



A Time to Be Born

By Dawn Powell

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Set against an atmospheric backdrop of New York City in the months just before America's entry into World War II, *A Time To Be Born* is a scathing and hilarious study of cynical New Yorkers stalking each other for various selfish ends. At the center of the story are a wealthy, self-involved newspaper publisher and his scheming, novelist wife, Amanda Keeler. Powell always denied that Amanda Keeler was based upon the real-life Clare Boothe Luce, until years later when she discovered a memo she'd written to herself in 1939 that said, "Why not do a novel on Clare Luce?" Which prompted Powell to write in her diary "Who can I believe? Me or myself?"

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A Time to Be Born By Dawn Powell Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Here's one to savor when you're feeling sour--a reissue of a 1942 novel teeming with egregiously opportunistic, social-climbing Manhattanites who see WW II as just one more cause to manipulate and who are appalled not by Hitler's barbarism but by his mean birth and bad manners. The narcissistic queen bitch of the hour (who Gore Vidal purports is modeled casually on Clare Boothe Luce) is Amanda Keeler Evans: she snatches a newspaper baron from his wife; achieves monumental success as a romance novelist after hubby's papers print rave reviews of the ghost-written book; and, subsequently, pontificates on politics without expertise but to great acclaim. Amanda even finds a way to use newly arrived Vicky Haven, an old chum from her anonymous Ohio past. Unbeknownst to Vicky, she's to serve as beard for Amanda's affair with Ken Saunders, an old beau whom Amanda doesn't love but whom she keeps on a leash to bolster her ego. But sparks ignite between beard and beau, the egotistical newspaper baron seeks revenge against an unfaithful wife and Amanda's empire threatens to fold like a house of cards. Period details are keen (in Vicky's apartment house: "At each landing was the conventional old-time niche designed for easing the passage of coffins up and down stairs"), and Powell's (*The Golden Spur*) spoof of the high and mighty still sizzles half a century after it was written.

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From Library Journal

Originally published in 1940, 1942, and 1954, respectively, this trio were reprinted by Vintage (Classic Returns, LJ 5/1/90) and the now defunct Yarrow Press (Classic Returns, LJ 4/15/91) in the early 1990s, when Powell experienced a bit of a resurgence only to disappear again. Like many of her works, these satirize New York's pseudointellectual elite. Powell is one of American literature's most lethal wits?she could hold her own against Dorothy Parker any time?and should be in all library collections.

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Review

"The Powell Effect is strikingly evident in her handling of the Clare Boothe Luce character in her roman à clef *A Time to Be Born*. The character is, in every conventional sense, a monster of sexual and literary deception, and a consummate liar and user, yet seen through Powell's clarifying lens her actions become understandable -- one even comes to accord her energies a respect akin to that we have for Becky Sharp. To feel, really feel, the heartbreak of an objectively contemptible character is an exquisitely mixed literary experience, and Powell was peerless in keeping her readers off stride." -- **Gerry Howard in *Salon***

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Matthew Lyons:

In this 21st millennium, people become competitive in each and every way. By being competitive right now, people have to do something to make these people survive, being in the middle of typically the crowded place and notice by surrounding. One thing that sometimes many people have underestimated that for a while is reading. Sure, by reading a reserve your ability to survive enhance then having chance to stay than other is high. For you personally who want to start reading a book, we give you that *A Time to Be Born* book as beginning and daily reading guide. Why, because this book is greater than just a book.

Amanda Mathis:

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Jackie Ballesteros:

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Mildred Vang:

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