Chapter Five

ART OF CHARACTERISATION AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN ANTHONY POWELL'S FICTION

Anthony Powell makes use of his narrative technique in order to develop his characters. For example, in his novel *A Dance to the Music of Time* he applies the technique of 'First Person Narration.' Nicholas Jenkins, for example, observes and reports the events of the whole life, but he is not simply a narrator. He takes part in the action of the novel. He thinks of different periods. He reflects on them and then comments on them. He narrates the actual actions or events and then thinks of the past. He, thus, narrates events that happened before. Besides, he also points out what others think of the events narrated. Thus, in his narration he correlates what actually happens, the results of what has happened, and the significance of what has happened according to others. It makes the readers enjoy the presentation of what happens. They also come to know how people think of what happened. Besides, they may find out how events and the people, connected with it, are connected with the time scheme of his novel. In other words, we may see for ourselves that Anthony Powell's method of narration consists of a fine blending of story-telling, commentary
on it, the personality of the narrator and his First Person Narration. For example, Murtlock with his group is introduced by Nick in the last volume Hearing Secret Harmonies of the novel sequence A Dance to the Music of Time. After introducing him and his group, Nick thinks of his studies in Burton and Ariosto. Not only this, he is reminded of Dr. Trelawney and Mrs. Erdleigh when he reads a quotation from Orlando Furioso. In other words, it takes him further in the past. But this is not all. All this leads him to think of the recent past when he is reminded of a T.V. Programme that involves Widmerpool. When he thinks of Widmerpool, it so happens that contemporary events return to his mind.

Not only this, Nick, the narrator, reflects on Nick, the protagonist of the novel A Dance to the Music of Time. Naturally we come across complexity of the periodic movements in the early stages of the book A Buyer's Market of the novel sequence. Also, in the early stages of this book, pictures of E.B.Deacon are offered for a sale which takes him to the past, that is, to his first visit to Walpole-Wilsons' house where in the hall of that house Deacon's pictures were hanging. The further events take him back to the time when Nick's parents and Mr.Deacon's parents were friends. But such a connection with the past time does not bring about any change in the importance of the events narrated or characters portrayed. Of course, with the passage of time, characters may undergo changes in
their fortunes, but they remain what they were so far as their characters are concerned. The cases of Widmerpool and Stringham may be taken as illustrations in this connection. In short, it is established beyond doubt that moving narrations, as pointed out above, point out very clearly that time does not change although it appears that it changes.

However, it may be noted that this method of connecting the present with the past is not something new. 'Time-shift', thus, is not a new technique. Modern novelists see time in a flux and pin-point what goes on inside the minds of the characters rising and receding waves in the stream of human consciousness. Anthony Powell has used this method in his novel A Dance to the Music of Time but has added something new to this method. He makes the events important parts of the over-all scheme of the novel sequence. The events in themselves are less important. He slows down the narrative pace. He also blurs or down-plays the impact of the events in the works of fiction. For example, Nicholas Jenkins of his novel sequence A Dance to the Music of Time places the uncertainties of the past and the clarity of the present in his mind side by side. By doing so, he puts emphasis on the present and the past, and the events described do not get importance. They remain in the background of the narration. In this connection the first two paragraphs of his novel sequence 'A Dance to the Music of Time' may be appreciated.
in our appreciation we may find that his prose is smooth and shows the self-confidence of the author. Also, his sentences are well-balanced and parenthetical in nature. Besides, he has used a number of similes for the purpose of satire. He makes powerful allusions with their help. So we find that in the technique used in his novel there is not only artistic detachment but also pictorial richness. Thus, in his descriptions he sees beyond what is actual and obvious. In short, in this novel the plain statements are followed by commentaries and reflections on the part of the author, and for this the author has used a stylistic device of using colons. This device permits him to connect the past with the present, and also enables him to connect the past with the present and also to analyse events and their interpretations. Thus, this device and other such linguistic devices help him to control the flow of events. Not only this, they also help him to moderate the abnormal actions and behaviour of his characters and to introduce allusions and mythology.

Besides, the author's own well-devised personality as the narrator in his fiction supplements his narrative technique. For example, in his novel sequence A Dance to the Music of Time Nick not only narrates what happens but also takes part in the action that he himself narrates. But, as things stand in the sequence, the narrator in Nick controls Nick, the actor. Thus, we do not come across the detailed narrations of Nick's
love affairs and personal life. So he remains only the narrator of the sequence and his inactivity does not appear to be creditable. Naturally, it leads one to think whether a character in a novel can be so neutral with regard to the action of the novel in spite of the fact that he is the central character of the novel. Naturally, when we read the sequence, it becomes difficult to believe what he says. He tells us how characters are involved in political battles. We also find how characters escape from sexual and romantic life. Not only this, we also come across characters considering seriously whether they should follow their love or listen to their voice of duty. Besides, we see characters that are made powerless by their own friends and associates. All this happens in this novel sequence but Nick remains aloof from all this. His personal involvement in the action of this novel sequence becomes less and less to the extent that in the last book of the sequence *Hearing Secret Harmonies* he remains only the narrator without any personality of his own. Nevertheless, he shows the ability of listening to others while talking. It is something difficult to achieve. For example, Nick's reaction to Matilda's revelation of the romance of her husband, Moreland, with Priscilla Tolland, makes Nick react like a person who is provoked when he listens to the adventures of love in the case of other persons. It is the reaction that people feel when they hear the news of adventures of love concerning other peopl
In such reactions we may read sadness, regret, a sense of jealousy and emotions that tell us of irrational dissatisfaction that we come across in life. The narrator does not involve himself in the action as if he had no private axe to grind. Rather, it lends him the capacity to appreciate others' adventures. He studied them to see life working in them. This technique on the surface appears like that of Charles Dickens as used by him in his novel David Copper Field, but the fact remains that Powell's Nick is not Dickins' David Copper Field in the sense that he does not narrate the story chronologically. His novel sequence A Dance to the Music of Time shows that it uses time in advance in the sense that the story comes to an end after 50 years of its beginning. Rather, like a conventional novel the description of the events in this sequence is not chronological. For example, in the book Kindly Ones of this sequence, Jenkins is shown just as a little boy before the First World War, whereas in the book written before it, that is in the Casanova's Chinese Restaurant, Jenkins is shown as a married man in his late 30s. In other words, Anthony Powell uses the flash-backs and flash-forwards in order to achieve this. Only with the help of these, he has been able to show not only the complexity of one period connected with the other, but also the abridgement of the chronological events. So Powell has made his narrative

technique highly elastic as without doing so he would not have been able to achieve all this. In other words, he has made innovations in his use of narrative technique -- in his 'I' formula. One of the ways is to imagine events with the ears and eyes of some body else. Unlike Dickins' David Copper Field, Powell's Jenkins views events through the eyes and ears of uncle Giles. Thus, Nick surrenders his own point-of-view, at least, for some part of the action. Giles's view of things is full of malice. It is prejudiced. It is also envious. We do not find all these in Jenkins'.

Besides, in Powell's narrative technique of flash-backs and flash-forwards, we also find the narrative technique of displacement or assistance. For example, in the book Temporary Kings of the novel sequence A Dance to the Music of Time in a nocturnal adventure Pamela is found naked in Baghsaw's house. It is at this time that Gwinnett is also staying there while doing research work on X. Trapnel. This event is narrated by Baghsaw's father. In the same book Pamela is shown in a vicious mood. She speaks nastily about Glover who hits Widmerpool and breaks his glasses in a scuffle. Moreland and Stevens narrate these events. They agree with each other so far as certain points of these events are concerned. But on other points of these events they disagree with each other. Thus, by having these weird events narrated by unimportant or ordinary persons, Powell has been able to reduce their importance and make them in
accordance with the general subdued tone that the book has. So, wherever Powell wants to tone down the events, he has used this narrative technique of displacement or assistance. Wherever he wants to make the action forceful, his main character narrates the events.

It follows then that the pace of narration in his books of fiction has been slow. We also find that his plots are not well-knit. But in spite of these, Powell has been able to keep up the interest of the readers in his works of fiction, particularly in his novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time*. This has been possible for him only through his delightful portraits of characters. In this connection it is pertinent to point out that Anthony Powell is of the opinion that the main interest of the novel should be in the characters it presents. That is why he says about his novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time* that he aims at pointing out the changes in the English Society from 1914 to the present, but to him the first priority is the investigations of human characters.² Anthony Powell himself opines in this connection, particularly his novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time*: "What I hope to do ... is to show the change in English Society...but this is only secondary to the investigation of human characters." Naturally, the interest of the readers in his works of fiction remains in

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his character-portrayal. For example, Jenkins speaks of Chips Lovell's Stories of his relations with others. He gives such a humorous account of these that the readers feel interested in them. In the book Molly's Lovell's account may be enjoyed in the words of the author thus: "... I always enjoyed hearing the details of other people's lives, whether imaginary or not, so that I found this side of Lovell agreeable... This concern for Lovell's relations had grown into something like a furitive interest in the comic strips of a daily paper..."\(^3\) Such an interest in the characters and their actions may be seen in almost all the English novels beginning from Henry Fielding's. In the book Soldier's Art\(^4\) Moreland gets pleasure in talking about his old friends. He says that in war time one gets relief when familiar things are talked about. He further says that it does not matter who is being talked about and what line the conversation takes. Further, in the same book Stringham tells Nick that he knows everything and that nothing social escapes from his notice. The words of Stringham in the book The Soldier's Art may be appreciated in this connection: "My dear Nick, you know everybody. Not a social item escapes you."\(^5\) The love of talking about one's own people is natural for all sociable persons. Naturally, one like Erridge, who thinks that one can

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5 Ibid., p. 80.
love humanity in the abstract sense and dislike individuals, will prove oneself a fraud to the society. That is why Anthony Powell is of the opinion that a man who cannot see the import of others is blind in the metaphorical sense. In this connection it may be mentioned that in his *Essay on Proust* Powell himself thinks that the novel is based on the classic concept that the situation of human life remain the same, although individuals may change: "The novel is founded on the essentially classic concept that, while the individual may change, the situations human life remain the same."\(^6\) It follows then that the main interest of the novel remains in the individuals it presents. Naturally, to Powell it is his characters that are the first and the last interest of the readers of his fictional works. We now consider what ways Powell adopts for making his characters interesting, distinct and appealing.

One approach on the part of Anthony Powell is that he bases his characters, as much as possible, on the real people. Powell himself has said to Robert Gutwilling in this connection thus: "I try to base my characters as much as possible after real people."\(^7\) Of course, it is necessary for a writer to draw his characters from the life he lives himself and also from the lives of others about him. But infusing his characters with

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observed characteristics and copying them from specific persons are two different things. Evelyn Waugh does not approve Powell's attempt at copying specific peoples in his novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time*. He admits that Powell's characters have their bases in the living people, but he thinks that characters should not be the copy of the specific individual or individuals. Rather, they should be living children of the author's imagination. The words of Evelyn Waugh may be appreciated in this connection: "I have known Mr. Powell for forty years and we have countless friends and acquaintances in common. In this context, as distinct from the books which captivated us before the war. I have recognised no character of incident taken from life..." Powell himself accepts Evelyn Waugh's remark in this connection when he is asked whether Widmerpool has been modelled on any person in his life or on a class of people, he replies thus: "I always like to think of my characters as representatives of two or three people in the real world. But they grow into a life of their own..." Besides, Nick reviews in the novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time* General Conyer's immediate action at Stonehurst when Billson enters naked into the drawing room. In his review he thinks that it is the individual that is important, not the situation. Further,


he observes in the book *The Kindly Ones* that in human life the individual ultimately dominates every situation, however disordered, sometimes for better and sometime for worse. So it is the man's personality, not his action, that is important. It is, then, the force of his character, not of circumstances, that determines his place in the dance of Time. It does not, however, mean that an unexpected change does not bring about a change in man's life. It does, but the decisive element in an adventure is always how the man acts and not the event. Further, in the book *The Acceptance World* of his novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time* Myra Erdleigh tells Nick that he should try to understand life. She further tells him that people can only be themselves if they possess the qualities that he desires in them. They would be then different people from those of life. The words of Myra Erdleigh may be appreciated in this connection: "People can only be themselves if they possess the qualities you desire in them." Also Nick's friends recognize in the book *The Valley of Bones* that all people are extraordinary. They add that it is more normal to be a bank manager or a bus conductor than to be a Baudelaire or Genghis Khan. It is a different matter that people are more of the former type. We may appreciate all this in the words of the author in the book *The Valley of Bones*: "It's no more normal to be a bank

manager or a bus conductor, than to be Baudelaire or Genghis Khan..." Moreland, in this connection, remarks on this very page of this book thus: "It just happens there are more of the former types." So each person, right from the bank manager, Gwatkin, to Field Marshal Montgomery in the novel sequence A Dance to the Music of Time is remarkable. But the fact remains that the people of one time are not different from those of other times, no matter each person is unique and responsible for determining the pattern of this life. Rather, they are much alike. Rowell recognises this fact. He also recognises the fact that human life also changes very little in the course of time. Of course, individual remains important. But it does not mean that the importance that is given to individuality is opposite to what Powell thinks of human life. On the other hand, these two truths of life are complementary to each other, as each needs the other for balance. In the book Books Do Furnish A Room Moreland thinks that the pattern of life remains the same in all times: "I've been reading Ben Jonson lately. He's a sympathetic writer who reminds one that human life always remained the same." Anthony Powell supports this by quoting from Richard Burton in the book Hearing Secret Harmonies. So in the Powell's

13 Ibid., p.91.
sequence A Dance to the Music of Time characters are both individuals and changeless human types. If one can balance these two, one can see characters as well as the society to which they are a part. This can be seen in the way Powell uses his characters. Characters fulfill the function that other writers give to plots or commentary in their works. For example, in his novel sequence A Dance to the Music of Time Nick’s life becomes increasingly complex. This complexity of his life is not expressed by showing him in confusion or in maturity. Rather, characters known to him reappear before him in their new roles. Naturally, it makes him think again what he knows about them. A large number of such characters inhabit Nick’s world, and it is they who make his world complex because of their increasingly intertwined relationships. In order to rethink about them he sees them in family gatherings, parties and other such groups of social life. It enables him to study them individually as well as collectively. For example, the book A Buyer’s Market Nick reflects on Members and Quiggin in a party. He says about them that at Mr. Deacon’s party they appeared as if they were one, and so were they then: “There were, however, two persons present who, as it now seems to me, first revealed themselves at Mr. Deacon’s party as linked together…”16 It follows then that the changes of scenes present only a little modification in the individuals forming a group. In this connection the

interest in human beings and becomes dangerous at the time of war, because he affects the lives of others without feeling any concern for them. Nick objectifies his observation in the book Soldier's Art when he says that Widmerpool was interested in himself. It may be seen commonly, but Widmerpool was notable in this because he did not hide his lack of interest in others. It may be appreciated in the words of the author thus: "There was something impressive in his total lack of interest in the fate of all persons except himself." Of course, when it acts against someone, Nick, the narrator, feels annoyed and even disapproves it in stronger terms. In this connection Nick's annoyance at and disapproval of Widmerpool's attitude towards Stringham in the war may be appreciated in the words of the author thus: "I was annoyed, even disgusted, by Widmerpool's attitude towards Stringham, this utter disregard of what might happen to him, posted away to God know where." Since he is concentrated in himself, he makes attempts to gain more and more power. It makes him disagreeable to others, but it becomes highly monstrous to the humanity during the war. It results naturally into his blindness to see the importance of other people in life. For example, even when he is associated with Murtlock and his cult, Widmerpool thinks only for himself, that is, for his position in the hierarchy of the army.

19 Ibid., p. 190.
It follows then that Powell gives primacy to individuals and not to the action in his fiction. Of course, plot matters to him, because it is the plot that reveals the personalities of characters. Situations display the temperament of the characters and so they are important. For example, on the basis of our understanding of Widmerpool, we may say that he is the first person to marry Pamela Flitton, but we certainly feel more interested in watching what happens in his married life. It is because it is this that reveals more about him. What people do is liked by us, because it tells us what kind of persons they are. That is why Powell narrates events but his emphasis remains on the individuality of his characters. Plots to Powell are important, because they reveal characters. For example, he narrates the long tennis-court dispute at La Grenadiere, because it reveals Widmerpool's characters in *A Question of Upbringing*. The author states it for the purpose thus: "The tennis-court was, however, the stage for him to reveal to me quite another side of his characters: an unsuspected strength of personality and power of negotiation..."20 Thus we find that every thing in the novel contributes to the revelation of characters, but even when there remains a mystery about them, because there is always a surprise in store and we can always find out more and more about them. For example, in the book *The Military Philosophers* Myr. Erdleigh thins that it is

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impossible to know thoroughly. She herself says in this connection: "Little enough only those know, who are aware what is to be revealed."\textsuperscript{21} Likewise, in the book \textit{Kindly Ones} Nick wonders about Stringham's relationship with Miss Weedon. He thinks in this connection that a man lives in the world without knowing even the important things about those people he has been in close contact: "One passes through the world knowing few, if any, of the important things about even the people with whom one has been from time to time in the closest intimacy."\textsuperscript{22} In other words, Powell makes it very clear that it is very difficult to understand human beings very clearly.

So Powell just compares almost two similar persons: one newly introduced and the other well known. By doing so he makes his readers see for themselves the newly introduced persons. For example, in his novel sequence \textit{A Dance to the Music of Time} uncle Giles comes again and again in the description. In fact, he forms the familiar half of many persons introduced for the first time in the novel. So many eccentric persons of the novel are compared with uncle Giles, because he is known as a peculiar person. That is to say, the author presents uncle Giles as a landmark that Nick chooses just to chart out others' idiosyncrasies. A comparison with uncle Giles lends a

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colour of eccentricity even to qualified and cultured persons. In the book A Buy-ers' Market Sir Gavin Walpole-Wil-son resembles uncle Giles when first introduced. Further, in the same book Sir Gavin Walpole-Wil-son distrusts smoothness in life and hankers after realism. All this reminds us of uncle Giles, no matter Sir Gavin does not possess eccentricity as uncle Giles does. Even though Sir Gavin is not like uncle Giles so far as eccentricity is concerned, but by comparing him with Giles the author has suggested that Sir Gavin is as eccentric as uncle Giles is. Further, in the same book Nick describes Mr. Deacon and points out that in his hatred for conventionality he is ahead of uncle Giles, no matter uncle Giles is famous as a little of a radical in his own family circle. In this connection, Nick observes thus: "In this last respect (Disdain for conventionality) Mr. Deacon went further than my uncle Giles, whose creed, of being 'a bit of a radical' was also well publicised within his own family circle." It points out very clearly that Mr. Deacon is unconventional, but basically he follows conventionality. Thus characters are compared with uncle Giles. Dicky Unfraville wears clothes like those of uncle Giles, Alfred Tolland's facial expression, particularly as air of abstraction on his face in his practical life, is like that of uncle Giles; and Ted Jeavons' military air, though different, is like that

24 Ibid., p. 6.
of uncle Giles. Likewise, in the book At Lady Molly's, even Erridge is like uncle Giles. He states it in this connection thus: "Uncle Giles, with his very different circumstances, was in much the same case, in that no one knew or, for that matter, greatly cared what he would do next..." It follows then that Powell puts emphasis on similarities rather than on contrasts while comparing characters. It is a different matter that sometimes even the resemblance between the two persons is so pronounced that the narrator need not make any comments. Comments of the two about each other are enough to reveal them. In this connection we can consider the cases of Pamela Widmerpool and Lady Craggs (Gypsy Jones). They appear in Erridge's funeral. They are similar in their boundless hatred and rage. Both of them bully Widmerpool. All this can be noted from what they comment against each other. For example, the book Books Do Furnish A Room Pamela asks Nick as to why that awful woman they travelled down with, is called Lady Craggs. In asking so she is in fact expressing her own opinion about Lady Craggs. After a little while, Lady Craggs asks Nick about Mrs. Widmerpool and then adds herself that she is a first class little bitch. Thus Nick is not required to give answer to their questions. He is not required to make any comments about

them. Similarly, Widmerpool and Sir Magnus Donners comment and the narrator is not required to comment about their characters. From their comments, we find that Widmerpool has fish-like mouth and that he feels difficulty while speaking. We also come across that Sir Magnus Donners has a similar mouth. It is not comfortable. Besides, like Widmerpool, Sir Magnus seeks power and talks pompously.

Besides, being alike in characteristics, Powell's character also, sometimes, show similarities in their actions or in their positions in the society. For example, in the book *A Question of Upbringing* Stringham cancels the date of his dinner with Nick. Nick takes it as an end of the school life and the beginning of a new period. Likewise, in the book *A Buyer's Market* Nick does not keep his promise of sharing a planned meal with Stringham. It is because he is required to join a party in which Barbara Goring is present. Thus we find that Nick does the same action that Stringham does. It shows not only maturity on the part of Nick but also his similarity with Stringham.

So far as Powell's minor characters are concerned, we find that they are described in terms of a single salient feature, but their single salient feature is used as a metaphor to explain other characters. For example, in the book *A Buyer's Market* Margaret Budd is described as the female equivalent of

Archie Gilbert. She is present at every dance. She is always lovely and fresh and yet does not appear as a woman of real life. It is a different matter that, though she is unaware, she represents most of the people who move about here: "... really, I think, almost wholly unaware, in gentle concentration on herself of the presence of most of the people moving about her." 

Likewise in the book *The Military Philosopher* we find that the author describes Archie Gilbert who has not greatly changed and is like Margaret Budd except that the author points out the newspaper notice of her wedding to Nick. Naturally, Nick connects them with pre-war world and asks Gilbert about Margaret Budd. In her comments on Gilbert, readers come to know of Gilbert's Character. It is because the readers are familiar with the characters of one of them, and it is this that enables them to discover the attributes of the other when compared with the first. This is how Powell describes a minor character in terms of another character who is well known to the readers. He can, thus, be quickly evaluated as well as fixed in our memories. Besides, the easiest way of discovering a characteristic in a character, even though he is familiar, is that he should be compared with another character on that point.

Besides using comparisons for describing characters, Powell has also used, and used it with skill and delicacy, the practice

of that decade (the thirties) to describe himself as a communist..." Similarly, in the book *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant* Erridge is described as a man of human and liberal principles, but he practises non-conformity in small matters. Isobel's brother, Red Earl, during Spanish War adopts a self-contradictory political roles. It may be appreciated in the words of the author thus: "Erridge, not withstanding passionately humane and liberal principles, was used to having his own way in the smallest respect, his high minded non-conformity of life in gene absolving him... from even the irksome minor discipline..." 34 Further, at Erridge's funeral, Nick thinks of the death of George Tolland from war wounds and that of Erridge from heart disease. His thinking leads him to conclude that people like Erridge, who are concerned with correcting the world get credit, whereas others like George Tolland, Stringham, Templar and Barnby, who fight so that the world may not become a worse place, are not recognised. Further, in the book *Books Do Furnish A Room* extreme left politics categorises characters. On his success as a Labour Party Candidate in the Parliamentary election, Widmerpool thinks that they (Leftists) are the masters then, but in the same book *Bagshaw* thinks that revolutions concentrate on getting the authority and the authority leads to oppression. Even the people, who are the sufferers of authority and oppression, authoritative and oppressive, whenever chance comes to

them. Widmerpool, Gypsy Jones, Quiggin and even uncle Giles, in their own ways, go to the extreme left politics in order to get authority over other people. It is a different matter that they fail in their attempts to grab power simply because they fail to perceive the reality of the world or human nature. For example, in the eyes of Anthony Powell, Marxists are such people as are romantic in the view of the social transformation and thus they overlook the realities of the society.

It follows then that besides the categorization of the people on the bases of social, political and vocational roles, people are also categorised by events and time. For example, the first world war provides characteristics to the personality of Ted Jeavons, and as such he is always identified with the First World War. It is apparent to Nick when he meets Ted Jeavons at Molly's: "It was at once apparent that he was something left over from the war." 35 Likewise, La Bas, Nick's old school master, always recognises the importance of the past in his life. Let us appreciate it in the words of author thus: "What's your generation, Jenkins? This was like coming up for sentence at the Last Judgement. I tried to remember..." 36 The time forces people to regroup themselves. In case they do not, they are left alone and then they are forced to regroup themselves.

Besides, time not only groups people into different kinds but also casts a shaping influence on them. Thus every character reconciles himself to his time, and his adjustment to it shows the kind of person he is. So we have a category of persons, like Nick, who always lead a graceful life till they become old. We also have another category of persons, like Widmerpool, who hob-nob even with kids who are half of their age, so that they may maintain themselves young in spite of their age. This categorisation of persons helps the readers to understand the actions of the characters. If it were not so, the readers would depend on their observations only. For example, Pamela Flitton prefers Trapnel to Widmerpool. Behind this lies a lot of thought, and it leads us to see that they will fight in life, as was the case with Othello and Iago in Shakespeare's Othello. The author states it beautifully in the hook Books Do Furnish A Room: "As the gas flared up again, its hiss for some inexplicable reason suggested an explanation of why Pamela had married Widmerpool. She had done it, ... in order to run away with Trapnel. I do not mean she had thought that out of precise terms..., promised anarchic extremities of feeling of the kind at which she aimed..."37

Thus the categorisation helps us to understand characters. For example, Nick classifies persons correctly, and this skill

of understanding persons grows with him in the proportion he advances in his age. We may take another example. During the Victory Service, Nick thinks of the text from Isaiah and begins to categorise persons he meets on the basis of comparative study. It is because simple categorisation of persons does not present a person fully to his mind. It is only a comparison of a person with another that helps him in understanding the personality of that person in detail. It is this that leads Nick to penetrate into the character of that person. Then alone he is able to present that person fully. This characteristic on his part may be appreciated by considering what he says in the book *The Military Philosophers*: "Taking the war personnel to the army, one had met quite a few way-farers. Biggs himself was essentially not of that category; Birthel perhaps: Odd Stevens, certainly..."38 But all is not well with Powell's categorisation of persons. In order to decide the category of a person, Nick, the narrator, has to observe him, analyse his actions and divide his personality into its essential parts. But this is not all. He is required to compare that person or his essential traits with another person or with his traits. Then alone he is able to decide his category. There are minor categories that are odd on their very surface. For example, Rackham belongs to the group of pub-dwellers. It is a group that Nick accommodates in his narration with a lot of difficulty. The

is why Bagshaw finds that the pub-dwellers follow rituals:
"... like almost all persons whose life is largely spun out in
saloon bars, Bagshaw acknowledged strong ritualistic responses
to given pubs." 39 In this connection we may also consider
Pamela Flitton whose behaviour is vicious. Dicky Umfraville's
remark that Miss Flitton likes the man who should always be
in hell supports this statement. Such a kind of persons we
generally come across. Nick readily accepts the category of
such persons as something general that may be observed in the
society. He gives details of Pamela's War Time sexual adventure
in order to support what he (the author) accepts. Such categori-
zation of beings helps Nick indicate their place in the world
of the novel sequence A Dance To the Music of Time. It is a wor-
that is almost transformed by the persons like Widmerpool, and
it is also a world haunted by persons like Stringham. 40 In
other words, two types of characters, the man of imagination
(from orderly Pennistone to maniac Trapnel) and the active man
(from General Conyers to Widmerpool) run throughout this work of
fiction. Both kinds of men, imaginative and active, are required
by the society. It is a different matter that it is the active
men that dominate the society in the present time. Pamela focuses
mainly on that half of the social order that sees the life of
action as most valuable. It is because of this that the novelist

40 A. Mizener, The Sense of Life in Modern Novel, p. 94.
thinks it necessary to examine this category. Besides, this category is also interesting. The moment we divide the characters as active and imaginative, other sub-categories based on drives, will, egoism, etc., appear. Then these categories are further sub-divided in the novel sequence according to certain changes in their nature and their behaviour. For example, will falls within the order of action during the war. Nick comes across the description of the two generals. They show two extremes. The Chief Imperial General Staff represents the extreme force of natural will. On the other hand, Montgomery represents the extreme of artificial will. In this connection the passage in the book The Military Philosophers may be appreciated: "... hurricane-like imminence of a thick-set general, obviously of high rank, wearing enormous horn-rimmed spectacles... Now he tore up the steps of the building at the charge, exploding through the inner door into the hall. An extraordinary current of physical energy... pervaded the place..."41 A careful reading of the passage reveals the powerful impact of a personality of natural will power. The word 'hurricane' is violent but not vicious. It shows the strength of will, but it is neutral, so far as action is concerned. On the other hand, Montgomery shows the will power, but it is carefully produced and extended. Further, Widmerpool by nature is not a man of will power, and so his attempts to present

himself thus do not carry weight. Barbara pours sugar over Widmerpool's head. Thus she humiliates him. Besides, Widmerpool fails to act as a lover with Mildred Haycock. Nick sympathises, but he is able to see the pitiful as well as the ludicrous in him. Likewise, Quiggin's pathetic eyes remind Nick of Widmerpool in the sense that he lives by the force of will. In this connection the words of author, describing Quiggin, may be appreciated: "... his doggy rather pathetic look about the eyes that had reminded me of Widmerpool, and which is not an uncommon feature of those who have decided to live by the force of the will."42 Since they have chosen thus, they do not remain the same human beings as they were. It is a different matter that Widmerpool has not become the villain as he becomes during the war. In the course of time, he becomes a lonely figure. He is disintegrating. He has a pathetic look. He remains so till he runs down naked along the road with Mortlock's group. Such is Widmerpool in the book Hearing Secret Harmonies. It indicates how ineffective will power is.

Another category of characters in Powell's fiction is based on the love of power, and it is their love of power, a form of egoism, that connects them with the world of action. For example, Moreland's wife, Matilda, belongs to the life of power and action. She confirms this when she returns to Sir Magnus Donners. She

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does not belong to the imaginative life of the theatre. In this connection we can appreciate the lines about her in the book *Kindly Ones*. In these lines, it has been made clear that she cannot remain as an actress in the theatre, because she wants power. In this connection the author observes in the above-quoted book: "Matilda has wanted for a long time to spread her wings. She knows at last she will never be any good as an actress. She wants power..." But it does not mean that the world of the theatre and that of power or action are completely separated from each other. For example, Nick, a character who belongs to the imaginative group, becomes a man of action in the sense that he later helps to cut the knot of red-tapes born out of their taste for intrigues during the war. It may be appreciated by reading the book *The Military Philosophers* minutely. Besides, Nick shows a sense of irony. It is this sense that enables him not to condemn fault in any one, because he himself may be guilty of the same.

It follows, then, that Anthony Powell refuses to take a moral tone and is able to see the dangers of an uncompromising theory. It is this that makes the readers of his fiction to see that his novels promote the qualities they themselves make fun of. Of course, some of them mistake his dispassionate


presentation of the drive for power as his approval of it. I think that he supports it, although it is not so. Herbert Howarth in his book *Discord in the Music of Time* supports this point and writes thus: "Jenkins and his friends are dancing to the music of the power of money, power and rank, power of those who have always been in and are determined to stay the power of those who are determined to climb in with them..." We can no doubt agree with the critic in the sense that power seekers are more than common now both in life and in the novel, but to mistake this commonness as an admiration on the part of the novelist will be an error and a serious one. In this connection, if we examine the novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time* minutely we find that Widmerpool is the victim of the drive for power. He is a laughable figure as a human being, matter he does many heroic deeds during the war. For example, Widmerpool works hard in order to get the quarrel between Scandinavians at La Grenadiere solved. Further, Widmerpool says to Nick in the book *At Lady Molly's* that he is ever ready to issue orders. Besides in the book *The Military Philosopher* Widmerpool observes that the war has taught him that he enjoys power. His election to the House of Commons and his marriage with Pamela Flitton also lend support to the fact that he enjoys power.


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power, no matter power-seeking dehumanises him to the extent that he renounces all power and prestige as we find in the book *Hearing Secret Harmonies*. Thus in the novel sequence characters like Widmerpool, who seek power, suffer from lack of imagination and will and are unable to seek power as effectively as they should.

These are, then, the categories in which Nick categorises men and women who are around him. Among them, we have both imaginative and active men and women. Among them we also come across smaller groups led by their will power, egoism and desire for power. Thus we find that the novelist categorises them and uses these categories to understand individuals. It also helps him to study his own time. Besides, it will not be an exaggeration to state that Anthony Powell has the ability to discern something common even in dissimilar persons. It is this ability of discerning commonness among dissimilar persons that has helped a lot in his study of characters.

However, Anthony Powell's use of comparing people and dividing them into categories is made the subordinate to his purpose of making his characters understandable to his readers. That is why Nick's observation of commonness among the persons he observes and his firm view of some characters are two different things. Likewise the categorisation of characters and the purpose of explaining someone's actions are meant to
recognise these individuals in the novel sequence. So it is the study of the individuals that has been given importance in his works of fiction. It is this that leads him to give proper care while naming his characters. For example, the name Bagrow in *Books Do Furnish A Room* is suitable if we take into consideration his outlandish nature. He does show his objectivity in commenting on things, and this he does by dissociating himself from the compelling present. A long list of outlandish names may be prepared from the novel sequence *A Dance to the Musi of Time*. Also, we find that the number and variety of names, that are also plausible and congruous, lead Anthony Powell to concentrate on the particularization of his characters. That is why whatever may be their category, they appear to be singular in their personalities. In this connection we may consider the personality of Pamela Flictton. She is the representative of Feminine irrationality. She also shows animal Viciousness in a marked degree. Also, we find her a representative of distorted sensuality. But the fact remains that she is more than the sum total of these characteristics. In the book *Books Do Furnish A Room* she is described as an appropriate attendant on death, not because of her clothes as they were far from sombre, but because of her appearance that reminds Nick of death. Nick describes her in the book *Books Do Furnish A Room*: "... she seemed an appropriate attendant on death. This was not on account of her clothes... This closeness to death was carried within herself."

Not only this, she herself tells Nick that she feels herself worse than a dead body. Besides, she talks to Nick about funerals at a Fission Party. At the end of the book *Temporary King* she meets more than her death match in Russell Gwinnett, the necrophile American Professor who is introduced first of all in the Book *Temporary Kings*. Pamela visits Russell Gwinnett in his bed room in a seedy hotel. She visits him after taking an overdose of sleeping pills. She does so, so that she may be able to satisfy his necrophilic eager desires. She is, thus, like Stringham, romantic imaginative, introspective and melancholic. It is a different matter that Stringham is a case unto himself. Nick grapples with Stringham's drunkenness and tries to take him away from Mrs. Foxe's party. Thus the above comments on Stringham is appropriate in the sense that personality does not depend on conditions that friends can alter. However, his (Stringham's) peculiarity or individuality is not an extraordinary one as it appears to be. In this connection we can consider the individuality of Mildred Haycock and that of Widmerpool. They are opposed to each other in their individuality as a couple. It is this that leads Nick to realise that individuals and situations are not and cannot be extraordinary as they appear to be.\(^{50}\) So the only advantage of grouping characters into types is that it makes it easier for him to study them or to know them. However,

Anthony Powell's art does not lie in making his categories of characters rigid. His characters do fall into categories but they are more than their category. It is because Powell thinks, through Nick, that his characters should live their own lives. They should not be puppets in the hands of the novelist. In this connection Nick observes in the book The Soldier's Art: "At any rate people must run their lives on their own terms." 51

It follows, then, that characters in the works of Anthony Powell grow and live their own independent lives. In this connection we may consider Widmerpool's character. In the different books of his novel sequence A Dance to the Music of Time we find that Widmerpool is a buffoon in the beginning, changes into a bully in the course of time, and from a bully, at the end, changes into a senile speaker of spiritual power. In the case of Stringham we find that his downfall is gradual and can also be predicted, but it is not wholly so, as it is this that makes his character interesting. The novelist suggests a change by exaggerating a characteristic in a character. He does it by comparing the present of a character with his earlier state. It is a different matter that such a gradual change in the personality of a character cannot be predicted, as essentially the personality of that character

remains constant. For example, Widmerpool does not understand changes in different characters, and so he fails to understand them. In the book The Acceptance World it is described that Widmerpool possesses an absolutely rigid view of human relationship. We may appreciate it in a better way in the words of the author thus: "... He possessed an absolutely rigid view of human relationships. Into this, imagination scarcely entered, and whatever was lost in the grasping the niceties, of character was amply offset by a simplification of practical affairs."

But it is dangerous to disregard a change in a character, without it human behaviour cannot be understood. It is equally dangerous to overlook the essential constancy in a character. We may appreciate this point by taking an illustration. Nick runs an affair with Jean Dupport. He thinks that she is an extraordinary woman, but she appears to be extraordinary to him because she changes according to the man she has in her life. In the book The Acceptance World the novelist points out that the description of the outward appearance of a woman cannot describe her essential personality. On the other hand, the rays of her character are focused through the persons she is intimately associated with: "... description of a woman's outward appearance can hardly do more than echo the terms of a fashion paper. Their nature can be caught only in a refractive beam, as with light

passing through water; the rays of character focussed through the person with whom they are intimately associated.\textsuperscript{53} Thus, to Nick Jean Dupport appears constant, no matter she is as inconstant as water in her various relationships with men. However, Nick finds at the end of the war in the book \textit{The Military Philosophers} that he himself and Jean Dupport have changed considerably, and that it has certainly brought a complete change in their life of love.\textsuperscript{54} He states that Jean and he were no longer persons they had been.

Thus the novelist connects change with constancy. He also inter-weaves mutability with permanence. All this shows how appropriate is the dance motif both to the characters of his novels and those of the world. So characters in his novels grow according to the critical situations in their lives. In their responses to the critical situations before them, they do not lose their essential personality, although in their responses it may appear.
