

PENGUIN BOOKS

# The Breaking of Bumbo



Andrew Sinclair

COMPLETE 2/6 UNABRIDGED

The rogue's progress of an Old Etonian in the Brigade of Guards and in London Society, of which Sarah Rothschild wrote in the *Daily Express* –

'He has had the impudence to write a book revealing what goes on under those bearskins and bowler hats – guaranteed to cause some bright-red faces in the officers' mess – and some uneasy titters at the next deb dance . . . his book reveals what National Service is like in the most snob-bish of British Regiments. He gives a scathing account of "the racket they call the Season".'

'Funny and touching and scandalous and full of life and talent' – *Sunday Times*

Cover drawing by George W. Adamson

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whose address can be found on the  
back of the title page*

*Muriel Spark*

MEMENTO MORI

1546

'Remember you must die,' said the voice at the other end of the telephone.

Dame Lettie Colston is the first of her circle of friends and relations to be reminded of this truth. But the activities of the anonymous caller soon become more widespread and defy amateur speculation and the investigations of the police.

The effects of these telephone calls on the aged recipients and the intertwining of the remaining strands of their lives are brilliantly and humorously described by Muriel Spark.

The author's later books *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* and *The Bachelors* have reinforced the reputation she made with *Memento Mori*.

'This funny and macabre book has delighted me as much as any novel that I have read since the war' -  
*Graham Greene*

'Brilliant and singularly gruesome achievement' -  
*Evelyn Waugh*

NOT FOR SALE IN THE U.S.A.

*Pamela Hansford Johnson*

THE UNSPEAKABLE SKIPTON

1529

The writer Daniel Skipton is an original example of the genius who nobody appreciates. He is at first sight a comic figure, an expatriate living and starving turns in the city of Bruges in Belgium; preying on visitors in the most disreputable and preposterous manner; organizing trips to brothels and 'exhibitions'.

But his faith in his own stature is unshakeable. He manages to combine degradation with superiority. In this picaresque and richly comic novel, one is always on the side of the unquestionably Unspeakable Skipton.

'Skipton and Skipton's way of life are based on the characters and situation of Frederick Rolfe, Baron Corvo, but only in so far as Rolfe was the prototype. Skipton is an individual, a personality in his own right. . . . it is funny in a way so ribald, so exactly acceptable and absurd, that the laughter it provokes has an after-effect of its own - a kind of internal smiling, a savouring and repetition of good moments' - *Encounter*

NOT FOR SALE IN THE U.S.A.

ANTHONY POWELL

*From a View to a Death*

1528

*From a View to a Death* is Anthony Powell's third novel and possibly his funniest. The story is of a ruthless London artist who pursues his sexual and financial quarry in the county and near-county society of rural England. V. S. Pritchett writing in the *New Statesman* has called it a 'social return-match; the desirable artist among the speechless foxhunters'. The characters are perennial in the classical English comedy of country life'.

find Anthony Powell as funny a writer as Evelyn Waugh and Sir Max Beerbohm' – John Betjeman

Anthony Powell is acknowledged as one of the most important novelists writing in Britain today, and his 'Music of Time' sequence of books has been acclaimed as the finest piece of English fiction since war.

NOT FOR SALE IN THE U.S.A.



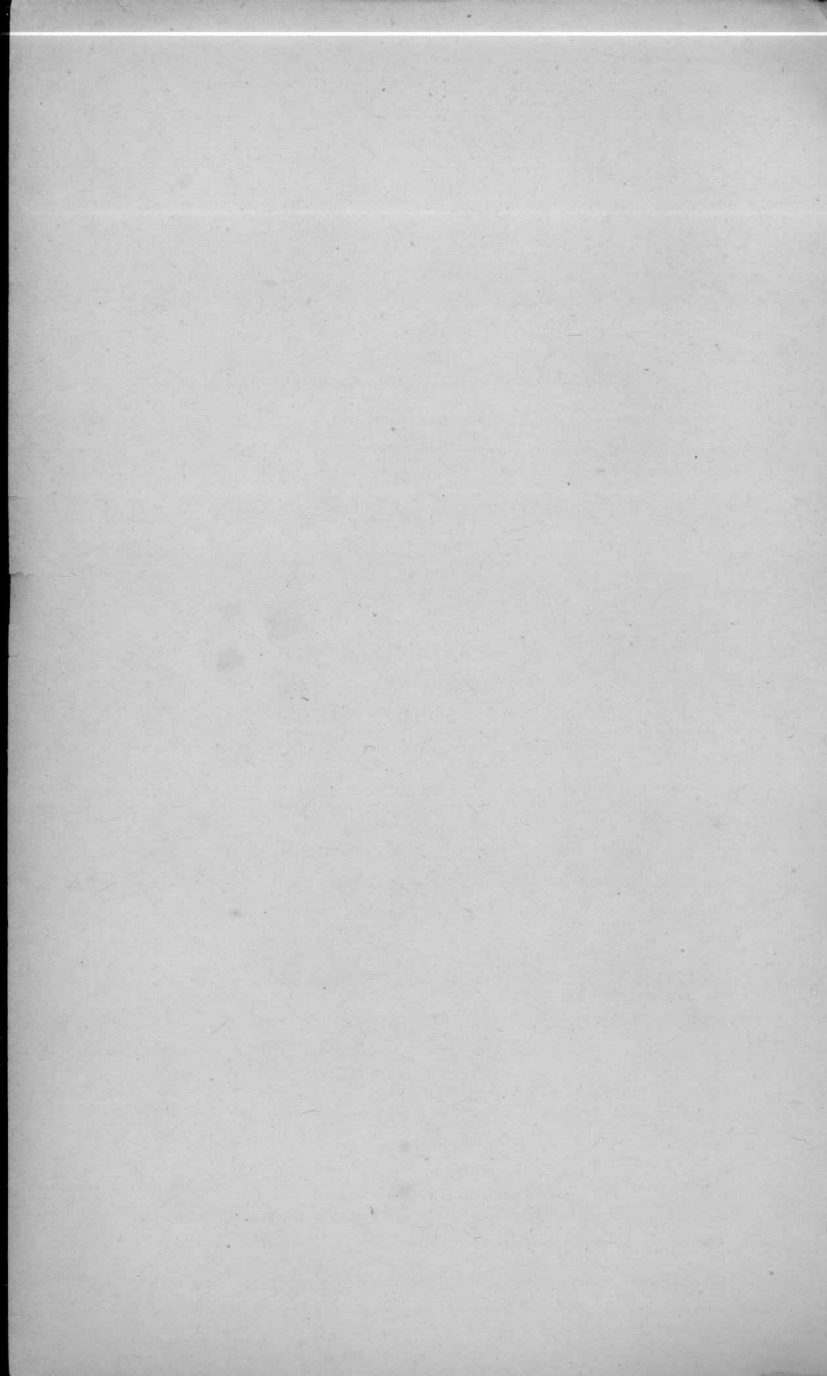
PENGUIN BOOKS

1551

THE BREAKING OF BUMBO

ANDREW SINCLAIR





ANDREW SINCLAIR

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THE BREAKING OF  
BUMBO

PENGUIN BOOKS

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH FABER AND FABER



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TO ANNIE

without whom this book would *never*  
have been written



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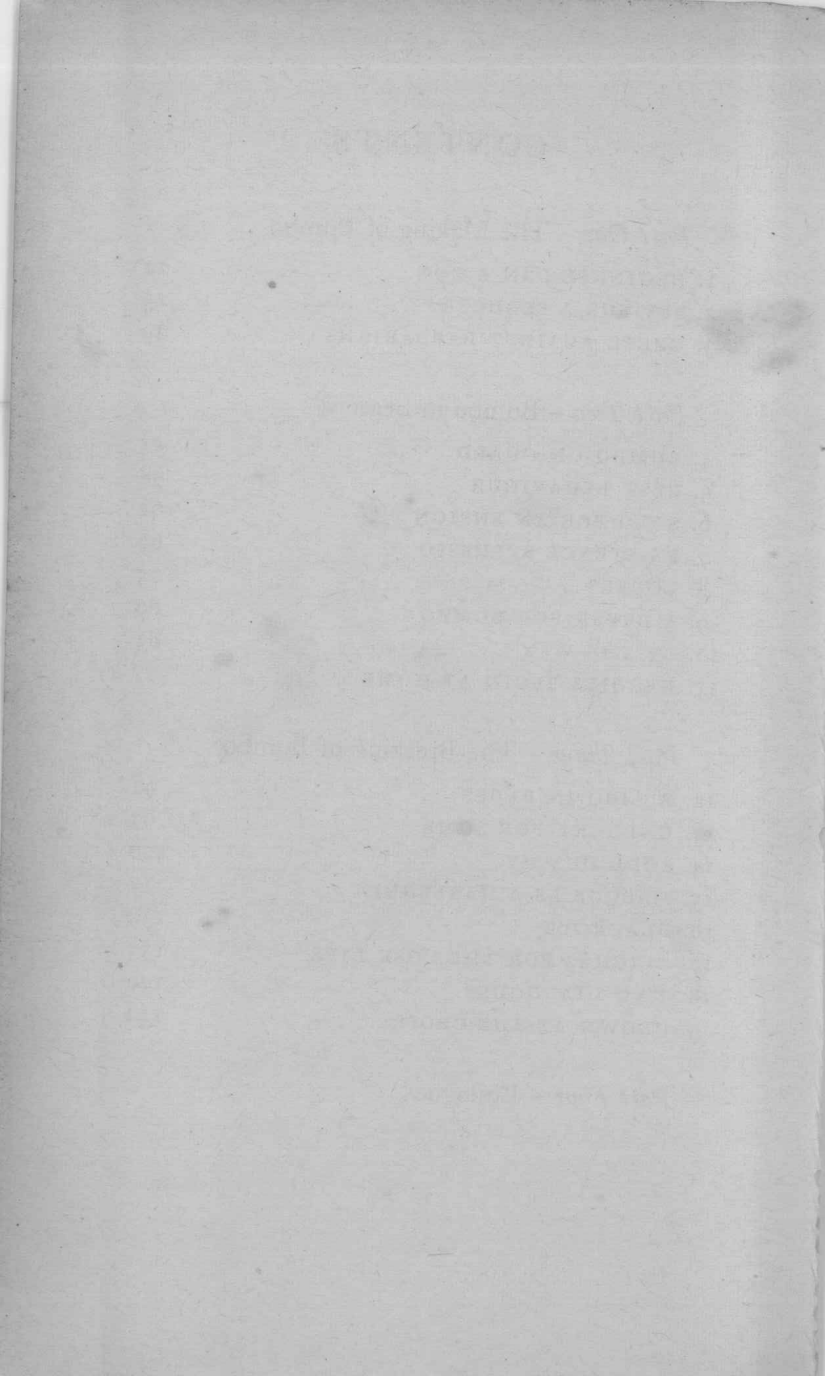
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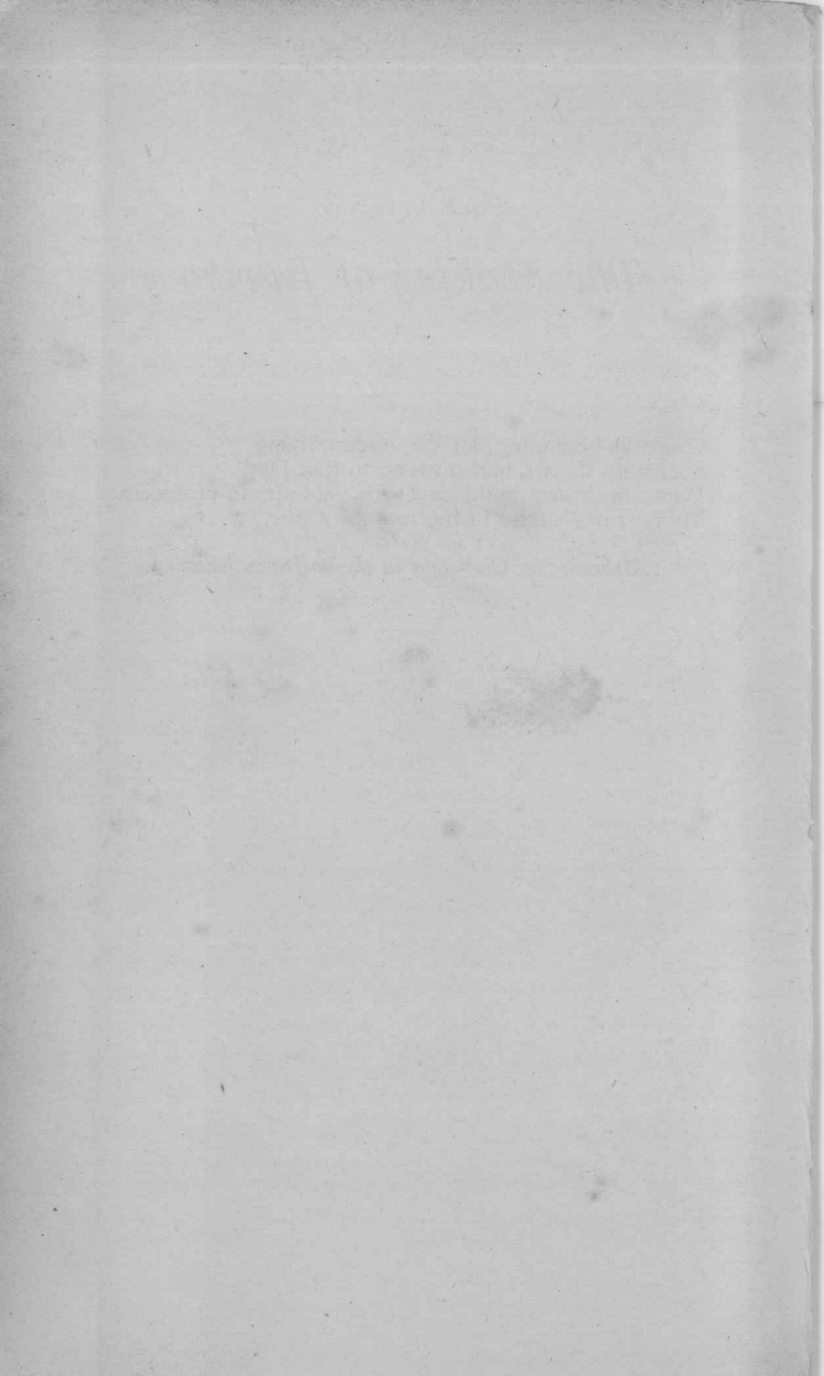
PART ONE

*The Making of Bumbo*

Green as beginning, let the garden diving  
Soar with its two bark towers, to that Day  
When the worm builds with the gold straws of venom  
My nest of mercies in the rude, red tree.

DYLAN THOMAS,

*Altarwise by Owl-light in the half-way house*



## I. BEGINNING IN A BOG

AND I don't care who your bleeding fathers are, or how much bleeding money they've got, or what bleeding school you went to – as long as you're here, I'm your bleeding father, and your bleeding mother, and your bleeding school, and you get twenty-eight bleeding bob a bleeding week, just like the bleeding rest of the bleeding bleeders. Bleed it. . . .

Drill Sergeant Plumb, in charge of the Brigade Squad, was welcoming them to Caterham. Bumbo looked at his sweating red face, and chubby five-foot body, which grew twenty-foot high, when he put his ridiculous, straight-peaked, brass-ringed cap on his head, and bellowed. Round Bumbo, sitting on their bare beds, sat the other twenty-three of the Squad, long-haired, public-schooled, frightened, and not showing it.

. . . You're going to hate me like I was the Devil himself and then, by the time I'm through with you, you're going to love me. Eight weeks, and you'll be loving me. It's happened before, it'll happen again. Now, outside, you bleeding lot, as you are, and the last bleeder out gets the back-end of my pay-stick, up his bleeding backside. . . .

They formed up in threes in the September sun outside, and the drill sergeant began to shout a monologue. Bumbo could not imagine that a man could shout so fast.

. . . Left turn, quick march, left, right, left, right, left, right, faster, faster, you dozy lot, left, right, about turn, about turn, about turn, get a move on you or you'll be in the report, what's your name, tell me after, left, right, left, right, left, right, left turn, left turn, left turn, left turn, right turn, about turn, HALTTTTT. . . . Well, look at you bleeding lot of wasters, form up, bleed you, you form up . . . tired eh? . . . out of breath? . . . well, well, you've only just started, stand up, or I'll chase you till you melt into your boots, you dozy, idle,



scruffy lot, I've never seen such a bunch of bleeding wasters in my life . . . stand up, left turn, about turn, left, right, left, right, keep the bleeding step, will you, bleed it. . . .

Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. Bumbo sweating into his suit, kicking his shoes to pieces on the tar of the paths round the hut, cursing, biting his lip, scared, wondering why the hell he was obeying the moustached pork-butcher, and obeying. Bumbo straining to get breath, straining to stand straight, straining to strain more. Bumbo unthinking, Bumbo one of twenty-four, Bumbo squadded.

*They* cut off Bumbo's hair, by running a razor up his spinal column, until by the force of its own momentum it ran off the top of Bumbo's skull. *They* crowned Bumbo with a khaki, cardboard dunce's cap, that came off every time he turned round, so that, at the command, he had to run to pick it up, while the others stood at ease. *They* clothed him in uniform that had to be pressed, webbing that had to be cleaned, brasses that had to be rubbed, boots that he had the pleasure of spitting on and polishing afterwards. With an academic flair for mathematical ingenuity, *They* made him fold his bed into a twenty-two inch square each morning, and iron his gym-shorts into a twelve-inch square each evening. *They* made him get up at six in the morning; at eleven at night, he was still sitting in the lavatory, talking with Billy the Kidder, beating the wrinkles out of his best boots with a toothbrush handle. It was only in this sleep-stolen time that Bumbo could remember who he was or who he had once been.

For *They*, in the seventeen hours daily that *They* had him, Sampson Bumbo, eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves, *They* had cropped his hair, and broken his pride, until it only was in the glitter of his boots. Quarter of an hour for breakfast, half an hour for lunch, half an hour for supper in the evening; drill, rifle drill, field training; the only break in the monotony for five weeks was one game of Rugby, when the Ruddy Reds went down before the Bloody Bogmen; and Bumbo