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GREEN LEAVES

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THE BARBARA PYM SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2003

The 2003 Annual Conference of The Barbara Pym Society was held on Saturday and Sunday, 30 and 31 August 2003 at St Hilda's College, Oxford, attended by 53 members. Some came specially from the US, Belgium, Germany, Holland, Austria and Australia, as well as from the more distant British counties. Hilary Walton, sister of Barbara Pym, was unable to be present as she had been swept off on a cruise by kind friends.

The first session was as usual the Annual General Meeting, the full minutes of which appear on page 3. Some notable points were the announcement of plans for a special meeting to be held in June 2004 in the village of Finstock, where Barbara lived with her sister, and a joint meeting with the Philip Larkin Society at a later date. The work of Yvonne Cocking as secretary to the committee was gratefully recognised as her term came to an end, and the meeting was pleased to hear that she would continue her work for the Society as Official Archivist, a post which she has informally filled for some time. As always, the frustrations of Barbara Pym's novels continuing to be out of print in England was discussed. The committee will continue to support efforts to correct this situation, and the meeting was pleased learn that the American publishers are reissuing four novels next year.

After lunch **Yvonne Cocking** opened the first session with a look at the background of Pym's anthropological novel, *Less Than Angels*, the focus for this conference. Yvonne had spent much time in the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford, going through the many Pym notebooks filed there. She was able to give us insights into Barbara's ideas for names and characteristics of characters, references to friends in her own circle, and some details of contemporary criticism, anecdotes connected with publicising and printing the book. The text of her paper appears on page 4.

Yvonne Cocking introducing the reading of "Parrot's Eggs"

Triona Adams, a St Hilda's graduate who has long been involved in the Society, then read **Peter Lloyd**'s paper delivered at the 1983 meeting, to enable those who had not heard it to enjoy some of his reflections as an anthropologist who knew Barbara and Hilary in the nineteen fifties.

After a lively session for questions and discussion, and the usual break for tea and coffee, two anthropology-based poems from the Barbara Pym archives were read, by Chris Ward, the Society's incoming Secretary, and an American member, Charles Gilbert. The poems appear on page 13.

There followed a paper, 'Barbara Pym: a novelist in the field', written and delivered by the Australian scholar, **Robin Joyce,** who is at present completing a PhD at the Australian National University.

During the ensuing discussion and questions, use of such words as "dim", and "bother" were mentioned as being typical of Pym's vocabulary. Members considered the sudden, untimely death of Tom Mallow in the book, seeing it as unusual in Pym's work, and apparently enabling Catherine to take over from him as the main character in *Less Than Angels*. There was dispute as to whether Tom really is the hero, the main character, as supposed by Peter Lloyd – who also regarded himself as the model for Tom – or whether this is Catherine, as posited by Robin Joyce.

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The guest at the Annual Dinner was the prominent Oxford resident, Baroness James of Holland Park, OBE, better known internationally as the novelist **P. D. James**. It transpired during her thoughtful and witty talk that she had long been a constant reader of Barbara Pym, whose novels she evidently knows well and returns to often. She thought all Pym's titles were excellent, and that "the whole of her experience, however mundane, was put into her art". Why had Pym never married? Would it perhaps have been inimical to her art, as in the case of Jane Austen? Were men frightened of that observant eye? Philip Larkin detected "the pain of being single" in Pym's work. Baroness James said she would like to think that Barbara had entered "a High-Anglican Heaven" and, after other nuggets culled from the novels, her thoughtful talk concluded, "We rejoice in the knowledge that her stories are celebrated now", and Barbara "achieved the fame she sought".

On the Sunday morning the Society Chairman led a group of members to church, while others explored the Oxford bookshops or mingled, chatting. There followed an open session for all participants, led by **Michael Wilson**, which he opened by saying that *Less Than Angels* had not hitherto been high on his list of favourites, and perhaps it was less accessible than other Pym novels? Kate Charles said that Hilary Walton had pointed out that Barbara herself was not interested in anthropology but had become interested in those involved in it! Nancy Ellen Talburt had felt the same, but on re-reading *Less Than Angels* had liked it this time round, due mostly to the character of Catherine, who she felt was the Barbara of Oxford days — the "Sandra" character as she called herself, full of pleasure in small things, parties and frilly clothes. A lively discussion with many participants was thus instigated, touching on the sexual *mores* of the nineteen-fifties and after, which produced some interesting arguments as to whether or not sex was indeed "invented in 1963" as Larkin later alleged, with some members quoting anecdotal evidence. This and other topics connected with *Less Than Angels* continued to be discussed over traditional English Sunday lunch.

The last session consisted of a dramatic reading of a radio play written by Barbara Pym, and not broadcast, introduced by Yvonne Cocking, who had discovered it in the Bodleian archive. Ten members of the Society performed "**Parrot's Eggs**", in which Barbara satirised the posings and jealousies of a group of archaeologists which culminated in the wedding of two of the characters. A photograph of the reading appears on page 16 of this issue.

This was followed by some discussion and farewells, with many thanks to all participants and organisers, and reminders that the Spring Meeting (usually held in London) will be based at St Hilda's and Finstock in June, and the next Conference on 4-5 September 2004.

Deirdre Bryan-Brown

Notice board

The 2004 North American Conference of the Barbara Pym Society will be held at Harvard University, Saturday-Sunday, 27-28 March. Speakers will include Katherine Duncan-Jones, Perri Klass and Father Gabriel Myers. Details and Registration forms will be posted on the Pym website.

Finstock Celebration

Mark your diaries now for Sunday 13 June 2004. In the year before the 25th anniversary of Barbara Pym's death, the Society will hold a celebration of her life. In place of the usual London Spring Meeting, we will be gathering in Finstock, where Barbara lived with her sister Hilary Walton during the final years of Barbara's life. Hilary is very much involved in the planning of the event, which will include a special Evensong at Finstock Church. The Bishop of Oxford, the Rt. Revd. Richard Harries — himself a Pym enthusiast — will be the preacher.

Various other plans are underway for the day, and more details will be sent to members after the beginning of the year. Transportation will be available from St. Hilda's College to Finstock, and it is hoped that accommodation packages can be arranged for those who would like to make a weekend of it.

Finstock Church Appeal

The village church in Finstock, where Barbara Pym worshipped — and, appropriately enough, organised the rota for lesson readers — is in the early stages of a modest financial appeal. The aim of the appeal is to make the church more 'user-friendly' by reinstating the original Victorian gallery and converting it to a child-proof area where parents can take their children during services. In addition, the church has been, until now, unequipped with loos, and as it is at some remove from the rest of the village, this is a situation which requires remedy - no doubt Belinda Bede would be deeply in sympathy with this aim!

The Committee has agreed that the proceeds from the Evensong collection at the 13 June 2004 gathering in Finstock will be designated for the appeal. It seems fitting, as well, that a corporate gift in the Barbara Pym Society's name should be made to the appeal. This will not come from Society funds, but is strictly voluntary. Anyone wishing to contribute to this very worthy cause should send a cheque to Eileen Roberts at St. Hilda's, payable to the Barbara Pym Society and clearly designated 'Finstock Church Appeal'. Please be generous.

Kate Charles, Chairman, Barbara Pym Society

REPORT OF THE TENTH A.G.M. OF THE BARBARA PYM SOCIETY HELD AT ST.HILDA'S COLLEGE, OXFORD, ON SATURDAY 30TH AUGUST 2003 AT 11.30 a.m.

Committee members present were: Kate Charles (Chairman), Eileen Roberts (Membership Secretary), Hazel Bell (Editor - Green Leaves), Yvonne Cocking (Secretary), Deirdre Bryan-Brown (Web Site Co-ordinator), Phil Bacon, Gabrielle Page, Maggie Parsons, Christine Ward, Maureen Woolley, and Ellen Miller (Chairman of the Barbara Pym Society in North America)

1.Chairman's Opening Remarks

The Chairman, Kate Charles, welcomed the delegates, some here for the first time, and the many familiar faces, from near and far. She then reviewed the year's activities:

In February the BBC had broadcast Jennifer Howarth's excellent play "The Resurrection of Miss Pym", which was very well performed.

The North American meeting at Harvard last March had been a great success, thanks to Ellen Miller, and congratulations are due to her and to Frauke Lenckos on the publication of *All This Reading*.

At the Spring meeting at St. Albans on 1st June, Katharine Duncan-Jones had given a delightful talk on her personal reminiscences of growing up with Barbara Pym's novels.

Victor Osborne's article "Miss Pym, the Not so Prim" was published in the *Daily Telegraph* on 7th June.

The Society noted with deep regret the death of Maeve Brennan, shortly before the TV programme on Philip Larkin, which could not have been made without her help, was shown.

Looking ahead, Kate told of a splendid event planned for 5th June 2004.* In place of the usual Spring meeting, there would be a visit to Finstock, Barbara's last home. In conjunction with Hilary, and with her fullest approval, this would include a service in Finstock Church as well as other activities at present being explored.*

Finally, Kate invited interested members to meet her at the Lodge at 9.40 on Sunday morning to go to the service at St Cross Church.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Hilary Walton, Hazel Holt, Peter Lloyd, and Bridget Guymer.

3. Minutes of Previous A.G.M

The minutes of the previous A.G.M. were accepted.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Larkin Society proposed a Joint meeting next year, possibly as the 2004 conference. The Committee would consider this in due course.

5. Financial and Membership Report

Eileen Roberts reported that at this time last year there was a balance of £4205.76 in the main account which now stands at £4466.51, the surplus being partly due to the conference fee introduced last year. £56 was received for sales of Hazel Bell's index to Pym's work, and £145 for sale of mugs. However, *Green Leaves* cost £1.25 ($2) a copy to produce. Eileen reminded the members that conference fees go straight to St Hilda's, and cheques should be made out to the College. Membership now numbers 235-240 in Europe etc., and 220 in North America. Ellen collects the membership fees for that region, and has about $3000 in her Pym account. Eileen reminded members that if they wished to be entered in the Directory of Members, they would have to sign their agreement in accordance with the Data Protection Act. She hoped that the new Directory would be distributed with the November issue of *Green Leaves*.

6. Editor's Report

Hazel reported that she was well on target to produce the next issue of *Green Leaves* by the end of November.

7. Elections

Yvonne Cocking had completed two terms as Secretary and would therefore stand down. Chris Ward had agreed to take over from her. There were no other nominations to the Committee, so Bridget Guymer and Gabrielle Page, whose first term had ended, were duly re-elected. Kate thanked Yvonne for her valuable work on the Committee, and said that Yvonne would continue to do research for the Society, and also look after the Society's archives.

8. Any Other Business

Hazel Bell has been editing and collating a series of articles on Barbara Pym and the Church, which will be published as a booklet, we hope in time for the Finstock meeting.

Ellen said that Moyer Bell, the American publisher of most of Barbara's books, will be bringing out *A Very Private Eye* in January 2004, and later *A Glass of Blessings* and *An Unsuitable Attachment*. Moyer Bell are also interested in arranging Barbara Pym literary events in Book Stores in the States, for example, one in Chicago hosted by Fraucke, one in Washington DC by Joan Drexler and another in Fort Wayne, Indiana, by Kathy Ackley.

The Society has received a copy of *A Woman's Pastorale*, by Barbara Kowalik of the Universities of Warsaw and Lublin. This is not a doctoral thesis, but the author spent time in 1985-6 at St. Hilda's. If copies are not available in this country, try emailing the Lexicon bookshop (lexicon@medianet.pl).

Professor Urdiales, husband of the late Patricia Shaw, has given the Society a set of four volumes, her complete literary works, published by the University of Oviedo, Spain.

Deborah Fisher said that the recently formed Siegfried Sassoon Society would be holding a meeting at the British Museum.

Ellen announced that the next Harvard conference would be on 27-28 March 2004. She proposes to put on her web site a walking tour map of Barbara Pym sites, including all the places where Barbara lived, churches where she worshipped, and other locations associated with her.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12.45.

Yvonne Cocking

*The Finstock meeting will now be held on 13th June, and the Bishop of Oxford is expected to be present.

The Barbara Pym Society 2003-4

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Membership Secretary Eileen Roberts
Secretary Chris Ward
Editor Hazel K. Bell

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Professor John Bayley;
The Revd Prebendary Gerard Irvine;
Baroness James of Holland Park, OBE
(P. D. James); Professor Peter Lloyd;
Miss Muriel Maby; James Runcie;
Professor Robert Smith

Less Than Angels: a look at the background of the 'anthropological novel'

Yvonne Cocking

In May 1978 Barbara Pym gave a talk to the Senior Wives Fellowship of Oxford University entitled *The Ups and Downs of a Writer's Life*. In it she said: "...my work at the International African Institute, where I was in daily contact with anthropologists and their work, was indirectly useful to me as a novelist. The anthropologist goes out into the field to study so-called 'primitive' societies, and to note their customs. Coming nearer home, this technique can very well be applied to our own society, to the things that go on in our everyday life. My novel, *Less than Angels*, is the one that shows this most clearly, but I have been influenced by the anthropologists in other ways - I think especially by looking at fictional situations with scientific detachment - but I hope also with sympathy". The techniques used by anthropologists - observation, notation and deduction - were employed by Barbara too.

Her idea of writing a novel set in an anthropological research institute seems to have arisen in the early 1950s. Barbara always carried with her a little notebook in which she jotted down her thoughts on any projects she was working on at the time, or any idea that struck her as interesting or amusing or that could perhaps be used later. Also included were accounts of her holidays, plans for supplementing her wardrobe, and shopping lists. This makes it a little difficult to follow any one theme, but entries for *Less than Angels* can be found throughout the notebooks covering the years 1952-1955. Many of these are general – like possible names for her characters – Gervase, Martin, Felix, Cyril, etc. for the men, Primrose, Vanessa, Deirdre, Deborah, for the women – and thoughts on the opening chapter: "A possible beginning - the young man coming back from Africa - to his provincial (or suburban) mother and her bridge-playing friends. Or begin with the funeral of a venerable anthropologist".

There is also among Barbara's papers a 36-leaved booklet, dating from April 1953, devoted entirely to *Less than Angels*. This is a handwritten collection of more or less disjointed paragraphs, some fairly lengthy, and some which appear almost unchanged in the novel; but it can in no way be considered a complete draft.

The character of Tom Mallow, rather than any of the others, was the starting point for *Less than Angels* - even his name was in no doubt from the beginning. In her notebook for 1952-3 her first words relating to this novel are, "The young hero of the anthropological novel has many women friends and admirers, but chooses none. He might refer to them callously as his girl friends – perhaps Africa or its people are his real love?"

While other aspects of the book underwent revision, this theme remained unchanged. Anne Wyatt-Brown, in her critical biography of Pym, tells us, "As in many Pym novels, some of the characters are derived indirectly from her friends. For example, Tom Mallow was partly inspired by Peter Lloyd, a young anthropologist whom Pym had met at the IAI and enjoyed sentimentalizing over. It was Lloyd's departure for Africa that enriched her scene of Tom's leave-taking. In contrast, most of Tom's less attractive features stem from Henry Harvey, Gordon Glover, and Julian Amery". No surprise there!

Barbara's notes describe Tom as "in no way remarkable to look at – of only medium height, rather too thin with dark brown hair". But in the definitive version he was made rather more attractive (the description 'sexed up', as might be said these days). "He was tall and dark, with thin aristocratic features, and brilliant grey eyes". Barbara also wanted it made quite clear from the outset that Tom was a brilliant anthropologist, and that "although beloved of several women, his main interest was always in his work" Anne Wyatt-Brown thinks, "Even in its early days his love affair with Catherine is tepid - he puts his career before his heart". When Tom was thinking about Deirdre, the truth suddenly came to him.

"He realised with a mixture of apprehension, gratification and *astonishment* that it was not his tribe she was interested in, but him. Land tenure, age sets, kinship terminology – could it be that all these meant nothing to her?"

When Deirdre "imagines him seething with all kinds of passions, really he is just quietly at home reading or writing his thesis", or even "going to Watford to talk about the lineage system" – Watford, where the bracing air was hoped to revive him after his return from Africa "looking so terribly 'White Man's Grave'." In the following year's notebook Barbara decided on Tom's death, a drastic move, and one unprecedented in the Pym novels. "Tom died doing something rather secret, political and splendid. Oh, dear, is he going to be a kind of Lawrence of Arabia? He dies the kind of death one of his class might have died in, say 1907".

Barbara then considered her heroines. Strangely, there is no direct reference to Catherine in the notebooks – her name and occupation are never mentioned, nor any details of her relationship with Tom. However, Barbara must have had a triangular situation in mind, because quite early on she notes, "The two women who love the young anthropologist must meet together." It must be Catherine, now in her early thirties, to whom Barbara is referring when she says, "Perhaps the young woman who loves an anthropologist can have been a Wren officer, aged 20, at Westcliff-on-Sea or in the New Forest before the invasion". Anne Wyatt-Brown thinks that Catherine represents Pym's view of the world. She shares her author's imagination, her amused reaction to anthropology, and her detachment. As for Deirdre, "I think the girl meets the young anthropologist at a party...". Note that Catherine is *the young woman*, but Deirdre is *the girl*. "Can the girl who loves him work in a library and get books for him?" In the booklet, Deirdre is an English graduate from Oxford, now working as an assistant librarian at Felix's research centre, a typical Pym representative, thinks Anne Wyatt-Brown. "On coming down from Oxford she had hoped to marry a Great Love, but she had not yet found one". Eventually, however, Deirdre becomes an anthropology student at the University of London, "rather than a husband-hunting Oxford graduate".

Barbara considers other characters in her notes, some of whom are reserved after modification. Felix Byron Mainwaring appears early on as "an aging Professor of Anthropology who is still attractive to women – has perhaps had several wives – and feels the burden of his middle name!" And the Lydgates: "I think there could be a missionary brother

(she a linguist) living in a cluttered suburban or country house full of African relics. They live with their old father - a Rationalist - who is grieved at his son's being a clergyman." The idea of Lydgate as a clergyman persists in the booklet. He had a parish in Oxford, and it was through him that Deirdre was introduced to his sister and Miss Clovis. He was, moreover, a deeply unhappy man. "His work in Africa had not brought a stream of converts to the mission, he had achieved nothing in the field of anthropology or linguistics, he was not even a good parish priest and knew himself to be disliked by most of his congregation...In one field he had achieved some fame or notoriety - he was well known as a writer of vitriolic reviews..."

That last bit, at least, was preserved. Other ideas were considered, then discarded. "Ought not Theo Grote (Theodore Mbawawa) and his wife Constance to come in somewhere?", and "You must have parrots' eggs in somewhere - Alaric Lydgate and Tom, [as the sender and recipient, presumably] - perhaps the Dulke's have a parrot who lays an egg...".

These notes provide only tenuous links to the finished novel. There must have been many intermediate drafts which have not survived.

On 10th October 1954 Barbara noted (as Hazel Holt quoted in *A Very Private Eye),*

> Today finished my fourth novel, about the anthropologists (no title as yet).
>
> Typed from 10.30am to 3.30pm sustained by, in the following order, a cup of milky Nescafe, a gin and French, cold beef, baked potato, tomato and grated cheese, rice pudding and plums."

However, another five months passed before Barbara sent the completed novel to Daniel George at Cape.

On 4th April 1955, Jonathan Cape wrote "I have read Less Than Angels with great satisfaction. It is very good and very charming I think. I have pleasure in sending you a contract..." -- she received an advance of £100 – and a few days later "...we will certainly try hard to place *Less Than Angels* with an American publisher. American publishers are funny people. They seem to be less and less addicted to English books, and they have a raw bright attitude, thinking not that a book is good but whether it will *sell* well. For my part, I have never known when a book would sell. I try to go for what I think is good...". Daniel added "I think you've achieved something as near perfection as it could be, and I have great hopes for its popular and esteemed success."

An unfortunate blip occurred just before publication. Jenifer Armstrong, Cape's Advertising Manager, wrote to BP to apologise for putting 'ornithologists' instead of 'anthropologists' in her publicity advertisement in The Listener "...there is no excuse, as I have read your book and enjoyed it very much, but I shall naturally see that in future it reads 'anthropologists', and apologise again."

The book was published at 13/6 (about 70p) on 17th October 1955. The first to congratulate her was her friend Frances Atkins.

> Dearest Buddy, I must write to you at once to tell you how tremendously I have enjoyed Less than Angels which I have devoured with almost indecent greed. I think it is far and away your best, more subtly shrewd, penetrating and funny even than Excellent Women. It is a complete triumph in every way... I hope it will have the resounding success it deserves..."

and the next was Robert Liddell.

> Dearest Barbara, Thank you very much indeed for your book, which delighted me.
>
> Anthropologists have something of the comforting charm of Bodleian readers, and I feel at home with them - the glimpses of church were tantalising, however. Do give us more and stronger incense next time. I very much liked the visit to the country house...Ivy, Elizabeth and Olivia all think poorly of Anglo Saxon Attitudes - I am sure it is not so nice as Less than Angels.

These were of course the novelists Ivy Compton-Burnett, Elizabeth Taylor and Olivia Manning, ganging up on poor Angus Wilson!

A slightly sour note was introduced only a few days after publication. Despite Jonathan Cape's assertion that he only went for 'good' books, rather than those that sell, his partner, the verbose Wren Howard, was reviewing the pre-publication sales figures. "I have only just woken up to the fact that I omitted to write to you before publication *of Less Than Angels*...The reason for this was that I wanted to compare the number of the present novel sold before publication with similar figures for *Jane and Prudence*. I had a slightly uneasy feeling that subscription figures for the new novel were not quite so good as those for the earlier one and I am afraid I was right. We subscribed about 2050 for *Less Than Angels*, which in general isn't a bad figure, but does not compare too favourably with the 2300 subscription to *Jane and Prudence*. I cannot rightly explain this slight decline, but imagine it is not unconnected with the collapse and bankruptcy of the large wholesale booksellers, Simpkin Marshall, from whom we might have expected a substantial order for a novel such as yours...".

However, more praise from her friends. "No. 4 [i.e. Pym's fourth novel] is having a great success with the Barnicots and their friends", writes Elizabeth. "Also, I believe, in the British Council... Mary (Hare) and I were particularly struck by your understanding of the YOUNG and your sympathy with them... I especially liked Mark and Digby, not only because they are so well drawn, but because of their chorus-like part in the story...". And from an unknown fan, "May I express my enormous pleasure in your books, particularly in the one I have just finished, *Less Than Angels*...This is my favourite, followed by *Jane and Prudence*, *Excellent Women* and *Some Tame Gazelle* in that order... I hope you will not consider it an impertinence when I say that I consider your books by far the best of their genre in recent years..."

Peggy Makins, better known as Evelyn Home in *Woman's Own*,,who answered readers' problem letters, wrote:

> ...thank you very much for *Less Than Angels* - contrary to some critics, I find little acid in your work, although it is invariably dressed with a sharp sauce...May I criticise a mere point of fact? As a journalist (working for a woman's magazine) I am sure Catherine would never have been permitted to suggest remedies like lemon rind and cucumber skin. Beauty writers work under the whiplash of Advertising Departments. Catherine would have written of a certainskinfood which was death to wrinkled elbows...But this is mere carping. It is a lovely book, and almost long enough.

The novelist Elizabeth Taylor, with whom Barbara had been corresponding fairly regularly, also wrote to her. Unfortunately, the letter is undated, and does not even mention the title of the book she is writing about, but I think it must have been *Less Than Angels*.

> Dear Barbara, It was such a nice surprise to get your book and kind of you to send it. Now I have read it and was sorry to finish it. I wished that it would last longer. I think I liked it the best of all - yes, I'm sure that I did. It is always interesting to get a glimpse of other circles. I am alarmed when I find myself among learned, academic people, who talk about their theses...and enjoyed finding out about their failings, and that they can often be childish...I should have liked more of that pleasant suburbia, so well described and easily imagined. I always feel I know what you are writing about and that, either from my own experience or through you, I know it too..."

Towards the end of the year, Wren Howard was on to her again about sales figures.

> Total sales up to the end of last week amount to 3092 copies, which isn't good enough, but that is certainly not your fault - what the book now requires is an advertisement of some kind or another through the BBC. Cannot you contrive to have it read in 'Woman's Hour'? That would make all the difference...

In August 1956 Cape wrote

> I am sure you will be pleased to learn that we have been able to place *Less Than Angels* with an American publisher, the Vanguard Press...They are the publishers who have always been interested in your work, and in fact very nearly took *Jane and Prudence*.

On hearing this, Robert Liddell wrote from Athens,

> It is very good news that *Less Than Angels* is to appear in the USA. You'll have lovely reviews, even if you don't sell any. Americans do review so nicely...

The book was published in the United States on 1 April 1957. On the same day, Jacques Chambrun, a New York agent, wrote:

> I have just finished *Less Than Angels* this afternoon, and I want to congratulate you on a book that gives the reader an uncommonly vivid experience. It is sustained, consistent, and well-balanced; and it leads us to hope that you have time for, or possibly have on hand, shorter work that could be offered for magazine publication...

As we know, despite his personal enthusiasm, Chambrun was unable to place her short stories.

By March 1958 the total number of copies of *Less Than Angels* sold in the US was 1386. "I still do not seem to have earned my $500 advance", recorded Barbara sadly.

I could find no newspaper reviews of this book among Barbara's papers, but the inference is that the critics were not as greatly impressed as they had been with, say, *Excellent Women*. Since sales were relatively poor, though this was largely due to the closing of the subscription libraries, and the demise of Simpkin Marshall, and probably poor marketing, perhaps her readers were not too keen either, possibly because of the unfamiliarity of the setting. Barbara herself said, in a talk at Barnes in the 1950s, "I suppose readers can be divided into two classes – those who like a setting that is familiar to them or that they can imagine without too much difficulty, and the others who want to be taken right out of their everyday lives and dumped down...in a setting that they wouldn't normally find themselves in".

Perhaps Barbara's loyal readers belonged in the first category, and preferred the familiar world of the village, the vicarage and the jumble sale.

Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Barbara Pym Society, St Hilda's College, Oxford University, 30 August 2003.

Moyer Bell update

Moyer Bell is a small publishing company in the small state of Rhode Island, featured in *Green Leaves* previously in November 1999, November 2001 and May 2002. Established by the husband and wife team of Jennifer Moyer and Britt Bell, the company devoted itself to producing high-quality literary works that were often overlooked or out of print. Moyer Bell bought the rights to several then out-of-print Barbara Pym novels and planned to reprint two a year. Then, sadly, Jennifer Moyer died of breast cancer, and it was left to Britt Bell to direct the company alone.

Now reorganized, Moyer Bell has become part of the Acorn Alliance, a consortium representing various publishers under the direction of Bell. You can find them on the Web at – www.moyerbellbooks.com/moyer.html. Barbara Pym is one of three featured authors, along with Angela Thirkell and Pearl Buck; Moyer Bell also publishes the works of Helene Hanff (84 Charing Cross Road), E.F. Benson (Lucia, of course), and Alice Thomas Ellis (*A Welsh Childhood*).

Barbara Pym titles currently offered by Moyer Bell are *Crampton Hodnet, A Few Green Leaves, Jane and Prudence, No Fond Return of Love, Some Tame Gazelle*, and *The Sweet Dove Died*. The next scheduled reprints, according to Britt Bell, are *A Very Private Eye* in January 2004, and in the spring of 2004, *A Glass of Blessings* and *An Unsuitable Attachment* will be published. "That leaves only *Civil to Strangers* of the books we're licensed to reprint," says Bell. *Excellent Women* and *Quartet in Autumn* are not available to Moyer Bell, but we understand that Virago Modern Classics plans to reprint early Pyms if licensing agreements can be arranged.

The Moyer Bell reprints are exceedingly attractive, with William Morris-type wallpaper cover art. They are printed on quality paper and are easy to read. Ordering information for the available titles is on the Web site, but we should mention that Moyer Bell cannot market their books in the U.K. or Europe (nothing personal, we're sure!). We usually have a supply of Moyer Bells available for sale at the March conference (March 27-28, 2004) at Harvard.

Ellen Miller

*

Perhaps Alexander McCall Smith isn't a household name in the U.K. and Europe, but in America his *No. 1 Detective Agency* and *The Kalahari Typing School for Men* have both appeared on the *New York Times* best-seller list. Smith, a Scottish lawyer and author, spoke at my local bookshop in the summer. I was out of town at the time and my friends told me the following: when asked by an audience member about his favorite authors, his first-named writer was Barbara Pym, "who wrote quiet novels". Incidentally, my book club has selected *No. 1 Detective Agency* for its December discussion.

- E. M.

Unsuitable for attachment: men in Barbara Pym's life

Nancy Talburt

Analysts of Barbara Pym's life and work tend to agree that a significant amount of autobiographical material is transmuted and reflected in her fiction. Consequently, the men with whom she had a romantic relationship or close friendship are of interest to scholars and readers for what they may reveal of her life and experiences and what they may suggest about her fiction.

Rupert Gleadow, Henry Harvey, Julian (Jay) Amery, Gordon Glover, and Richard Roberts ("Skipper") appear among them to have represented in Barbara Pym's life the highs and lows of romance and courtly attachment. Romances with Friedbert Gluck (in Germany), Harry Harker, and Brian Mitchell were casual on Barbara's part, if not on theirs. There were also casual relationships during Pym's time with the WRNS in Naples. Consistently, there were friendships and correspondence with unmarried men—writers or would-be writers— who shared history, friends, or interests with Barbara.

Romantic relationships were most prominent in her years at Oxford, 1931-34, and in the years immediately after, but two later attachments were also significant. At Oxford, Rupert Gleadow appeared in her life in the spring of 1932 and courted Barbara in style. He was dashing and good humoured and treated her well, no doubt maintaining his style even in importuning her for the kind of relationship he desired and she didn't. He was the first person to recite Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress* to her. A number of Rupert's warm and charming letters survive, often beginning "dearest Barbara." Rupert even visited Barbara at her home in Oswestry in the summer of 1932. Their meetings seemed a jolly round of lunches, drives, tea, films, boating and other adventures, often in company with Rupert's flat-mate, Miles Macadam. Accounts of these times suggest that this was a delightful and fun-filled romance for a young girl. The relationship with Rupert reached a plateau reflecting his desire for a greater physical involvement than she wanted and a resultant impasse, but they continued to see one another through June in 1933 and remained friends and correspondents.

Henry Stanley Harvey ("Lorenzo," "Gabriel") was the love of Barbara Pym's life, but their relationship at Oxford appears much less fun-filled and romantic than hers with Rupert. There was a tortuously long beginning, initiated by her observations of him in the library and followed by a note to him, only moving forward when he finally spoke in April of 1933. Barbara's feeling for Henry, whom she had not met and of whom she knew nothing, may appear more like a crush or an obsession, but it nevertheless stood the test of time. Barbara clearly felt that Henry did not take her seriously as a friend or a lover. Because of his treatment she decided from time to time to stop responding to his invitations to his rooms. The relationship went through many such ups and downs and mostly jogged along with her being but one of a circle including slightly older men with Henry at its centre. They spent some time alone together in Oxford, but more time was spent as a threesome with Robert Liddell (Jock). It seems that Henry continually frustrated the desires of Barbara and Jock for a more exclusive friendship, and each of them appeared initially to be jealous of the other's time with Henry. When Henry married in 1937, in Finland, Barbara's hopes for a more suitable attachment were dashed. She wrote to him (and his wife) off and on throughout her life and was joking with him from her hospice bed three days before her death.

When Barbara was 24 and Julian (Jay) Amery was 18, they had a brief fling in Oxford in 1937-38. It may have been the most perfect and complete, in certain ways, of her courtly romances, though one in which they were together for only a total of twenty hours over just a few weeks. Barbara did not initiate this friendship except by typically flirtatious behaviour that included an assumed identity and accent. Jay behaved graciously as well as romantically throughout the affair. The relationship ended, apparently with mutual agreement and because it was unsuitable for continuation on both sides. She cherished souvenirs, created a shrine to him (which, as she ironically observed, included *paper* roses), remembered him silently on his birthdays, and followed his distinguished career through newspaper cuttings.

Barbara met Gordon Glover in 1941 while working in the censorship office at Bristol and living in the same household with his wife, Honor Wyatt, and their children. Honor and Gordon were divorcing by mutual consent, and Honor had became a close friend of Barbara's. Despite this unorthodox, if not unpropitious, setting, Gordon began an affair with Barbara that seemed especially intense for her, but was a more routine pattern of behaviour with him. His career, familiarity with music and literature, clever letters, attractive appearance, and education reminded her of Henry Harvey, and she wrote to Henry in 1942 explaining that she'd never thought another man would remind her of him. Predictably to those who knew Gordon, after a very few weeks, they met and he told Barbara that as they had no hope of marrying any time soon (until after the divorce), they should take a year's break from the romance. In fact, he simply ended the relationship. As a result, she suffered greatly and wondered if there could ever again be anyone who would suit her so well. The grief and pain she felt over Glover's abrupt ending of the relationship persisted for years, albeit controlled and rationalised away until she came to the conclusion, despite her love, that he had been second-rate.

The most difficult relationship to classify, although it clearly was an important and ultimately distressful one, was that with Richard Roberts, eighteen years younger, an antiques dealer from Nassau in the Bahamas, to whom she was introduced by a friend, Bob Smith, in August of 1962. This friendship had special importance, if only for an aura of romance and Barbara's indirect experience through Roberts of an active, varied, and cosmopolitan life-style. In agonizing over a gift, she concludes that one couldn't give him anything he hadn't already got. Barbara eventually saw Roberts as having taken up her friendship in a particularly attentive way, appearing to admire her work and enjoy her company only, as time wore on, to drop her or behave as obviously bored when they were together. Like Henry, he was subject to moods, and like Philip Larkin he appears to have had a view of life that was much different and darker than her own. Barbara repeatedly refers to specific bad moods and uncommunicative behaviour, as she so often did regarding Henry. She worried more than one might have expected over the decline of this friendship, perhaps as a consequence of her age and the rejection of her seventh novel. She never loses her ironic perspective, how-

ever, and says, "memories of him were associated with delicious meals . . . is that how it turns out as one grows older?" Or perhaps it is simply the case, as she put it, that "one probably never does cease to be interested." It is impossible not to associate Richard Roberts with the comment made by Mrs Culver in *The Sweet Dove Died* to Leonora that "the odd thing about men is that one never really knows . . .. Just when you think they're close they suddenly go off."

Other significant men in Barbara Pym's life were her correspondents and fellow writers such as Jock (Robert Liddell), Bob Smith, and Philip Larkin. More influential in some ways than lovers, they provided long-term and consistent companionship, appreciation, and support as fellow writers. They shared interests and information regarding many other matters from Anglicanism and churches to events and comedy within their own lives, including gossipy chat about mutual acquaintances. They also passed on intelligence reports regarding those individuals in whom her interests were more romantic. Jock Liddell introduced Robert Smith to Pym, and Smith later introduced her to Richard Roberts. Both Liddell and Smith, in their critical assessments of Pym's fiction, stress the importance it will have in the future for historians of this era because of its minute detail. They do not identify the more universal elements of her dual vision with wit and irony of the kind that can cause a landslide in the mind.

Philip Larkin first wrote to Barbara in 1961 offering to write an essay regarding her next work and mentioning how much he'd enjoyed her novels. His clever and acerbic correspondence with her was intermittent for the rest of their lives and makes an interesting and dramatic contrast to her works and letters. Indeed, his highly humorous and equally dark comedy accentuates the lightness of her touch and her outward optimism and acceptance. His letters seem also to have contributed to her desire to write an academic novel, not about Oxbridge but about the world of the red-brick university. His comment that her novels "may look like women's books, but no man can read them and be quite the same again" is worth remembering. Larkin's relationship to Barbara was that of writer to writer and did not result in a face-to-face meeting until more than a dozen years after their correspondence began.

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A key element in Pym's romantic attachments is the fact that while she created a new persona for herself in Oxford, Sandra, a flirtatious girl with an "appalling" reputation, she didn't wish to alter her behaviour to meet either Henry Harvey's or Gordon Glover's expectations. Also she didn't care deeply or care long for those who appear the more excellent men who cared for her. Both Rupert and Harry seem to qualify as excellent men. What might have been the effect of her preferences on her writing? Did she, for example, already see the devastating consequences that living happily ever after, in or out of marriage, might have on the experience and perceptions of a writer of comedy?

Given her sharp and penetrating insights into human behaviour, even in youth, it is difficult to understand why Barbara Pym fell in love as she did, and so often. As Hazel Holt puts it in her biography, *A Lot to Ask*, "Even before she went to Oxford, Barbara had shown a remarkable propensity to fall in love with people she didn't actually know." Holt goes on to point out (after citing examples) that this emotion, though strong, was not a substitute for interaction with real young men at Oxford. Friends such as Honor Wyatt and Robert Liddell find exaggeration in her accounts of her relationships, as does Rupert Gleadow, whose letters suggest he didn't take her feelings for Gabriel very seriously and expected her always to be in love with some handsome young man. Her diaries and letters say otherwise.

Not only did she fall in love with people she didn't know. Even after she came to know Henry Harvey well, his disagreeable traits – including teasing her to tears over his affection for someone else – and his moodiness did not destroy that love. It became almost a badge of honour that she loved in spite of, rather than because of, his behaviour. Whatever the disagreeable traits, it appears that Barbara felt a kinship with Henry Harvey that she found to include her ideal of female-male interaction. We know that ideal included a common love for music, an ability to talk in terms of works of English literature and writers and cap quotations, perhaps even appreciation of Matthew Arnold, a ridiculous sense of humour, pleasure in common accomplishment as in her devoted assistance with the completion of Henry's thesis, and finally in the feeling that he was her own sort of person.

Consistent with another typical behaviour, Barbara recognizes that she will love Gordon until she falls in love with someone else. This often happened to her in the Spring in Oxford. Love was a staple of her life and one must have an object for it, but not necessarily a "one and only". In fact Barbara persisted in having more than one chap at a time throughout her days at Oxford, often one chap who existed entirely in her head, apart from a face glimpsed at a distance. She loved "Geoffrey" whom she never met, from afar, even after meeting and continuing to see Rupert Gleadow. She continued to see Harry Harker throughout most of her Oxford days and is still seeing Rupert when she finally meets Henry, after months of watching him from far and near but never exchanging a word. As Hazel Holt observes, she would go on being attracted to men until the end. Holt also points out that Barbara had the knack of remaining on friendly terms with her old loves, and her diaries record that she even had lunch occasionally with Gordon and once with Starky, a friend from Naples. Whenever Henry was in England (he was still working in Sweden), they would meet as old friends and she continued to correspond with him. Indeed, in the last years of her life, Henry lived but 30 miles away, and they enjoyed taking driving trips.

Barbara's love for men who didn't return her love is paralleled by the love of at least two suitable young men during her Oxford days. Harry Harker and Brian Mitchell both proposed marriage and were told she didn't feel that sort of love for them. It was not a lack of real-life experience or possibility that precipitated Barbara into love, nor the need for fantasy to replace life.

It is useful to consider that if 'men only want one thing' from women, it must be supposed to have a counterpart in what women want from men. Some might say 'romance' although perhaps more would say 'marriage.' And for some, marriage is primarily a means to a fixed place in society and children. However, having turned down at least two proposals of marriage, if Barbara Pym wanted marriage at all it must have been for something else, possibly for the grand passion that would accompany it, even if that passion didn't last, and for the recognition the world withholds from the spinster. Domestic life and children seems to have held no romantic attraction for Barbara Pym. As Jock Liddell has observed, there are no children in her fiction with speaking parts.

A possibility advanced by Orphia Jane Allen in her Barbara Pym: Writing a Life (1994), is that Barbara was a woman who wrote her own life in advance of living it and possibly unconsciously avoided marriage to develop her art. In a letter to Jock in 1936, Barbara writes; "I often ask myself (as a kind of test) whether I would rather be loved by Henry or have my novel accepted at the present moment. I feel I'd like both, but perhaps if my novel were published, the rest would follow."

Indeed, as it turned out, being a writer, being published, and being appreciated

for the quality of her works gave her a special place in the world, then took it back, just as certain love affairs had promised happiness, then denied it. It might fairly be said that her experiences with Richard Roberts would not have grieved her so much but for the rejection of her seventh book. Moreover, her knowledge of how marriage was valued or interpreted by others might have loomed larger during the years when her books were not being published. When I asked her in 1979 at lunch in Oxford about the "*gaudy*" when Old Girls return to Oxford, she referred me to Dorothy Sayers' novel, *Gaudy Night*, but offered no observations of her own. Looking back, I see the possibility that she didn't like to return without that symbolic ring on her finger described so well by Mildred Latham:

> That was really it. It was the ring on the left hand that people at the Old Girls' Reunion looked for. Often, in fact nearly always, it was an uninteresting ring, sometimes no more than the plain gold band or the very smallest and dimmest of diamonds. Perhaps the husband was also of this variety, but as he was not seen at this female gathering he could only be imagined, and somehow I do not think we ever imagined the husbands to be quite so uninteresting as they probably were."

Barbara refers specifically to marriages of those well-matched but not madly in love:

> . . . lots of marriages of that kind turn out very well. But personally I would prefer the other thing, even if it wore off, as I am told it does. Maybe I shall be able to keep my illusions as it doesn't look as if I shall ever get married.

The other thing she wants is romance, a grand passion. Unlike Prudence (*Jane and Prudence)* with whom her desire for romance has called for comparison, her accounts of being in love herself seem to underscore the passion rather than the mere enthusiasm of Prudence's feelings. One might ask whether it is possible really to fall in love without leaving reason behind? Isn't some sort of negative capability necessary, to be so filled up with the idea of the loved object that fact and reason have no place?

In regard to the effect of her life experiences on her fiction, the question is often raised whether "failure in love" darkened her comic vision. This will depend upon the reader's perspective of "dark." For those who see her comic vision as realistic and successful, it not an issue.

Another question often raised is whether failure in love too much narrowed her life and, as a result, the canvas or the scope of her writing. Put another way, was being single for a woman in her day a barrier to living in and writing about a larger world? Or being more active in that world? Or writing for and appealing to a larger range of readers? In 1979 Barbara Pym and I discussed criticism of E. M. Forster which likened him to someone lying on a beach in a deck chair observing and describing the swimmers and ending with an observation that he should have gotten in and swum himself. She took exception, thinking that the energy it took him to swim or just keep afloat, might have taken all the energy he had to write. We know from Pym's diaries and letters that she had a great deal of experience that did not go identifiably into her writing. Consequently, her scope and canvas appears to be of her own choice. She could have written of student days at Oxford, the war, her work in various war offices and in Naples, of Germany and Austria on the eve of the war, as those were all within the realm of her travels and personal experience.

Why Henry Harvey did not return Barbara Pym's love is one of the imponderables, but it may make more sense to ask why he should have done so. It is a commonplace of love or romance that individuals may not love someone otherwise attractive to them simply because that person's affection is unstintingly given rather than difficult to gain. In his essay *A Successful Life*, Robert Liddell stresses the burden that unreturned love places on the loved one. That Barbara retained Henry's friendship and earned at last his highest regard is significant. He told a PEN Club meeting:

> Barbara was a triumphantly good person . . . And her goodness grew. Whatever it was, the moral effect of the exercise of the imagination in Wordsworth's sense, or her Christian routines, she seemed to me more wholly a good person than I would have thought anyone could be. When I went to see her a couple of days before she died – we listed people she did *not* want to come and see her, but quite without malice. It was great fun. Her spirit was high.

One hopes he had also said these things or similar ones to Barbara. On the other hand, having one's "goodness" recognized or praised is not *quite* the same as being fallen in love with.

A central fact of her life is that Barbara Pym dived or leaped into love, she didn't just fall. She reached for romance and the adventure of love with energy and passion and good cheer and enthusiasm. She both pretended and played and felt. Not only did she dive in, she savoured. Throughout her journals she marked special occasions as the first or best such time she has had. She didn't want the experience to end or to forget it. In fact, the diaries admittedly exist mainly to record times she saw whomever she was in love with at the time. Even the little day books from the early 1960s record when Richard Roberts ("Skipper") called or made an appearance. John Bayley has observed that as a diary writer Pym is "better than almost anyone at the Feel of being in love, which is a solitary matter shared with the diary self." He sees part of the pleasure as imagining the lover reading the entry.

Barbara Pym enjoyed and suffered. It was particularly the men in her life who made this possible. These experiences were vital to her development, painful as they sometimes were. They added knowledge to the perception and consciousness with which she was born and helped make her the writer she was.

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The primary sources for this essay include the published Pym novels; the collection of Pym materials housed in the Bodleian library including journals and diaries, unpublished works, and correspondence between Pym and the men in her life; the autobiographical, *A Very Private Eye*, edited by Hazel Holt and Hilary Pym Walton, and the biography, *A Lot to Ask* by Hazel Holt. Many other published studies of Pym's life and works provide insights and theories of individual scholars regarding the influence upon her works of her close attachments.

Abridged version of the paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Barbara Pym Society, St Hilda's College, Oxford University, 8 September 2002, and the 2003 North American Conference, Harvard, 29 March 2003.

Publications

The works of Patricia Shaw

Patricia Shaw, who died in 1998, was Professor of English Literature at the University of Oviedo, and founder-Chair of the Spanish Society for Mediaeval English Language and Literature (as well as a keen member of the BPS. Her obituary appeared in *Green Leaves* 6.2, November 2000). Now those two august bodies have combined to produce *Obra Reunida de Patricia Shaw*, in four handsome volumes, and have presented a set to the library of St Hilda's in her memory.

The set contains sixty-one essays, 29 in Spanish, 32 in English. Two of them, featuring the works of Barbara Pym, were reviewed in *Green Leaves* alongside her obituary. We can best give the flavour of this collection of delightful and scholarly essays by quoting some of their titles.

Vol. 1, *Estudios Medievales,* (16 essays) includes, among others: 'Loathly Ladies, Lither Ladies and Leading Ladies: The older woman in Middle English Literature'; 'Monster-Mothers and Minster-Mothers: the role of the older woman in Anglo-Saxon writing'; '"Of fish and flesh and tender breede / of win both white and reede": eating & drinking in Middle English narrative texts'; 'Representations and functions of widowhood in Middle English writings.'

Vol. 2, *Literatura renacentista,* (11 essays) includes: 'Ale wives, Old Wives, Widows and Witches: the Older Woman in English Renaissance Studies'; 'Mad Moll and Merry Meg: the Roaring Girl as Popular Heroine in Elizabethan & Jacobean writings'; 'Macbeth and The Critics.'

Vol. 3, *La novela inglesa,* (14 essays) includes: 'Characteristics and Conventions of the English Detective Novel'; 'Humour in the Novels of George Eliot'; 'Anthony Powell's *A Dance to the music of time*'; 'Las novelas cortas de Jane Austen'; 'The View in Winter: the Theme of Old Age in Contemporary English Fiction'; 'Barbara Pym: the Jane Austen of Our Day'; 'The Romanticism of Mary Wollstonecraft';' Clarissa Harlowe: A Revaluation'; 'Sheridan Le Fanu: Master of the Occult, the Uncanny and the Ominous'; 'The idealization of America and Americans in English Novels of the 1790s'.

Vol. 4, *Miscelanea,* (20 essays) includes: 'The Pursuit of Love: a Motive for Literary Humour'; 'English Humour in English Literature'; *'The bewties of the fut-ball*: Reactions and References to this *Boysterous Sport* in English writings'; 'Samuel Pepys y España'; 'La poesia de T. S. Eliot'; 'The Linguistic Content of the Popular Comic'.

A Woman's Pastoral: Dialogue with Literary Tradition in Barbara Pym's Fiction by Barbara Kowalik. Marie Curie-Sklodowska University Press, Lublin 2002, 329 pp. Index. www.ika.edu.pl http://www.ika.edu.pl ISBN 83-227-1881-0. The book can be ordered, for 18 euros plus postage, from: Marta Kornaszewska, Lexicon, Ksiegarnia Wysylkowa, Maciej Wolinski, 02-550 WARSZAWA, ul. Kielecka 16m.4; e-mail lexicon@medianet.pl

"No shepherd, no pastoral" was Leo Marx's definition of the genre, and it would seem immediately to exclude any novels by Barbara Pym. However, Barbara Kowalik argues convincingly that they are, indeed, placed firmly within the pastoral tradition. True, Arcadia has been transported to northern English climes and the Arcadian shepherds have been transformed into middle-aged spinsters, but this subversion is itself an aspect of pastoral/ comic writing which makes Barbara Pym's work so much a part of the genre.

It is a crucial shift of emphasis to any devotees of Pym's novels because what Kowalik argues is that an injustice is done if the novels are kept within the framework of the realistic novel and, specifically, the woman's novel with its emphasis on ordinariness, domesticity and so on. There is a richness and complexity in the novels, with their poetic and dramatic qualities, which is lost unless explored at other levels.

Kowalik traces the history of pastoral tradition, beginning with Theocritus and Virgil, and follows it through its poetic development in English literature to its transmutation into prose fiction in the 19th century .She draws upon the theories of Bakhtin, the use of "ordinariness" or the "prosaic" in the novel. Kowalik argues that these so-called ordinary novels with their fictional worlds "close to nature with its archetypal patterns, appear to be realisations of the old pastoral convention". Within this pastoral mode the use of the comic is traditional and, as Bakhtin argues, is the basis for satirising society. The use of these two conventions by Pym places her in the line of English literature which is best exemplified by the work of Laurence Sterne. It is an interesting thesis and one which Kowalik explores in detail.

An analysis of the ways in which Pym's novels conform to the pastoral genre is provided in Part 2. Kowalik uses the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* as an example of the kind of fictional, pastoral world that is created; one which, set apart, has its own time-space, characters, ethos and is a peaceful haven in contrast to the 'other' society. We can see similarities in Pym's novels with her fictional communities – separated from larger society, frequently rural but, even when urban, not part of the mainstream. There is the use of the church as a central haven, both physically and socially and time is portrayed cyclically according to the seasons, representing order.

The portrayal of love in Pym's novels also conforms to the pastoral conventions. It is idealised, romantic and frequently unrequited. Any marriages are portrayed as dull and mostly undesirable and, as Kowalik argues, in pastoral 'married love and wedded bliss are almost contradictions in terms'. In other ways Pym's novels conform to the conventions of the pastoral genre; the particular uses of literary allusion and the choice of titles and names confirms the ties with pastoral; the forms of love include friendships, love of nature and animals all of which have their precedents in pastoral literature. All of these aspects are analysed in great detail and identify Pym's work as being within the pastoral tradition.

However, Kowalik does recognise that it is not a simple relationship. She is aware of the reductive nature of using, for example, the characters as types rather than seeing them as the unique individu-

als that they undoubtedly are as well. She is also aware of the way in which Pym uses the pastoral mode in a comic, deflationary way to expose what Kowalik sees as the dominant patriarchal culture. This, of course, is within the tradition of the comic in pastoral as described by Bakhtin. Thus the pursuers of romantic love are not young shepherds but ageing spinsters, and the world is seen through their eyes. In *Some Tame Gazelle*, for example, the competition between Agatha and Belinda for Henry is explored in terms of their literary knowledge, and Belinda feels that Agatha originally won him 'because she knew a great deal more about medieval English literature'. Kowalik compares this with the shepherds' singing competitions in the traditional pastoral, but here it is the women who are active pursuers of love and who, comically, compete. These are heroines, not heroes, and they are mature, independent, and intelligent, not 'rural lasses'. They take the initiative, form friendships, take care of others, and are lovers of nature and animals. Sometimes these are presented in the elegiac mode and sometimes as comic, but it is the women who are central to the action.

Thus Pym can be seen to use the genre in a way that challenges the conventions while drawing on them. I will give a final example of this with Kowalik's analysis of the fool. The fool as defined by Bakhtin has been transformed into the spinster. Jessie Morrow is a fine example, both laughed at and laughing at others and herself. She observes, frequently unseen;she can be comic and roguish; she is put in a position of inferiority by society but, at the same time, she questions and challenges that position. So it is through such portrayals that Barbara Pym presents women as the central characters in her version of pastoral; they maintain the ideal. It is they who labour, who meditate, who create order.

I found this a most enjoyable and insightful analysis of Barbara Pym's novels and feel that it adds considerably to the body of critical works. There are many original and exciting ideas in the analysis of women and their roles in her fiction. Although Pym's feminism may be described as 'mild', nevertheless, Kowalik argues, within this pastoral framework she places woman to the fore and fosters the image of 'woman's dignity, self-worth, and creativity'.

Maureen Wooley

Four British Woman Novelists: Anita Brookner, Margaret Drabble, Iris Murdoch, Barbara Pym; An Annotated and Critical Secondary Bibliography by George Soule. Lanham, MD and London: Scarecrow Press, and Passadena, CA and Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Salem Press, 1998. 521 pp. Index. £51.50. ISBN 0-8108-3505-3. Hardback.

The annotation and criticism of the subtitle are indeed full and through in this bibliography of four woman novelists. Murdoch dominates it, but, of the final 77 pages devoted to works on Pym, criticism of the first two, by Katherine Ackley, takes a full page; Janice Rossen's volume, *The world of Barbara Pym*, receives a detailed account of nearly two pages.

The first section, on 'General Studies', covers 107 items – books or articles; then, in 'Criticism of individual novels', more are treated in the same way. Some fascinating titles are included: "The language of Christianity in Pym's novels", "What shall we do with our old maids?", "Cozy heroines: quotidian bravery in Barbara Pym's novels", "Humoring the sentence: women's dialogic comedy", "Pym's homosexuals" and "For the ovaltine had losened her tongue".

The most frequently cited authors on Pym are Anne Wyatt-Brown (17 references in the index), Janice Rossen (16), and Katherine Ackley, Orphia Jane Allen and Charles Burkhart (14 each).

An admirably thorough reference book, but also enjoyable just to browse in.

Hazel K. Bell

Index to the writings of Barbara Pym

If you can't remember in which of Barbara Pym's books Mrs Gammon appears, a mincing machine is mentioned, or the Book of Revelations quoted,* you need Hazel Bell's index. As well as answering these and hundreds of other such questions, it provides at a glance a remarkable overview of the variety of topics discussed in the novels (and in some cases the diaries and letters too). Just browsing through the index makes you want to go back to the books. Not surprisingly, some of the most substantial entries concern food, clothes and the clergy. The entry for 'food' has cross-references to 'breakfast; cafés; cooking; dinner; lunches; restaurants; suppers; and individual entries' (such as 'cauliflower cheese'). A distinction is made between 'fish (as food)' and 'fish (in pond)'. Under 'hymns', as many as 29 hymn titles are listed as well as several more general references to hymns.

It is all here in this indispensable tool.

Hazel has indicated the page numbers on which the characters, topics, places and products first appear in each of the books, and has thoughtfully supplied a table of the first pages of chapters in the editions used for the index, in case your editions have different pagination, to narrow down the search.

* Mrs Gammon: *An Unsuitable Attachment* 11
Mincing machine: *Less than Angels* 26
Revelations: *Some Tame Gazelle* 107

Christine Shuttleworth

The index is online (A-F sections only as yet) at http://www.spore.it/pym/BPwritings_index.htm. Printed copies, 40 pages in A5 format, can be obtained from the Development & Alumnae Office, St Hilda's College, Oxford, OX4 1DY, cost £2.00 plus 50p postage & packing. Cheques should be made payable to the 'Barbara Pym Society'. For more information phone 01865 276828.

Anne Tyler on Barbara Pym

Anne Tyler, American novelist and winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Literature in 1989, wrote the foreword to the single-volume edition of *Excellent Women, Jane and Prudence, and An Unsuitable Attachment* published by the Quality Paperback Book Club in 1984. It is a most interesting essay to read.

Tyler starts her essay by imagining Barbara Pym and Jane Austen "united at last in some genteel parlor in heaven" and trying to work on a novel together. Austen brings up the question of romantic interest, with a slew of questions to consider, including – How will the heroine catch him? Pym replies, "But why on earth would she *want* him?" Tyler notes that although Pym sympathizes with Austen's

approach to romance, she has "a good humored" suspicion that the hero may not be worth the trouble. In fact, during this heavenly conversation, Pym listens to Austen almost as an anthropologist would on hearing about the beliefs of some primitive tribe. Recalling that at least one Pym character believed that the novelist and the anthropologist shared much in common, Tyler thinks Rupert Stonebird could be sued for plagiarism for suggesting that he present a paper entitled 'The Wiles of Nice Women in a Civilised Society.' After all, Pym has already covered the topic in her ten novels.

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Tyler finds that *Excellent Women* is the novel she would suggest to someone who wanted to learn what Pym was all about by reading one of her books. She views Mildred Lathbury as probably the most likeable and funniest of Pym's characters. Though Mildred is earnest, she is also "subject to a kind of inner bubble of amusement at unlikely moments."

Tyler notes that although the central concern of EW is the existence of excellent women such as Mildred, the notion of "less-than-excellent-men" is almost as important. Women in the novels may observe that men usually don't do things unless they like to or have natures that are "so much less noble" than theirs, but such remarks contain no "asperity." As Tyler notes, the women seem to be saying that the men "mean no more harm than children do" and that they must be "humored in their foibles while the women get on with the business of life." Tyler reminds us of Mrs Morris's comment, in discussing the vicar's sermon, "That's all very fine, standing up and talking about the Pope. A lot of us could do that. But who's going to cook the Sunday dinner?" The section on EW ends with Mildred imagining herself peeling potatoes at Everard Bone's sink, wondering if any man is worth the burden, and deciding that in the end "it might turn out to be not so heavy after all."

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Tyler finds *Jane and Prudence* the most comic of Pym's novels. With the plot set in motion by Jane's desire to find a "more suitable" match for Prudence than Arthur Grampian, Tyler points out that much of the humor in the novels "derives from the unspoken suggestion that in a sense, there can be no suitable match for any woman, if it's men you're trying to match them up with." Certainly Fabian Driver is unsuitable, though even he is somewhat perceptive – he realizes that Prudence and Constance both excelled in letter writing compared with him. Here Tyler becomes Pym-like, imagining Constance Driver and Prudence Bates sending each other "lengthy, poignant missives full of quoted verse, once they've shaken off the crude male presence of Fabian."

Tyler notes that Jane is the first, and very nearly the last, of Pym's married women heroines. She finds Jane "especially interesting because she is the only married woman with whom Barbara Pym seems to have identified." Jane has "a writer's fascination with words," as when she ponders over Canon Pritchard's being "called to a higher sphere." Tyler claims, we "might even go so far as to say that Jane is a sort of honorary spinster." She believes Jane is much like Mildred Lathbury, who would have applauded Jane's remark about listening to gloomy plays on the wireless and wishing that someone would make a cup of tea. Jane, like Mildred, tends to "wander off absently in a swamp of metaphor," as when she states that the family, newly arrived in the village, are like "people coming into a the cinema in the middle of a film."

Tyler finds Prudence another "departure" for Pym, as she is far from the "prim spinster" encountered in the earlier novels, citing her obvious pursuit of men, her failure to meet the highest moral standards (though this is only hinted), and "above all, oh, the very worst: overdressing."

Tyler asks whether anyone has written a paper entitled "Clothing as Indicator of Character in the Novels of Barbara Pym." Her own analysis indicates that both "decorous, tailored garments of natural fibers" and "the meek and shapeless costumes of Jane Cleveland and Mildred Lathbury" are signs of "personal excellence." On the other hand, we find Prudence at the village whist drive in a green and gold shot taffeta cocktail dress!

Tyler believes that a "curious reversal" is under way in J&P: Prudence is not a "natural-born Pym heroine" while Miss Morrow, who is "reserved, intelligent, and sardonic" is. Tyler believes that Pym may have decided to "turn the situation over and approach it from an unexpected angle." Though our loyalties are with Prudence, "there's a moment when we realize that if the situation had been presented differently — as in Barbara Pym's other novels — it might have been Miss Morrow whom we cheered on."

*

Tyler thinks the plot of *An Unsuitable Attachment* may be a bit "disconcerting". She touches on its history, its rejection by publishers, and what are referred to as Pym's wilderness years, 1963 to 1977. She asks whether Pym may have retreated during this period owing to some private sorrow, unrelated to her publisher's rejections.

Tyler finds a "dogged quality," in the final third of AUA, as it is the first of her novels to have "lengthy, solid paragraphs of pure getting-from-here-to-there." She finds the ending curiously flat, "lacking in conviction."

The characters of AUA remind Tyler of the cast in J&P, the groups sharing many of the same aims. "Penelope would like a man, Sophia would like to find one for her, and Rupert Stonebird is always willing to attach himself to some attractive woman." But the character Pym cares most about is Ianthe Broome — the "self-contained librarian." Again, Tyler focuses on clothes, noting that Ianthe wears "ladylike stockings with seams" and good shoes with a "sensible heel", and her dresses "are linen or wool or silk, generally in a nice medium blue." By contrast Penelope shows up a dinner party with pointy shoes, a string of black beads and a "silver lamé cocktail dress that splits down the back halfway through the evening." Tyler implies that one might expect Ianthe to emerge the victor in the contest for Rupert's affections, knowing what clothes meant to Pym. But John Challow changes all of that. When Challow moves into the spotlight, Tyler believes, "the book develops a vagueness that's surprising after all the fine-tuning we've come to take for granted in Barbara Pym." We learn little about John, and even when he declares himself in Ianthe's garden, "it reminds one of those shying-away camera shots (leaves falling; or a window shade lowered) at intimate moments in old movies."

Tyler notes that this novel ends happily, despite the "many unhappy notes scattered through it." She finds particularly arresting Sophia's comment when telling her husband that Ianthe wishes to marry: "We've both had this picture of her which was so pleasing and comfortable and all the time she's been wanting something more."

Tyler wonders whether Barbara Pym may have been trying to suggest that she dreamed of a happier ending for her own life. But she is quick to add that Pym, to be honest, might add that "she couldn't make herself believe that the accepted version of a happy ending was as wonderful as most people claim it to be"

Despite certain weaknesses, Tyler believes that AUA contains "some real joys" — including Faustina, the scenes of the English travelers abroad, and the cameo appearances of Lady Selvedge, Sister Dew, and Everard Bone. Indeed, Tyler thinks one of Pym's most "endearing quirks" is the difficulty she has in saying goodbye to her characters. She

mentions other characters who make reappearances, including Esther Clovis, who, until her death is announced in *A Few Green Leaves*, is likely to "sail through at the oddest moments."

Yet Tyler believes that Pym left nothing to sheer happenstance, enjoying the habit of dropping in thematic references to anthropology. Thus we have Sophia's buying Penelope new shoes and a necklace after some disappointment in love, "like early travelers taking presents to natives." And in ladies' rooms we find women "working at their faces with savage concentration."

Tyler ends by noting that Pym was engaged in a lifelong study of two astonishing tribes: "civilized" men and "civilized" women. Coming back to the beginning of this fine essay, and to the two writers whom she pictures conversing in that higher sphere, Tyler imagines Pym telling Austen that she has never found the two tribes to be all that closely related — then smiling and leaning back in her chintz-covered chair, as she awaits Jane Austen's reply.

Beverly Bell

Obituaries

Maeve Brennan 1929-2003

Maeve Brennan, who died on 11 June, 2003, will be remembered in literary circles as the colleague, muse, lover and faithful friend of Philip Larkin; and as the author of an admirable memoir, *The Philip Larkin I Knew*, published in 2002.

Born in Hull in 1929, Maeve lived there all her life there, graduating from the University of Hull, where she secured a job as library assistant, in January 1953. Two years later she and her colleagues were introduced to the newly appointed University Librarian, Philip Larkin.

Maeve was twice engaged. A devout Roman Catholic, her first engagement was broken off on the grounds of religious incompatibility. Her second ended because of another attachment.

When, in 1960, Larkin decided to give regular tuition to members of his staff who were studying for the Library Association examinations, Maeve joined the class. As a reward for her hard work he invited her out to dinner. When she passed the exam another celebration was called for, and their friendly association escalated into a love affair which endured for the greater part of two decades.

The affair gave rise to painful feelings of guilt and frustration in both parties. Maeve was aware from the start of Larkin's aversion to marriage, and of his long-standing attachment to Monica Jones at the University of Leicester. Steadfast in her Catholic faith, Maeve was by no means complacent regarding her failure to live up to her own ideal standards.

Eventually Larkin's divided loyalty brought about the end of their affair, in 1978. There remained, however, a firm friendship, based on lasting affection and, in Larkin's words, 'undimmed memories'.

Maeve joined the Barbara Pym Society just over a year before her death. It is sad that she will no longer be able to enjoy, and contribute to, the Society's activities.

Phil Bacon

James Hale

James Hale, publisher, editor and literary agent, who was Fiction Publisher with Macmillan from 1982 (when they published An Unsuitable Attachment to 1988, died in London on 14 August 2003.

James Hale was Hazel Holt's agent, and it had been planned that he might also become agent for the literary estate of Barbara Pym.

Two poems by Barbara Pym, found in her archives in the Bodleian Library. The first is dated February 1973; the second, February 1972.

Field Work

When an older woman came into the room
He stood up, not knowing why he did so.
The Trobriand Islanders might have explained his action,
Had they been the anthropologist
And he the tribe being investigated.
I, that older woman so politely treated,
Felt only pleasure at his gracious manners
And relief that he did not look into my eyes
So that nothing was demanded of me
And I could observe him without his knowing that I did so.

Afro-American folksong

(inspired by searching through *Michigan African Studies Cen Newsletter* with the first hint of spring in the air)

As I was a-data-gathering one fine May morning,
I spied a pretty maiden who so sweetly did sing,
'I am presently a doctoral candidate for my Ph.D.,
Can you spare a few data, sir, and give them to me?'

'Young woman, I'm the rapporteur,' I said to that maid,
And coordinator of a program for which I've been paid
With a Foreign Area Fellowship, so I think it is clear
That I cannot give you any data for your Ph.D, my dear.'

'But if you will come with me to my next Seminar,
Where participants will be gathered from near and far,
With readings of papers and discussions all week,
I think that you will find there the data you seek.'

She sprang away from me 'Oh, no, sir,' she cried,
'I will not come to your Seminar, for I have my pride.
I'd rather gather data barefoot than fall for that old trick!
Away with you, false rapporteur, your suggestions make me sick!'

Pym gleanings

In books

** *Three Junes* by Julia Glass (Pantheon, 2002).

Jack is the tour leader, Marj and Paul are tour members. they are in Greece.

> "There's one on every tour," Jack says of Marjorie: a den mother, someone who likes to do his job for him. And Marj is a good sport, he says, not a bad traveler. He likes her. But she exasperates Paul. She is a heroine out of a Barbara Pym novel: bookish, dependable, magnanimously stubborn, and no doubt beneath it all profoundly disappointed. At an age when she might do well to tint her hair, she's taken up pride in her plainness as if it were a charitable cause.

** A. S. Byatt writes in the introduction to *On Histories and Stories* (Chatto & Windus, 2000):

> The French know everything about Barbara Pym, whose English quaintness responds to their stereotypes of Englishness.

** The entry for Barbara Pym in the *Bloomsbury Reading Guide* by Kenneth McLeish (1996) reads:

> Only Jane Austen and Ivy Compton-Burnett wrote about worlds as restricted as Pym's – and she is regularly compared to both of them. Her books are high-Anglican high comedies; she is tart about the kind of pious middle-class ladies who regard giving sherry-parties for the clergy as doing good works, and she is merciless to priests. Much of the charm of her books lies in their ornate, formal dialogue: her characters all speak with the same prissy, self-conscious elegance, like civil servants taught light conversation by Oscar Wilde.
>
> *A Glass of Blessings*: Wilmet Forsyth is rich, well-bred, happy and dim. She fills her mind with fantasies about the priests and parishioners at her local church, imagining that their lives are a whirl of hidden passions, ambitions and frustrations. She imagines herself in love with a handsome evening-class teacher, and assumes that he adores her too. As the book proceeds, every one of these assumptions is proved spectacularly, ludicrously mistaken.

** From *Original sin* by P. D. James (Faber & Faber, 1994:

> [Miss Blackett] sipping her sherry looked across at her cousin ... A sensible face, people might say. A sensible face for a sensible woman, one of Barbara Pym's excellent women but with none of the gentleness or reticence of a Barbara Pym heroine, applying a ruthless kindness to the problems of the village ...

** From *The Sixth Continent, a literary history of Romney Marsh* by Iain Finlayson, Atheneum 1986, p. 226:

> Readers of The *Times Literary Supplement* might have read, on 18 October 1985, David Cecil's recommendation of an unjustly neglected novel, *Crossriggs*, by Mary and Jane Findlater. Since his previous recommendation of the neglected novels by Barbara Pym rocketed that lady to late literary fame, David Cecil may be taken to have a nose for the recondite and an uncanny sense of timing.

** John Updike's review of *Excellent Women* and *Quartet in Autumn* on their first publication in US, in *New Yorker*, 26 Feb. 1979, was republished in *Hugging the Shore: Essays and Criticism*, Knopf, 1983. His observations include:

> An unfortunate effect of such simulataneous exposure is to reveal, of two books written over twenty years apart, how alike they are, even to striking, on the last page, the identical muted chord.

and –

> Mildred Lathbury is one of the last of the great narrating English virgins ... her tale has some of the power of the portion of *Bleak House* narrated by Esther Summerson – the power, that is, of virtue, with its artistic complement of perfect moral pitch and unforcedly clear discriminations.

** Chapter 20 of Anne Lamott's novel *Rosie* (The Viking Press, 1983) begins:

> The next morning, Elizabeth sat on the porch swing reading *Excellent Women*.

(No further references to that novel or its author.)

In the press

** Katherine Duncan-Jones, reviewing P. D. James's novel, *The Murder Room* (Faber), in *The Oldie*, November 2003, writes:

> A richly absorbing, generous narrative frame allows James scope for moments of Barbara Pymish cosiness as well as scenes of du Maupassant-like horror, the two styles being skilfully interwoven. Here, after discovering a particularly horrible death, two elderly women comfort each other *à la* Pym: 'They sat at the table opposite each other. The scrambled egg was perfect, creamy and warm and slightly peppery. There was a sprig of parsley on each plate.'
>
> Pym-like too is James's palpable pleasure in describing the 'gloriously adorned interior' of All Saints, Margaret Street, in which 'as the door is closed behind her the quiet air and the serried ranks of empty chairs imparted a more subtle mystery'.

** *Saga Magazine* runs a column of diary extracts through the years for its month of publication, "Dear Diary". In September 2003 it included an item from Pym's *A Very Private Eye*, for 26 September 1933:

> What funny things one does – I finish an essay on The Puritanism of Spenser and Milton and then dash off to the Regal to see *42nd Street* which was good – all legs and music.

In June 2003 it ran the *Very Private Eye* entry for 13 June 1932:

> I had a note from Rupert and Miles asking me to go to the flicks. I dashed to Carfax at 7.30 and we went to *Goodnight Vienna* at the Queener. It was lovely, and somehow appropriate. We sat at the back in the corner and I had two arms around me for the first time in my history. The flick was over at 10, so we stopped at the coffee stall by Cowley Place on our way back. We drank to each other in chocolate Horlicks.

** The front page of *The Independent Review* of 18 August 2003 shows a full-page photograph of P. D. James, standing before her bookshelves. Eye-catching on these, lying prominently on James's left, level with her chin, is, identifiably, *A Very Private Eye* by Barbara Pym.

** D. J. Taylor, reviewing Salley Vickers' third novel, *Mr Golightly's Holiday*, in *The Spectator* of 16 August 2003, comments:

> The narrative saunters whimsically on, one step up from the village comedies of Miss Read but a good many notches south of Barbara Pym.

** *The Guardian*'s weekly competition, 'Folio Incognito', that challenges readers to identify authors of extracts, on 9 August 2003 included three paragraphs from

Quartet in Autumn, chapter 2: Letty's late arrival at the office 'due to a person under the train at Hammersmith'.

** In an article about quotations, 'In others' words' by Hazel K. Bell in *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, July 2003, Pym is cited thus:

> Next most evidently there may be clear acknowledgement [of the source of quotation] in the narrative, as when Belinda in Barbara Pym's *Some Tame Gazelle* observes, on hearing that a friend is installing a fish pond in his garden: 'Leigh Hunt writes rather charmingly about a fish – "Legless, unloving, infamously chaste"'; or Basil in Pym's *An Unsuitable Attachment* calls a wedding couple 'Imparadised in one another's arms, as Milton put it'.

** *The Weekend Telegraph* for 7 June 2003, under the headline: 'Miss Pym, the not so prim' in its 'Literary landscapes' series, devotes the greater part of a page to Barbara Pym. Victor Osborne writes of her life and work, and describes a visit to Finstock, near Oxford, with an interview with Hilary Walton, Barbara's sister.

The article begins:

> The popularity of the novelist Barbara Pym, who died in 1980, is being revived after many years of neglect in which all her books went out of print in Britain. With luck, the revival may also bring a sympathetic reassessment of her reputation. She was one of the most acute observers of English village life and yet, as a person and a writer, she has been unfairly sidelined as "the prim Miss Pym".

Further down, we read:

> Barbara Pym belongs to that rare group of writers, which includes Graham Greene, Charles Dickens and Jane Austen – with whom she has often been compared – who created a world that was unmistakably their own, and is instantly recognisable.

The article is accompanied by photographs of Wychwood Forest, the original cover of Jane and Prudence, Pym herself, Cornbury House by Wychwood Forest, Finstock village, Finstock church and Oxfordshire countryside, and a map of Oxfordshire around the Forest.

** *The Times* marked what would have been Pym's 50th birthday in its 'Anniversaries' column on 2 June 2003.

> BIRTHS: Barbara Pym enjoyed modest success as a novelist after the publication of her debut *Some Tame Gazelle* in 1949. Five more novels would follow until 1963 when Jonathan Cape, her publisher, rejected *An Unsuitable Attachment*, deeming it out of step with the times. For many years she was in "the wilderness"; she wrote in 1970: "I get moments of gloom and pessimism when it seems as if nobody could ever like my kind of writing again". In the January 21, 1977, issue of *The Times Literary Supplement*, Barbara Pym was named by Philip Larkin and Lord David Cecil as "the most underrated novelist of the century." Almost overnight, her literary career was reborn and all twelve of her novels were quickly republished. She was born on this day in 1913.

** *The Independent*' column, 'Days like these', for 3 April 2003, reproduced Pym's diary entry for 3 April 1940, beginning:

> This morning I polished up an old box I found upstairs – it is of walnut with black and yellow inlay and a brass crest. It makes a beautiful box for relics ...

** From *The New York Times*, September 14, 1997, Claude Rawson reviewing *Jane Austen: A Life* by David Nokes (Farrar, Straus & Giroux):

> Her scope, in letters and fiction alike, is the immediate environment. She spoke of "the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labor." This famous account ... is self-deprecating, but has a high consciousness of craft. What it doesn't mention is the extraordinary human resonance of her microscopically attentive notations: motives probed with a Jamesian attention to nuance, a Chekhovian blend of irony and pathos, but also the peculiarly English self-undercutting found also in Philip Larkin and Barbara Pym.

In academia

The abstract of Eleonore Biber's PhD. thesis, "The modern Anglo-Catholic novel: "Aspects of Anglo-Catholicism as reflected in the novels of Barbara Pym and A. N. Wilson", runs:

> This study examines the portrayal of the Anglo-Catholic milieu in the novels of Barbara Pym and A.N. Wilson. The introduction provides a definition of Anglo-Catholicism as a section of the High Church movement in the Church of England affirming its apostolic and sacramental character, an overview of the High Church tradition throughout the period from the Reformation to the end of the 20th century, and a survey of Anglo-Catholic novels from the Oxford movement to our time.
>
> Pym's religious background is interpreted in the light of her diaries, literary notebooks, autobiographical reflections and statements by her circle of friends. In charting A.N. Wilson's literary career, the focus is on his development from fervent Anglo-Catholic to convinced agnostic.
>
> The study argues that the novels of both writers provide a repository of information on Anglo-Catholicism.
>
> Features of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism such as slum priests, the eccentric monk Father Ignatius, young male devotees, church architecture in the wake of the Oxford movement and hymns are discussed.
>
> Aspects of modern Anglo-Catholicism are amply reflected in Pym's and Wilson's fiction: types of priests, theological colleges, the attitude towards the ordination of women, today's religious orders, the role of the laity, the calendar, forms of worship, vestments, incense, auricular confession, the pilgrimage to Walsingham, ecumenical relations.
>
> The conclusion contrasts Pym's and Wilson's strategies and individual emphases.

On the web

** The website of Maplewood, New Jersey, describes the regular rummage sales of Morrow Memorial Methodist Church, with a concluding paragraph:

> The heroine of English novelist Barbara Pym's *Excellent Women* surveys the rummage sale at which she volunteers and muses, "It's rather nice to think of churches being united through jumble sales. I wonder if the Methodists are having one too?" Indeed they are, at Merrow Church in Maplewood, for the seventieth year in a row.

** A site called 'Famous Women Who Died of Breast Cancer' by Carol Sutton includes this item, which we reproduce exactly as it appears:

> Barbara Mary Crampton Pym: born June 2, 1913 in Oswestry, Shropshire, England; had breast cancer surgery in 1971 and died of cancer on January 11, 1980. Her book *Quartet in Autumn*, was shortlisted for The Booker Prize for literature.
>
> Pym wrote six books and published between 1950 and 1980. Pym's niece, Hazel Holt and her sister, Hilary Pym, edited an autobiography in diaries and letters.
>
> These notes are courtesy of my mother-in-law, Lyle Fauteux.

The Barbara Pym Web Site

Several years ago Claudia di Giorgio of Italy, an enthusiastic Pym reader, added a Barbara Pym site to her personal Web page –

http://www.spore.it/pym/society.htm.

(She wrote about it in *Green Leaves* Vol. 8 No. 1, May 2000, page 8.) The Pym presence on the Internet drew interested readers from all over the world, many of whom joined the Society and/or joined the online discussion group now at www.yahoogroups.com. The Pym Society designated Claudia's site as the Official Barbara Pym Society Home Page.

Three years ago I developed a Web site for the North American Barbara Pym Society to facilitate registration for the annual BP conferences at Harvard. At that time it became clear that Claudia was unable to maintain her Web site (the last time it was updated was December 2001), and gradually my site came to carry news of the U.K. Pym Society as well.

At its meeting in June 2002, the executive committee of the BPS agreed to make the North American Web site the official Internet home of the Society and to expand the information to include both branches of the organization. Deirdre Bryan-Brown was named the BP Society's Web manager. Currently the Web site includes membership information and downloadable forms; news of conferences, both past and upcoming; links to books by and about Barbara; speeches and photographs of past conferences; and a brief biography of Barbara.

I am the "owner" of barbara-pym.org, but the job of posting information is in the capable hands of Webmaster Sherrie Saint John, an energetic, enterprising and creative friend to whom I introduced Barbara Pym. (My goal is to manage the site myself, but it's more fun working with Sherrie!)

We recently added a counter to determine the number of visitors to the site. At the time of writing, the number stands at 810 visitors since July 2003. The Web site produces a steady trickle of new members for the Society, many of whom have expressed their delight in discovering a Pym fellowship.

Thus, Barbara Pym lives on through her incomparable works, both on the written page and in cyberspace.

Ellen Miller

Reading "Parrot's Eggs". *Left to right*: **Tim Burnett, Michael Macke, Robin Joyce, Tom Sopko, Rita Phillips, Michael Wilson, Stephen Shell, Jean Jamieson, Deirdre Bryan-Brown**