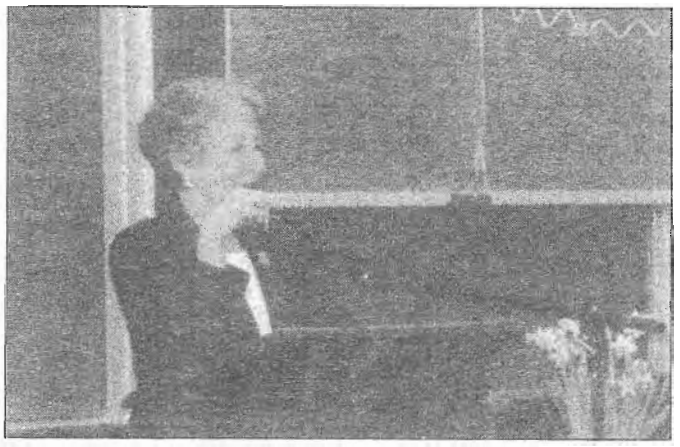
ISSN 1360-9920

GREEN LEAVES

The Journal of the Barbara Pym Society Vol. 8, No. 1, May 2002

THE NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE 2002



Ellen Miller opening the North American conference

The fourth annual meeting of the Barbara Pym Society in North America was held on the weekend of March 23 and 24. The evening before the conference began, a group of at least twenty of those attending from out of town met for dinner at Chang Sho restaurant, near Harvard Law School. Lively discussions got under way, and the staff wisely put us in a corner where we could continue without disturbing other patrons with our enthusiastic "book talk".

Saturday could not arrive soon enough, and we converged on Austin Hall for a substantial morning coffee that even Harriet Bede would have found adequate. Balancing cups and plates, we managed to greet old friends and welcome new ones. Surely Barbara Pym would have found the setting suitable, with its high ceilings and enormous windows looking out on the Harvard campus and its noble buildings.

As always, Ellen Miller managed to herd us into the lecture hall, where she opened the meeting by reading notes from Frauke Lenckos and Eleonore Biber, who were unable to attend. She also passed on greetings from Hilary Walton, Hazel Holt, and Father Gabriel Meyers. To set the mood for the meeting, Ellen read a few lines that Robert Smith wrote, touching on "the safe and comfortable world that Barbara Pym has left us" with her exquisite miniatures, her wit, and sense of the ridiculous. Though September 11 was not mentioned, I think many of us were remembering the comfort that Pym had provided – whether we managed to reread her novels during those very bad days or just mentally put ourselves into her world.

The Novelist at Work

The first speaker was **Janice Rossen**, author of *The World of Barbara Pym* and a senior research fellow at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, who chose as her topic: "Barbara Pym: The Novelist at Work." She noted that two things are particularly interesting about the way Pym's literary career unfolded after she wrote *Some Tame Gazelle*.

First, Pym had limited experience to draw upon compared with many writers, having neither traveled extensively nor worked as a journalist or reviewer. Instead, she and her sister led quiet lives in the 1950s that largely revolved around office work in the day, and, for Barbara, writing her novels in the evening. This pattern did not create many exotic experiences. Nevertheless, Pym was very aware of her powers of observation and her role as a novelist, filling her notebooks full of odd bits and random thoughts in her wanderings through London.

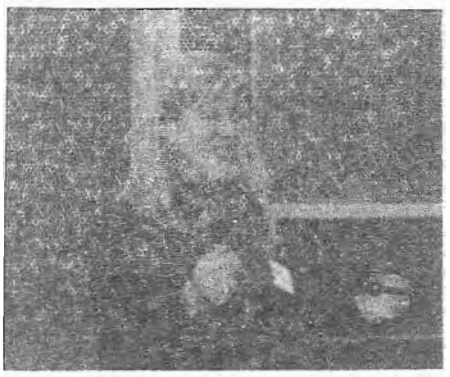
Secondly, much of what Pym wrote did not work. She had to wait a long time to find her voice and her publisher. During the period when she could not find a publisher, her "vicars and spinsters and librarians and tortoiseshell cats were forced to give way to the daring radicalism of the so-called Sexual Revolution." Rossen believes this dealt a blow to Pym's creative powers from which she never fully recovered.

While Pym's friend Philip Larkin dealt with the unexpected cultural shift of the 1960s with a certain amount of envy, rage, and wit, Pym could not. She wasn't angry about the deprivation that angered Larkin, and feminism as a cause did not interest her. Instead, she remained a writer of brilliant social comedies in and of the 1950s, keeping her focus on the England she observed at the time, with its 19th century roots intact.

Rossen raised the questions of how Pym managed to write such wonderful books and why they continue to enthrall us. Many readers turn to her novels because, as Robert Smith put it,

Contents

North American Conference 2002	1
Sonnet by Barbara Pym	7
Oxford in the 1930s and early 1950s	8
Some Tame Gazelle: a brief history	10
A Barbara Pym Day at Lincoln Cathedral's Library	13
Pym gleanings	14
Notice board	15
Obituary: Charles Burkhardt	16
Imaginary conversations: II	16



Janice Rossen

they are "good books for a bad day." They allow us to escape the present for a while, and are absorbing enough to make us enter another world and care about the characters. They fortify us and point to some useful way to look at life, teaching us to laugh, hope, value virtue and goodness. But how did Pym do this?

Rossen believes that one important element in answering this question is that Pym has what A.S. Byatt characterizes as the *sine qua non* for writing fiction: the "primitive gifts of curiosity and greed, about other things than literature." Rossen considered how these two attributes – curiosity and greed – give us a clearer idea about Pym's gifts as a novelist.

Pym's characters are avidly curious. Dulcie Mainwaring decides to find out about Aylwyn Forbes's brother, and she saves up a trip to the library to get the information she needs as a "kind of special treat" for herself. We also have curiosity fueled by local gossip in Jane Cleveland, who wants to know something about the people in the parish and lets her lively imagination work on such information. While Jane's curiosity is innocent, Jessie Morrow's is sharp and cynical, and she takes pleasure in flaunting her knowledge about Fabian. Often Pym's novels are about finding out something that has been deliberately hidden – as when Miss Doggett's curiosity leads her to tell Jane, amid the plum preserves and tobacco leaves of the Cleveland kitchen, that "there may be something between Jessie and Mr. Driver." Rossen believes that A.S. Byatt is right and that the primitive motive of curiosity is a powerful force in narrative. In her view, Pym increases our interest by making different characters have different kinds of curiosity.

As for the novelist having the quality of greed, Rossen believes that this notion appears in Pym as the quality of deprivation – in an "astonishing range, from self-denial and wistfulness, to bitter disappointment and crushing, deep grief." But though we expect this in more serious genres, it is less common in comic novels. Pym's novels are comic, but take place in a universe where problems are not extremely dramatic, but not easily solved either. We have as an example Winifred Malory arriving at Mildred's doorstep in the rain. The situation is ludicrous, but it is serious. Mildred resists having Winifred as a flat-mate, and Pym does not trivialize the emotion of the two women or make the solution look easy. Mildred reflects that she is exhausted with bearing others' burdens. So here we have an intersection of Pym's work between curiosity and greed – or "a desire for life at some deep level." Mildred wants to help, but does not want to be overwhelmed by the demands of others.

Rossen noted that Philip Larkin described his own work by saying that "deprivation is for me what daffodils were to Wordsworth." In Pym, we find that the characters make a "solemn ritual out of having the little that they are allowed to have in life, or feel that they will be allowed to have."

Pym is shrewd and open-handed, and is not bitter in describing this dynamic. She exposes characters' faults, but allows them to remain unchanged if that is their wish. We have the example of Prudence, who continues to be addicted to romance, but freely chooses to remain addicted. Then there is Jane who will never finish her scholarly book on the 17th-century poet. Neither character will change, but they have the comfort of accepting their deprivation. They want what they choose, so we respect them.

Rossen also talked about Philip Larkin's' relationship with Pym. During the years when Pym was not published, Larkin tried to dissuade her from adopting a new style of writing that would betray her innate gifts. As almost the only writer with whom Pym discussed her work in progress, he provided limited advice, but was helpful in constantly reassuring her that her work had infinite value. He told her that he read her books every 18 months or so. "How good they are!" he notes, "How much what one wants after a hard or even a soft day's work. How vivacious and funny and observant! And feeling, of course." In his essay on Pym he notes, "Amusement is constantly foiling more pretentious emotion. But emotions are there all the same." Rossen notes that in a sense, Larkin represented the voice of all of us when he wrote to Pym saying, "your novels are wonderful; they give us endless pleasure; don't give up or pay any attention to those editors who discount [them]."

Rossen concluded that in Pym's next-to-last books, *The Sweet Dove Died, Quartet in Autumn*, and the red-brick university novel, her kindness to her own characters seems to have faded under long years of disappointment. Leonora, Caro, Letty, and Marcia do not have the comfort, sweetness, and occasional endearing silliness of many of her earlier creations. However, in *A Few Green Leaves* she returns to her earlier way of writing, perhaps acting on Larkin's advice.

In response to the changes that took place in the 1960s, Larkin chose a darker side while Pym continued, like Jane Cleveland, to "notice the things that one shouldn't." Larkin encouraged her to keep her cheerfulness. He gave us a way to see her novels, and we appreciate their vivacity, amusement, coziness, sly wit, and yet deep feeling. Rossen ended by noting that the novels "employ zealous curiosity though it is tempered with kindness – they urge zest and a greedy passion for life (even if this is often portrayed in terms of deprivation) . . . The novels show us how to choose wit and fortitude and noticing (at odd moments) the 'wrong' thing, which might just be precisely what we need to see."

Exploring Women's Friendships

After a coffee break, we returned to hear **Katherine Anne Ackley**, professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens point, speak on "The Company of Women: Women's Friendship in the Novels." She began by noting that Pym put twice as many women in her novels as men. She then looked at the wide range of friendships and acquaintances that we find in the books – from those that are "dull and solid without charm," as Mildred put it, to those that are "splendid and worthwhile," as Wilmet Forsyth learns.

Ackley noted that while ultimately the novels celebrate the value of friendship among women, "much of her comedy and wit find expression in her portrayal of the inflated importance of men and the effect men have on the way women interact with one another." Among the examples resented of what happens when men interfere with female friendships, perhaps the most memorable is that of Letty and Marjorie in *Quartet in Autumn* and the change that David Lydell makes in their lives.

Clearly there is plenty of backbiting, cattiness, and distrust among women in Pym's novels, with remarks on appearance (dim, mousy Mary Beamish) and

domestic abilities (Mrs Hoccleve's inability to keep a good table). As Catherine Oliphant – viewed by Ackley as one of Pym's most reliable observers of human behavior – notes, "women do think the worst of each other, perhaps because only they can know what they are capable of."

Ackley also gave examples of how women dismiss or devalue each other. From Allegra Gray's plots to remove Winifred from the vicarage, to Leonora Eyre, who used women friends as a foil, "particularly if, as usually happened, they were less attractive and elegant than she was."

Yet in spite of the critical and even cruel comments and the various kinds of relationships (including women living with women out of economic necessity or simply because they have known each other a long time), we also find friendships that are positive. This certainly applies to the sisters in the novels, but also to pairs such as Jane and Prudence, Wilmet and Sybil, and Wilmet and Rowena. We also find camaraderie between employee and domestic help, which highlights the important role that maids, sewing women, and housekeepers play in connecting households by passing along important information (Miss Prior with her insights about Mrs Hoccleve, Mrs Jubb and Mrs Morris with their exchanges about Allegra Gray, and Florrie and Emily with their intelligence concerning the Archdeacon and Bishop Grote).

Perhaps Belinda's magnanimous attitude toward Agatha makes the elder Miss Bede the most admirable of all of Pym's characters when it comes to analyzing friendships. Ackley noted that Belinda is generous to all women and is uncomfortable thinking of herself as Agatha's rival. After learning that Agatha has knit a sock that is too short for the Bishop, she finds that she can almost love Agatha as a sister. Belinda is greatly relieved when Agatha returns to her sharp self.

Kathy Ackley

Ackley ended by noting that we might almost judge Pym's female characters by the success they have with women friends. We see this in Wilmet's growth in maturity, which coincides with her acceptance of Mary Beamish's friendship. By contrast, Leonora Eyre remains frozen in her inability to establish meaningful ties to men or women. The likable women in the novels are sensitive and sympathetic to other women – though occasionally critical – and they welcome friends. As Pym wrote in one of her notebooks: "With the years men get more bumbling and vague, but women get sharper."

Tea, Wine, and Milton

After lunch, we returned to the lecture room to listen to **Judy McInnis**, professor of English and Spanish at the University of Delaware, who chose as her topic: "Communal Rites: Tea, Wine, and Milton in Barbara Pym's Novels." She investigated the nature of love in relationship to the rituals of consuming tea and wine consumption in the novels. She believes that Pym uses these rituals – feminine and masculine – to figure Caritas (charity) and Eros (passion), the immanent and the transcendent, the real and the ideal.

McInnis believes that Pym uses food as a way to join people in pleasurable community, provide spiritual and physical comfort and the means to develop a Christian community. The continuity of the Church depends upon the survival of the body – to which women minister. Noting that Janice Rossen has pointed out that Pym never made her theology explicit, McInnis believes the outline of Pym's theology emerges from the conjunction of descriptions of tea, wine, and Milton.

McInnis reminded us of how Pym delighted in joining the reverenced and the reviled, as when her affair with Henry Harvey culminated in their reading of *Samson Agonistes* in the nude – flagrantly undercutting Milton, the great English puritan. Later, in *Some Tame Gazelle*, this episode is transformed into Archdeacon Hoccleve's reading of the same work to Belinda. This chaste recasting retains the conjunction of the sacred (love of deity, reason, and beauty) and the profane (Henry's and Belinda's attraction for one another). Milton is a poet Belinda wishes to share only with Henry, and she is indignant when Bishop Grote couches his patronizing and patriarchal marriage proposal in terms of *Paradise Lost*.

By using the impure blending of profane and sacred Love as a background, Pym contrasts her characters' ideal visions of themselves and others with the

Judy McInnis

reality of their lives. The chasm between the real and the ideal is bridged by the power of desire and imagination. Driven by passion (Eros), the lover seeks to unite with the perceived perfection of the Beloved. When the lover discovers the Beloved's flaws, charity (Caritas) maintains the bonds of affection. The flaws become endearing quirks, revealing human weakness, causing the Lover to want to protect the Beloved. Love within marriage pales into a habit of charitable forbearance. McInnis sees this scenario played out in all the novels during ceremonies when many cups of tea are imbibed, sometimes enlivened by a glass of wine.

Nothing disrupts the sanctity of the tea ceremony – not romance, work, nor religious obligations. When characters seem unable to cope – Julian Malory, Rocky Napier, Graham Pettigrew, to name a few– a cup of tea restores spirits and puts thing into their proper perspective. *Crampton Hodnet* is steeped in tea references. To give just two: Francis falls in love with Barbara Bird over tea, in the very same restaurant where he had courted his wife over the same beverage years before. Anthea and Simon leave the tea things languishing by the fire while they embrace – the bells of evensong creating a sacred setting for profane love. In other novels we also find tea symbolizing societal order and stability. When Mildred suggests forgoing tea at a church committee meeting, the reaction of those around her implies that she has "struck at something deep and fundamental."

The role of tea-pourer corresponds to that of high priestess within the domestic sphere. Fabian pours at his garden party, rather than alienating either Jessie or Prudence. Rupert Stonebird recalls his mother's sacramental role at the tea urn, while he passes round cups – a balancing act for her husband, the vicar, who presides over the communion ritual. At the end of *A Glass of Blessings*, Father Ran-

some notes, "Life has to go on, and I suppose a cup of tea does make it seem to be doing that more than anything."

We find tea scenes in restaurants and in the work world. The widows who run the tea rooms act as modern versions of the ancient celibate female religious orders who cared for the temple. In the office, workers eagerly await their tea, and any variance from the routine is distressing. Perhaps the seriousness of tea in this capacity is best highlighted by Esther Clovis, who is believed to have lost her job as secretary of a learned society owing to her deficiencies as tea maker.

While tea celebrates reality and the continuity of daily life in the domestic, work, and religious sphere, assured by an immanent deity, the consumption of wine in the Eucharist represents the human attempt to achieve union with an ideal, transcendent divinity – it is a patriarchal ritual that only Pym's male priests can administer. The Eucharist celebrates the intervention of the divine in human affairs.

Thoughts of wine lead to thoughts of Italy and Rome and the more physical nature of the Roman Catholic church. Though Pym's characters resist the notion of going over to Rome, they often long for Roman sacramentalism or evangelical Protestantism, and the expression of religion in images and gestures with greater physical freedom. Recall how Letty does not participate in the noisily joyous religious celebrations of her African landlords, thinking of her own faith as a "grey, formal, respectable thing of measured observances and mild general undemanding kindness to all."

In her novels, Pym suggests that the English should allow greater physical expression of their faith – Rome offers more hope of spiritual rebirth than Milton's grey Puritanism. In *An Unsuitable Attachment*, Pym contrasts Italian culture, dominated by wine and Eros, with English, dominated by tea and Caritas. The Catholic priests on the plane to Italy are rowdy and eagerly buy up all the small bottles of alcohol. Ianthe notes how young Italian lovers "gaze at each other more devouringly."

Pym indicates that imagination and desire are stronger in Italians, who move so easily from the profane to the sacred – from Petrarch's Laura and Dante's Beatrice to the Virgin Mary. This contrasts with the English, whose careful rationalizations make the transformation from profane to sacred love more difficult. But in Rome, we find that the characters of *An Unsuitable Attachment* are invigorated: Sister Dew breaks her leg and is carried by two strong men to the hospital, the high point of her visit. Mark Ainger is overwhelmed by the grandeur of St Peter's and can recall only a tall thin English lady arranging thornless roses as the nearest equivalent at home. Meanwhile, in Rome, Penelope and Ianthe recognize their love for Rupert and John.

In Rome, wine and its associations with manliness appear when Rupert worries that he has not shown himself to be quite a man by allowing the two vicars, Mark and Basil, to select a wine at the party in the Italian restaurant. The other novels also reveal the ideal pattern of male dominance in the wine ritual. For instance, in *A Few Green Leaves*, Tom Dagnall and Martin Shrubsole discuss wine knowledgeably and consume twice as much as Avice and her mother at dinner. Wilmet and Piers stop for tea rather than wine during their first meeting, hinting that romance will never materialize. In *No Fond Return of Love*, we learn that Aylwyn Forbes prefers women who are not "too knowledgeable about wine."

While men are the connoisseurs of wine, the ladies often provide it – Ianthe and Wilmet offer sherry to their male guests, and Catherine and Meg keep bottles of certain wines for the men in their lives. In initiating romance, Everard Bone has a bottle of wine by the fire and Aylwyn Forbes presses sherry on Laura. Francis Cleveland carries a bottle of wine with him when he escapes with Barbara Bird, but forgets the corkscrew – a symbol of what doesn't happen on the trip.

McInnis offered many examples of how Pym uses wine in connection with the exchange between profane and sacred love. At Marcia Ivory's house, her three office mates find a bottle of Queen of Sheba sherry and they open it in remembrance of her – with Marcia serving as a Christ-figure whose death has finally brought them together. In *A Few Green Leaves* Emma attends a midnight Christmas eve service at which a non-believing organist – perhaps owing to the apricot brandy Tom has given him – plays *The Messiah* magnificently. During the service, Emma realizes that she wants a male companion, who the reader recognizes is Tom Dagnall. Tom has awakened Emma's affection both by his beauty and his pathos – a mixture of sacred and profane love.

McInnis tells us that Pym is unwilling to justify male dominance despite the patriarch God of the Judeo-Christian tradition. God exists, but he is reaffirmed and upheld by women who impose the school mistress's code of fairness, tolerance, and equanimity – which Emma imagines during the funeral of Miss Lickerish.

Two writers more unlike than Milton and Pym are hard to find. Milton asserts male privilege elsewhere, whereas Pym questions the premises underlying that privilege. McInnis asks us to recall that Pym winks at knowledgeable readers when she has Jane Cleveland remark "in many ways one dislikes Milton ... his treatment of women was not all that it should have been."

Subversion Behind a Teacup

Following another coffee and tea break, Catherine Wallace, Sunday editor for *The Toronto Star* (who used *Less Than Angels* as a cultural anthropology primer a few years ago when she was on a fellowship at the University of Toronto on how to study the graduate students at her residence) presented her talk: "Barbara Pym's Excellent Women: Subversion from Behind a Teacup." Noting that she keeps an extra copy of *Excellent Women* to loan, she told us that she was taken aback when one of her colleagues, whose work she respects and admires, told her that she hated the book, mentioning "all those unhappy unmarried women." Wallace said this surprised her, because she views Mildred and many of Pym's other heroines as models of independence. In fact, she finds it odd that the books fell out of favor just as feminism was starting.

Wallace agreed that Mildred's world can be an old-fashioned one, with her church work, her job at the Society for Aged Gentlewomen, and her cups of tea. Nevertheless, Mildred has the audacity to believe that she is at the center of her own life. Wallace finds her to be a deeply subversive woman. Mildred wears a pleasant and helpful façade, but does exactly what she wants to maintain her independence. Unlike the single-women characters of Austen and Brookner, she is not looking for a rescuer to sweep her off to a new life.

There are no marches for feminist causes in *Excellent Women;* instead Mildred deftly side-steps this request or that expectation, but in such a polite fashion that no one realizes she is going her own way. She does not want to alter society, she just wants to be mistress of her own life.

Mildred's most difficult battle is being allowed to live alone. Meanwhile, society seems to want single women to band together in a kind of secular nunnery if they have neither husband or child. But there is no opportunity for subversion in a nunnery. Therefore Mildred will not move

Catherine Wallace

into the vicarage, nor take Winifred as a flat-mate, nor marry the vicar.

Regarding Julian, Wallace noted that Mildred rejects him so subtly that he doesn't know it. She prefers leaving society's façade intact, though she does have to be blunt at times. Certainly this is true when she tells Mrs Gray that she [Mildred] is not "a dear," and when she turns down Everard Bone's invitation for dinner – envisioning herself with an aching back bending over his sink.

Other Pym spinster heroines too are mistresses of their own lives. Belinda and Harriet live exactly as they please; and though she loves Henry, Belinda notes that she is a contented spinster. Harriet is, as Wallace put it, "queen of all she surveys." Why indeed would she change her comfortable life of spinsterhood in a country parish for the unknown trials of matrimony?

Prudence, by contrast, is not comfortable with the notion of spinsterhood, and indeed seems to have made men a sort of career. But Wallace notes that even romantic disappointment does not "interrupt her carefully lovely life; it reinforces it." Recall how Prudence treats herself to a particularly nice lunch when she learns that Jessie has stolen Fabian, musing that someone might ask "Who is that interesting-looking young woman with the traces of tears on her cheeks, eating smoked salmon?"

Catherine Oliphant is close to Mildred in spirit, but she has a more modern feel, living with a young anthropologist with no question of marriage in prospect. She thinks of the stories she writes for magazines as making raw life "more palatable by fancy, as tough meat may be made tender by mincing." In her life with Tom, she makes the decisions and mends the fuses. When he leaves her for a younger, more compliant woman, Catherine worries about the force of her own character, thinking that she should have let him go on writing "commence" instead of "begin" or "start." But she cannot change the fact that she is a strong individual who delights in the individuality of others – which amounts to her own form of social subversion. This culminates in her encouraging Alaric Lydgate to burn his notes, a suggestion he finds outrageous but eventually agrees with.

With Dulcie Mainwaring, we return to a heroine as deceptively pleasant and as skilled in small talk as Mildred. But she also turns out to be a talented eavesdropper, using her indexing and research skills to track down people who interest her, and even passing weekends in cheerless hotels to further her research efforts. She does not mistake solitude for emptiness: returning to her empty house, she thinks about the work she has and how she might consider letting rooms to students, begins to plan her summer holiday, and considers the possibility of attending other learned conferences.

Wallace ended by talking about *A Few Green Leaves*, reminding us that it was written in the late 1970s, thirty years after *Excellent Women*. Society has changed and Emma is a single woman, not a spinster. She has had a professional career as an anthropologist, rather than devoting her life to good works in her parish. But, oddly, Wallace believes that Emma is less confident than Pym's earlier heroines. For example, Emma is annoyed when Graham wants to walk her home through the woods just because she is a woman, and irritated that people in the village may notice that she is taking a casserole through the woods to him. Rather than subverting society's assumptions, Emma seems to be trying to meet them. Wallace also notes that Emma has a mother, which is rare in Pym's novels. Beatrix is traditional enough to tell Emma to wear something nice. Wallace noted, "It's as though Emma is not intended to be as complete an adult." She wonders whether this is because the roles of the sexes were in flux at the time or because Pym is just reflecting on the awkwardness of a new social order. "Or is it a comment on a substantive change in people – that the collective has overtaken the individual?" Like all of us, Wallace ended on a wistful note, wishing that Pym could have kept writing through the 1980s and '90s, so that we could have seen how her women developed.

Following Catherine's talk we adjourned for a few hours to visit the local bookstores and rest, but met again for dinner and a viewing of "Tea With Miss Pym" and "Miss Pym's Day Out." Newcomers were delighted to see Barbara Pym, her sister, and guests in the garden at Finstock, while those of us who have seen it many times were happy to see the films again. Each time you come away with one more detail and a clearer picture of who Barbara Pym was.

Charlotte M. Yonge's Influence

On Sunday morning, we listened to Barbara Dunlap, professor emerita and retired head of the Archives and Special Collections at the Library of the City College of the City University of New York, who entitled her talk "Reading Charlotte M. Yonge into the novels of Barbara Pym." Dunlap has written many articles on Yonge, who was associated with the Tractarian or Oxford Movement, and a student of John Keble. Yonge wrote or edited more than 200 books between 1847 and her death in 1901, including histories and historical novels, biographies, tales of village life, and volumes on religious instruction. However, she is primarily known for her domestic novels. Also, like Pym, Yonge was a journal editor and had a serious need to write in order to be happy.

Barbara Pym was an enthusiastic reader of Yonge, and to Dunlap, "Pym's work is steeped in the work of the older novelist, and knowledge of Yonge's novels adds another layer of enjoyment in our reading of Pym's complex fictions." Pym was also interested in the Oxford Movement, and maintained her "Anglo-Catholic Diary" from the mid-1930s into the 1970s, in which she chronicled events connected with the movement and its influence.

Dunlap noted that the most sympathetic protagonists of both novelists are immersed in English literature and the Anglican church, and devalue worldly success. Although they are also characterized by spiritual humility, this does not stop them from making acute observations of the world around them. Yonge's domestic fiction often deals with young people emerging into adulthood, and their efforts to chart their way through life's problems. While the most admirable characters are shaped by their religious life, there is not much discussion of belief, which is in keeping with the Tractarian ethos. Nevertheless, Yonge's households are not "oases of calm", and C.S. Lewis described the families in her novels as experiencing domestic life as an "arduous vocation."

Dunlap considered many elements in Yonge's novels and how they were refracted in those of Pym. As an example,

Barbara Dunlap

the contemplative dailiness that we find in *Some Tame Gazelle* and *Excellent Women* is also in Yonge's *The Pillars of the House*, described by Pym as "very churchy" and offering "much enjoyment and richness." In the *Daisy Chain*, one of Pym's favorite Yonge novels, we are introduced to Ethel May, a delightful character who is described by Pym as the "real heroine of the book." Ethel has trouble maintaining the appearance befitting a Victorian lady, and with her skirts and hair awry, she is always rushing through her tasks, both domestic and intellectual. She is witty, modest, and scholarly.

Regarding her most popular novel, *The Heir of Redclyffe*, Yonge noted that the basic impulse of the story was her conscious effort to bring out two characters – the essentially contrite (the hero, Guy Morville) and the essentially self-satisfied (Guy's cousin, Philip Morville). In many ways, Pym does this also, with the contriteness of Belinda Bede, Mildred Lathbury, and Dulcie Mainwaring contrasting with the self-satisfaction of Harriet Bede, Helena Napier, and Viola Dace.

In *A Few Green Leaves* we find an overt reference to Yonge. The bookshelves in Beatrix Howick's cottage are lined with Yonge's books, and a window overlooks the main street of the village – though little of interest can be seen. Such a window is important in two of Yonge's novels, as the May and Underwood families enjoy the amusement of looking out onto the High Street in the county towns where they live. When Beatrix thinks about why she remained unmarried after her husband died, perhaps she had in mind the attractive young widows in Yonge's novels who "exploit their attractiveness with expensive mourning costumes as a showcase for their 'interesting' grief and attract second husbands."

In *Quartet in Autumn*, Letty reflects on the fact that an unmarried aging female is not of interest to fiction writers. Such characters were also not interesting to Victorian novelists. Here, Yonge was an exception. She drew portraits of adult unmarried women as well as of marriageable girls. Dunlap believes Ethel May could be imagined as anticipating characters such as Mildred Lathbury, who is single, unattached, and trying to make a life for herself. Mildred, like Ethel, has no confidante and sees no romantic life of her own, viewing herself as a useful spinster to some of the men around her. This and other novels of Charlotte Yonge explore the loneliness of the single woman, who cannot expect to remain "first" with anyone.

The domineering older woman who likes to control the young appears in Yonge's novels and is later refracted in such characters as Pym's Miss Doggett. For example, in *The Pillars of the House*, four unmarried sisters – who are also Pymian in their genteel impoverishment – are appalled when one of the novel's heroines decides to maintain her post as a governess even though her family has regained their estate. When she tells the Misses Hepburn that she would rather maintain herself than be a burden on the encumbered estate, the eldest sister replies, "very little suffices single women who have broken with the world."

Dunlap noted that *A Glass of Blessings* mines the richness that Pym found in *The Pillars of the House*. However, Pym's Wilmet Forsyth is the mirror-opposite of Yonge's Wilmet Underwood, who works hard to keep her brothers and sisters together after her parents' death, teaches school, manages the household with admirable thrift, and provides motherly affection to her younger siblings. Her beauty is only a burden to her, and she cannot imagine that any man will ever fall in love with her. By contrast, Wilmet Forsyth is idle and extravagant, and exhibits a trait that Yonge described as undesirable: that of "receiving homage and exciting admiration ... always imagining love, either to her or from herself." Essentially, Pym has Wilmet Forsyth's story invert that of Wilmet Underwood, as Yonge's Wilmet cannot believe it when the delightful John Harwood falls in love with her. As Dunlap notes, Wilmet Underwood lives the experiences that Pym's Wilmet Forsyth must only imagine.

Both Pym and Yonge wove their concerns as churchwomen into their novels. The Oxford Movement brought the reintroduction of sisterhoods into the English church, the idealization of celibacy for priests, particularly for those attached to city missions, and a greater emphasis on ritual. These notions are reflected in various ways in Pym's novels. As an example, Mary Beamish asks Wilmet whether she thinks it's wrong for priests to marry, then proceeds to contemplate joining a sisterhood herself. Mary is Tractarian in many ways, with her devotion to her mother and her disciplined religious life. Julian Mallory seems to adhere to Tractarian ideals as well by being a devoted, celibate (in spite of Mrs. Gray's efforts) priest in a "tough" district of Pimlico. As for rituals, Mildred tells us that her parents would not have approved of her attending a "high" church, and can imagine her mother whispering "incense" with fright. Regarding ornamentation of the service, Father Gelibrand is believed to have gone too far in observing "so-called obligations", and the ritualist Father Tulliver at Rhoda Wellcome and Mabel Swan's church has unknowingly set up a competition between the sisters, who try to outdo each other in observing feasts and fasts.

Dunlap noted also how tea scenes advance both writers' stories, with Pym using them to a particularly dramatic effect in *Jane and Prudence* and *Excellent Women*. The novels of both writers feature comic teas and teas of consolation, with a major character in Yonge's *Heir of Redclyffe* "giving his cup to be filled again and again and wondering why one person's tea should taste so unlike another's."

Dunlap ended by noting that Pym found Yonge's novels "congenial to her own temper and interest." Pym wove into her books many of the same concerns that Yonge had, but treated them from her own unique perspective.

Closing Moments

Following the last of our coffee breaks – as one member told Ellen Miller, "Pymians know the importance of the coffee urn and its attendant pleasures"– Anthony Kaufman, Professor of English, University of Illinois, led a roundtable

Anthony Kaufman

discussion with speakers and participants. Topics touched on included views of Mildred Lathbury and her relationship with Everard Bone, and the various "Johns" who play a role in Pym's work: John Milton; John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester; and John Donne.

We then watched three video excerpts from the 1993 Barbara Pym Literary Weekend in Oxford, which became the Barbara Pym Society in 1995, with presentations by Barbara Everett, Robert Smith, and Hilary Pym Walton. Hazel Holt and Henry Harvey also made appearances, and it was very special to end our conference with their words and faces fresh in our memory. We enjoyed a Pymian moment when someone at the Oxford conference in a flowered print dress unintentionally blocked the camera's view.

Following the conference, we gave heartfelt thanks to Ellen Miller for the wonderful job she did in organizing another superb conference – one that mixes the academic side and the reader's side, and abounds in intellectual and social pleasures. Participants had gained a new understanding of the novels and the subtle differences in the way Pym describes people. While we had begun the conference thinking of Robert Smith's words about the novels being "good books for bad days," we ended it with a greater understanding of the rich imaginary world Barbara Pym created, one that offers infinite possibilities for thought.

Report by Beverly Bell

Photographs by Sherrie Saint John

Beverly Bell

The Barbara Pym Society 2001-2

Chairman Kate Charles
Membership Secretary Eileen Roberts
Secretary Yvonne Cocking
Editor Hazel Bell

Committee
Deirdre Bryan-Brown; Bridget Guymer
Gabrielle Page; Maggie Parsons
Rita Phillips; Chris Ward

US Organizer Ellen Miller
email: ellen@ellenmiller.net

Society correspondence and queries to:
The Barbara Pym Society
The Development & Alumnae Office
St Hilda's College, Oxford, OX4 1DY
tel. 01865 276867; fax 01865 276820
email: eileen.roberts@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk

Editorial correspondence to:
Hazel Bell, 139 The Ryde
Hatfield, Herts AL9 5DP
tel. 01707 265201; fax 01707 273601
email HKBELL@dial.pipex.com

Pym **website address**:
www.spore.it/pym/home_english.htm

North American Pym website:
www.barbara-pym.org

Honorary life members:
Mrs Hilary Walton; Mrs Hazel Holt: Professor John Bayley
The Revd Prebendary Gerard Irvine; Professor Peter Lloyd; Miss Muriel Maby; James Runcie; Professor Robert Smith

Sonnet by Barbara Pym

We have retrieved from the Pym archives in the Bodleian Library the following poem written by the 25-year-old Barbara Pym, reprinted here by permission of Hazel Holt.

Sonnet written to a Dear Young Friend on the Third Day of December Nineteen Thirty Eight, it being the First Anniversary of our Meeting

My melancholy disembodied Fingers
Caress the Letters and the Faded Flowers.
My Gothick Spirit obstinately lingers
In long-forgotten Places, Haunts of ours,
Where we, who loved in a proctorial* way,
Did twine our Hands and for a Moment stay.
We were those lovers parted in the Spring
Who never met upon this Earth again,
Yet on the Last Day when the Dead shall rise
And Bones be clothed with Flesh, this dusty Thing,
Our Love that in so long a Sleep has lain,
Shall spring to Life in our new-fashioned Eyes.
Then shall Belgravia and North Oxford see
The Decorous Kiss of Immortality.

3rd December 1938

*Some versions have 'poetic'.

Oxford in the 1930s and early 1950s

Eileen Roberts

Barbara Pym came up to St Hilda's College in 1931; *Some Tame Gazelle* was written between 1934 and 1935, but was not published until 1950. This span of almost twenty years saw the world at war, incredible social change, new inventions and medical discoveries; it seems appropriate to look at the differences between the 1930s and 1950.

In my edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the chronological summary for 1934 reports the 'Night of the Long Knives' in Germany, that the Stalin purges began in Russia; under 'Important Literature': Henry Miller' s *Tropic of Cancer* and Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. Franklin D. Roosevelt was President of the United States, and the world was deep in the Depression, but the Marx brothers were to be seen in *A Night at the Opera*. The Labour Party leader, Ramsey Macdonald was Prime Minister, leading a Coalition Government, but by 1935 it was the turn of the Conservative leader, Stanley Baldwin to lead the country. King George V was in poor health and would die in January 1936, bringing an era to an end. He had been much loved by his people – if not by his children - a kind man, very concerned about his country, who had taken his responsibilities very seriously – unlike the King who succeeded him.

In Oxford in 1934 there were many different facets to life. For its citizens life was in many ways much better than in most parts of the country. William Morris (who was created Lord Nuffield in 1938) had produced the prototype of his first car in 1912 and had moved from his small premises (the Morris Garage) in Longwall Street to the former Military Training College in Cowley, employing 300 men. By 1938 this had risen to 10,000. His success had also attracted other industries, including the 'Pressed Steel Company' (supplying car bodies) which actually soon outgrew Morris Motors. Oxford was classed as a very prosperous town and its population grew rapidly. This was John Betjeman's 'Motopolis'.

Some 8,000 new houses were built, mostly by private developers, as the former villages around Oxford were absorbed. Oxford 'workers' moved out to Cowley to join Morris, attracted by high wages, and migrant families from Wales

Eileen Roberts

and Scotland moved in. More housing was needed for this new population, and Oxford City council had to build large estates to house them. One of these was Cutteslow, an area around the junction of the Banbury Road and the A40. In 1933 the council sold twenty-two acres of land for the erection of a private estate, but it was right next to the new Cutteslow council estate. This resulted in one of the most regrettable incidents in Oxford's comparatively recent past.

The private company maintained that there had been a 'gentleman's agreement that only respectable tenants would be housed on the council estate, and were outraged when the council decided to house twenty-eight slum-clearance families there. The company immediately built two large brick walls to divide the properties, topped with metal spikes. Apart from the 'apartheid', as a result the council tenants had to detour almost a mile to reach their nearest school. The council reacted by tearing down the wall, the company by rebuilding it – over and over again. The matter went to the High Court and the judge found in favour of the private company. In the end the council had to buy the site on which the nine-inch-wide wall stood, for half a million pounds, and the wall only finally came down on 9 March 1959, after almost twenty-five years.

Oxford shops appear in many of the Pym novels. 'Elliston & Cavell' and Grimbly Hughes of Cornmarket street were the main stores in the thirties, but both were taken over in the fifties. However, Frank & Jane Cooper on the High and their famous marmalade survived well into the nineties.

Oxford University Press was of course well established and 1933 saw the completion of Volume VIII of the *New English Dictionary*.

But what of the other Oxford – Academe? Barbara's diaries do not mention any of the above activities, and I am sure this would have been true of most of Oxford's students. The split between the 'Town' and 'Gown' truly did exist (and still does?).

Before we examine the other Oxford, one must talk a little more of William Morris, for he bridged both worlds. A hard taskmaster, he was not liked by his workers, but in fact became one of Oxford's greatest benefactors. Originally dreaming of becoming a surgeon, he gave millions to Oxford for medical research. He set up the Nuffield Foundation (10 million pounds) for social welfare and caring for old people, founded the Nuffield Institute for Medical Research in 1936, and rescued the old Wingfield Hospital which is now the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre.

The colleges also benefited from his generosity, money being given to St Peters, Worcester and Pembroke, and finally for the creation of Nuffield College. He bought the Radcliffe Observatory and gave it to the University. An interesting connection exists between two of these Colleges and the Oxford Canal which up until this time had been a most important part in Oxford's trading. Two of the Canal company's headquarters – the Canal House and Wyaston House – built in the 18th century are now respectively the entrance and the Master's lodgings of St Peters College. The beautiful rectangular pond in Nuffield College's grounds is of course the New Road Coal Wharf site.

Now turning to the University: while recognizing the buildings we would probably not recognize the academic life. Tutors taught, the Oxford tutorial education was, as now, beyond par; but little research was done in the humanities and most emphasis seemed to be on getting students through finals. I am told on very good authority that in Maths it was fairly common for good undergraduates with a flair for getting through schools to be appointed as tutors purely to teach the next

generation how to get through their exams.

At St Hilda's a student recorded in her diary:

> To tea with Miss Rooke who in actual fact is sensible enough, but for some reason or other likes to be thought of as wildly eccentric, rather in the style of the Red Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*. I'm quite sure she deliberately puts it on. For example on this occasion she pretended to be meeting me for the very first time and during most of the tea party addressed her remarks to us obliquely by carrying out an animated conversation with James, her Cairn terrier. Needless to say, James' observations (as interpreted by her) put him in the front rank as a raconteur – in fact we could only get a word in edgeways when Miss Rooke paused for breath or bodily refreshment.

Another recorded her monthly spending at £5 2s 7d, the dearest item being 'Theatres and Cinemas' at 10s 10d [54p today].

Two famous Oxonians recorded their impressions of Oxford in Ann Thwaite's *My Oxford* (Robson, London 1977). Jo Grimmond came up in1931 to Balliol.

> I approached the sacred city to take a scholarship examination ... Everything about Oxford appeared new, interesting and unexpected. I remember the peculiar mixture of the couple of days or so I spent at Balliol: the austerity of the rooms with the greenish walls and iron bedsteads and, on the other hand, the extreme agreeableness of 'Sligger' Urquhart's hospitality. F F Urquhart, the first Roman Catholic to be made a Fellow since the Reformation, was then still the Dean.... My first impressions of Balliol were not mistaken, for it remained a curious mixture. Its discomforts were typical. The only baths were a steaming inferno presided over by a one-armed man of great charm when one got to know him, but at first sight reminiscent of one of the keepers of the Underworld. These baths were some hundred yards across country; so were the lavatories. The staircases were stone and perpendicular. As an ingenious torment the lights would stay on for only a short time. I am told that a distinguished German refugee of advanced age was frequently found in pitch darkness halfway up the stairs waiting for someone at the bottom to switch the light on again.
>
> On the other hand, there was the blissful sense of freedom – the joy of having one's own rooms: two rooms, not one; and there was also the hospitality of the dons who lived in College – again at the head of these was 'Sligger'. By that time he was an old man and ill, but his rooms were still open when he was in College to almost anyone who wished to call.

And from Angus Wilson, who came up to Merton in 1932:

> Through the enmeshment of family trustees and unpaid family debts to my mother, the sum that I finally received from my mother's will was a great deal smaller than she had reason to think she had left me; but it was enough to give me £300 a year at Oxford on top of my tuition fees, my College payments and my expenses in vacations. It was as my second brother, a headmaster of a preparatory school, who would dearly have loved to have been at Oxford himself, quite rightly said, a good income ... £300 a year for term-time pleasures alone ... allowed me to live in a way almost deserving the popular description "like a lord". Perhaps I should briefly describe this manner of living, since it formed the rather pleasurable material basis of my three years at Oxford. Some part of it was derived from what years of living with my father had taught me was "a good life". This principally consisted of eating out at restaurants and having "good food" as often as possible. I think I ate in College only in the first two weeks of those three years – and that out of fear of the consequences of not doing so ... In fact I *was* acting against College regulations by not fulfilling a certain number of dinners in hall; but, as I never signed off, I paid in full for dinners every night of my three years and consumed none of them, so the College authorities were the richer by some hundreds of dinners not eaten but paid for ... In any case the food, by the standards my father had given me from the Café Royal and the Trocadero, was vile, worse than that served at my brother's prep school, which was the nadir of my father's scale of feeding. After the first three weeks, I ate out in restaurants ... soon found that the best food was at the George – it served that sort of good semi-French cuisine that still existed in the best English provincial restaurants before the war ... I ate out every evening, elaborately consuming *Sole Mornay* and *Meringue Chantilly* with a book propped up against the vase of flowers that ornamented the table. I could not by any means regularly afford the George and ate at assorted restaurants, cafés and "ladies" tea rooms ... At restaurants we drank normally gin and tonic; and, in our rooms, a great deal of dry sherry (a peculiarly disgusting habit I think now). On occasions of evening celebrations and parties we also drank, as I remember, port and liqueurs, especially cointreau. This curiosity becomes explicable when I reveal that the cocktail for smart parties was a White Lady (gin and cointreau in suitable proportions) ... On top of this rather extravagant expense upon food, I smoked regularly about thirty-five to forty cigarettes a day, very costly small flat Turkish cigarettes called Melachrino which I carried about with me in tins of a hundred.

He goes on to talk about clothes, pastimes, etc., but says very little about studying! When one realises that a good wage for a working man then was thirty shillings a week (£6 a month, £72 a year) one does not find it difficult to understand the huge chasm between 'Town' and 'Gown'.

By 1950 I am sure there were still the rich students, but for most of Britain rationing was still in place, housing was scarce and for both 'Town and Gown' these were hard times. For the University, the attitude to teaching and research had completely changed. The Government was now providing full funding, and demanded research and the start of the publish-or-die system we know so well today.

Barbara might well have been jealous of her successors at St Hilda's. For those who were reading English it was a 'golden age': the age of C. S. Lewis, Lord David Cecil from whom they had tutorials and lectures, and of J. R. R. Tolkien. (Tolkien in fact spanned both ages, much as Barbara had done – *The Hobbit* was published in 1937 and *The Lord of the Rings* 1954-5).

1950 saw the Labour party retake the country, only to be ousted by the Conservatives led by Churchill a year later. 1950 saw the start of the Korean War which was to last until 1953, and in 1951 Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* were published – a long way from the world of Belinda and Harriet Bede.

But by 1953 things were beginning to look up – it was the start of the second Elizabethan era – Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile on 6 May, Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norkay conquered Mount Everest the day before the Coronation, and the first kidney transplant was performed.

Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Barbara Pym Society, St. Hilda's, Oxford University, 2 September, 2001

Some Tame Gazelle: a brief history

Yvonne Cocking

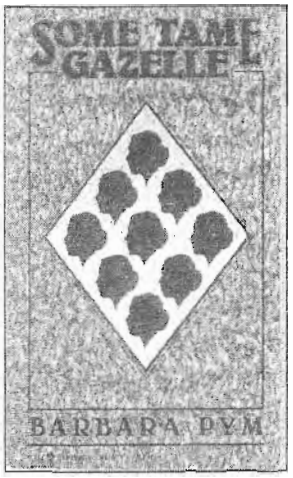
During the open discussion of *Some Tame Gazelle* at last year's conference, Barbara Everett and Hilary Walton discussed the extent to which the novel had been revised after the first draft of 1934, and agreed that the change consisted mainly in the dropping of some extra characters and many quotations. I thought it would be interesting to examine the changes a little more closely.

The recorded history of *Some Tame Gazelle* begins on 1st September 1934, when Barbara Pym wrote in her diary

> Some time in July I began writing a story about Hilary and me as spinsters of fifty-ish. Henry, Jock and all of us appeared in it. I sent it to them and they liked it very much. So I am going on with it and one day it may become a book. It is very interesting in more ways than one. It is of course "for Henry", and in it I seem able to say what I cannot in the ordinary course of events. Barbara keeps looking back to her youth, and so I have an excuse for revealing some of my present feelings about Henry. No change has been wrought in them, as far as I can see. He still remains the only person.

In this early draft, Barbara made no attempt to disguise her characters but used their real names, Barbara and Hilary of course, Henry Harvey (the Archdeacon), Robert 'Jock' Liddell (Dr. Parnell), John Barnicot* (John Akenside), Honor Tracy (Hester Carey), Alison West-Watson (Agatha), Count Robert Weiss (Count Piozzi) and so on. By November the characters had received their fictional names and the novel was completed and typed.

> Mon 11 Nov Armistice Day.
>
> My novel came back from being typed ...They seem to have done it well and ...it looks very nice. I may call it "*Some Tame Gazelle*". "*As Some Sad Turtle*" is also another possibility ...I spent some time going through the novel in the evening and did about 13 chapters. I am alternately cheerful and depressed about it.
>
> After a few corrections, it was bound.



and started its round of the publishers, Chatto & Windus first.

> Friday, 6th December
>
> I forgot to say that yesterday my novel was rejected by Chatto, but they wrote me a very nice letter. They think it's too long and my character drawing too detatched, but I have a style which is a pleasure to read etc. I wasn't so depressed as I though I'd be and even looked forward to cutting and improving it.

It was indeed a very encouraging letter for an untried novelist to receive, and I think it worth reproducing almost in its entirety:

> Dear Miss Pym
>
> I have read "Some Tame Gazelle" and have talked it over with one of our readers. I am sorry to say that we both feel that we could not launch it successfully. On a novel of that length we should have to sell about 1500 copies to recover our outlay, and when I tell you that many a first novel nowadays sells less than 500 you will appreciate our fears.
>
> On the other hand I should like you to know that we both thought the novel to be something a good deal more than promising. It showed a close observance of character and a marked ability in portraying it. Also you have an easy and lucid literary style which is a pleasure to read.
>
> I wonder if you would like me to tell you what I think to be the shortcomings of your novel. I always do so with the utmost diffidence, for a publisher is haunted by the ghosts of past errors of judgment ... one can only go on trying to analyse what people read and why they read it ...
>
> My own feeling is that your novel would not create much talk. Somehow I can't hear people saying, "My dear, you simply *must* read *Some Tame Gazelle*!" I think it would have proved a more appealing book if you had declared your hand a little more openly and had communicated to your readers more emotion of your own. For instance, I felt I should have enjoyed your two maiden ladies more if you had written about them more tenderly, or on the other hand more maliciously. I should have liked to have shared your pity for them or your laughter at them. In other words, I wish you had been much less detached in the creation of all your characters. Not that detachment is a literary failing; indeed it can often be a positive virtue. But I think that this novel with its minimum of plot and its maximum of dialogue would have proved more successful if the characters had emerged in a more sympathetic light, or alternatively if they and their conversation had appeared more absurd.
>
> ... please don't be discouraged by a first reject ... But if you don't have the luck to strike another publisher with more courage and sense than I am showing, do go on writing. There is writing in you. And, if you can, give me another chance on a future work. I am truly grateful for the first sight of *Some Tame Gazelle*.

There were further rejections by Gollancz, Macmillan, Methuen and others, but Jonathan Cape expressed some interest provided that certain alterations were made.

> Dear Madam,
>
> I have been very interested in reading your SOME TAME GAZELLE. Personally I have enjoyed it, but it is likely that it may just misfire and fail to attract any large body of readers...
>
> I am sending the MS back to you ... but I shall be glad to see it again if you will spend a little time over it in giving attention to the following suggestions ...

These included choice of place and personal names, relationships between certain characters, the verification of quotations, and the profusion of 'underlines'.

He ended 'If you will given consideration to these minor criticisms, I shall be pleased to see the MS again, and I think

---

* In my paper given at the 2001 Conference (*Green Leaves*, 7 (2) Nov 2001) I was mistaken in writing that John Barnicot was the model for Nicholas Parnell

that I may be able then to offer to publish it.'

Barbara made the alterations, but was very disappointed when Cape changed his mind. She put the novel aside and concentrated on other writing.

The 1934 version in the Bodleian Library is bound in two volumes, described as 'a typescript fair copy of early draft of *Some Tame Gazelle*, begun July 1934 ... 604 leaves foliated in one sequence'.

The main characters in this version of the novel were Belinda and Harriet Bede: Archdeacon Henry and Mrs Agatha Hoccleve; their son the Curate (his forenames are disclosed only towards the end of the book!); Dr Nicholas Parnell and his musician brother Harrison; Hester Carey, Belinda's flamboyant, much travelled, left-leaning friend; Mr Mold, Parnell's assistant; Count Ricardo Piozzi; and Theodore Grote, the Bishop of Niihau and Kahulaui in Hawaii.

The Curate, Henry Langbaine Orm Hoccleve (Henry after his father, Langbaine – the name of a late 17th century writer about whom the Archdeacon 'wrote a very scholarly book', Orm – an abbreviation of The Ormulum, a middle English text 'about which Mrs Hoccleve had written a dull but scholarly book') was beloved of his mother, but somewhat despised by his father, who called him '...a *hopelessly* inefficient creature...his sermons are *atrocious*, and yet he seems popular in the parish. I don't know how people manage to sink so completely to his level'. In fact, his down to earth sermons such as the one about the Loaves and Fishes were enjoyed by the congregation much more than the Archdeacon's 'Judgment Day' diatribe. No wonder the Curate lived in lodgings rather than at home! In this version, he is in love with a charming young girl who is up at Oxford reading English (with special reference to *The Owl and the Nightingale*). 'I'm hoping to be able to help her with some of my notes on *The Ormulum* and *Sawles Warde*...' says Agatha. Belinda, however, tells Harriet that she is 'a quiet little thing. Dark and slim, rather pale, quite intelligent. I don't think there's really very much to say about her. Nicely dressed, but not at all made up like we used to be when we were young girls.'

In her notes of August 1945 for a revised version of the novel, Barbara decided that the curate need not be the Hoccleves' son, and toyed with the idea of naming him Aelfred Willow before deciding on Edgar Donne.

Harrison Parnell, who was in the village to play in the concert which followed the garden party at the vicarage was suspected of a *tendresse* for Agatha, whom he had known when they were younger, and was therefore loathed by Henry. He was later disposed of as 'an unnecessary red herring'.

Hester Carey is an interesting creation. We know little of her background, but she evidently had the means to travel quite extensively in Europe, and like many other travellers she adopted an eccentrically careless style of dress and behaviour, which Belinda secretly envied. Agatha disliked Miss Carey who was not popular in the village either.

> She was so unconventional and gave people the uneasy feeling that she knew all about their affairs and made fun of them. And then there were her foreigners. She was in the habit of inviting them to stay in her house for long periods at a time. Just now she had a Russian with her, a *male* Russian...there was something about Russia that wasn't quite *normal*. All that dreadful Communism, for instance. But Belinda would hear nothing against her friend and admired her fine bohemianism, even if she sometimes thought that dear Hester went *a little too far*.

In spite of this, the curate asked Belinda if she would persuade Miss Carey to address the Women's Institute.

> "I'm sure they would be interested to hear about her experiences in Russia and Finland. She has travelled to so many fascinating places." Belinda smiled. The idea of Hester addressing the Women's Institute amused her. One never knew what dear Hester might say to them. And then her peculiar Bohemian appearance would hardly set them a good example of tidiness, for Belinda had to admit that her friend Miss Carey often looked rather a mess. Nevertheless, the Bede sisters really did feel that Hester could usefully contribute to the life of the village.
>
> Harriet thought it would be so delightful if the Mothers' Union could be taught weaving on hand looms. It would be such an economy if they could weave the materials for their own and their children's clothes. And when they were more skilled in the craft they might even weave the flannels and tweeds for their husbands' coats and trousers. Hester must teach them to do it. Belinda thought that it would be nice if she could be made to take some more active part in the work of the parish, and ... as the Curate had suggested, the Women's Institute would be very interested to hear of her experiences in Russia and Finland. A series of nice little talks might be arranged. "A Russian washing day". "Some Finnish sandwich fillings". Belinda was full of ideas.

Hester had been loved by their friend John Akenside, an expert on Central European affairs and author of a posthumous Hungarian Reader and Grammar. Belinda

> could not help feeling that although he had been shot in a revolution in Czechoslovakia some ten years ago, Hester's refusal had really killed him ... Surely dear Hester ought to become a little sad when his name was mentioned ...Belinda would hastily remind herself and anyone else who accused dear Hester of having no finer feelings that she had really loved nobody after poor John's death with the exception of one or two Spaniards, a Russian, and perhaps that starving Hungarian Count to whom she had given shelter the winter before last ...[Hester] maintained that love never killed anyone nor were the effects of unrequited love in any way lasting ... She affirmed that John Akenside's melancholy had been caused entirely by his stomach or his liver... Belinda thought her almost cruel in the casual way she spoke of broken hearts.

In spite of the interesting possibilities afforded by this strong personality, Barbara decided eventually to tone down Hester Carey and make her into Edith Liversidge.

In his letter of 6th August 1936, Jonathan Cape had suggested to Barbara that Piozzi be renamed 'because of the association in the minds of some readers with Mrs Thrale's Piozzi'. She settled on Bianco, perhaps a linguistic play on the name of the character's model, Count Roberto Weiss.

Theodore Grote was retained of course. In the 1945 revision, he is still a Hawaiian Bishop, but, no doubt influenced later by her association with the International African Institute, he ended up as Bishop of Mbawawa. His lantern slide lecture which began 'The climate of Hawaii is temperate and the soil is very fertile...' was not much changed in the final version. His slides showed palm trees and handsome natives clad in flowers, for whom he asked the audience for donations of clothing, but Belinda thought that the exiled Nazis in Africa were a far worthier cause. He also played the ukulele, blew into a large shell, and sang a few verses of *Aloha Oe* in a high-pitched voice. The early Grote found neither Miss Bede to his liking. He decided that 'Harriet was nothing more nor less than a designing spinster', and that 'Belinda was no better...'. Feeling that he was being trapped, he left hurriedly after

tea with Harriet ,'almost as if he were afraid of me', she thought.

A very interesting theme throughout the first version was that of the plight of the Nazis at the time in which the novel was set. Barbara, as Belinda, recounted some of her own experiences of several visits to Germany as a student. Belinda had visited the Rhineland when she was twenty-one. There she had met Helmut and his friend Kurt, two young members of the Nazi party. Like many others in the early thirties, she found much to admire in National Socialism. She was a little in love with Helmut and was therefore the more disposed to admire the political party to which he belonged. '...the Nazis were rather special people. Helmut had been a Nazi'. When she wore the little swastika brooch he had given her 'he had always been so pleased at this sign of her presumable sympathy with the National Socialist Party.' She herself 'had always rejoiced in being blond and Aryan'.

Since Barbara had set the novel thirty years into the future, she could only speculate on the fate of the Nazis.

> After the terrible revolution of the 1950s ... all the dear Nazis [were] in exile in Africa ...What a good thing Belinda had taken her dear mother's advice and had not become engaged to Helmut! Otherwise she would probably have been in Africa now, and one heard such *dreadful* things...'

These refugees were apparently still in need of charitable donations from well wishers, and Belinda enthusiastically knitted garments and raised funds for them.

> 'It is a subject very near to my heart', she sighed. 'Yes,' agreed the curate. 'We must do all we can to help them. Of course, I suppose everyone realised that Hitler couldn't last for ever. He was a powerful personality, but after he went there was really nobody to lead them...
>
> Harriet was far less enthusiastic. 'Of course I'm sorry for these Nazis, but I do so dislike having to knit things for them'...She suggested, rather condescendingly Belinda thought, that the remains of the good fare left over from the garden party might be sent to the Nazis in Africa. Belinda had pointed out the impracticability of this idea. Obviously everything would be stale and even mouldy long before it reached them. But Harriet had not seemed to consider this very important. 'They should be grateful to get anything' she had said...Poor Helmut having to live on the several weeks old fragments of Henry's tea ...

In view of actual events, it is probably just as well that the novel was not published in the 1930s. Barbara very soon lost any sympathy for the German regime of the time, as we know from her wartime diary entries, and her enthusiastic service in several Government departments before joining the WRNS. She actually voted Labour in the 1945 general election.

Barbara started a notebook in August 1945. On the signed title page she wrote 'Notes for Some Tame Gazelle, 2nd version. Go over all the characters and make them worse – as Proust did. Especially the Archdeacon (and Dr. Parnell)'.

She jotted down some of her ideas for achieving this:

- Have an interesting first sentence. [She improved on her original opening sentences by advancing the curate's combinations to pride of place!]

- More plot, less quotation, more household detail, characters a little stronger and some (ie Miss Carey) less exaggerated.

- Harriet might become engaged to Mr Mold...and then find out he has a young lady in Oxford [but NO written above this.]

– Curate's wedding at the end – his bride some years older than himself. He has been caught. The Archdeacon draws a parallel with himself. Perhaps she is a niece of Agatha, that is how it comes about that the wedding is in the village.

– Can the Bishop propose to Belinda?

– Make Agatha subtly nagging. Perhaps Belinda should be a little less vague and sentimental, more observant, sharper.

– Make Hester Carey into Edith Liversidge.

– Some more characters - Edith Liversidge and her friend Miss Moberly, to gossip about Harriet. Edith is splendid. Has made a home for a poor relative – a decayed gentlewoman. Edith is certainly not decayed, and sometimes appears to be hardly a gentlewoman, Belinda thinks.

– The little sewing woman Miss Prior, a kind of Agnes (Edith) Liversidge, or perhaps even a decayed gentlewoman, very touchy and easily offended. Belinda would give her the best of the chops and there must be cake for tea. Make a chapter begin with this.

- Blackening of the characters. The Archdeacon. Spiteful and jealous about the curate because people prefer his homely, conventional sermons. 'It will be better for him to go to Oxford, where once again he will sink into obscurity, or even the mission field.'

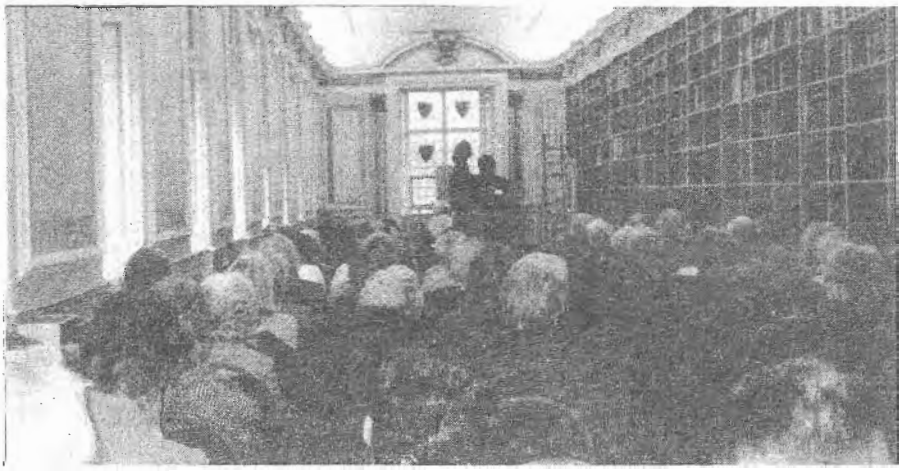
Encouraged by Jock Liddell, Barbara worked hard on the revision. 'The new version was more tightly constructed, with all the extraneous Germans and Finns pared away, as Jock had suggested. The observation was more acute and the tone more steadily ironic – Belinda's view of the Archdeacon, though still loving was more clear-sighted and amused. Barbara was fortunate that {Some Tame Gazelle} had not dated too much. Although the war had changed the English social scene pretty radically, enough remained of pre-war life, especially in the provinces and countryside, to make a novel set in the late 1930s perfectly acceptable'. [1]

Barbara submitted the revised novel, now only 303 typed pages in length, to Jonathan Cape early in 1947. On 29th March he replied

> Dear Miss Pym
>
> I have read with interest and pleasure the revised version of SOME TAME GAZELLE. I won't say that I remember the MS in its original form, but as I read the new version I heard an echo or two.
>
> I am willing to publish your novel..."

At last, *Some Tame Gazelle*, so long in its preparation, saw the light of day.

1. Hazel Holt. *A lot to ask*. London: Macmillan, 1990, p.145



The Wren Library, Lincoln Cathedral (see next page)

A Barbara Pym Day at Lincoln Cathedral's Library

The Annual General Meeting weekend at St Hilda's in September 2001 closed with the usual announcements regarding the following year's meetings, but we also learned we could look forward to an additional treat. This was not to be an official society event but a bold idea from a speaker who had given us such pleasure at the A.G.M in 2000. Dr Nicholas Bennett and his wife, Carol, subsequently sent out an appropriately leaf-green coloured leaflet headed "Knitting Socks for the Curate". This gave a few vital facts about Barbara Pym and pointed out that "libraries and the Church of England provide two recurring backgrounds in her writing and it is thus fitting that her work should be the theme of this first Literary Day in Lincoln Cathedral Library".

So it was that on a sunny but cold March weekend more than eighty people filled the elegant Wren Library. Although one might say that Excellent Women of a certain age predominated, it was good to see many male participants, quite a few couples and a gratifying number of young people. Six members of the Society's committee managed to attend, including the Chairman. With our enrolment confirmation we had been sent another green paper, a useful map of the centre of Lincoln pointing out "Some Pymmish places to lunch".

Best of all, though, was the news that we could book for a "very Pymmish bed and breakfast at Edward King House" which turned out to be the Old Palace, once home to the Bishop of Lincoln and conveniently placed just below the wall of the Cathedral. Several of us booked early on and were rewarded by the sort of English experience that Barbara seemed to cherish. The walls of the enormous building were thick, old wooden windows rattled in the nightlong winds coming at us across the Fens, the decor was spotlessly clean postwar "shabby genteel". My own room seemed chilly on arrival and at first glance the only form of heating appeared to be a sole electric radiator, a convector heater circa 1961, on which was a notice stating primly:

> This heater accepts only old 50p pieces. Please ask at reception.

While cherishing this advice and feeling that Miss Pym would also have reserved the information for future use in one of her notebooks, I was relieved to discover a modern radiator behind the dressing-table, which warmed up cosily when I boldly turned it on. The newest thing in the room was a comfortable modern bed, most welcome after the long drive up from the south, and as I drifted off to sleep I was mildly surprised to hear hymns being sung very close to me. The next morning I was asked at breakfast if I were one a party of singers also staying, as the house is used as a retreat house and conference centre by diverse groups. I rather wished I had been allowed to think I was hearing an angelic choir, though.

For the meeting we climbed a short, steep path up to the magnificent Cathedral which happened to be having an Open Weekend, so there were stalls being set up by all available doors and cloisters. In one of these we were greeted and served coffee, then as privileged Pym persons we climbed the private staircase to the famous Wren Library. It was an honour to sit in this long, panelled seventeenth-century room, lined with many ancient leather-bound books, to which access is normally impossible for the general public and only rarely granted to visiting scholars, we learned. All the more unusual, then, to have the room filled to capacity and shortly echoing with laughter and applause.

Dr Bennett, being an archivist as well as librarian, described the work of the Library in preserving valuable books and liaising with other organizations. He then gave his excellent talk on "Barbara Pym and Libraries", an expanded version of that he gave to the conference at St Hilda's in 2000 (reported in *Green Leaves* Vol. 6 No. 2. The depth of his knowledge of the novels and his humour were warmly received.

As we dispersed for lunch in the various nearby inns and cafés we once again ran the gauntlet of the unusually boisterous visitors, many with children, who filled the cathedral and its surrounding, giving a bustling, almost medieval, air to what is normally a quiet place. I think Barbara would have appreciated the stalls selling various homemade products and the delightfully named White Elephants without which no Church fund-raising is complete. (Full explanation of this phrase available from any committee member when next we meet.) There was also time to examine a small exhibition selected from the Library of books quoted or referred to by Barbara Pym which most of us would never have been able to see before. Yvonne Cocking ran a stall with society mugs, cards and leaflets for those wishing to join, but the main attraction was a large selection of the famously out-of-print Pym paperbacks most generously donated by Barbara's sister Hilary Walton, who, although unable to attend herself, had taken a keen interest in the arrangements. It was good to hear the delighted comments of people as they scooped up the books which most of us in the UK find so elusive. We are greatly indebted to Hilary for donating the books. The rate at which they sold should act as an encouragement to those pressing the publishers to reissue the novels over here.

In the afternoon Kate Charles spoke on "Barbara Pym and the Clergy". Kate's breadth of reading in all the novels and her ability to select quotes and references made her time whizz past, delighting those who knew the works and introducing many in the audience to Barbara's subtle wit.

The last event was a series of dramatised readings deftly given by members of the Cathedral Library staff, who were experienced in this potentially tricky field.

After closing remarks and many thanks and compliments all round it was obvious that the idea of introducing Barbara Pym to an audience in the Lincoln area had been a great success. Nicholas and Carol Bennett and their team had made the journey worth while for the half of the audience who had come from outside the local area, and created many new friends for Barbara's works. Dr Bennett said later that they were so encouraged by the way the day had gone that it would be followed by other such Literary Days in the future, and he would be pleased to hear suggestions.

Many of us were able to stay on for a magnificent Evensong in the Cathedral, a suitably High Anglican Service with clergy and choristers of all ages. One would like to think that Barbara would have enjoyed the day from start to finish.

Deirdre Bryan-Brown

Pym gleanings

In books

Alan Bennett, in *Writing Home* (Faber & Faber, 1997), referring to his dramatization of Kenneth Graham's *Wind in the Willows*, comments:

> The River Bank, despite Rat's protestations, can be a bit on the dull side. Newcomers there are eagerly gobbled up, as newcomers always have been in novels of provincial life, from Jane Austen to Barbara Pym.

From Susan Moody's novel, *Sacrifice Bid* (Headline, 1997):

> Clerical garb brought Cassie out in hives, a fact she attributed to her Vicarage years, when Uncle Sam had worn his dog-collar all the time and his cassock most of it. So it was a relief to see that the Reverend Hugh Nightingale was dressed in nothing more threatening than a dark suit and a silk tie patterned with nasturtiums. Observing the spill of tangerine and apricot, she reflected that this, thank heavens, was not the kind of cleric who had stepped from the pages of a Barbara Pym novel. Clergymen so often looked as though their underwear was hand-knitted.

Christina Schwarz writes in her notes to the reader concerning plot, in her suspense novel, *Drowning Ruth* (Ballantine, 2000), the following distinctly muted praise:

> Although I love to read books in which not very much happens—Barbara Pym, for instance, is one of my favorite authors—those don't seem to be the kind of books I can write.

In the press

Hermione Lee, in an article, 'Innocence abroad' in *Oxford Today*, Michaelmas issue 2001, refers to:

> ... those sudden, surprising bursts of American literary appetite for figures who look insuperably, proudly English: that odd wave of passion for the novels of Barbara Pym, or the marvellous moment when Penelope Fitzgerald, a few years before her death, became as admired in the States as in Britain for *The Blue Flower*.

The Times, 13 February 2002, in its section 2, featured Philip Larkin and his house in Hull – 'An ugly little house'. Two of his letters to Barbara Pym about the house are quoted – of 5 June 1974, and 14 August 1976.

Janet Laurence wrote in *The Author*, Spring 2002 ('Staying alive'):

> Luck can play a big part in an author's life ... Whatever happens, an author should keep on writing. Remember Barbara Pym. Dropped by her publisher after a series of delightful and well regarded novels, her name was picked out by two critics as their choice for the most underregarded modern author ... and new editions of all her backlist followed.

The Spectator, 6 April 2002, reprinted A.N. Wilson's account of a dinner-table conversation with the late Queen Mother in 1990, 'In her own words', including:

> Wilson: What do you read for pleasure, ma'am?
>
> Queen Elizabeth: I am very fond of detective stories. I like P.D. James, but it takes me about two months to finish one of her books. I really prefer Dorothy L. Sayers. Oh, and Barbara Pym I love.

André Bernard offered a 'Commonplace Book' page on Dining, in *The American Scholar*, Spring 2002. Seven passages quoted included Pym's description of lunch at the Golden Egg in *A Very Private Eye* for November 27, 1964 – 'Oh, the horror!'.

All the following are taken from book reviews in the *New York Times*:

November 17, 1996, by Michael Upchurch on *High Latitudes: A Romance* by James Buchan (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)

> *A Parish of Rich Women*, Mr Buchan's 1984 debut ... may sound like something out of Barbara Pym, but it is actually a nervy diptych, contrasting the self-destructive tendencies of a heroin-enamored English upper crust with those of a Beirut citizenry suffering through civil war.

January 19, 1997, by Michael Upchurch on *The destiny of Nathalie X and other stories* by William Boyd (Alfred A. Knopf)

> It isn't possible to discuss "the world of William Boyd" as you might that of Barbara Pym or Raymond Carver. ... Mr. Boyd's fictional landscapes are far too diverse in character to be classified as a single imaginative entity.

May 4, 1997, by Elizabeth Hanson on *Tropical classical essays* from several directions by Pico Iyer (Knopf)

> The lively book reviews range from Vikram Seth's novel *A Suitable Boy* to Barbara Pym's *No Fond Return of Love* to Paddington's *Storybook*.

*

Mildred felt his hot breath ...

This wonderful story, difficult to believe, appeared in the largest newspaper of Cleveland, Ohio, *The Plain Dealer*, on 9 November 2001.

*

Mildred Lathbury, a clergyman's daughter in post-war London, lives in the long-gone world of the respectable and never-married ladies of *Excellent Women*, Barbara Pym's acclaimed 1952 novel.

But for 64 pages in some editions, beginning after Page 136, readers meet Jason Dallin, the protagonist of *Sex Toys of the Gods*, Christian McLaughlin's 1998 novel about a flamboyantly gay Ohioan in Hollywood.

The misprinted, bawdy edition surfaced at a University of Akron course on modern British literature taught by Thomas Dukes.

"It would be like finding a love scene in the New Testament," he said.

In Chapter 15, Mildred stands outside the vicarage as Miss Enders and Miss Statham rush into church for Evensong, an Anglican evening prayer service. Mildred has just learned that the rector, who others had thought might marry her, is engaged to a widow.

The tension leads to a discussion with a friend about a sad poem.

But beginning on the next page, Jason Dallin, a store clerk at Video Xplosion in Hollywood, is dropping modern references and interacting with characters named Doll Babcock, Shirtless Muscle-Stud and Scary Bald Guy.

Jason has been hired by his idol, a has-been female pop star, and her husband, Hank, a hunk who later realizes – with a lesson from Jason in a swimming pool – that he is gay.

McLaughlin is co-creator of an MTV soap opera, "Spyder Games," and author of a 1994 novel, "Glamourpuss," about a gay actor.

Pym, who lived from 1913 to 1980, had moderate success in the 1950s and then slipped into obscurity. But in 1977, Pym resurfaced after writer Philip Larkin called her "the most underrated writer of the century."

Pym wrote six novels, including *Some Tame Gazelle* and *Quartet in Autumn*.

Plume, a trade paperback division of Penguin Putnam Inc., publishes both *Excellent Women* and *Sex Toys of the Gods*.

Plume produces 70 to 80 new titles each year and keeps 700 older titles in stock, said spokesman Brant Janeway.

"This is the first I've heard of this," he said. "It seems there was an error at the printer or the bindery."

Janeway offered to replace the students' hybrid editions. Four of Dukes' 15 students had the mis-assembled book, purchased as "used" at the University of Akron bookstore.

® 2001 *The Plain Dealer*. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission

Literary tour

Norma Munson, a Pym Society member living in Rockford, Illinois, achieved great publicity for the Society in an article that appeared in the *Rockford Register Star*, local newspaper of Rockford, Illinois, on 8 March, 2002.

The article, by Julie Snively, is headed: 'Trans-Atlantic friendship built on love of literature: Rockford woman connects with indexer and fellow fan of two British authors'. It recounts how Norma discovered the works of Barbara Pym and joined the Pym Society in 1999, quoting her as saying, "I enjoy Pym's sly satire, wry humor and her exquisite observations of the minute details of what appear to be ordinary lives".

On holiday in England in 1999, Norma, with her literature-loving friends Teen Haskell and Hazel Bell, made a two-week driving tour of southern England. To quote the *Rockford Register Star*:

> Highlights included visits to the graves of Pym and of Angela Thirkell.
>
> In Finstock, where Pym lived, they noticed a tiny village church, where some of the "excellent women" of the congregation were holding a "coffee morning."
>
> "Teen, Hazel and I stopped for a rummage sale/coffee morning, exactly as described in so many of Pym's novels," Norma said. "It was a highly serendipitous, off-the-beaten-track experience."
>
> Their journeys also took them to St Hilda's College at Oxford, where Pym studied.
>
> And they drove to Hay-on-Wye, a Welsh town full of used-book stores.
>
> "We bought so many books we had to have them shipped home," Norma said.
>
> Yes, the haul included Pyms and Thirkells. "I can't resist a used book by Pym or Thirkell," Norma said. "I feel they need to be given good homes."

The Barbara Pym Society website addresses are both given – perhaps they will bring in new members.

Radio

From 7 January 2002, BBC Radio 4 broadcast as its 'Book at Bedtime' a nightly serialization of *Excellent Women*, read by Deborah Findlay in ten 15-minute episodes. Findlay's interpretation of the narrator, Mildred Lathbury, as well as of most of the other characters, including the males, was generally applauded, but there was one exception. Winifred, with her quavery voice, sounded like 'a feeble old woman', although in the book she is said to be only a few years older than her brother Julian, who is in his early forties.

Most other comments by members were favourable, although one found the reading too 'straight' and felt that Pym's high social comedy was not appreciated.

C. M. S.

Notice board

Coming events

BARBARA PYM SOCIETY

Spring meeting
9 June, St Albans, Holborn, London WC2
Fr. Gabriel Myers on Victorian hymns in the Pym novels

Annual Meeting and Conference
'Unexcellent Men'
7 - 8 September 2002
St Hilda's College, Oxford

North American conference
29-30 March 2003
Harvard Law School, Mass.

*

The second conference of the **Anthony Powell Society** will be held 7-8 April 2003 at Balliol College, Oxford. The theme will be 'Anthony Powell and Oxford of the 1920s.' Details from enquiries@anthony.powell.org.uk

Moyer Bell update

The latest information from the American publisher Moyer Bell is that they are still struggling to return to their production schedule following the death of Jennifer Moyer last year. *The Sweet Dove Died* should be available in the next month or so. *No Fond Return of Love* will be next, followed by an as-yet-unnamed novel in the fall. *A Few Green Leaves* will be reprinted, most likely towards the end of summer. Currently available in stores in the U.S. are *Excellent Women* (Macmillan edition), *Jane & Prudence*, and *Crampton Hodnet*.

In the U.K. and Europe, Moyer Bell reprints are available only through Gazelle Book Service, Falcon House, Queen Square, Lancaster LA1 1RN, England. Phone: 44-524-68765, Fax: 44-524-63232.

To order directly from Moyer Bell, call toll-free 888-789-1945.

Some books are available on www.amazon.com.

*

The Web address for the audio cassette collection of seven Pym books (located in Bath, UK) is
www.audiobookcollection.com

Book search

The "Register of British Bookfinders" was first printed in 1998; a new 2001 edition is fully revised and enlarged. It is in A5 booklet format and lists county by county over a hundred businesses offering booksearch services with details of names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail and Internet information. It covers England, Ireland, Scotland & Wales.

Price £3.99 post free, available from C. Ambrose Winder, Toronto House, 11 Mayfield Grove, Harrogate, N.Yorks, HG1-5HD (Tel: 01423-566239). Cheques payable to C. A.Winder.

Pym-L

The Pym-L email list was set up in May 1998 'to provide an open forum for discussion of all topics pertaining to the work of the English novelist Barbara Pym (1913-1980)'. The guidelines state that 'discussion and questions concerning related writers are also welcome', but, from my experience of the list, Pym's life and works seem to provide enough material for debate and appreciation; since subscribing I have not seen any reference to any other writer.

This unmoderated list is intended for 'all readers of Barbara Pym – teachers, students, writers, individual readers, bibliographers, book collectors, and others who may want to learn more about her work and share ideas and information'.

Topics of discussion may include critical interpretation and opinions about the novels, influences on Pym's work or her influence on other authors; her views on writing, religion, etc; films, TV, stage productions or audiorecordings of her works; books and essays on her work, as well as Pym-related travel suggestions, conference announcements, lectures, calls for papers, information on new publications and work in progress, URLs of websites of potential relevance to the study of Pym's work; biographical questions, teaching ideas, and similar writing from any genre.

Whole books are discussed chapter by chapter, most recently *A Glass of Blessings*. There is much detailed discussion of, for example, the significance of Keith's accent, the fashionableness or otherwise of certain districts of London, Pym's literary references, or the reappearance of characters from one novel to another.

The list archives (starting from January 1999) are available to subscribers.

To subscribe, visit
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pym-l
and follow the instructions.

C. M. S.

ALS Gazetteer

The Alliance of Literary Societies has produced a Gazetteer of its member societies, categorized by county, including pictures and photographs. It is now up on the web, at:

www.sndc.demon.co.uk/map/gaz3.htm

Have a look - it's fascinating! Barbara Pym is duly covered, under Shropshire, Oxfordshire and London.

Essay competition

The Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS) and the David St John Thomas Charitable Trust are combining to sponsor a competition. Entrants must be members of literary societies in membership of the ALS: this applies to the Pym Society. They should write an essay, up to 1000 words, on the theme, 'Does 19th-century fiction still have anything to say to a 21st-century audience?' The announcement comments:

> You may feel that such 19th-century authors as Jane Austen and Charles Dickens were writing in a time and on subjects that no longer have any relevance to the world in which we live. Or you may believe that the 19th-century greats have a timeless message, and that we can still learn both from what they have to say and from their writing techniques.

Essays must be received by 15 October 2002; 1st prize £100, 2nd prize £25 book token. Further details and rules are available from the editor of *Green Leaves*.

Obituary

Charles Burkhart

Charles Burkhart, who has died recently, was one of the earliest American admirers of Barbara's work. He had already made the acquaintance in Greece of Barbara's old friend Robert Liddell when he came to England to pursue his interest in her novels. He had originally been in England in 1949 as a Fulbright Student and knew Oxford well. Indeed he might be regarded as a sort of latter day Henry-Jamesian figure, a dedicated Anglophile, who naturally gravitated to Barbara's books as part of his devotion to all things quintessentially English.

He had already written critical studies of Ivy-Compton Burnett (also one of the trio of subjects of his book, *Herman and Nancy and Ivy*, published in 1977) and in 1987 he wrote a study of Barbara's novels. This book, *The Pleasure of Miss Pym*, gives a view of the novels that is both scholarly and affectionate.

He was for many years a Professor of English at Temple University in Pennsylvania, and was a kind and amusing friend, entertaining Hilary and myself at his home in Philadelphia and always visiting us whenever he came to England. He will be greatly missed.

Hazel Holt

Imaginary conversations: II

Who are the speakers - all from Barbara Pym's novels - in the following synthesized conversation?

(1) "Are you happy?
(2) "The worst of it is that I think I've lost my faith."
(3) "Anyone would think the world had come to an end."
(4) "Strong passions, isn't it ... Eating mean, you know, it says that in the Bible."
(5) "Don't be ridiculous."
(6) "But there are worse things to worry about."
(7) "That's a very clever saying. You young women nowadays are so much cleverer than we were."
(8) "Ah, well, we aren't meant to be satisfied in this world ..."
(9) "It must be difficult. There is very little to do on Sunday, really, unless you go to church."
(10) "Of course a lot of very good people aren't religious in the sense of being church-goers."

Answers:

(1) Phoebe in *The Sweet Dove Died*, chapter 8
(2) Tom in *Less Than Angels*, chapter 9
(3) Mr Cleveland in *Crampton Hodnet*, 'The Prodigal Returns'
(4) Mrs. Morris in *Excellent Women*, chapter 3
(5) Mrs Cleveland in *Crampton Hodnet*, 'Thoughts at a Lecture'
(6) Mabel in *Less Than Angels*, chapter 3
(7) Miss Wellcome in *No Fond Return ...*, chapter 9
(8) Sister Blatt in *Excellent Women*, chapter 5
(9) Deirdre in *Less Than Angels*, chapter 1
(10) Mrs Bonner in *Excellent Women*, chapter 6

N. K. M.