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FORMS OF TENSION IN ANTHONY POWELL'S
A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME

by

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B. A., University of Sheffield, 1973

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1975

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1975
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List of abbreviations

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| <u>A Dance to the Music of Time</u> | <u>A Dance</u> |
| <u>A Question of Upbringing</u> | <u>Q.U.</u> |
| <u>A Buyer's Market</u> | <u>B.M.</u> |
| <u>The Acceptance World</u> | <u>A.W.</u> |
| <u>At Lady Molly's</u> | <u>A.L.M.</u> |
| <u>Casanova's Chinese Restaurant</u> | <u>C.C.R.</u> |
| <u>The Kindly Ones</u> | <u>K.O.</u> |
| <u>The Valley of Bones</u> | <u>V. of B.</u> |
| <u>The Soldier's Art</u> | <u>S.A.</u> |
| <u>The Military Philosophers</u> | <u>M.P.</u> |
| <u>Books do Furnish a Room</u> | <u>B.F.R.</u> |
| <u>Temporary Kings</u> | <u>T.K.</u> |

Introduction

A Dance to the Music of Time, a sequence of twelve novels by Anthony Powell, of which eleven have so far been published, has already received its share of critical attention. The most usual method of the critics has been to single out a particular feature of interest which can be traced throughout the sequence, to discuss the way in which it develops and how, in general terms, it relates to the whole work. Bergonzi, for instance, discusses the use of anecdote as a central feature of the novels' structure, and relates the success of the anecdotal method to what he calls our love of gossip, and our interest in the peculiarities of English "manners" and English eccentrics.¹ Many critics, such as Maes-Jelinek and John Russell, are concerned with the novels' statement about the decay of English society, and tend towards comparative studies of Powell and Evelyn Waugh.² Raymond McCall and Arthur Mizener concern themselves with discussing Powell's use of the fine arts.³

Few critics, however, have turned their attention to the larger matter of how the sequence operates as a literary unity, or, more particularly, how the dramatic tension of both the individual novels, and the series, is maintained. Traditionally, tension in a novel is achieved through one

or more of various ways; most usually the plot of the novel is the vehicle which creates tension, where "plot" is used to cover the interaction between characters and events. In its most obvious form, the "mystery" or "suspense" novel presents us with a series of events and characters, the significance of which the reader comes gradually to realise as increasingly more details are added to the composite picture of a situation which the novel creates. The tension of the novel is achieved through the arousal of a reader's expectancy; in simplistic terms, it depends upon the sustaining, for as long as possible, of the questions about who did what, when, how and why. Even novels which cannot be classified as "mystery" or "suspense" depend to some extent on this sort of tension; in the novels of Charles Dickens, for example, we follow the chronologically recorded events in the life of a Pip or an Oliver, we trace the development of the character, and wait to discover how he will make sense out of the situations he finds himself in. The plot of a novel presents the reader with a puzzle, and it is in the gradual working towards a solution that tension is achieved and sustained.

Even in the stream-of-consciousness novel, in which the traditional chronological presentation is habitually distorted, tension is achieved in a comparable way. In this case the reader's attention is drawn to the psychology of a single character, and as the character consciously, or subconsciously, delves into the totality of his experience,

by means of association, in memory or in anticipation, the reader gains increasing insight into the identity of that character. The "puzzle" of identity, in such a case, has an effect similar to that of the "puzzle" of situation in the more conventional novel; both create the dramatic tension which welds a novel, creates an intense unity which is provocative and, ultimately, satisfying.

In both "plotted" and "plotless" novels, then, dramatic tension is achieved through the presentation of either a situational or psychological dilemma, and is underscored by what might be called "artistic tension." By "artistic tension" I mean that which makes a piece of literature something more than a simple presentation of situation or character. A newspaper report of a situational dilemma, or a psycho-analyst's record of a client, do not arouse and sustain our interest in the same way as a piece of literature, because the basic "facts" of a case, which might sustain dramatic tension, are not linked by devices which create artistic tension. Such devices include, in the novel, use of setting which either complements or contradicts the "plot"; use of a point of view which either limits or modifies perception of events and characters; use of language which in itself effects an aesthetic reaction in the reader and thus intensifies his pleasure in the actual reading process; or use of symbols or motifs which work to intensify and universalise the significance of certain situations, and to create, on a secondary level,

a unification of the work in that their echoing, or repetition, reveals a sense of pattern behind what might otherwise be considered unpatterned, unassociated, maybe even chaotic.

This, then, is a grossly oversimplified statement of the ways in which a work of literature achieves tension. But what of the novels which make up A Dance? None of the novels in this sequence relies upon a conventional plot structure; events are not recorded in such a way as to build a complex situation of which the reader awaits a denouement or resolution. Only in Temporary Kings⁴ is there any attempt to create interest in a series of events which are in themselves intriguing, and even in this work the creation of a conventional plot-line is minimal and secondary. Nor are the novels of the sequence specific attempts to analyse and present the complex psychological identities of the many diverse characters; stream-of-consciousness technique is never used, and the narrator, Jenkins, seldom presents us with full, objective evaluations of any character's motivations, desires, or any of the factors that control an individual's psychology. There is little protracted description of setting in the novels, used to provide a constant backcloth to the subject matter. If and when symbols are used they do not recur in such a way as to establish a prevailing sense of design, nor are they so pervasive that the novels themselves become symbolic. Powell's language, though lively and attractive, is certainly not sufficiently notable to accredit for its

own sake, and has in fact been held accountable for a possible dullness in the books. Powell does control the point-of-view of the sequence; the subject matter of each novel is presented through the narration of Nick Jenkins, but, as most critics agree, Nick is an unemphatic, slightly anonymous narrator, "self-effacing and unambitious,"⁵ so that the fact of our view of events and characters being filtered through his perspective does little, one feels, to modify or enhance that view, and certainly does little to contribute to the tension of the novels.

In what way then, does Anthony Powell imbue A Dance with tension, either dramatic or artistic? In one sense, at least, Powell's novels are comic, and comedy depends on tension just as much as, if not more than, tragedy; comedy, particularly social comedy, relies upon revelation of the distance there is between appearance and reality, between ideals and actuality, between the glories of human aspiration and the trivialities of human achievement. Comedy depends upon the juxtaposition of opposites, and it is in this that we find the key to Powell's "method." A Dance is wholly controlled and developed by the use and presentation of pairs of opposites, in characterisation, in structure, in theme, in perspective. Anthony Powell achieves dramatic and artistic tension in his novels because whatever he presents the reader with, or whichever method he uses to present it, the reader is always made to be aware of a simultaneously existent opposite at work, a contrast, even a contradiction. Thus, as Robert K. Morris

has discussed, characters of will are invariably contrasted with characters of imagination;⁶ the moving design of the "dance," and of music, is balanced against the static, tableau quality of pictorial art; present moments of awareness are played off against present moments of remembrance and, though less frequently, of anticipation; the use of social satire is often complicated by what would seem to be a structuralist notion of society, although, on the face of it, these two views would be mutually exclusive.

In these, and other, ways Powell builds up a set of contrasts which work both structurally and thematically to imbue his work with a vital sense of tension. But they do not all achieve this in the same way; in some instances the final effect of contrast is to create the impression of "natural balance," in others to stress complexity, and in still others to invest the situations and characters Powell presents, with novelty. The purpose of the present study is to examine the most important of the contrasting pairs which are evident in A Dance, with the ultimate aim of showing that the device of opposition is the most prevalent feature of control in the sequence, and that it works to create the artistic and dramatic tension which infuses the novels not only with richness and vitality, but with thematic significance. If, at times, I deal with material which has already been noted and discussed by critics of Powell's work, I hope it will be clear that I do so, not in order to deny the validity of what they have had to say, but with the intention of revealing the

importance of that material in a somewhat different context. W. D. Quesenbery has gone some way towards discussing the significance of opposition in A Dance, in revealing the "connections between subject, theme and image,"⁷ but has not, it seems to me, been explicit enough about the precedence and prevalence of the device, and has therefore omitted consideration of certain aspects of the subject. Quesenbery noted that the opposition set up between chance and will worked in conjunction with antithetical concepts of time. I hope to extend discussion of this correlation and to place it in the context of the pervasive use of opposition which I perceive in the novels.

Forms of Movement: Notions of Time

Few critics have found it possible to discuss A Dance to the Music of Time without reproducing, at some stage, the initial description of Poussin's "The Dance of the Seasons," which, as Quesenbery claims, "implies both the subject and the method by which the novel will proceed."¹ The reference to the painting, and Nick's consideration of its implications, is a brilliantly succinct, yet comprehensive statement of the prominent concerns of the sequence which follows.

"These classical projections, and something in the physical attitudes of the men themselves as they turned from the fire suddenly suggested Poussin's scene in which the Seasons, hand in hand and facing outward, tread in rhythm to the notes of the lyre that the winged and naked greybeard plays. The image of Time brought thoughts of mortality: of human beings facing outward like the Seasons, moving hand in hand in intricate measure: stepping slowly, methodically, sometimes a trifle awkwardly, in evolutions that take recognisable shape: or breaking into seemingly meaningless gyrations, while portions disappear only to reappear again, once more giving pattern to the spectacle: unable to control the melody, unable, perhaps, to control the dance." (Q.U..p. 2)²

There is a sense of cyclic imperturbability about the image presented in this way, an indication that human beings, performing as they do inside of Time, are at once wholly controlled by Time, but of minimal importance to it. The patterns of human existence can neither interrupt nor change the on-going immutable current of Time. The

opening scene of A Question of Upbringing reinforces this view; it is a description of "men at work," human beings acting out a function and a role, and presumably contributing something to their human existence by so doing. And yet their actions are viewed as "pantomimic gestures," and the seemingly trivial act of throwing kipper remains onto a fire is accomplished "as if performing a rite"; whatever they do would seem to have overtones of which they are unaware, and they are overtones which place them irrevocably inside of the eternal movement of Time. The image which is of most importance in this description is one of perpetual circularity: "As the dark fumes floated above the houses, snow began to fall gently from a dull sky, each flake giving a small hiss as it reached the bucket." (Q.U. p. 1) There is movement in this image, both upward and downward, and yet the effect is of something static. The scene becomes a tableau, inside of which movement is caught, and in this sense is entirely complementary with the description of Poussin's painting. Here too we have a tableau, the still image of a work of art, but the vital movement of the dance is within the still confines of the painting.

In this way, from the very beginning of A Dance, Powell introduces us to the two essential elements of movement which persist throughout the sequence: the static quality of tableau, which is to be found in pictorial art, and the motion of the dance, which is to be found in music. What it is of importance to note, however, is that the "method"

of development of the novels is an inversion of the relationship between motion and tableau that the two early descriptions suggest. In Poussin's painting, and in the image of the "men at work," the sense of movement is to be found within the tableaux; in the novels that follow, scenes perceived through the painter's eye, the tableaux, are within the larger, patterned movement of the dance of time. The tableaux, of which there are a great many, exist as points of focus and of culmination, and usually represent scenes, or moments, which impel the narrator's mind backward, in reminiscence, or forward, in anticipation. All movement exists between those points which are solidified in tableaux, but makes no sense, has no significance, or is even of no note, until put in the perspective of, and linked by, the tableaux. The "measure" of the dance is a result of this. There is an almost serene sense of movement, even when the subject matter of the novels deals with chaos or vitality, as our perspective is made to move from one still point to another; it conveys a notion of ritual, which is of the utmost importance to the design of the sequence and to the statement about the patterning of human life which Powell makes.

I have said that Powell's method is an inversion of the initial images, and yet there is a similarity in that, in both cases, it is by plunging oneself into the richness and significance of the tableaux that one comes to understand the nature of movement. In a sense Powell is reproducing the techniques of the cinema. A moving film is

made up of static frames, viewed in such rapid succession that they are non-differentiable; between each of these frames there is only a microscopic difference and yet, were one to extract certain frames, the onward motion of the picture would be disturbed and disorganized--a viewer would be left with a vaguely disturbing sense that the "picture" was not complete, and his understanding of it thereby impaired. It is the sequence of static frames which simulates movement. Powell's tableaux are such static frames, and his notion of movement is that it exists between those frames and can be understood by close attention to the individual static "shots." Yet there is a difference in that Powell will alter the speed at which the "film" is run (dwelling, for instance, throughout fifty pages on the description of a certain evening, yet passing over a period of years in a brief, dismissive paragraph³), and sometimes will stop it altogether, because he recognizes the heightened importance of certain moments and particular events. The disruption of fluid, consistent movement, the purposeful juxtaposition of motion and stillness, is that which creates tension in the novels, primarily because it disallows us from becoming complacent and from falling into the fallacy of believing that the pattern of human life which Powell presents is one reliant upon recurring geometric precision, but also because it negates the notion that a present moment in time is significant only as a unit in

measuring the linear progression of life.

The notion of time has proved to be one of the most problematic topics of philosophical and literary inquiry in the twentieth century. There is a widely held view that the stream-of-consciousness novel, for instance, is wholly a product of a new understanding of the notion of time, engendered by "Bergson's philosophical theories of time, memory and consciousness," from which derives the concept of "durational flux."⁴ It is certainly the case that few modern novelists depend wholly upon the chronological, linear time-scale which was traditional in the novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is equally certain that the notion of time has thereby been complicated, and that it is not an easy matter to classify, or even describe, the understanding of time which many twentieth century novelists work in terms of. Quesenbery has summarized the four basic concepts of time which are evident in the modern novel, and discussed the way in which all four have a place in A Dance; time can be seen, he suggests, as line, as cycle, as suspension, or as interval. Notions of time as cycle or as line are inextricably bound up with concepts of chance, or of fatalism, since they imply that man has no control over the perpetual movement of time; perceiving time as interval, or suspension, implies the predominance of will, of the idea that man can make use of time according to his interests and demands. In A Dance, claims Quesenbery, "all four concepts of time are represented philosophically . . ."⁵

Whether or not Powell conscientiously worked these concepts of time into his novels it is certainly the case that aspects of the novels can be categorized according to the four designations, but it would be a mistake to suppose that Powell is using A Dance primarily as a means of theorizing about the nature of time. The sequence obviously reflects time-consciousness, as do most modern novels, but this does not mean that the novelists are concerned with redefining or re-evaluating the nature of time; it means only that such novelists are attempting to describe, and maybe evaluate, the way in which man responds to the significance of particular moments of time, that they are concerned with the subjectively relative response to moments of present experience, and with recording an associational method of ascertaining the comparative importance of those moments. They are trying to gain an enlarged perspective on man, not on time.

The basic opposition of motion and tableau in A Dance is obviously complementary with the opposition between notions of time as line or cycle, and those which deal with time as interval or suspension. Theoretically the notions contradict, and the discordance of such contradiction creates a form of tension; but in practice, as is evident to Nick Jenkins, the narrator of the sequence, the notions fuse according to the way in which an individual perceives his own life, and at what stage. For Nick, it is as a result of the intervals in time, the suspension of a moment outside of its place in a metric order of time, that the

patterns existent in linear or cyclic time can be properly perceived and understood. Nick discovers that a present moment of awareness may, in itself, be significant, that its importance is immediately evident, and that a scene is immediately perceived as a tableau. (Such is the case with the opening scene of the sequence.) He also discovers, however, that in many instances a present moment of awareness is swallowed up by the linear or cyclic movement of time, and that it is only perceived as suspension in retrospect, when once future events have revealed or clarified its significance. In Temporary Kings, for instance, Nick is surprised, on re-encountering the American play-boy, Globber, to discover stored in his memory a vivid image of an earlier, apparently insignificant encounter: in retrospect that first meeting is revealed as having ritualistic significance. "The years," Nick muses, "invest the muster-roll of Globber's dinner party with a certain specious picturesqueness, if anything increased by being a shade grotesque. At the time, at least on the surface of things, the evening turned out heavy going." (T.K..p. 70) The memory of that evening, long buried in Nick's mind as being of no significance, proves now to be useful in helping him to form an adequate understanding of Globber's character, and as a tableau, or, as he calls it himself, a "vignette," it is important in linking that long-past time with a future encounter between Pamela Flitton/Widmerpool and Globber. (T.K. pp. 257 ff.)

Present moments of awareness, then, are juxtaposed with present moments of remembrance or anticipation and it is in the intricate fusion of the two that a sense of pattern and design is to be discovered, in life as in the structure of the novels. In the present, events frequently seem to be random and arbitrary, but in the perspective of the past and the future, they can be seen as ordered and appropriate. As a result of this, life can be regarded simultaneously as planned and unplanned.

"Afterwards, that dinner in the Grill seemed to partake of a ritual feast, a rite from which the four of us emerged to take up new positions in the formal dance with which human life is concerned. At the time, its charm seemed to reside in a difference from the usual run of things. Certainly the chief attraction of the projected visit would be absence of all previous plan. But, in a sense, nothing in life is planned--or everything is--because in the dance every step is ultimately the corollary of the step before; the consequence of being the kind of person one chances to be." (A.W. p. 63)

Typically, in this incident, Nick is fascinated by the way in which future cognition of the significance of an event reveals an almost fatalistic predetermination, which is orderly, working in conjunction with chance, which is supposedly arbitrary. Again order and chaos pull against each other, setting up a dynamic tension; again, it is only in acknowledging their dialectic synthesis that Nick, or anyone, perceives the sense of pattern. In a sense, the key to Nick's philosophy is the necessity of such acknowledgement and acceptance, but never acceptance tainted by complacency. Powell would

seem to suggest that there are two ways in which one can disturb the pattern of the dance of time; most obviously, one can attempt to deviate from the dance, to create a new pattern, to use steps which are governed by egocentricity in the belief that the imposition of will can change the workings of Fate; less obviously, and perhaps for that reason more dangerously, one can disrupt the pattern by presuming the dance to be a simple one, by losing sight of its intricacies, a presumption manifested in the tendency to compartmentalise life, and to view it in absolute terms. For Powell both types of deviation have comic potential, but both are viewed ultimately as being serious mistakes in dealing with human life. This is a matter to be taken up more fully in the present paper; I note it here in order to explain more fully what is meant when talking of the need to acknowledge, and accept, the necessary conjunction of supposed opposites.

It can be seen by this time, I hope, that the use of motion and tableau in Powell's novels is related to his treatment of time, and that both are primarily important because they use the method of opposition in order to create dramatic tension; it is juxtaposition that sustains the development of the novels, both in theme and in structure. Powell's use of tableaux is by no means innovative, though it is perhaps unusual to discover such an intensely visual mode of expression and construction in a work of literature. Whenever series of tableau scenes are used in art the intention is not merely to solidify the scene

presented, but to force contemplation of the movement between scenes, and to create an awareness of measured progression. Thus, for example, the Catholic church has long represented the Stations of the Cross in a series of fourteen scenes, depicting Christ's journey from the moment of betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane, to the time of crucifixion: the tableaux serve the specific purpose of forcing meditation, not only of the points in time thus presented, but of Christ's spiritual movement towards the cross. They are ritualistically conceived, and used in ritual; they purposefully strive towards the evocation of combined spiritual energy and spiritual serenity, by fusing those seeming opposites through measured, controlled, ritualistic movement. A very different example of the way in which tableaux are used to suggest progression is Hogarth's series of engravings, The Rake's Progress; here, of course, "progress" is actually decline into dissipation, but the sense of the descent into decadence is suggested not only by the subject matter of the individual engravings, but also because they necessitate consideration of what has gone between them. In this instance the opposition between the energetic and the static is used to increase the horror of the engravings: there is something particularly disturbing about those scenes of decadence frozen within the still frame of art, and the horror is resultant from the sense of contradiction and discordance. Two such diverse examples can tell us much about Powell's use of tableaux. As with the Stations

of the Cross, Powell's movement from one scene to another establishes a sense of ritual; as in Hogarth's engravings, the fusing of stillness and activity evokes emotional tension. And it is possible that only by the use of this device could Powell have managed to evoke simultaneously the sense of ritual and the sense of the chaotic, which is so intrinsic to his notion of the pattern of life.

It will be of use, at this stage, to consider some specific examples of the use of tableau scenes, in order to clarify how exactly they relate to the sense of movement. Various series of tableaux permeate A Dance, each series unified not only by the narrative point of view, but by the recurrent presence of a central character, as, for instance, Myra Erdleigh. John Russell regards Myra Erdleigh as being the "presiding genius" of A Dance, and as controlling the unity of the sequence since she is, in his understanding, "the marker of trilogies."⁷ Although I believe this to be an over-statement of her importance, I would agree that she is one unifying character, and has (like many other characters) a specific significance. Powell gives us very few details about the normal processes of Mrs. Erdleigh's life; we are concerned with her only insofar as she participates on certain occasions. Yet, as a fortuneteller and mystic, she is particularly suited as a character around whom to construct a sense of design, and of Fate, and those scenes which center around her reveal a great deal about the moving pattern of the lives of those people with whom she is

involved. On almost every occasion of Myra Erdleigh's presence "on stage," events culminate in a tableau scene, recorded and represented through Nick's "artistic" perception. Raymond McCall has succinctly stated the absolute interdependence of tableaux and Nick's pictorial vision: "By endowing Jenkins with a strong sense of pictorial composition and the ability to 'frame' episodes, Powell creates a series of tableaux vivants."⁸

When we are first introduced to Myra Erdleigh, the eye of the painter is employed primarily in establishing the physical setting against which Mrs. Erdleigh, Nick, and his uncle, Giles, are projected as they sit together delving into Nick's possible future. The scene is the "lounge" of the Ufford hotel, and the description of the room is one of total stillness:

"The wallpaper's intricate floral design in blue, grey and green ran upwards from a cream-colored lincrusta dado to a cornice also of cream lincrusta. . . . A palm in a brass pot with ornamental handles stood in one corner: here and there were small tables of Moorish design upon each of which had been placed a heavy white globular ash-tray, Several circular gilt looking-glasses hung about the walls, but there was only one picture, an engraving placed over the fireplace, of Landseer's Bolton Abbey in the Olden Time. . . . A clock, so constructed that pendulum and internal works were visible under its glass dome, stood eternally at twenty minutes past five, No sign of active life was present in the room except for several much-thumbed copies of The Lady lying in a heap on one of the Moorish tables." (A.W. pp. 3-4)

The room is made memorable not only by means of precise description, but because it is associated, for Nick, with the Temple of Janus, the doors of which "were closed

only in time of Peace," an allusion of which we come to see the significance when, in The Military Philosophers, Nick returns to the Ufford and reiterates the observation.¹⁰ Furthermore, even here, in this description of a room frozen into imperturbability at "twenty minutes past five," there is the tension of opposition: the "three fish-paste sandwiches and slice of seed cake" present a "painful contrast" with the Landseer depiction of "medieval plenty," and copies of that most staid and civilised of English magazines, The Lady, are thrown negligently against the exoticism of the Moorish tables. The two contrasts are important in clarifying and encapsulating the significance of the episode itself, and it is because of the close inter-relatedness of setting and subject matter, in this case, that the episode is itself transformed into a tableau. In its juxtaposition of the quotidien and the slightly exotic, the scene becomes "frozen" in the pattern of Nick's life, precisely because the energy which Mrs. Erdleigh generates is directly linked to her, and Nick's, understanding of his past and future.

Nick, at this stage, is still naive in his understanding of human nature; bemused by Gile's excitement, he admits that "I was then so far from grasping the unchanging mould of human nature that I found it even surprising that at his age he could presuppose anything to be called 'a future.'" (A.W. p. 12) He is to learn the folly of this, and it is at a subsequent point in time, similarly cemented

by a tableau in which Mrs. Erdleigh figures, that Nick is first able to extend his understanding of Giles and move further towards a comprehension of human nature--although, ironically, the occasion for this is Giles' death.¹⁰

The two episodes are specifically linked by Nick's recollection, on the later occasion, of the afternoon in the Ufford. He remembers that at that time Mrs. Erdleigh had foretold his future, "prophesying my love affair with Jean Duport, for a time occupying so much of my life, now like an episode in another existence." (K.O., p. 154)

Even had we not been told the details of that romance we would be able to understand, to some extent, the movement of Nick's life between those two points in time.

We would recognise the difference between the younger man who needed to be told that "'People can only be themselves.

. . . If they possessed the qualities you desire in them, they would be different people,'" and who admitted himself to be "transfixed . . . half-way between dissipation and diffidence" (A.W. p. 15), and the slightly wiser

Jenkins who can look back upon the relationship which helped him, in many ways, to exert himself in order to step clear of that transfixed state. And it is, appropriately, during the later episode, whilst Nick is staying at the Bellevue after Giles' death, that he reëncounters Bob Duport, and discovers the extent to which he had misconceived Jean's character, imbuing her with qualities he wished her to have, and goes some way towards realising the need to reform his concept of Bob Duport on the same grounds.

The whole account of this later episode is developed through the presentation of minor, isolated tableaux; the description of Giles' belongings "laid out on the bed" (K.O. p. 155), epitomizing so much of what Giles had been, and, as it turns out, how little Nick had known of him; Nick's first sight of Bob Duport which, as he says, "cut a savage incision across Time," and recalls an earlier episode which had taken its place as a suspension in time--the car accident in which Nick, Duport, Templer, Stringham and Jimmy Brent had been involved (K.O. p. 164); the painfully comic account of Dr. Trelawney's imprisonment in, and eventual emergence from, the bathroom, initiating an encounter that plunges Nick into the past, forcing him to contemplate his earlier naivete, at which point, with fatalistic appropriateness, Mrs. Erdleigh arrives to "tend" to Trelawney. (K.O. pp. 183-95) The last scene is, of course, of most importance; Dr. Trelawney's manner of speech directs the ritualistic quality of the scene, his presence at the Bellevue directs Nick's memory backwards, and Myra Erdleigh's entrance freezes the scene and stresses the significance of it as a point in time. When she addresses herself to Trelawney, Nick "remembered the same expression coming into her face when speaking to Uncle Giles" (K.O. p. 196), and, relating this static moment to the past, he recalls both their first meeting at the Ufford, and their second meeting at the Templers'. (K.O. p. 197) The second meeting occurred at a time when Nick was first becoming aware of

his love for Jean. At that time Mrs. Erdleigh had arrived with Jimmy Stripling, whose familiarity with Jean Nick dismisses as the prerogative of an "ex-brother-in-law." During the course of the episode Nick, possibly because he has been impelled out of his "transfixed" state by his love for Jean, is revealed as drawing away from his initial naivete: "I reflected, not for the first time, how mistaken it is to suppose there exists some 'ordinary' world into which it is possible at will to wander. All human beings, driven as they are at different speeds by the same Furies, are at close range equally extraordinary." (A.W. p. 85)

The prevailing image of the first meeting of Nick and Myra Erdleigh was of them grouped around the cards with which Nick's fortune was being told, that of the second meeting, the group of guests at the Templers' collected around the planchette board, and that of the meeting at the Bellevue, Myra, Nick and Bob Duport arranged around Trelawney's bed. In all three instances it is Myra Erdleigh who is most in command. And between those three static tableaux a pattern has emerged, a dance of life played out. In the first scene the presence of Jean is felt only as a futuristic possibility, Nick is presented as naive and indecisive, and Giles is very much alive, though presented simplistically through Nick's inexperienced perspective. In the second episode, Jean is physically present, Bob Duport's existence is remotely felt,

and Nick is plunging himself energetically, optimistically and decisively into the world of experience, yet already twinging with jealousy when Stripling embraces Jean. In the room at the Bellevue Jean exists as part of a past experience which, however, Bob Duport, now physically present, has altered the focus of by revealing that Jimmy Stripling, whom Nick already knows to have been Jean's lover, had been succeeded in that role by Brent; Nick has grown, in his understanding of Jean, of Bob, of Giles. Giles is dead, but in his place is the eccentric Trelawney, equally dependent upon Myra Erdleigh, and fused with Giles in Nick's, and our, sense of the design of his life, by the fact that Giles and Trelawney have themselves been linked by an earlier tableau, at the time of Giles' arrival at the gates of Stonehurst, where Conyers and Trelawney are standing, discussing the value of Time.

(K.O. p. 68) Myra Erdleigh, ever controlled and mystically objective, by her presence forces the reader to take note of the associations between the three scenes, to see them as points of suspension which, however, incline ever backwards and forwards, and thus draw attention to the pattern of the dance that has moved between the points of pause. A tension is established between the moment of immediate concern, to which the reader is overtly directed, and the significance of that moment to which we are directed by means of association. The tension is dynamic and dialectic; Myra Erdleigh has captured its essence when, in

The Acceptance World, she remarked that "the thread that runs through life," depends upon "'Commencement - Opposition - Equilibrium' . . . 'Thesis - Antithesis - Synthesis.'" (A.W. p. 90)

Every tableau in A Dance can be seen to relate, in varying ways, to many others, although there may not necessarily be a cross relatedness between these latter. As I have noted above, for instance, Giles and Trelawney have shared a static moment which fuses them in Nick's sense of design, and they have both played a part in those scenes which unite Nick and Myra Erdleigh. The moment which fixes them at the gates of Stonehurst, however, does not, in itself, form part of the pattern which links Myra, Nick, Jean and Bob Duport. It is an instance of the way in which A Dance builds up a complex web of associational tableaux, the sheer diversity of which itself creates a type of energy and tension, and thus of movement.

The reader can be assured that if a "new" character in the sequence of novels is shown to be one of the central figures in a tableau, it is an indication that he is to function as another dancer in the measured formations of time's patterns. The most explicit example of this is to be found in The Valley of Bones¹¹ where, in one of the most vivid and evocative of all Powell's scenes, Bithel performs the strangely surrealistic dance for which he is always to be remembered. The members of Nick's battalion have contrived a practical joke through which Bithel, the

newcomer, is to be made to believe that someone else is in his bed. Bithel enters the room, immediately understands what is going on and, "clasping his hands together above his head," begins to dance.

"Bithel, now gesticulating whimsically with his hands, tripped slowly around the bed, regularly changing from one foot to the other, as if following the known steps of a ritual dance. . . . From time to time he darted his head forward and down, like one longing to embrace the figure on the bed, always stopping short at the moment, overcome by coyness at being seen to offer this mark of affection--perhaps passion--in the presence of onlookers. . . . as Bithel's dance continued, its contortions became increasingly grotesque. He circled round the bed quicker and quicker, writhing his body, undulating his arms in oriental fashion. . . . Bithel showed no sign whatever of wanting to terminate his dance. Now he placed the palms of his hands together as if in semblance of a prayer, now violently rocked his body from side to side in religious ecstasy, now whirled past kicking out his feet before him in a country measure."
(V. of B. pp. 26-28)

The amusement of the onlookers soon turns to embarrassment and tiredness; Nick is left alone in the room with Bithel, as he collapses onto the camp-bed. Returning to his quarters Nick finds his colleagues in "general agreement that Bithel had unnecessarily prolonged the dance."
(V. of B. p. 29)

In spite of its obvious differences, this description of Bithel's dance is powerfully reminiscent of the opening scenes of A Dance: Bithel's whimsical gesticulations recall the "pantomimic gestures" of the workmen on the road; but more importantly, in this scene, as in Poussin's painting, the movement of a dance is captured inside the still image, the tableau. These similarities serve to

stress the incongruities between the scenes and thus to mark them as the incongruities which we shall see plaguing Bithel's career. Bithel dances alone; there is no circle of partners with whom he shares his ritualistic movement. Bithel dances without music, possibly implying that he is somehow unconnected with the "music" of time. He dances grotesquely, vacillating between performing a slow, rhythmic ballet, an oriental dervish, a "country measure"; there is movement in his dance, and there is energy, but there is no respect for the formal pattern, nor for the formal limitations. Habitually, we come to realise, Bithel "unnecessarily prolonged the dance," but it is only if we record and retain the significance of the scene as tableau, and move forward to a subsequent static point of time with awareness of the point from which we move, that we shall understand the nature of Bithel's comi-tragedy, or understand how Bithel is used to reveal something of Powell's notion of the necessary relation of the dancer to the dance. In addition to the scene's importance for the above stated reasons, we may also note that "Bithel's dance" is an instance when the present moment of awareness is important--Nick immediately responds to the ritualistic and surreal qualities of the dance. The tableau forms itself not only in Nick's mind, but in front of his eyes. Yet the very fact of its bizarreness evokes, in the reader, simultaneous future expectation of significance, so that the two states of time are played off against each other, accounting for much of the dramatic tension of the incident.

There are, of course, many more examples of Powell's use of tableau, and each of them could be profitably discussed, since each adds something innovative to the design of the novels, and of the lives upon which they focus. Widmerpool, one of the most forcefully evident of the characters in the sequence, is to be found time and again at the core of a tableau: in the opening pages of A Question of Upbringing, his emergence through the drizzle is a precisely framed moment which anticipates the frequency of his appearance in memorable "still-shots." (Q.U. p. 4) In A Buyer's Market he is to be found frozen in horrified bewilderment as Barbara Goring pours sugar over his head and shoulders;¹² in The Kindly Ones he both disrupts and creates a tableau as he bursts in upon a party at Sir Magnus Donners', where the guests have been posing for Donners' camera in the attitudes of the Seven Deadly Sins. (K.O. p. 123ff) Possibly Widmerpool is more involved in the pattern that Powell's tableaux establish than any other character, a fact which conveys much about the irony which Powell achieves, amongst other things, through such scenes, since, according to Nick, "Once he [Widmerpool] decided in his mind what a given picture of what some aspect of life was like, he objected to any modification of the design. He possessed an absolutely rigid view of human relationships." (A.W. p. 205) Every time Widmerpool is evident in a tableau an aspect of "human relationships" has been modified, and Widmerpool's marvelous quality of rigid stillness attests to his complete

ignorance of that fact. He is only ever aware of a sense of design if it is his will that has initiated a re-arrangement of life--yet the tableau scenes in which he stands out almost as caricature are invariably indicative of all the patterns, the threads of life, which have eluded the grasp of this most "wilful" of characters.

This, then, is the relationship between movement and stillness in the novels of A Dance, a relationship which establishes design not only structurally, but also thematically. It is a form of movement which reveals Nick Jenkins' ever-widening concept of human nature and a form of tension which simultaneously holds the novels together and projects the reader's awareness backwards and forwards through the years they chronicle. And, as the discussion of Widmerpool perhaps already suggests, the device of opposition also has much to do with characterisation, and with Powell's view of the society and the individuals he presents. But this is a matter deserving of separate treatment.

Units of perspective--the individual and society

Hena Maes-Jelinek has said of A Dance that "the originality (and the main defect) of the sequence lies in the author's attempt to combine the lightness of social comedy with the depth and scope of socio-historical fresco."¹ This would seem to me an insightful remark insofar as it takes account of a dualistic social perspective which is evident throughout A Dance, but I would suggest that what Maes-Jelinek regards as a defect can be understood as a highly effective aspect of the device of opposition, if one goes somewhat further in examining what the two sides of the duality actually consist of. The "social comedy" is social satire, and, as I shall discuss, satire depends upon a highly individualistic perspective of man; the "socio-historical fresco," however, must take account of society as an organic group of people, and must imply the concept that the individual is of note only insofar as he is an integral unit within the social or historical organism. It would seem to be logically impossible for any one writer to deal simultaneously with social satire and with "socio-historical fresco."

But this is precisely what Powell does, and successfully. The view of social patterning which he presents us

with is very much a part of the structuralist's notion of society, and yet he deals with the characters between whom the patterns exist with all the sharpness and individualism of the social satirist. In an essay on Joyce's Ulysses, Robert Scholes has discussed structuralism in terms which are useful in the present context: he contrasts the bio-energetic concept of man with the cybernetic concept.² Bio-energetic man is "bounded by the skin," and is thus absolutely separated from all and any other human beings; for the bio-energetic man the unit of meaningfulness in social terms is the physical individual, and the individual ego. A cybernetic view of man, however, comprises the belief that the unit of meaningfulness is the social or historical organism; cybernetic man attacks the notion of ego, which dies with the body, and stresses the survival of systems of ideas which are created between people, rather than by them. For the structuralist the notion of will, as manifested by Widmerpool, could only be destructive, since it would tend to cut across the intricate patterns of the organism, thus disrupting their wholeness. And certainly nothing of a Widmerpool could ever survive, if we accept the structuralist concept that individuals are only meaningful in their cybernetic selves; Widmerpool is wholly bio-energetic.

But the problem is that, in one sense at least, all of Powell's characters are portrayed as bio-energetic; their individual identities are of utmost importance to Powell, and to his sense of how they inter-relate in a

pattern which is at once "planned and unplanned," harmonious and chaotic. His sometimes almost fatalistic sense of design, which would appear at first to complement the structuralist theory of design, is seen when examined more closely, not only to take account of the quirks and eccentricities of human nature, but to depend upon them. Some characters, to be sure, are sufficiently eccentric that they seem to exist outside of the immediate pattern; Dan McCleod suggests, for instance, that Giles is an eccentric precisely because he is "unable to adapt to the music of time."³ But, as I have already suggested, regardless of whether or not Giles is able to consciously modify his behaviour so that it accords with the norms of the pattern of life, he is related to the pattern, as is Widmerpool. Their very deviation becomes a causal element of the design, and Powell's point would seem to be that once an individual attempts to diverge from the measured pace that the music of time imposes, he probably no longer profits from the pattern, because he can no longer tap its richness and vitality, but he can certainly, and probably cannot fail to, continue contributing to it. The painful comedy of a Widmerpool, of an Uncle Giles, lies precisely in this fact of their being stranded in a position from which, though they are visible to, and therefore available to the other characters, they can no longer thrust themselves back into the dynamic mainstream of human relationships and human patterns. The point is that for Powell it is quite conceivable that one can have a

cybernetic world view, yet still perceive individuals as essentially bio-energetic, since the social or historical pattern which fuses individuals is not the result of something which they consciously create or consciously retreat from, but something they cannot help being a part of. In this case then, the tensions of the novels will be established by juxtaposing characters' bio-energetic notions of themselves, presented through the individualistic perspective, with a cybernetic notion of society, presented as Powell's omniscient structuralist perspective is filtered through Nick's narrative in such a way that Nick himself is not aware, perhaps, of the larger signification of some of the ideas or observations that Powell has him record. And this tension is the mainspring of the social comedy since it denotes the degree of difference between appearance and actuality. Most of the characters appear to themselves to be meaningful as isolated individuals, but Powell knows better.

Both Mark Members and J. G. Quiggin, for example, believe in the force of their individuality to the extent that they consider the job as secretary to St. John Clarke to offer the potential to influence and dramatically change the pattern of that man's life. Mark is the aesthete, Quiggin the Marxist ascetic, and in their battle over St. John as a suitable subject on whom to exert the power of their individualism, they fail to notice that such individualism is little short of an

artificial facade:

"In leaving behind the shell common to all undergraduates, indeed to most young men, they had, in one sense, taken more definite shape by each establishing conspicuously his own individual identity, thereby automatically drawing farther apart from each other. Regarded from another angle, however, Quiggin and Members had come, so it appeared, closer together by their concentration, in spite of differences of approach, upon the same, or at least very similar, aims. They could be thought of, perhaps, as representatives, if not of different cultures, at least of opposed traditions." (B.M. p. 247)

Quiggin eventually manages to oust Members from favor with St. John Clarke, and takes over the job. For Nick "the news was surprising, though of a kind to startle by its essential appropriateness rather than from any sense of incongruity." (A.W. p. 53) But when Trotskyism replaces Marxism as the currently fashionable form of progressivism, St. John dispenses with Quiggin as summarily as he had with Members, and we, at least, come to realise that this is equally "appropriate," since neither Members, nor Quiggin was significant, for St. John, as an individual in the first place. Intensely aware of their bio-energetic selves, Members and Quiggin failed to realise the parts they were playing as representatives in the fluctuation and re-evaluation of systems of ideas that was very much a part of the socio-historical context of the late 1920's: they remain ignorant of the fact that their cybernetic selves were all the while of the most significance.

If we return once again to the description of Poussin's "A Dance of the Seasons" we realise how thoroughly that

passage controls the whole sequence of novels. Human beings can be regarded, we are told, as "facing outward like the Seasons, moving hand in hand in intricate measure," and in that brief sentence we find Powell's resolution to the opposition between notions of cybernetic and bio-energetic man. In the structuralist view the figures in the dance of social history would certainly be linked in this way, inextricably interdependent. But perverse, obstinate, and eminently human, the figures face away from each other, proclaiming their bio-energetic individuality and refusing to acknowledge, at least visually, that they form a part of the patterned cycle of movement. And for all the beauty of that image there is something characteristically absurd about the striving outwards, about the attempt to dance in time both with the music and with the partners in the dance, whilst refusing even to look at them. Powell shows us how, in just one sentence, it is possible simultaneously to maintain a structuralist perspective and satirise human folly.

Anthony Powell enjoys "pairing" characters, possibly because by so doing he allows them to balance out each others' idiosyncracies and to negate each others' artificial notions of egoistical individualism. Nearly every character in the sequence has an opposite or a complement--sometimes those two things are revealed as being the same. Of all these pairs, the one which is most notable, and most discussed, is that of Stringham and Widmerpool. Even in

their youth these two were antithetically contrasted with each other as representatives of the imagination and the will, and of the upper and the middle classes, engaged in a power struggle which the Stringhams of the world are destined to lose precisely because of their characteristic romanticism. I do not intend to discuss the pairing of Stringham and Widmerpool, about which enough has already been written, but to draw attention to the other couplings of characters which work in the same way, and which have largely been neglected because of the dominance of the Widmerpool/ Stringham interest. Powell is far too committed to the development of artistic and dramatic tension through opposition to risk a loss of tension whenever Widmerpool and Stringham are not on stage.

One of the most interesting, perhaps because least expected, uses of character opposition is in the pairing, in Temporary Kings, of the two Americans, Gwinnett and Globber. Powell's concern throughout the sequence has been with British society and when he thematically mates characters it is usually with the intention of allowing the opposition between them to reveal something of the strata of English classes. But suddenly he focuses his attention upon an American couple who, for all their differences, bear remarkable conceptual resemblance to Stringham and Widmerpool. Even the names are suggestive of similarity: Stringham and Gwinnett are "thin" names, implying a sense of astringency, refinement and of curious vulnerability; Globber and Widmerpool are names which evoke roundness,

repletion, and thus materialistic success. The very fact of concentration upon two American characters is perhaps intended to indicate that the decay of the English social structure has resulted in at least a partial loss of the elitist isolationism so characteristic of the British upper classes. Whatever the explanation, the effect is that there is, in Temporary Kings, a sense of a broadening perspective, of an extension of the design to cover other than English life, and thus a universalisation of the motif of the dance in time. Perhaps it is only fitting that, as Nick grows older, his perspective should be enlarged in this way, and that the more familiar he becomes with the domestic pattern, the more he should be forced to look to new experience, the unfamiliarity of which will reinvigorate his participation in the dance, and prevent his falling back into the early habit of complacent compartmentalising. The introduction of Pamela Flitton in The Military Philosophers has already done much to enliven Nick's perception of the shape of the dance, and it is, appropriately, Pamela who effects the pairing of Gwinnett and Glober.

To a certain extent Gwinnett is a debased version of Stringham, and Glober an improved version of Widmerpool. Gwinnett, like Stringham, has associations with his country's "aristocrats," in that he is descended from a "Signer" of the Declaration of Independence; the emptiness of that claim to distinction is perhaps indicative of the extent to which the English upper classes had lost their

distinction by this time, at the hands of men like Widmerpool. Yet paradoxically when Glober is introduced to Gwinnett he conveys a certain amicable respect for Gwinnett's roots, in recognising the name immediately and referring to its significance. (T.K. p. 97) Nick suspects that Gwinnett may take affront at Glober's familiarity, but remarks that "there was no question of 'putting Glober in his place,' an inclination that might easily have emerged in England from a personality of Gwinnett's type." (T.K. p. 98) Here, as in the subsequent record of any association between Gwinnett and Glober, there is a suggestion that between the two American "classes," or types, that the two men represent, there has been an evening out of distinctions and therefore, of class hostilities. It would never be necessary for Glober and Gwinnett to fight for power in the way in which Widmerpool and Stringham seem symbolically to do, on the occasion when Widmerpool and Nick struggle to put the drunken Stringham to bed. (A.W. p. 208) If Gwinnett and Glober have no reason to struggle against each other in this way, it is not because they are any less opposite than Stringham and Widmerpool:

"The dissimilarities of these two Americans seemed to put them into almost every direct opposition in relation to one another: Gwinnett, much the younger, a disturbed background, chancy fortunes, a small but appreciable stake in American history: Glober, of mature age, easy manner, worldly success, recent--not necessarily easy--family origins. . . . No doubt gladiators too had in common the typical characteristics of their trade, and something bound Gwinnett and Glober together" (T.K. p. 99)

Searching for a word with which to describe the communality of the two Americans, Nick overhears an "appropriate term"--"allotropic--a variation of properties that doesn't change the substance." (T.K. p. 99) The communality of Glober and Gwinnett is in that shared substance which will not be altered regardless of the degree to which the "properties" of either man's individualism vary. The communality of substance can be found to link all of Powell's contrasting pairs of characters, and perhaps they are so sharply defined and presented as opposites precisely so that the tension thus created between them will, in fusing thesis and antithesis, resolve itself in a synthesis of sameness. Thus Barbara Goring, the socialite beauty, and Gypsy Jones, the lower-middle class socialist tramp, are shown to share a common substance when Nick asks himself "were Barbara and Gypsy really the same girl. . . . There was something to be said for the theory; . . . I could not help being struck . . . by a sense of solemnity at this latest illustration of the pattern that life forms." (B.M. p. 258)

The existence of that common substance, whatever it actually is, can be regarded as that which causes human lives to be as inextricably bound together as they are: it is the communality that creates the pattern, not the individuality, and all of the idiosyncracies of human behaviour serve ultimately to throw into sharp relief the core of sameness which links the human dancers in time. The dramatic tension of A Dance is, at least in part, created in the consistent statement of opposition between

characters, or between types; the artistic tension is controlled by the careful presentation of scenes in which the oppositions fuse in some way, as for instance in one of Nick's reminiscences of his childhood:

"Once we saw Dr. Trelawney and his flock roaming through the scrub at the same moment as the Military Policeman on his patrol was riding back from the opposite direction. The sun was setting. This meeting and merging of two elements--two ways of life--made a striking contrast in physical appearance, moral ideas, and visual tone-values." (K.O. p. 29)

The resolution of dramatic and artistic tension will be achieved, it would seem to me, when all of the oppositions can be synthesised in such a way as to reveal that at the central, still point of the dance in time, is the controlling essence of sameness.

Conclusion

A Dance to the Music of Time is not yet completed, and since it is a series of novels which works so wholly on the principle of formal measured movement, it is possibly presumptuous to attempt any conclusions about it, or even any tentative suggestions of the sort made in the present study. The complexity of the novels cannot be under-rated: Powell's intense feeling for history blends with his intense awareness of the minutest detail of present experience; present, past and future are inextricably bound together in his perception of life, as are all of the human relationships which manifest themselves throughout a life-time. And Powell closes his mind to no theory, no observation, no fact, no fancy that might possibly add to his understanding of the human dance.

John Rees Moore has said of the sequence that "a sense of design emerges, though an equally strong sense of the impossibility of seeing the whole design comes through simultaneously."¹ Surely this is a reaction that Powell would want to evoke with his work; he is himself, if we are to believe the testimony of Nick Jenkins, habitually bemused, perplexed, even stunned to discover the way in which patterns in time are created and manifested. Each realisation of the sense of design is received with a combination of incredulity and delight,

and were it not for the seeming impossibility of such design existing, those moments of realisation would not be worth remarking. For Powell, recognition of a pattern evolving is a ritualistic, almost mystical, instance of intellectual cognition; to lose the sense of impossibility would be to simultaneously lose the sense of wonderment, without which the pattern of time loses its relativistic significance. More than anything else Powell writes to steer his readers away from complacency, and this he achieves through the tension of opposites--not only within his subject matter, as I have discussed in this paper, but within the reader. There is a sense in which Powell wants to preserve his reader's scepticism, always adding new facets, new possibilities to a situation already so complicated that there seems no way that all of its elements can be made sense of, and then introducing, for instance, the one character who, through an intricate process of associations, is seen to pull together all the loose threads in the weave, to link characters who seemed to have no place at all in the picture, and thus to put into perspective, not only the pattern of time, but the thematic significance of the units of the pattern.

Powell's themes in this sequence are sociological, philosophical, psychological: they deal not only with the emotional and actual interplay of the characters, but also such topics as the relationship between art and action,² or the nature of military duty.³ We learn about the world of academics, the movie industry, the book-publishing

business, high-finance, the theatre, the army, and the antique trade. We move between the pubs of London and the Houses of Parliament; between manorial estates in the country and grimy attics in north London. There are occasional excursions to France, to Belgium and to Italy. And each new place, profession or social milieu, contrasts forcefully with all that has gone before and all that is to come, setting up a persistent tension of opposition. The narrative line of the novels is dramatically reinforced always by the fact that it moves through contrast after contrast, and underscoring the dramatic development, linking the main places or episodes artistically, is a continuous series of deftly noted images which have also to do with the fusion of things apparently antithetical. Typical examples of these include the account of the evening spent at Casanova's Chinese Restaurant, the name of the restaurant itself offering "one of those unequivocal blendings of disparate elements of the imagination which suggest a whole new state of mind or way of life"⁴; the description of Nick's first view of the Templers' house, when "The clouded horizon and olive-green waves lapping against the stones made it a place of mystery in spite of this outwardly banal appearance" (Q.U. p. 73); the recurring presence, in different places of the bronze statuette Truth Unveiled by Time (C.C.R. p. 13; p. 144); and the description of the tailor's shop where Nick has gone to buy his army uniform, where two headless dummies seem at first to represent "dualisms of the antithetical

stock-in-trade surrounding them," though Nick soon comes to perceive them as "not antithetical at all."⁵

As I have suggested, if the dramatic and artistic tension of the novels is dependent upon the use of opposition, then the resolution of the tension will depend upon the merging and blending of antithetical elements, and that fusion will reveal, it is to be supposed, the common pattern of existence.

"I used to imagine life divided into separate compartments, consisting, for example, of such dual abstractions as pleasure and pain, love and hate, friendship and enmity; and more material classifications like work and play: . . . That illusion--as such a point of view was, in due course, to appear--was closely related to another belief: that existence fans out indefinitely into new areas of experience, and that almost every additional acquaintance offers some supplementary world with its own hazards and enchantments. As time goes on, of course, these supposedly different worlds, in fact, draw closer, if not to each other, then to some pattern common to all; so that, at last, diversity between them, if in truth existent, seems to be almost imperceptible except in a few crude and exterior ways: unthinkable as formerly appeared any single consummation of cause and effect. In other words, nearly all the inhabitants of these outwardly disconnected empires turn out at last to be tenaciously inter-related; love and hate, friendship and enmity, too, becoming themselves much less clearly defined, more often than not showing signs of possessing characteristics that could claim, to say the least, not a little in common; while work and play merge indistinguishably into a complex tissue of pleasure and tedium." (B.M. p. 159)

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

¹ Bernard Bergonzi, The Situation of the Novel (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1970), pp. 118-133.

² Hena Maes-Jelinek, Criticism of Society in the English Novel Between the Wars (Paris: Societe d'Editions Les Belles Lettres, 1970), pp. 499-518.

John Russell, "The War Trilogies of Anthony Powell and Evelyn Waugh," ModA, 16 (1972), 298-300.

³ Raymond G. McCall, "Anthony Powell's Gallery," College English, 27 (1965), 227-232.

Arthur Mizener, "A Dance to the Music of Time: The Novels of Anthony Powell," Kenyon Review, 22 (1960), 79-92.

⁴ Anthony Powell, Temporary Kings (London: Heinemann, 1973).

⁵ Neil Brennan, Anthony Powell (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974), p. 15.

⁶ Robert K. Morris, The Novels of Anthony Powell (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1968), p. 117 ff.

⁷ W. D. Quesenbery, Jr., "Anthony Powell: The Anatomy of Decay," CRITIQUE, 7 (1964), 23.

Forms of Movement: Notions of Time

¹ Quesenbery, p. 17.

² Anthony Powell, "A Question of Upbringing,"

A Dance to the Music of Time (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1955), p. 2.

³ For typical examples see the extended treatment of the evening of Mrs. Andriadis' party (A Buyer's Market, pp. 24-158) and Nick's brief notification of his marriage to Isobel Tolland (Casanova's Chinese Restaurant, p. 56).

⁴ Shiv Kumar, Bergson and the Stream-of-Consciousness Novel (London: Blackie, 1962), p. 4.

⁵ Quesenbery, pp. 14-15.

⁶ Anthony Powell, "The Acceptance World," A Dance to the Music of Time (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1955).

⁷ John Russell, Anthony Powell: A Quintet, Sextet, and War (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 103.

⁸ McCall, p. 227. McCall mentions the idea of "tableaux" and deals in a limited way with an aspect of juxtaposition, that between "human manners" and "the formal perfection of works of art," but his article is primarily concerned with an analysis of the use of the artist's perception in the sequence.

⁹ Anthony Powell, "The Military Philosophers," A Dance to the Music of Time: Third Movement (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968), p. 62.

¹⁰ Anthony Powell, "The Kindly Ones," A Dance to the Music of Time: Second Movement (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1962), pp. 146-203.

¹¹ Anthony Powell, "The Valley of Bones," A Dance to the Music of Time: Third Movement (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968).

¹² Anthony Powell, "A Buyer's Market," A Dance to the Music of Time (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1955), p. 70.

Units of perspective--the individual and society

¹ Maes-Jelinek, p. 508.

² Robert Scholes, "Ulysses: A Structuralist Perspective," JJQ, 10 (1972), 161-171.

³ Dan McLeod, "Anthony Powell: Some Notes on the Art of the Sequence Novel," SNNTS, 3 (1971), 47.

Conclusion

¹ John Rees Moore, "Anthony Powell's England: A Dance to the Music of Time," HC, 8, No. 4 (1971), 2.

² Powell, The Kindly Ones, p. 75 ff.

³ This is a topic which is considered throughout the war-trilogy; the Third Movement of A Dance.

⁴ Anthony Powell, "Casanova's Chinese Restaurant," A Dance to the Music of Time: Second Movement (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1962), p. 29 ff.

⁵ Anthony Powell, "The Soldier's Art," A Dance to the Music of Time: Third Movement (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968), p. 1-4.

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FORMS OF TENSION IN ANTHONY POWELL'S
A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME

by

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B. A., University of Sheffield, 1973

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1975

The sequence of novels, A Dance to the Music of Time, by Anthony Powell, is imbued with both dramatic and artistic tension through the use of apposition, which can be regarded as the single most dominant unifying device both within the individual novels, and in the sequence which they comprise. The systematic employment of antithesis, in characterisation, in structure, in theme, and in perspective, is an important feature controlling the sense of design with which these novels are primarily concerned. An examination of the ways in which opposition is employed is essential if one is to understand both Powell's concept of the human "dance to the music of time," and how he sustains the sequence of the novels without employing any of the traditional methods of either the plotted or the plotless novel.

In A Dance, a series of static tableau scenes control movement since they record the still points of time which reveal the significance of human behaviour. All movement between these points is measured and ritualistic once viewed through the perspective of the tableaux. Powell thus fuses the contradictory concepts of time; movement between the scenes is linear or cyclic, but the tableaux themselves are either suspensions of, or intervals in, time. The significance of human life is to be found in the interdependence of these notions of time, and in the opposition between

present moments of awareness, and present moments of memory or anticipation.

Powell's social perspective is similarly a fusion of antithetical notions; his understanding of the inter-relatedness of human life implies a structuralist notion of man as cybernetic, yet his focus upon the eccentricities of individuals indicates his understanding that men regard themselves as bio-energetic. But Powell reveals that even when men willfully deviate from the patterns of the social organism they are merely adding a new element to it. Men appear to themselves to be bioenergetic and individualistic, and thus Powell can write social satire which relies upon the notion of individualism; but in actuality men cannot help but be part of the cybernetic pattern of society, which Powell can perceive structurally, and record as social history.

In presenting the contrasts between characters, Powell draws attention to their essential sameness, their communality. The dramatic and artistic tension which has been created in the sequence by the presentation of opposites, will probably arrive at resolution when the diverse elements of the pattern of human life are fused, and the still core of sameness exposed.