stone each year. Westdown quarry is inactive at present, and Asham quarry is permanently closed.
The quarries have a considerable impact on Chantry, with blasting, noise, dust, light, and movement of stone. There have been road and path closures, and the landscape and environment are being irrevocably changed. Most of this activity has taken place in the last fifty years. As the quarries have become larger they have employed fewer people. At present only one or two parishioners work in the quarry industry.

Most of the parish is at least 500 foot (150 metres) above sea level, excepting the steep sided valley of Whatley Brook. The ground continues to climb to the west. Chantry is the beginning of the Mendip plateau (although the Mendips traditionally start at Cottles Oak in Frome).

To the south, the parish is bounded by Nunney from Collie Corner to Dead Woman’s Bottom, mainly on the line of the old road. The boundary then follows Castle Hill stream along Asham Wood which is in the parish of Downhead. Castle Hill Wood, to the north of the stream, is in Chantry but Shearmoor Wood is not. Some of Castle Wood has been cleared fairly recently. The boundary between the two woods is a small stream which flows in a mini ravine, over six foot deep in places. The boundary follows the track for about one hundred metres before going north along the hedgerow towards the main road. Here it abuts onto Leigh on Mendip. However, before it reaches the road, it turns east diagonally across the fields to the crossroads at Mary’s Grave, now abutting onto Mells. From there it continues east along field boundaries to what was Mells/Chantry Lane. It is a field or two north of the civil parish boundary that is marked on the Ordnance Survey maps and takes in the site of Pool House Farm. It meets the old Mells Lane, where there was a bend, and proceeds south- east along the lane to a small stream, which it follows to Railford Bottom. From there it follows a line to the west of Whatley Brook to Stoney Lane. It then goes south along Stoney Lane to Collie Corner. From Railford bottom to the east, is the ecclesiastical parish of Whatley.

The Parish Roads
The main east-west road is of considerable antiquity. In the mid eighteenth century it was converted to a turnpike. The milestone, c1775, opposite Yew Tree Cottage, was one of a number erected by the turnpike trust. At Railford one can still see the deeply eroded line of parts of the old track. This must have led from Frome to the central Mendips and a road appears on the old Mineries map of c 1600 as going to the north of Asham Wood, from Whatley to the mines around Charterhouse.
Bulls Green Lane, from Little Elm to Dead Woman is similarly ancient, as is Stoney Lane, both being deeply cut between the surrounding fields. The old lane to Mells is mentioned by Leland in c.1530 and appears on maps of the Mells estate from 1682 onwards. A turnpike to Coleford was formed in 1780, leaving the main turnpike at Mary’s Grave. The new Bulls Green Link was constructed in 1998, partially funded by the Holecombe quarry, destroying Coalpit Lane and part of Dead Woman’s Bottom and forming a barrier between the parish and Asham Wood.

**Around the parish**

**The Castle**

The oldest known remains in the parish are the earthworks above Castle Hill Wood, which are probably about 5,000 years old, either late Neolithic or early Bronze Age. They now consist of a low two foot mound, about 40 metres long and twenty metres deep, forming a three-sided rectangle. The fourth is formed by the steep sided escarpment of Castle Hill Wood. There was a stone wall at their core. They have been ploughed several times in the last century. Just inside the wood, beneath the camp is an eighteenth century boundary stone, inscribed MCL. In the camp is a concrete “dragon’s tooth” constructed c 1940 with the remnants of an inscription on its base.

**Mary’s grave**

I have heard four accounts of how these crossroads got their name.

1. A young woman, living in Balls Green in 1850, murdered by a jealous wife, from Great Elm, was buried there.

2. A gypsy caravan containing a gypsy queen was cremated there.

3. A suicide, possibly who had the surname Mary, was buried there.

4. A highwayman, who used to dress as a woman, was tried by Judge Jeffries and hung in the Brewhouse (now the garage) of the Old White Horse, and was buried there. The latter seems the most likely story. It was known as Mary’s grave before 1846 and highwaymen tended to be buried at crossroads of parish boundaries. I have found no evidence for the first story, apart from Rev. Alan Holt’s book, *East Somerset*
SECRET HARMONIES 8

_{Romantic Routes and Mysterious Byways} (1986). It is possible, of course, that all four stories are true. There used to be a large stone inscribed with a cross at the presumed site of the grave, but this disappeared in 1998 when the new road was built. It did not appear on Somerset Council’s archaeological survey prior to the construction of the road.

_Pool House Farm_

Was of great antiquity. It was mentioned in the 151 terrier of Glastonbury Abbey, as part of the boundary of Mells. It was destroyed by fire c.1885 and the site is now being further destroyed by Whatley Quarry, as has been Mell/Chantry Lane.

_Dead Woman’s Bottom._

This name Dead Woman dates back to at least 1542, appearing on an old lease of that date housed in the Horner archives in Mells. The last house (in ruins) was bulldozed in the 1970s, but it used to be a thriving community. Old maps show a mill there and the banks of the mill pond can still be seen by Asham Wood, to the west of Dead Woman. The 1882 map marks a factory there, making brushes. In a book called _Somerset Birds and other Folk_ by E.W. Hendy (1944) there is a chapter called ‘A Somerset Woodman’, which gives a delightful account of James and Emma George’s life there in the 1880s making hurdles etc. They were both baptised, married and buried in Chantry church. He died in 1912 at the age of 82.

_Asham Wood_

Although outside the bounds of Chantry, this ancient woodland (a site of special scientific interest) has always been important in the life of the parish, with up to a dozen men working there from Chantry and exploiting the underwood. The blocks of coppice were sold annually by auction, alternating between the White Horse in Chantry and the Tadhill Inn in Downhead. In Castle Hill Wood there is a tufa spring; objects immersed in it are coated and impregnated with limestone. The names Collie Corner and Coalpit Lane may well refer to charcoal burning rather than coal extraction.

_The Dead Woman Estate_
This estate belonged to the manor of French House, owned by the Horners of Mells. French House manor is shown in the Domesday Book as Middlecote. In 1759 the Dead Woman Estate was held by Robert Brown and consisted of a house, garden, orchard, malthouse, barn, stable and outhouses with three fields called Tapps Coppice, amounting to about 20 acres. In 1803 it was held by Mary Harris, who was probably Robert Brown’s daughter. I think it is likely that Green Farm was this estate. This farm, partly destroyed by the new Bulls Green Link Road, now has its building in the North West corner of the property. It was built in 1840 (as shown by the date on the front of the house) and extended in 1974. Arthur Perry, an old Chantry resident, said that some of the land in Bulls Green Farm could not be grazed, but only used for haymaking. This was due to the presence of the poisonous autumn crocus, which used to grow abundantly. When made into hay it apparently loses its toxicity. It was eradicated eventually by the use of differential weedkiller, but still grows in Asham Wood.

*Bulls Green*

Used to be a thriving community of some ten houses. Asham House was the site of a grocer’s shop at one stage and was known as Hock ‘n’ Ham.

*Inns*

There were two inns, the George and the White Horse, but sadly both are now closed and converted to private houses. They date back at least to the building of the turnpike and probably much earlier.

*Fairs*

There were two fairs a year held in Chantry, behind the George Inn, but they died away at the beginning of the twentieth century and were finally killed off by the First World War. They were held on the first Tuesday after Trinity Tuesday, and the first Tuesday after 29 September. Their presence is surprising. Neither Great Elm nor Whatley held fairs, nor did Downhead, though Mells and Nunney did. On some of the old maps, the entire village is called Little Elm and it appears to have been more populous that either Great Elm or Whatley. It seems surprising that the parish was formed as late as 1846 as it was obviously quite an important place.
SECRET HARMONIES 8

*Schools*

The school was held in what is now known as the Old School House (or Little Acre) from the 1840s. In 1857 the building was much enlarged to provide accommodation for three other schools.

1. A Lady’s College – this was a boarding school and attracted girls from all over the world as well as all over England, to be taught fine arts with native French and German speakers. It was at its peak about 1881 with sixty-seven scholars aged from 10 to 17 listed in the 1881 census. At this stage about half of them were lodged in Chantry House. Numbers declined to 18 in 1901 and it closed about 1914. There is an account in Helen Mathers’ *Coming Through the Rye* (1875) of her time there, the village being thinly disguised as Charteris. She describes school life, the church and Mr. Russell (Fussell) who owned Charteris (Chantry) and introduced her to cricket (chapters 13–21 in Seed Time).

2. An Industrial School to teach girls to become domestic servants. There were usually less than a dozen scholars.

3. The Elementary School, later the National School. This closed in 1949.

4. The Infant School or Kindergarten. This took children from 3 years old or younger. In 1851 there were 46 scholars in the last two schools aged from 3 to 14, though most left at about 11. Absenteeism was always a problem. The Fussell family were keen on education and inspired the formation of these schools. Rev. James Fussell was an inspector of schools.

*Church Houses*

The Parsonage, now the Grange, near the church was initially inhabited by the vicar. The Vicarage (West House) in Little Elm, to the west of the village, was initially for the curate, but later the vicar lived there until 1936 when the village shared a vicar with Whatley. Since 1960, both parishes have been part of the Mells Group, sharing their priest now with four other parishes (at one stage this rose to 11 parishes!)

*Orr Farm*
This is now situated next to the church and was originally where Bullen Mead is now sited. It was thatched and destroyed by fire c.1930. One barn remains. The name is ancient (the spelling varies), and means that there are mines or pits for mineral extraction (almost certainly iron ore) on the farm. In 1530 Stephen Dorset of Ore Farm in the parish of Whitley[Whatley] was presented to the court of Donnehead (Downhead) for felling oaks and ashes in Sheremore (Shearmoor) without licence. He appeared again in 1540 for trespass in Asham. He may well have needed the wood for smelting iron. Some mediaeval lime slag has recently been found in the grounds of The Chantry in the stables garden. The names Coalpit Land and Collie Corner probably refer to charcoal burning (repeated?). To this day the field above Chantry Lake is called Smiths Field. In the next field, Buttermead, there are signs of old iron workings.

*The Primitive Methodist Chapel*

Dated about 1820, it was converted to a private house in the 1970s.

*The Chantry*
This was built about 1820, possibly by John Pinch for James Fussell. It is a comparatively small house, though well proportioned. It is approached from the north and has an entrance porch with Doric columns. The principal rooms face south; the ground on which it was built falls sharply away to the south and below the main floor, the semi-basement has ground-level access on the south side. There are three main ground-floor rooms. An annexe was added by Edward Tylee in the early twentieth century, to form a Roman Catholic chapel, and rather spoils the proportions of the house. This is now used as a kitchen. The stables have been converted to a private dwelling. The lodge was originally single-storied but was extended by Edward Tylee. The grounds are still extensive, possible originally laid out by Goodridge. There is a lake, two grottos and a secret garden etc. There are carriage drives around the grounds and lake. The ice house is quite a distance from the house on the opposite hillside (but facing north). There are still the remains of the water-wheel and pumps which pumped water from the lake to the house. The first owner of Chantry House was James Fussell IV, who died in 1845 and it then passed to his nephew, Rev. James Fussell. However, he did not always live in the house and it appears to have been heavily mortgaged by the time he died. In 1891 it was used as dormitories for the girls’ boarding school. In 1905 the estate was sold at auction and passed into the hands of Edward Tylee, though he only lived there part-time.

In 1952 it was purchased by Anthony Dymoke Powell CB CBE, the famous author, who lived there with his wife, Lady Violet, until his death in 2000. Lady Violet died in 2002, and it is now owned by their sons. Chantry and its inhabitants are described by Anthony Powell in some of this books, especially *The Strangers are all gone* and the three volumes of his journals.

*The Fussells and the Ironworks*

Some branches of the Fussell family had lived in Whatley parish since 1750. The Fussell family had been engaged in edge tool production since the mid-eighteenth century. The lake in Chantry which powered the Stoney Lane ironworks was built in several stages. In 1806 an agreement was made between Edward Portman of Bryanston Dorset and James Fussell of Mells to construct a watercourse in Downhead to help supplement the stream flowing into Chantry, notably Castle Hill Stream. The stream on the east side of Asham Wood was unreliable in the summer. The first lake was probably built in 1806, is now the southern part of the main lake, and is
largely silted up. However some of the dam and sluices could still be seen until a few years ago. A map of 1822 shows that the lake had been enlarged and a canal, parts of which are still to be seen, was channelled under Stoney Lane, the ironworks being on the north side of the lane. The level of the lake was raised by about two feet at a later stage; the old banks, lined with stone, can still be seen in the waters. Mr Anthony Powell further raised the dam and reinforced it during his tenure of the Chantry, as there was a danger of it collapsing. A further lake and works were built at Railford at a later date, possibly 1830. The stone dam still exists, with a large hole in the centre, through which the stream flows. The canal from the lake to the works is well preserved and there is more to see of the Railford works themselves, than the Stoney Lane works which have almost all disappeared. There is a large tapering chimney fifteen metres high, with other walls, water ducts etc in the gardens of Railford Cottage. Up to about 8 years ago there was a plaque, thought to have read “Thomas Fussell 1840”. A number of the old grindstones have been halved and the resulting semicircles used as steps throughout the garden. After the ironworks closed the Railford premises were used as a sawmill until the 1920s. Up to a dozen men from Chantry used to work in the edge tool factories until they closed in 1895. They produced tools of high renown which were sold not only in this country but abroad. There is said to be a collection of Fussell’s tools in the Curtis Museum in Alton, and some of their pattern books are held in Winchester. Unfortunately most of the Fussell family papers have not been located, and only the occasional property deeds have been discovered.

The Name Chantry

Is said to derive from the Chantry field, mentioned in the Whatley Tithe Book of 1797. In Whatley church, in the 14th century, a south chantry chapel was added by Elizabeth, widow of Sir Oliver de Cervington and dedicated in 1350 with an altar tomb, presumably that of Sir Oliver. An enquiry by Edward III in 1365 “asked if William of Seavington assigns six messuages (dwellings), a caracate of land and four acres of meadow with appurtenances in Whatley next Mells for a chaplain to pray for William, Alice, his wife, Walter of Monyton, Abbot of Glastonbury, David of Walcot, John of Mersshton and Jon Way, whilst they lived, and their souls after their deaths and for the souls of Oliver of Seavington, and Joan, his wife, would the king be caused any damage or prejudice?” The reply, about two months later, was that “there is no prejudice or damage to the Lord King or others. That the lands are held of the Abbey of Glastonbury by Knights Service and
valued yearly at four marks. There is no other tenant between the king and William and there remains to William one messuage and two caracates of land at Whatley beyond this gift, which is held at Glastonbury for Knights Service, worth eight marks – which is sufficient.” According to “Spur of Mendip”, writing in the Somerset Year Book, 1932, pp 63-6, James Fussell, who built the Chantry, was living in Chantry Manor Farm, which was the manor house of Whatley-under-the-Wall. Chantry Manor House came into the Fussell family by marriage with Miss ffolliot. It seems fairly certain that there were two manors in Whatley (as in other villages) and one was sited in the Chantry area, but I suspect that the old Manor House stood near the site of the stables. The Fussells later purchased more land in Chantry, including parts of Rudge Common, on the other side of Stoney Lane.

**Chantry people.**

The 1851 census shows a population of 242. The main activity was farming, involving 47 people. There were 7 farms (there are now three). Sixteen men worked in the woods and ten in Fussell’s ironworks. Ten people were employed as servants and there were also two gardeners and a coachman. There were three carriers, two painters and two carpenters. There was also a butcher and a shopkeeper. Surprisingly there were also three teachers and a professor of music. An army colonel lived in the Chantry. The population collapsed when the ironworks closed and only 149 people were listed in 1901 census, and there were then about 14 empty properties. Since then, there has been a further slow decline to the present day with now about 130 people living in the parish.
Notes on Contributors

Margaret Boe Birns
Margaret Boe Birns is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at New York University, and Adjunct Associate Professor of literature at The New School. Margaret specializes in English, American, and European literature of the 20th-21st century, the mystery novel, contemporary world literature, the short story, and the nineteenth century novel.

Dr Nicholas Birns
Nick Birns teaches at New York University. 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. 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.*

Michael Henle
Michael Henle began reading *A Dance to the Music of Time* in the 1970s and over the next few decades sent occasional fan letters to Anthony Powell. In the mid 1980s he wrote AP an anguished note upon discovering that his [Henle's] personality type matched that of Kenneth Widmerpool—at least according to the analysis given by Gen. Conyers in At Lady Molly’s. Powell attempted to reassure him, writing on 27 February 1988, “I think it must be remembered that General Conyers would have been the first to agree that he was no more than an amateur in the theories of Jung.” By writing this piece, Henle believes he finally has come to terms with his inner Widmerpudlian nature.

Clive Jenkins
Clive Jenkins was brought up in the Northern Vale of Glamorgan between Cowbridge and Llantrisant. He attended Cowbridge Grammar School and
Jesus College, Oxford where he read History. He has recently retired as Head of a tutorial centre in Oxford.

**Stephen Lloyd**

Stephen Lloyd, a retired teacher of English, has had a life-long interest in British music. For 16 years he was editor of the *Delius Society Journal* and is the author of biographies of such musical figures as Delius’s close friend the composer Balfour Gardiner, Sir Dan Godfrey and William Walton. More recently his study of that intimate friend of Anthony Powell, Constant Lambert was included by *The Spectator, The Guardian* and the *TLS* in their 2014 ‘Books of the Year’ lists. He has also contributed to books on Arthur Bliss, Edward Elgar, Percy Grainger, Cyril Scott and Ralph Vaughan Williams as well as editing Eric Fenby’s collective writings on Frederick Delius.

**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* published by the Anthony Powell Society.

**Tom Miller**

Tom Miller is old enough to remember World War II. Thereafter, he attended Eton and New College, Oxford, where he read Law. He qualified as a solicitor, but moved to Guernsey in 1972, and worked in merchant banking and for the local newspaper. When a contributor to the *Illustrated London News*, he interviewed Kingsley Amis, from whom he learnt much. He frequently visits Italy, and has been round the world three times.

**Harry Mount**

Harry Mount is Anthony Powell’s great-nephew. He is editor of the *Oldie Magazine*.

**David Rawlins**

David Rawlins was the Powell family doctor. He is the author of *Chantry: village and church* (2003). He has also written on Chantry church. www.dixon.org.uk/chantry
Correction

Unfortunately there were a few errors in Keith Marshall’s listing of articles by AP in the *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society* published in *Secret Harmonies* 6/7. The corrected section of the table is below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Powell Families of Radnorshire</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3 | *The Powell Families of Radnorshire*  
12 (1942), 49-53 |                                                                                                                                 |
| 15 | Some Lawsuits about Brilley and Huntington in the 16th and 17th Centuries  
29 (1959), 31-44 | Transcripts of records of lawsuits regarding property in Brilley and Huntington during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. |
| 31 | Miscellaneous Documents of Various Periods – Dealing with Radnorshire and the Marches  
46 (1976), 28-36 | Wide variety of often short transcripts mentioning Powells and others from 1254 through to the reign of Elizabeth I. Includes Escheators’ Accounts, Patent Rolls, Parliamentary Writs, Chancery Proceedings and Court Rolls. |