



Understanding Anthony Powell (Understanding Contemporary British Literature)

Nicholas Birns

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Nicholas Birns offers readings of Anthony Powell's entire oeuvre, including the novels *Afternoon Men*, *Venusberg*, and *The Fisher King*, and his journals, which appeared in print between 1995 and 1997. Birns takes a global view of Powell's corpus, situating his works in context and explaining his place among the second generation of British modernists. Birns adds to the understanding of how Powell and his compatriots pioneered a "next wave" modernism in which experimentation and traditional narrative combined in a sustainable mode.

Looking especially closely at *A Dance to the Music of Time*, the twelve-volume sequence of novels that is Powell's masterpiece, Birns sets the series in its social and historical context, emphasizing the role that both world wars and the cold war played in Powell's life and writing. Birns shows that instead of setting forth a single champion against evil, Powell subtly communicates a half-melancholy, half-humorous sensibility in which he invites the reader to share.



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