



Jim Powell.

**IN DATES**

- 1949** : born in London
- 1969-1970** : student, working for the Beatles
- 1987** : General Election candidate
- 2001** : closure of his ceramics business
- 2007** : wrote his first published novel

# Lord Jim

Passionate about politics, rock 'n' roll and football, former businessman, **Jim Powell** is above all a writer.

If, in 1987, Jim Powell, Tory candidate for the General Election in a Coventry constituency, an industrial town in the doldrums, had been elected, he would not perhaps have become a writer. Member of Parliament, Minister, why not Prime Minister, ennobled by the Queen? But he was defeated by 4,000 votes. "It was in the middle of the Thatcher years," he recalls. "I was a Conservative, but of the centre, in disagreement with her social policy, her diatribes against the unemployed. I knew I was going to lose. Politics has always animated me, but I didn't want to become a professional politician." So he gave it

up, but remains a man who is politically engaged. "I will vote 'In' on the referendum on Europe," he says. But by proxy: the Powells divide their time between a country home in Northamptonshire, and France, in a small village in the Tarn, "where there are many fewer English than in the Dordogne or the Lot." Born in Kensington ("which is now France in London"), he adores our countryside and can get by in French.

He could also have been a pop star. He composes melodies in his head, puts words to them and has recorded several demos, but still awaits his Pygmalion. One of his songs, *I Can Do Soft*, can be heard on his website. A music fan, he even worked during his student days for the Beatles. "It was in 1969-1970, the time of *Let It Be*. An employment agency offered me a job with Apple, their record company. I rubbed shoulders with John, George and Ringo. Not Paul. They were already falling out." He didn't dare to ask them for an autograph or a reference. "Music didn't work for me,

but, until 2007, neither did writing novels."

## Phlegmatic

Even though he has led a rich life, with varied experiences (he has also been a consultant, and head of a respected ceramics company, not profitable thanks to the wage costs of 'Made in England', which had to close in 2001), Powell has "always written." Poems, songs and a first novel, in 1974-1975, turned down by "hundreds of publishers." "It wasn't very good," he admits phlegmatically. But it didn't stop him continuing to send manuscripts to publishers and also to agents. And then, eventually, in 2007, *The Breaking of Eggs* was published by Orion: a novel that deals, amongst other themes, with fascism and communism in the 20th century. The success was more critical than commercial, but there were translations in seven countries – not France: perhaps one day through Sonatine, if *Moi, Ma Vie et les Autres* (published by Picador UK in March as *Trading Futures*) goes well. One could wish for nothing more for this introspective novel, where a man of sixty, going through a difficult time (e.g., alcoholism, an unemployed City trader), reviews his life, looks in the rear-view mirror of his car and asks himself what direction he wants to take. All infused with a grim irony. "I didn't want a novel that was only funny or only sad," says the author. "It's a soft book with a hard landing."

Jim Powell relies on the public on this side of the Channel. "France is different in its tastes, especially in literature, which is why I love it." Thank you, my Lord. Meanwhile, he has already finished his next novel, is wondering if he mightn't finally make a record, and is working, through the University of Liverpool, on a doctorate on the history of cotton, in which his family, the Peacocks, were once involved. One understands why he lives in the countryside.

Jean-Claude Perrier



**Jim Powell**  
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