Green Leaves

The Journal of the Barbara Pym Society Vol. 12, No. 1 May 2006

The Barbara Pym Society of North America Conference, 2006

Professor Isabel Stanley examines the epistolary friendship of Pym and Larkin.

For the eighth straight year, the rain fell on schedule for the meeting of the Society's North American branch, which got under way Saturday morning, April 1, at Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Ellen Miller greeted us with the news that we had representatives from across the country as well as from Austria, Canada, and the UK. Meanwhile, a glance around the room showed that several knitters were in the audience, bringing a touch of the trivial round and common pursuit to our scholarly discussions. This year, we met in a different building; but though different pigeons may have come to the window, we quickly adapted to the change. After all, it is the fellowship and intellectual stimulation (and fairy cakes and tea) that bring us to Harvard each spring. Also, lunch and dinner were closer at hand in our new location, though this didn't encourage anyone to wear unsuitable shoes. This year, a total of 82 attended the conference, of which a good number were first-timers. Ellen read from Barbara's entry dated April 1, 1943, in *A Very Private Eye* – "Well, the beginning of a fourth month and a donkey, then two donkeys, eating the cabbages in the garden. (April Fool.)" – and then introduced the first speaker.

Isabel Stanley, whose dissertation topic was "The Anglican Clergy in the Novels of Barbara Pym," is a professor of English at East Tennessee State University. Examining the epistolary friendship of Barbara Pym and Philip Larkin, she noted the encouragement and kindness that Larkin showed for Pym during their 19 years of friendship. Both writers were shy, and had a love of ordinary routines and small daily treats. During Pym's final illness, Larkin sent her many witty letters. The two writers had a similar sense of humor (witness the delight they took in sending dull post cards to one another while on holiday). Both even learned to drive in their 50s. One participant noted that Larkin's kindness and genuine consideration show through in the letters he sent to Pym – traits that might not have been evident in his correspondence with other people. The CD "Dear Miss Pym, Dear Mr. Larkin" was played in its entirety.

In the second presentation, "He Seems a Nice Boy, but Rather Unexpected," Eleonore Biber looked at the role of homosexuality in Pym's novels. Biber received a Ph.D. from the University of Vienna, and her work centers on the Anglo-Catholic novel and Victorian detective fiction. She examined Pym's interest in homosexual relationships, touching on the writer's own experiences with gay men who were friends or neighbors. She also looked at historical aspects of homosexuality, while giving special attention to Pym's portrayal of the microcosm of the church and its homosexual types. Various types of gay men in the novels were examined: the gossip, the gourmet, the lover of antiques, as well as extreme examples of camp sensibility (for instance, Terry in AFGL), the likeable Piers, and the villainous Ned. Biber also looked at duos of women. Her paper reinforced the

"A few green leaves can make such a difference." — Miss Grundy, A Few Green Leaves

Contents

U.S. Conference Report	1
Barbara Pym in Germany	3
Under the Spell of Barbara Pym	9
Review: *Reading Barbara Pym*	12
A Visit to Kelmscott Manor	13
Pym Gleanings	16

©*The Barbara Pym Society* ISSN 1360-9920

notion that Pym was very open to different lifestyles, putting her far ahead of her time in many respects.

After a delicious lunch, Ellen Miller told us about what one participant called a "church hall jumble-sale style" book sale that took place in Oxford before the 2005 conference. Listening to her talk – "Holding Barbara Pym's Volume of Donne: The Pym Book Sale at Blackwell's" – it was hard not to be envious of those who got to pick from a roomful of books "by Barbara Pym, about Barbara Pym, inscribed by and to Barbara Pym." The books were owned by Barbara and her sister Hilary, some with their signature on the flyleaf, some with scraps of paper inside, some with pressed flowers, some with marginal notes. The sale gave rise to many stories. For instance, Tom Sopko bought a copy of Donne's "Complete Poetry and Selected Prose," with "Oxford 1930" and Pym's name inside. He found pressed flowers on the pages with "The Relique" and "Elegie XIX: To His Mistris Going to Bed." Later he realized that in AUA, pressed flowers fall out of Penelope's copy of Donne when Mark Ainger opens it.

The next speaker was Robin Joyce, a Ph.D. candidate at Australian National University, who is working on a thesis on Jane Austen, Barbara Pym, Fay Weldon, and Zoe Fairbairns. Joyce discussed published and unpublished short stories of Pym, noting that these were written and published (although sporadically) over a long period. She divided Pym's short stories into four types: the plot with a twist, the happy ending, short stories that are major pieces of social commentary, and the character-driven story. She also discussed links between the short stories and the novels. Joyce passed out a very useful summary of eight of Pym's unpublished short stories. We agreed that Pym's novels are often made up of vignettes, which have much in common with the short story.

Janice Cooke, who has taught English at the University of New Orleans for 21 years, led a discussion about the short stories of Pym. Among the different points that were discussed were Jessie Morrow, and whether or not she was the same character in the two different novels (J&P and CH), the recurrence of characters (and names) in the novels, the appearance of Faustina in "A Christmas Visit," and the fact that "Goodbye Balkan Capital" was viewed by Henry Harvey as Pym's best novel, owing to the complexity, length, and detail of its sentences.

Pym's novels are often made up of vignettes, which have much in common with the short story.

The BBC films – "Tea with Miss Pym" and "Miss Pym's Day Out" – and the "Desert Island Discs" audio were played before an appreciative audience.

On Sunday morning, Father Gabriel Myers spoke about Hilary Pym Walton, who died last year. The sources for his talk were 14 letters from Hilary (written between 1992 and 2001) and his three visits to Finstock in 1998, 1999, and 2002. Titling his talk "The Countess of Finstock," he noted that if Harriet Bede had outlived her beloved sister, she might have acquiesced to Ricardo Bianco's proposals, and become a countess.

Myers described meals with Hilary at the Plough in Finstock (tomato-basil soup, rack of lamb, black currant pie), the delights of being in the cottage's sitting room, with its chair for Janey the cat, admiring family photos, and talking about Philip Larkin and other friends. Clearly, Hilary was a person of self-confidence, high spirits, and family pride, just like the imaginary Harriet. But she also had deeper layers and was capable of "ironic subtlety" when it came to her sister. The letters from Hilary touch on subjects such as counted-cross stitch, a clematis by the front door, painting at the cottage, and a new red sofa. Myers ended by noting that Hilary had written him about "a good Witsunday service in Finstock Church" where the "choir sang that old Attwood Creator spirit which always brings nostalgic memories of schooldays and youth!" So a group of conference participants, having rehearsed briefly, sang the first stanza of the hymn, and then the rest us joined in to sing all three. Before we sang, Myers asked us to "imagine those delicate Sunday morning odors from the Barn Cottage kitchen."

After one final cup of tea, we heard our last speaker, Yvonne Cocking, who had superbly researched a topic that many of us have been curious about: "Barbara Pym and Germany." Using Barbara's diary entries and other materials found in the Bodleian Library, she created a fascinating story, though many unanswered questions remain. The complete talk begins on page 3.

Following the German theme, the conference closed on Sunday afternoon with a dramatized reading of Barbara Pym's short story, "The German Baron," admirably narrated by Rita Phillips, with roles taken by Robin Joyce, Jill Stevens, Tony Kaufman, and Ellen Miller. They sent us off in high spirits, and we left the conference feeling that many new topics had been touched on in our efforts to explore the works and life of Barbara Pym.

Beverly Bell

Barbara Pym in Germany

Yvonne Cocking

The story of Barbara Pym in Germany is essentially the story of Barbara and Friedbert Gluck. Hazel Holt and Hilary Walton have given an account of the five visits Barbara made to Germany between 1934 and 1938, and of her relationship with Friedbert, in *A Very Private Eye* and *A Lot to Ask.* In this paper I am attempting to draw together the published details of this story and enhance them with some of Barbara's diary entries, many of which have never before been revealed.

Why Barbara became so interested in Germany in her student days is not clear, but in October 1933 Barbara was attending classes in German, perhaps in preparation for a National Union of Students (NUS) visit to Cologne the following Easter. She may have decided to join that tour because she was frustrated by the lack of progress in her relationship with Henry Harvey, and was longing for a change of scene away from him, temporarily anyway.

On Thursday 29th March 1934 she wrote: "Today was the beginning of a very happy month in my life which may make some difference to my future ..." The next day Barbara and her friend Dorothy Pedley set off for Dover.

> We had a lovely crossing and never felt the least bit ill. In fact we ate ham sandwiches and chocolate cheerfully. We got to Brussels soon after 6 and went to dinner. I felt depressed...and almost wished myself back in England. (How little we know of the future) ... In Cologne, German students met us at the station and there I first saw Hanns Woischnik ... Buses were waiting for us at the Station and I staggered in half asleep. We drove a long way to the *Kamaradschafthaus* – where we were to be put up. On arrival we had breakfast – ham and rolls and lots of tea ... but all I wanted was to go to bed ...Then I had my first sight of real Nazis and of Friedbert Gluck. He was wearing a black uniform although the others were in yellowish brown shirts with the Nazi swastika business on their left arms. They saluted each other in the Heil Hitler manner. Then we went into lunch and various speeches were made. Friedbert spoke in German – I remember being much impressed by him, and thinking him a marvelous unapproachable Nazi. What did he look like? Tall, with a lovely figure set off to advantage by the black uniform – very dark with smooth black hair and a high forehead – dark complexion and greyish green eyes [not a typical blond Aryan!], rather strange looking but undoubtedly fascinating.

After lunch they went into the town and to the Museum where Barbara admired some wonderful pictures. After that they went round Cologne in the buses and saw the cathedral. "Before dinner Pedley and I ventured to the shops and managed to buy cigarettes, oranges, and Pond's vanishing cream, asking for them all in my uncertain German...I can't remember much else of that day, but I suppose I ended up by being still in love with Gabriel [one of Barbara's names for Henry Harvey], however much the Nazis had impressed me."

Sun 1st Apr: "April Fool's Day and the beginning of a new month and I almost think a new period in my life. Today I was completely unfaithful to Gabriel – I mean in

the sense I regard it – kissing other people. I began it with a kind of desperation but how it ended is a different story, to be told in good time if I ever finish writing up the account of the next two days."

After breakfast that day Barbara went to the cathedral and then there was a reception in the Town Hall.

> I got into conversation with a bearded man of our party who seemed to have taken something of a fancy to me." [After dinner they went to the Opera.] *Die Valkÿrie* – very good especially scenic effects, but of course Sigmund was too fat... During the interval I had some beer with Noel Wallace, the bearded man, who seemed quite nice. I went and smoked a cigarette with him, and Friedbert Gluck came and spoke to us. After the 2nd Act I was talking to Friedbert, who translated some of the German summary of the opera for me ... I had another cigarette with the bearded man and went into his box where he sat on the floor by me and stroked my arm and ankle. After the opera I went out with him to the Café Wien ... there was a lovely band which played 1933 tangos and Viennese waltzes ... the man is doing research in psychology at London, he told me. We

went to another café where there was real dancing and fat families swaying in time to the music. We danced too, and I enjoyed it. Then by the river again where he kissed me…

[The top half of the next page has been cut out. The lower half continues:]

Eventually, about 2 a.m. we got on a train and arrived back at Mulheim, to find others also returning. One of the Germans, Hanns Woischnik, was coming downstairs with a bottle of something so we all went up to somebody's room and had a little party. We made much noise and drank quite a lot. Hanns was a little tight. After the party had broken up Hanns and I went round the corner and he kissed me several times. He was very sweet and asked me to go to his ….

The next lines are lost on the other side of the torn-out page. Was Barbara trying to conceal her activities with the bearded man or with Hanns? Both, probably!

Mon 2nd Apr: A day of unmixed happiness – undoubtedly the loveliest of this year. The weather was lovely and we set off for our trip on the Rhine As we were given our tickets for the steamer Hanns looked at me intimately with his bright eyes and said 'How are you?' I was wearing his grey silk scarf with my green frock and little black coat. After a time I got into conversation with Friedbert Gluck. He was looking sweet and he hadn't shaved because his chin was gloriously black and rough. He was wearing flannel bags and a brown tweed coat – a lovely greenish pullover with a nice flowery sort of tie and exquisite shirt. To crown all a very *schön* green hat. We talked a lot and I tried to practice some German on him. He is fond of sports and is good at skiing. I talked also to Hanns who gave me his address and said I must write. We landed at Bonn and went ashore for lunch and to see the University. Friedbert and Hanns were of course walking with the officials. During the many German and English speeches I caught Friedbert's eye and we smiled at each other. On board the steamer again to Königswinter I was with Friedbert all the time. The district is lovely – mountains with forests topping them and romantic looking castles. We went up Petersberg in a mountain train and in parts it was very steep … woods on each side and lovely air when we got to the top. It was very hot and sometimes I wore Friedbert's hat to shade my eyes from the sun.

After tea we wandered and looked at the lovely view of the Rhine and town down in the valley. All the time Friedbert was very sweet – why couldn't I have stayed there always – so happy with someone so nice? At about 6 o/c we went down in the train again. I walked back to the landing place with Friedbert, and we said how lovely it would be if I could stay, and if we could go together all round this lovely country. It was as romantic as anything could possibly be. We then met the others and saw Hanns again. He paid me charming compliments and said that his afternoon would have been much nicer if I'd been there – and we were all crowded together and he held my hand. Aboard the steamer again I was with Friedbert and we had a party with some other people. By the time we'd finished there were nine bottles on the table – all empty. I was as near to being intoxicated as I've ever been and was gloriously happy, madly so, with Friedbert very close to me and his arm around me. Once he kissed me and I suppose we didn't behave well — but what did it matter. Indeed what did anything matter? Then we went down to the lower deck and kissed as we stood and watched the lights of Cologne drawing gradually nearer and it meant saying goodbye I knew, but somehow I could not care. I was really living in the present – an exhilarating sensation too seldom enjoyed. It was so lovely to have someone saying nice things to me after Gabriel's rudeness and unkindness. I at last began to realize that there could be something in my life beyond Gabriel. Friedbert said he had noticed me before he knew my name and that I was like the English song, his *Secret Passion.* I feel somehow that even if we never meet again there will always be this short happiness to remember. Parting seemed at that moment to be romantic. Going to the Station we stood together in the back of the bus and he put his arm around me. He kissed me goodbye and we shook hands publicly. As the train slid out of the station I realized that I had left my heart behind in Cologne.

The journey home included an overnight stop in Bruges which Barbara seemed to enjoy in spite of her heartache. Before the English party broke up the leader suggested that people should write to thank Gluck if they felt they wanted to thank someone. So presumably Friedbert was the main organiser at the Cologne end.

Thurs 5th Apr: "Getting home, I realized all the time I was thinking about Friedbert Gluck and not about Gabriel – at least not with the intensity and longing which

had formerly characterised my attitude towards him. I looked quite lovingly over my Cologne souvenirs."

Fri 6th Apr – Tues 10th April. "I may as well write up these few days together as there isn't anything special to say about them. One important thing seemed to have happened to me though. My tour in Germany meant that I began to take an interest in Hitler, Nazis and German politics. I made a scarlet box with a swastika on it. I bought a small swastika to wear on a pin. I wrote to Hanns and Friedbert, although I realized that one cannot bring back the past. The prospect of going back to Oxford and the possibility of seeing Gabriel did not really thrill me. The first night I came home we turned on dance music and the programme provided two appropriate tunes. *Let there be no more heartaches, no more tears* was the first, and as far as Gabriel is concerned I don't think there *will* be any more, but of course I realize that I'm bound to be still fond of him, and I shan't really know how things stand until I see him again. The second tune was the old one *I'll see you in my dreams* – and that is probably the only time I shall see Friedbert again."

After that intensely romantic episode, Barbara returned to Oxford to prepare for Schools, as the BA examinations in Oxford are called.

Tues 17th Apr: "The post came and brought me (Oh, joy!) something from Friedbert. A long letter all in German – which I have not yet deciphered, and a lovely snap of him. Also a book containing a speech of Hitler's (in English). Dear Friedbert ... I am longing to decipher my letter."

Wed 18th Apr: "At about 6.30 Gabriel passed by and invited himself in – we talked, and he asked me to supper that evening and I felt happy and excited. Henry, by the way, had insisted on reading some of Friedbert's letter [she must have showed it to him, possibly to make him jealous] and had translated a little of it – very satisfactorily."

The next few days' entries show that Friedbert and his letter were in the forefront of her mind, and she thought a lot about going to the Rhineland again. "I bought a frame and put Friedbert's photograph on my desk so that I can see it when I'm working."

Wed 25th Apr: "After tea I felt *terribly* depressed about Schools – but the mood gave way later to one of exuberance. I am just going to write to Friedbert."

Fri 27th Apr: After another evening at 86b Banbury Road where "Henry was rather rude to me," Barbara got back to college. "I looked at my photo of Friedbert and said aloud 'Oh my darling – it's you I love.' I wonder."

Sat 28th Apr: "When I went to 86 this evening Henry and Jock quarreled rather a lot and I left in a furious temper with Henry. Also, I lost my swastika and burst into tears in the Banbury Road because of it."

In spite of this loss, she records on Mon 30th Apr: "April has been a happy month and I am sorry to see it go."

Wed 2nd May: "At Bodley again. Henry came and spoke to me — they can't find my swastika. I am fed up...very depressed about work and a disquieting feeling that I may be in love with Gabriel still. I wish Friedbert would write, that would cheer me ..."

Thurs 3rd May: "If Friedbert does not write soon I shall find myself as deeply in love with Henry as ever I was before."

Tues 15th May: "I tried all over Oxford to get a swastika and was unsuccessful – except for a gold one which was too expensive. Oh dear – darling Friedbert, why don't you write? I want so terribly to go to Germany again and I'm 12/10d overdrawn at the Bank. I die for a letter or something from F. Gluck."

Sat 26th May: "No work all day – a *passionate* desire to go to Germany."

Mon 28th May: "Had a very affectionate letter from Hanns Woischnik written in good English with many darlings in it. Apparently F. has told him that I am 'going there' in June – if so I wish F. would write! I did not realize that Hanns was at all fond of me. He says he will never forget me, but seems to think I am irretrievably Friedbert's! I suppose the truth is that I belong to a cruel, sweet Englishman called Henry Stanley Harvey, but at the age of not quite 21, it is not possible to be certain. Henry does not write, nor do I see him. The Germans, at least, appreciate me if the English don't ... I *do* want to go back to Germany."

Thurs 7th Jun: "Schools. I got my second."

Tues 19th June: "The first day on the Dole ... I want to go to Germany on the last day of term. I had a nice letter from Friedbert."

Sat 30th June: "In the evening I found a letter from Friedbert awaiting me." It appears that he was trying to find some sort of job for her in Germany – tutoring in a family, one imagines. "Now arrangements are to be made for me to go in September (D.V.) Links [Barbara and Hilary's nickname for their mother] isn't at all keen that I should go to a family purely on his recommendation, which is understandable, and I got very worried about what I should do about it ..."

Sat 7th Jul: "... negotiations about Germany still going on, but nothing definite is emerging from it yet. I still desire passionately to go there, and am still trying to acquire more vocabulary."

Wed 10th Jul: "Today I thought sadly of Friedbert. I'm not going to Cologne now, but

perhaps to Hamburg with the NUS."

There are no diary entries between 26th July and 1st September. However it later appears that she did go to Hamburg, presumably with the student group, on 17th August.

At the end of July or early August she must have written to Rupert Gleadow, because in a letter from him dated 3rd August he replied "One can not under any circumstances love a *real* Nazi. Yours I'm sure must be only a pretence. The real ones (and I've been arrested by them!) are all sadists and keep their women brutally in order. But lots of Germans are very nice for all that."

It wasn't until the 1st September that Barbara wrote in her diary: "Germany was delightful and more than usually interesting as we arrived in Hamburg on the same day as the Führer and were able to see him. I thought he looked smooth and clean and was very impressed. The elections were to be held on the Sunday, August 19th." This was a referendum to approve Hitler's becoming supreme head of state. "There was plenty of publicity urging voters to say *Ja* for Hitler." However, she does not mention Friedbert, who was presumably still in Cologne, on that visit.

On 1st September Barbara also wrote, "Some time in July I began writing a story about Hilary and myself as spinsters of fiftyish. Henry, Jock and all of us appeared in it." This, of course, was the first version of *Some Tame Gazelle*. What is less well known is that Friedbert also appeared briefly in it. She envisaged a situation in which the Nazis had been defeated and the exiles were living in poverty in Africa; Barbara (later Belinda) and her friends were knitting vests and things to send to them. "Of course, it had been rather extravagant of her to use such an expensive wool to knit a charity garment, but she excused herself by remarking that after all the Nazis were rather 'special people.' Friedbert [later Helmut] had been a Nazi. She was wondering whether to wear her little swastika brooch or not. Dear Friedbert had been so pleased at this sign of her presumable sympathy with the National Socialist Party ... The Nazis were young and arrogant then and she had hardly known which she liked best, Hanns later Kurt] or Friedbert ... Barbara had always thought that Friedbert would make a good Führer, and much handsomer than Hitler." Of course, none of this appeared in the published version of *Some Tame Gazelle*.

On 20th October, she had another letter from Rupert Gleadow: "It's good that you have been to Germany and can talk about it. Oh, but *please* don't admire those *filthy* Nazis in their beautiful uniforms: you won't get a chance much longer, becos [sic] 1936 will just about see the end of Hitler."

"Friedbert was angelic to me. Such kindness as his one can never forget."

On Good Friday, 19th April, Barbara went to Cologne again with the NUS. "I was very tired, but sufficiently awake to notice who of last year's German students were there to meet us. I noticed Müller and then, to my pleasure, Hanns. It was so nice to see his familiar face again that I felt comforted although there was no sign of Friedbert. We stayed at the *Kameradschafthaus*." Very little more, except that on the next page, undated, Barbara wrote "Friedbert was angelic to me. Such kindness as his one can never forget."

May 1935: "After Germany I was in love with Friedbert *in a way*. I put it so because I realized even at the time that most of it was probably glamour – his being a foreigner – the little Americanisms in his speech like 'terribly' and the way he said 'Barbara' – it being in a foreign country with the Höhenzollern Brücke by moonlight and zwei Manhattan at the Excelsior, and his Nivea cream that I rubbed on my arm to remember the smell of him – our evening of love in *Volkspartenstrasse zwei und fünfzig* – for all these things I loved him and yet I hardly knew him as a person and didn't at all agree with his National Socialism ..."

Sat 16th Nov: "No letters today or indeed any other day it seems. Henry, Jockie, Barnicot, Friedbert, Sharp [another St. Hilda's student], *London Mercury* [a magazine to which Barbara had offered some short stories] – all silent."

There is no record of a visit to Germany in 1936, but in a letter to Henry reproaching him for not writing, she mentions that, "Even Friedbert has spared a moment from the organization of the Olympic Games to send me a beautiful postcard." If Friedbert was involved in the Games, and we heard earlier that he was good at sport, he may not have been free to meet Barbara that summer. She was obviously still thinking a lot about him though, because she mentions "vivid and lovely dreams of Friedbert." However, Henry came to the fore once again when in June and July Barbara was working as his secretary, for "30/- a week and a few caresses."

There are no diary entries for the time that that Barbara was in Germany in 1937. It appears from letters that they (Barbara and Hilary?) went to the Black Forest. "Tonight," she writes to Jock, "I have been drinking beer to get into practice for the large quantities we shall consume there ... We are going ... on 1st August . ... I shall be home again about 20th Aug." This seems too long for a NUS tour, but we have no details of this trip. It has to be assumed that they met up with Friedbert.

On 12 December Henry Stanley Harvey married Elsie Beatrice Godelhjelm in Helsingfors at the English Church. Barbara wrote in her diary, "*So endete ein grosse Liebe.*"

Early in the New Year of 1938, Barbara and Friedbert were in correspondence again. Apparently they were planning for her to visit him in Dresden where he was now stationed and to stay almost a month. This visit is recorded in pencil in a tiny diary, one page per day. Unlike her 1934 diary, she writes very little of her private feelings, confining herself almost entirely to fact.

On Tues 3rd May she left for Germany, arriving about 10 the next morning in Dresden, where Friedbert met her, and took her to the room he had found for her, which she seemed to like very much. They had lunch together but because Friedbert had a sore throat and was feverish, she had dinner alone in her room and went to bed early. Friedbert was in bed all the next day, so she didn't see him, but he phoned her.

On the Friday she visited some museums. Friedbert, still not quite recovered, met her at 5.30 at the Eden Hotel, where they read the English papers and had coffee, and later had supper in her room.

The next day, Saturday, Friedbert had to go away somewhere, so Barbara saw very little of him for the first four days of her holiday, but he returned in time for lunch on Sunday, after which, "We went to Pillnitz by train, walked about there and had coffee in a very nice café overlooking Dresden. After supper we went to Der Maulkart at the Regina Palast and afterwards had some beer at Zum Schwarzwälder." You will note that no meal or drink ever goes unrecorded on this visit!

Friedbert did not take any leave during her visit, and indeed was away on duty on a number of occasions, when Barbara had to entertain herself. However, there was a general pattern to their days. Barbara went sightseeing in the mornings, Friedbert usually joining her for lunch in her room, which was presumably supplied by her landlady. He then went back to work and met her later, sometimes even after dinner time, and then they would go out to bars and cafes, often until quite late.

Mon 9th May: "F. came to lunch. Had tea at Rumpelmayers and supper at home with F. We then went to the Olympic Games film [no doubt the famous film made by Leni Riefenstahl] at the Prinzess Theater. Very good. Then some beer at Zum Schwarzwälder."

Tues 10th May: "Lazy morning. F. came to lunch and I walked with him to the tram stop ... [he] came very late to supper and we went out to meet friends of his. We drank a lot – Rhine wine and cocktails ... then had something to eat. Then to the Regina Palast where we had champagne and danced till nearly 3. Not much sleep that night."

Fri 13th May: "F. came very late from Leipzig. We went out to the Alt Bayern Biergarten and made plans about going to Prague next day."

Barbara's diary account of this weekend visit is somewhat laconic.

Sat 14th May: "Packed my small bag. I went to the station and got the tickets. Friedbert came just in time, 12.36. Train full and very hot. We had lunch, then sat in the dining car for coffee. Passed through the lovely Sächsische Scharz to the frontier at Bodenbach. Then into Czechoslovakia...we got to Prague about 4. Went to the Hotel Bevanek. *Doppel Zimmer*. Had a bath. Walked about. Ate at restaurant Procheski, wandered in Wenceslas Square... then bed quite early."

Sun 15th May: "Had breakfast 8.30 then sightseeing tour of the town which lasted until after 1. Saw very much. Very hot. Lunch at Deutsche Haus. Packed and left hotel. Had coffee in the town, then caught the 5 o/c train – carriage to ourselves. F. slept. I had ham and eggs in the dining car ... got to Dresden after 8."

But in a letter to Jock on the 23rd of the month she was more expansive.

> Did I tell you that we went to Prague the weekend before last? It was as hot as August and we sat in the restaurant car mopping our faces and making rather waspish remarks to each other and then we went back to our carriage and a handsome young Czech began speaking to me in perfect English, and dear F. kept on wanting me to look out of the window at things ... I was so terribly excited in the taxi to think that we were really in Prague, but F. was not at all, although he had never been there. 'Oh the Golden City,' I kept saying, 'The Golden City.' 'No, I do not think it is Golden', he said ... In the evening a sort of Czechish Mr. Barnicot attached himself to us ... somehow there was never a time when he wasn't with us. He thought F. and I were English as we occasionally spoke to each other in that tongue, and after a time F. said to me 'I do not like to go with this gentleman more,' so after we had politely exchanged add dresses and I had coyly waved at him out of the back of the taxi we found ourselves alone.

It appears that Barbara and Friedbert were starting to get on each other's nerves. Certainly Friedbert must have become fed up with Barbara always talking to strange men, which in itself suggests that she was beginning to be bored with him.

On Thurs 26th May, Friedbert came to lunch and apparently had

the afternoon off. Shops were closed. We went to Kuvart Rathen by train, stopping an hour in Pirna, which he showed me, and we had tea. Climbed up the rocks at Rathen and had a lovely view into Bohemia. After supper we had a long, long talk and cleared up many things and ended up very happily."

What were these matters which had to be cleared up? They could have been personal, but I am inclined to think that at last Barbara was having doubts about German politics and Friedbert's part in it. If that were the case, it seems that he was able to reassure her.

During her last weekend Friedbert was away all day on Saturday and most of Sunday. On Mon 30th May, the day before she left, her entry is enigmatic. "F. came to supper. Went to his room while he typed a letter. Then to the Weindorf in Prägerstr. Very nice. Then mock turtle soup at the station. I chased my hat down Uhlenstr. at 4 a.m."

That was the last time she saw him. He did not come to the station to see her off the next day, probably because he couldn't leave the office. Barbara wrote in her diary: "June 1st - Henry's 27th birthday. Shopped in the morning, and in the afternoon a last visit to the Eden ... Went home and packed, had my last meal in my dear room. Left at 8.34. Many soldiers on the train, all very nice to me. Slept quite a lot." Not a mention of Friedbert. She was still on her journey home on her 25th birthday.

Throughout 1939 Barbara's diary tells of the seriousness of the international situation, until they heard on 1st September that Hitler had taken Danzig and invaded Poland. On 12 Jan 1940, Barbara wrote to Jock, "I have no recent news of Friedbert for you as I have not written to him since September – nor he to me ... One does not expect letters from enemy aliens..." On Wed 10th April she remembers that it is Friedbert's 29th birthday. Sunday 26th May was a day of national prayer. "Church packed morning and evening. 2 fine sermons. I thought, 'Friedbert, against this, you haven't a chance.'"

By November, Barbara had applied for work in the Censorship Department. "Started brushing up my German – reading poor F.'s letters." Throughout the month she was assiduously studying German, "Reading Goethe's letters," and "Struggling over Rilke – perhaps Friedbert was right about my not being able to understand him." On Tues 18th Nov: "After tea, translating a letter from Friedbert, one of the last I had and painful to me. One feels one ought to be ashamed of ever having been fond of a German. Where are you now?"

Hazel Holt tells us in *A Lot To Ask* that in December Hilary heard from Nora Wahn, who had written several books on Nazi Germany and was working at the BBC, that Friedbert had gone anti-Nazi, but as Hazel says, "It is hard to imagine how an SS officer could have done this and survived."

After the war, as the appalling events in Germany were gradually revealed, the feeling of shame at having known and loved a Nazi must have intensified, and Barbara would not have wanted anyone to know about this episode in her life. Friedbert evidently survived, for on 31st July 1946, over a year after the end of the war in Europe, and again on 24th September, her diary records letters from him, but their contents are destined to remain unknown. Even Hilary was not aware of them. It is unlikely that Barbara responded. The romantic dream was finally shattered by stark reality, and another great love ended.

References

Holt, Hazel and Pym, Hilary (eds.) *A Very Private Eye: The Diaries, Letters and Notebooks of Barbara Pym.* London: Macmillan, 1984.

Holt, Hazel. *A Lot to Ask: A Life of Barbara Pym.* London: Macmillan, 1990.

Unpublished diaries and letters in the Bodleian Library.

This paper was presented at the North American Barbara Pym Society Conference on 2 April 2006. Yvonne Cocking is the Pym Society's archivist.

From the Editor

With this issue, Green Leaves changes editors and its appearance. Hazel Bell's term as editor has expired and I have been elected to succeed her — a very tall order indeed. A professional indexer and editor with a number of professional books to her credit, Hazel brought not only her considerable publishing skills to these pages, but her devotion to and understanding of Barbara Pym resulted in scholarly yet readable issues, eagerly awaited by members.

Now, for the first time in the history of the Barbara Pym Society, an American sits in the editor's chair. As you know, the Barbara Pym Society is composed of two branches one on either side of the Atlantic, and our membership is almost equally divided between North American and U.K./ European members. *Green Leaves* will continue to further the goals of the Society — "to foster the appreciation and wider knowledge of the life and works of Barbara Pym."

I encourage you to send news to share with other Pym Society members, unpublished articles or poems, and your feedback. My e-mail address is ellen@ellenmiller.net, or you can write to me at 145 Indian Hill Road, Carlisle, MA 01741, USA.

Ellen

Under the Spell of Barbara Pym

Dale Salwak

When Ellen Miller honored me with an invitation to speak, I accepted with some trepidation. What could I possibly say about Barbara Pym that hadn't already been more eloquently said by others? I began to feel much as I felt 35 years ago as a graduate student: I was certain I could never read enough or work hard enough or know enough to have any original insights into a subject about which I cared so much.

I have decided to let both the author and some of her readers do my speaking for me, for they can describe in great detail and from many perspectives an experience we all share, and which I'd like to explore with you: what it means to fall under the spell of Barbara Pym.

When we begin reading a novel we are invited to enter the mind of another, to allow our own world to be subsumed by the author's created one. In doing so, at times we are touched within by some sort of awe or joy or delight. We feel lifted. We feel more fully and pleasurably alive.

Philosophers call these "aha" moments – as in *Now I see, Now I know, Now I understand.* The Church calls them "epiphanies" – from the Greek *epiphaneia*, meaning "a manifestation." Virginia Woolf called them "moments of being" and Wordsworth called them "spots of time."

Whatever name we apply, once they occur and we have considered them afterwards in calm reflection, we also see that our understanding has fundamentally changed: the world is put into clearer perspective; we feel ourselves in touch with the rhythm of life in a fresh way; we begin to move in a direction different from anything we'd ever imagined, a direction that we know is right for us.

That describes precisely how many of us respond to the novels of Barbara Pym. Why? What is it about this particular author's temperament and work that casts such a powerful spell, that draws us in and will not let us go? Why is it that for so many of her devoted readers the novels serve such a deeply personal purpose? Why are we so certain it was no hyperbole when Philip Larkin said of her books, "No man can read them and be quite the same again?" . . . .

Like many admirers, I wandered into this author's magnetic sphere through the recommendation of a friend. It was a rainy weekday evening in the summer of 1980, and I was in London – caught in limbo-land between a completed project and no project, between relief and letdown from which I hoped the attractions of travel abroad would help me to emerge.

The little I knew of Barbara Pym was through the writings of others. Early reviews on both sides of the Atlantic of her posthumously published *A Few Green Leaves* praised it as "charming and funny," "beguilingly comic," "magical" and "one of her best." Paul Bailey referred to the "quiet confidence of its unhurried narrative." These items, and others, I'd clipped and inserted into a "backburner" folder, along with her photograph which I had found in the *Observer*. I would later write that this photo revealed the sort of gentle, intelligent face we expect to see in wise, kind teachers, reflecting an unselfishness and a patient endurance—a face, in fact, not unlike my own mother's. I had kept the obituaries I'd read from the previous January, notices which expanded my awareness of Barbara, at least in the abstract, and planted in my mind the thought – here is someone I should look into.

Adding to my interest was the rapt enthusiasm of a friend who that night loaned me her copy of *Excellent Women* – still my favorite Pym novel. I read it straight through, and as I did so, to my surprise many of my distractions fell away, I felt assured, and I was filled with a unique sense of peace and warmth, an impression so intense that it seemed to expand into an ineffable joy that remains with me to this day. At the time, I didn't have the words or the understanding to explain such a strong reaction, but I did know I felt impelled to read everything by her and about her that I could find.

Sometime between that fateful summer evening of 1980 and the fall of 1984, increasingly drawn both to explore and to pay tribute, in a small way, to the ever-growing interest in her work on both sides of the Atlantic, I began to form the idea for two books – a collection of original essays on her life and work, written by those who had known her or her novels; and an annotated bibliography of secondary writings in which I would trace how the work, once it had left her hands, had been received and interpreted by scholar-critics and contemporary reviewers.

This leads me to another point I'd like to consider – the genesis of the two books I've published about this remarkable author. In the 1998 issue of *Green Leaves* I related how I researched and compiled the reference guide[1], but here I would like to revisit some of the steps by which I brought to completion a book entitled *The Life and Work of Barbara Pym*, and in the process what I learned about her, myself, and her readership.[2]

You think you are alone, and then you look up, and you are surrounded. When I began work on the project I was struck immediately by the enthusiastic way everyone I met or wrote to welcomed everything having to do with Bar-

bara – even when I knocked at their door without warning!

Selecting the book's contributors, for example, was a fairly nebulous process – a blend of instinct and coincidence and luck. I began by contacting those writers with whom I was personally acquainted, then reached out to others I had read or knew of. Sometimes one person led me to another – as John Halperin did for the novelist, Penelope Lively, and the critic, A.L. Rowse; as Bob and Virginia Redston did for Gilbert Phelps; and as Constance Malloy did for Janice Rossen who, I discovered, lived a mere thirty minutes drive from my home, was a reader at the Huntington Library (where I also had a desk), and was herself writing a book entitled *The World of Barbara Pym*. A chance meeting with John Bayley on the occasion of his wife Iris Murdoch's talk at the University of California, San Diego, resulted in the wonderful opportunity to ask if he would like to contribute. "I admire and enjoy her so much," he said. "I'd be very glad to do you an essay on her."

At first I envisioned having 20 contributors, but expecting that some would decline for perfectly understandable reasons, I wrote to 35. Indeed, even the negative responses were revealing. "Although a keen student of Pym," said Auberon Waugh, "I do not feel I know enough about her to contribute." Lord David Cecil wrote: "I would have been pleased to write for you . . . but, as a matter of fact I am nearly 82 years old and already committed to as many projects as I can possibly manage in the near future; so, regretfully, I must refuse." Philip Larkin, who allowed me to re-publish the introduction he had written for *An Unsuitable Attachment*, declined writing a new essay: "You mustn't think of me as a scholar," he wrote: "just a hack reviewer." And although John Braine, also a fan of Pym's, died three months before he could complete his promised essay, he gave a tantalizing glimpse into what he would have written when he said in an early letter: "I will give you an essay that only another novelist could write of his contemporary."

In the end, however, 19 of the group I'd contacted did deliver, and John Halperin's letter accompanying his piece typifies their feelings: "You have hit me in a vulnerable place: I love Barbara Pym." He also helped me to place the book with Macmillan.

Arrangement of the essays in a collection like this can be a real challenge, but in this instance the pieces, as they arrived, began to suggest three broad categories – "The Life," "The Work" and "In Retrospect." As my authors corresponded with me and submitted their work, I began to realize that my own strong response to Barbara was in no way unique. She seemed to touch, to guide, to inspire us all.

One of the highlights for me during this period was flying to New York City the first week of October 1984 to visit the office of Barbara's American publisher, E. P. Dutton. There I was allowed the immense pleasure of reading through four file-drawers of reviews and other materials, with permission to copy anything I wanted to help with my projects. I also attended a commemorative tea at the Gramercy Hotel honoring Hazel Holt and Hilary Pym on the occasion of the American publication of *A Very Private Eye* and, afterwards, met with them in their hotel suite to discuss plans for my book.

I carried away from that meeting the pleasant memory of a very Pymish moment. As I was leaving the hotel room and just pulling the door closed behind me, I heard one of my hostesses say to the other, "Such a nice young man. So unlike the *other* American we met this morning." I can only imagine what Barbara might have made of that scene.

As I reflect, it's hard to put into words the sense of excitement and good fortune I felt about working "with" Barbara during those early years. Here I was, six years out of graduate school, seven years into my teaching career, and so privileged to embark on fresh and fascinating territory. Now the early 1980s and its accompanying flood of interest all seem a distant memory. But I also realize that in ways I will perhaps never fully understand, that early work brought me closer to Barbara Pym herself.

Robert Frost described his reaction to reading one of D. H. Lawrence's poems in these words: "It was such a poem that I wanted to go right to the man that wrote it and say something." That was my thought when reading *Excellent Women* for the first time.

Unfortunately, I could not go right to Barbara and say something, for she was already gone from us. Luckily, though, I could benefit from the experiences and memories of those who had, and as they shared them with me, I began to see her more fully as a person, not just a writer.

Sometimes when we fall for an author through her works, our expectations are disappointed when we actually meet her. Not so with Barbara Pym. My correspondents confirmed how happy they were that meeting her only enhanced, and did not diminish, their regard for her as a person. "She had that wonderful combination of quiet charm and good manners that made you feel she really wanted to talk to you," wrote one. Another said: "In meeting Barbara one never felt that she had missed out on any part of life." It is this ideal that impressed another of my correspondents when she wrote of her one and only meeting with Barbara. It had occurred only a few months before she died, and it elicited this description:

"I liked Barbara so much and I am so sad for you, that you never met her. She was so easy to talk to – thoroughly nice, relaxed, not tense, with no 'side' at all, no desire to teach, or impress, or talk too much, or dominate the conversation. In fact, she was, if anything, a little quiet and shy, though not really reserved, and didn't at all mind all the questions I plied her with! . . . We chatted easily about all sorts of quite ordinary things, from gardening to books. . . . She was a 'lady' in the nicest sense of that maligned word. She had an inner glowing depth, and warmth and vitality. . . . I thought I would see her again before long and be able to ask more, but I didn't realize she was already ill, and that we would not meet again."

Yes, Barbara was gone, but certainly not forgotten, and this brings me to my third and final point about the nature of her amazing spell: it has not just endured, but has in fact grown to affect more readers with every passing year. "No reputation is more than snowfall," says Delmore Schwartz. "It vanishes." True for some writers, perhaps, but thankfully Barbara Pym is an exception. Her literary reputation is secure; her books continue to attract a growing audience as the years pass; and the critical interest is ever-widening with, at the last count, 31 books, many hundreds of essays, and 44 dissertations as well as translations into French, Italian, German, Dutch, Portuguese, Hungarian, and Russian. Here I embrace the absolutely basic definition of "criticism" that Frank Kermode gave when he called it "the medium in which past work survives." As long as somebody is examining a piece of art, through whatever lens, it is surviving. Many of Barbara's readers identify with the work, enjoy the work, and want to go on enjoying it. And critics continue to find new depths to mine there as well. Certainly her appeal to the reading public lies partly in her fulfillment of the most fundamental requirements of any great writer: She is a storyteller, a teacher, but above all, an enchanter. . . .

Beneath the calm surface of her novels, the events of Pym's fictive day do make an imprint. When we close the book 244 pages later, we realize that nothing momentous has happened outwardly, and yet she has made us care for her characters and the minutiae of their lives, and that, no doubt, is one of the many reasons for her sustained appeal.

She is a storyteller, a teacher, but above all, an enchanter.

But I believe there is another reason for her staying power, and that is, through her books Barbara meets us at our point of need — not only for pleasure but for companionship, for stability, perhaps even for consolation.

I have heard of numerous instances in which people grieving the loss of a loved one (or of their own health) have found comfort in Pym's novels during their blackest hours. I know a married couple who got through a personal tragedy by reading the novels to each other every night. Paul De Angelis, her American editor, has related how his reading of *Quartet in Autumn* "coincided with his coming to terms with his father's death"; and John Bayley has said the novels "not only sustained but calmed and satisfied" him "as nothing else could" – as Iris Murdoch died slowly and cruelly from Alzheimer's disease. "All honest thought is a form of prayer," Lance Morrow has written, and Barbara Pym's honesty can lead us to a kind of benedictus within.

I think this phenomenon occurs in part because her plots and moral clarities remind us of the importance of staying connected with others and, ultimately, with hope, with a simple faith in the durability of the human spirit. Her books, Robert Liddell wrote, "often seem to come to us like gifts of nature, like the air we breathe or the water we drink (but purer and more wholesome)." I agree that Barbara stays soothingly far away from the easy, sweeping nihilism of many 20th-century writers. She reminds us, as did Henry James more than a century ago, that every life is a special problem which is not ours but another's. "Content yourself," James once wrote in a letter to Grace Norton, "with the terrible algebra of your own. We all live together, and those of us who love and know, live so most."

This is not escapist literature but "the kind of reading," says Lance Morrow, which "one does to keep sane, to touch other intelligences, to absorb a little grace." And we all could use a little of that at one time or another. For example, I'll always be thankful that I had the sense to introduce my mother to *Some Tame Gazelle* when she was in her late sixties and facing some of the inevitable challenges that come with age. "It was the best thing you could have done for me," she said years later.

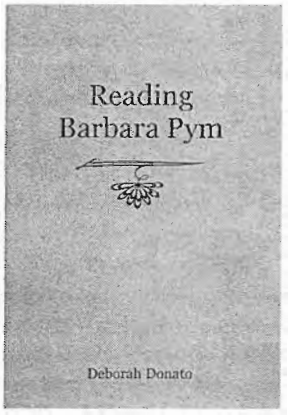
Pym's humor as well as the crystalline calm of her prose helped my mother to get through the ten times my father went into the hospital for surgery. During the first three of those in-again, out-again years, she busied herself with the novels and over the next five years took to heart Barbara's solution to her own mind-numbing trials – "I just went on writing," Barbara has said. "It was all I ever wanted to do." Under her maiden name, Frances Bachelder, my mother wrote an essay entitled "The Importance of Connecting" for my Pym anthology and a novel, published in 2000 under the title *The Iron Gate*. One evening two years ago, after she'd spent a long and uncertain day at my father's hospital bedside, I found my mother asleep in her chair at home, a copy of *Some Tame Gazelle* opened on her lap.

"I've been looking at that book again," she said, upon awakening. "I can't help it. It's just so funny."

(continued on page 15)

Book Review

Reading Barbara Pym by Deborah Donato (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005). 124 pp., Bibliography, Notes, Index. ISBN 0-8386-4095-8. $ 35.00



This overview of four Pym novels and their reviews and criticism is scholarly and accessible, informative and entertaining. Donato draws on an impressive range of bibliographic sources (there are five pages of Works Cited) to examine the opinions and what she concludes are misreadings by other writers, academic reviewers, and feminist studies. She has immersed herself in Pym's diaries, letters, and novels and has effectively distilled the writings of others to offer her own refreshing insights on every page.

Readers will want to put a sticky note tab in the Notes section---some of these tidbits are fascinating. A browse through the excellent index before reading the book will set the tone for its scope as well as provide pointers for future reference.

The introduction gives a comprehensive look at the author's intentions and reveals her keen understanding and respect for Pym's unique art and her aim 'to consider the substance and quality of the collective critical response' to it. Each chapter includes a perceptive analysis of one of the novels.

In Chapter One Donato presents *Some Tame Gazelle*, which is "Free of the urgent concerns and pretensions of most twentieth-century novels." There are references to Woolf, Gaskell, Dickens, Spark, Drabble, Murdoch, Austen and Shakespeare, among others. Contrasts are offered with the novels of Muriel Spark, Anita Brookner and Ivy Compton-Burnett. Some of Donato's comments such as "Relationship between reader and text is not so much established as inhabited like two persons meeting and falling into step," make one want to pencil an NB in the margin. The notes here are a helpful reminder of the sources of Pym's allusions and references, such as the origin of the name of Archdeacon Hoccleve.

In Chapter Two, after summarizing the plot of *Quartet in Autumn,* Donato identifies the signs of aggression in the language and actions of the characters and the poignant views of their lives in 1970s England. She finds poetry in Pym's choice of words and phrases, suggesting that a description by Pym "slows down the passage as poetry will, distills its truth as poetry can, and relies on the reader's intimate understanding as poetry does. All of this occurs in a heartbeat, however, as in daily life it does, when there is seldom time for immediate reflection." She highlights facets of the novel that the casual reader might register but not stop to consider or appreciate, quoting John Updike's "[this Pym text] make[s] us think without knowing we are thinking."

In her consideration of *Excellent Women* in Chapter Three, the author perceives that Pym's use of the first-person narrator is not as successful as it is in *A Glass of Blessings*, published six years later. Donato addresses A.S. Byatt's antipathy and condescension with a detailed analysis of the novel and traces parallels between the narrative and Pym's personal life by continuing to draw on Pym's diaries and letters. Despite the weaknesses she reveals, Donato acknowledges that *Excellent Women* is commonly recommended as first reading for those new to Pym partly because of the critics' emphasis on its humor.

Donato expands on the misleading emphases by reviewers regarding the definition of a "full life" in her chapter on *Jane and Prudence*, suggesting that reviewers, exemplified by a *New Yorker* blurb on the Harper & Row's paperback edition, miss Pym's irony, thereby misrepresenting the novel. She contrasts critics' assumptions with Pym's unconventional but deeper concerns and recognition of a "quiet side of joy." I was particularly interested by her comparison between Drabble and Brookner's "psychosocial analyzing" of their characters and Pym's spare characterizations of Jane and Prudence and their relationship. Donato validates Pym's portrayal of Jane and Prudence's modest pleasure in the small joys of everyday life.

From the simple but elegantly designed cover to the back material of the book, *Reading Barbara Pym* is obviously the work of someone knowledgeable, sensitive and respectful toward her subject. It is nitpicky to ask that Donato's "This chapter begins. . ." and "I will consider. . ." and "I will employ. . ." be eliminated. For both the casual and academic reader, these minor complaints are more than outweighed by her overview of the wide variety of literary criticism and her illuminating appreciation of the Pym novels.

Norma Munson

"A Nice Elderly American Lady . . .": A Visit to Kelmscott Manor

Barbara J. Dunlap

In September 2004, I was using the Pym archives in the Bodleian Library to prepare my paper on "Barbara Pym and the Sermon." As I was reading the later diaries, I came across an entry that made my heart turn over. Under the date of 6 August 1975 Pym mentions a visit on the previous Wednesday to William Morris's country home, Kelmscott Manor: "a nice elderly American lady shows you round" (MS Pym 74/XXXV, f. 9). Innocuous words perhaps, but not to me. Not only could I identify this "lady," but my own home is the apartment on Riverside Drive in New York City that she and her husband called home for decades.

I knew Margaret and Roderick Marshall because of my late husband's long-standing involvement in the work and legacy of William Morris, the great 19th-century poet, designer, printer, and socialist. Through his design firm, Morris & Co., he started a revolution in house decoration in England and produced wallpapers, fabrics, furniture, and stained glass. From 1871 until his death in 1896, Kelmscott Manor, located on the border between Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire in the Cotswolds, was William Morris's country home. His deep love for this Elizabethan house, built of honey-colored Cotswold Stone and looking as if it had "grown up out of the soil," was the subject of his 1895 essay "Gossip about an Old House on the Upper Thames." Kelmscott Manor is the final destination of the Thames journey upstream from Hammersmith described in Morris's romance of the future, *News from Nowhere* (1890).

It is lovely to know that Barbara Pym visited this magical place, a score of miles from the cottage she shared with her sister in Finstock, West Oxfordshire. How did a "nice elderly American lady" come to be showing this English visitor round?

When Morris's daughter May died in 1938, she left Kelmscott Manor in trust to the University of Oxford, who eventually passed it on to the Society of Antiquaries. The society carried out extensive restoration work between 1964 and 1967, and then offered the house on a seven-year lease to people willing to "show" it several times a year. One of Roderick Marshall's daughters had married an Englishman. The couple leased the house, and Margaret and Roderick Marshall, who were both professors of English at Brooklyn College and nearing retirement, made it their home for several months a year.

On summer trips to England in the late 1960s and early 1970s, my husband and I were part of a group from the William Morris Society who traveled in July upstream from Oxford to the Manor in launches leased from Salters. The trip of about 25 miles takes a half hour by car and several hours for those who love to "mess around with boats." We would arrive in time for a tea that included Margaret's homemade banana bread – a new experience for English people at the time. Joe and I also traveled to Kelmscott Manor on a perfect June day in 1973. This time we went by car, taking our six-month-old son. It was a wonderful visit, complete with tea in the garden served on little tables that Roderick had made using Morris tiles.

At the end of 1973, the Marshalls gave up their home in New York City to stay full-time at the Manor. We were already established in the same apartment building and were delighted to move into this larger, brighter apartment and to continue its Morris traditions. After Roderick Marshall died, Margaret moved to Oxford when the lease for Kelmscott Manor was up at the end of 1975. Thus Barbara Pym was one of the last summer visitors she greeted. In one Christmas card, Margaret Marshall assured us, "they say in Oxford the best years of your life are between 60 and 90." In another letter she commented: "I hope you are still enjoying [the apartment]. If anything rubs off on you four people, that no doubt will come from the loving relationships which radiated from all five of the Marshalls who previously lived there."

While they lived at the Manor, Roderick Marshall wrote *William Morris and His Earthly Paradises* (1980), a book that ties together his knowledge of Morris with his scholarship in Jung and Eastern philosophy. In an "Afterword" he wrote:

> For Margaret and me the years spent here at Kelmscott, immured on dull days among the flower-patterned papers, rugs, chintzes, tiles and tapestries of the Manor, and on bright days among the primulas, peonies, roses lilies, buddleias and hollyhocks of the garden ... have seemed to pass more in timelessness than in time (pp. 314-15).

I am happy to know that Barbara Pym had a glimpse of this world during her own residence in the Cotswolds. Do the Morris cover in Barn Cottage and the one described in Beatrix Howick's cottage in AFGL owe something to this visit?

I also like to think that during her years at Barnes, Barbara Pym was just across Hammersmith Bridge from Kelmscott House

(26 Upper Mall), which was Morris's London home from 1878 until his death.

So often I have felt that Barbara Pym's novels were written for me — a sensation I am sure many of her readers experience. Now I have this slender link with her in a chain that links Morris, the Marshalls, my husband and Barbara Pym into a circle dear to me. Barbara Pym's simple diary note has made me even more mindful of the passage from Morris's *A Dream of John Ball* (1886), which our younger son Anthony read at his father's memorial service:

> Fellowship is heaven and lack of fellowship is hell: fellowship is life and lack of fellowship is death: and the deeds ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them, and the life that is in it, *that* shall live on forever, and each one of you part of it.

For further exploration on the Web go to www.kelmscottmanor.co.uk. For William Morris, "Gossip about an old house ...." go to www.burrows.com/morris/gossip.html.

Barbara J. Dunlap is Professor Emerita and retired head of Archives and Special Collections at the Library of the City College of the City University of New York. She has written on Charlotte M. Yonge and has addressed Pym Conferences at Harvard.

Barbara's writing table

Thanks to contributions by Pym Society members, Barbara Pym's writing table was purchased from Barn Cottage in Finstock. A small brass plaque will be added to the table, which will reside in the Senior Common Room at St. Hilda's College. A set of Pym books will be placed nearby, and her photo will hang on the wall.

Pym as playwright

Doollee.com is the new "not for profit" free online guide to modern playwrights and theatre plays. Hazel Bell has submitted an entry for Barbara Pym that includes the novels and short stories that were dramatized and presented at Pym Conferences. If you go to www.doollee.com/PlaywrightsP/PymBarbara.htm, you will find the pages. While it is a bit disconcerting to see Barbara Pym among "playwrights," it is certainly appropriate in the context of the doollee (written with a lower-case "d") site.

No Soft Incense now published by HKB Press

Sadly and suddenly, Anna Brown, who in 2004 published the collection of essays, *No Soft Incense: Barbara Pym and the Church,* for the Barbara Pym Society under her imprint, Anna Brown Associates, died in September 2004. Hazel Bell, who edited and indexed the collection, has now registered as a publisher, with the imprint, HKB Press. The publisher's listing for *No Soft Incense* on www.amazon.co.uk has been changed to The Barbara Pym Society / HKB Press. The volume cannot be listed on the U.S. Amazon site as it is neither published nor distributed by a U.S. firm; therefore, any publicity for it in the States or Canada would be most welcome! Information about *No Soft Incense*, excerpts from reviews, and ordering information are at www.barbara-pym.org/nosoftincense.html

The next production of HKB Press, due out 21 August, will be Hazel's own book, *A Stage Mother's Story — We're Not All Mrs Worthingtons!*, an account of the first thirty years of the career of her son Aidan Bell, an actor in musicals, and how it contrasted with and impinged on her own career in scholarly publishing.

The Barbara Pym Society 2005-06

Chairman: Deirdre Bryan-Brown
Membership Secretary: Eileen Roberts
Secretary: Chris Rutherford

Committee
Phil Bacon, Maggie Parsons, Bridget Villatoro, Michael Wilson, Maureen Woolley,
Archivist: Yvonne Cocking
US Representative: Beverly Bell
***Green Leaves* editor** and **Website Coordinator**: Ellen Miller

Society correspondence and queries to: The Barbara Pym Society
Development & Alumnae Office
St. Hilda's College
Oxford OX4 1DY
Tel: 01865 276867
Fax: 01865 276820
E-mail: eileen.roberts@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk

Editorial correspondence to:
Ellen Miller, 145 Indian Hill Road, Carlisle, MA 01741, USA
E-mail: ellen@ellenmiller.net

Pym Website:
www.barbara-pym.org

Two new articles on Pym

Orna Raz of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who spoke at the U.K. Barbara Pym Conference last September, has published "Dandies, Acolytes and Teddy Boys: Ambiguous Treatment of Male Sexuality in Barbara Pym's Novels of the 1950s." The article appears in *Partial Answers* 4/1 (2006).

"Novelist as Scholarly Editor, Mid-twentieth Century" by Hazel Bell is in the January 2006 issue of the *Journal of Scholarly Publishing,* volume 37, number 2, published by the University of Toronto Press. The novelist/scholarly editor is, of course, Barbara Pym.

continued from p. 11

But we need not be in our seventies or eighties to fall under Barbara's spell, nor do we need to be suffering to appreciate what Frauke Elisabeth Lenckos has called the "infinite possibilities" of the text. Her words speak, I believe, to anyone at any age and in any state of mind that is willing to slow down and listen, because Barbara is writing of the human heart. The context may be different from our own and on the surface the characters may be quite unlike ourselves, but the human heart is not. Here, too, she meets us at our point of need.

Because we live in a world that devalues those who make time to listen to the inner self, and in a society that tends to equate the need for solitude and introspection with laziness, inactivity and non-productiveness, we should not be surprised to find that many people have lost possession of what Emily Dickinson called the "appetite for silence." At work and at home, among friends and at play, there seem to be everlessening opportunities for quiet time. And as people grow older and their lives become steadily more hectic and fragmented, they find themselves caught up in a race against time, with no time to be alone – and silent.

But the world in which Barbara Pym's characters live, whether urban or provincial, is the antithesis of this chaos. It is a quiet world, evoked in such detail as to make the reader feel that the action could not take place in any other milieu. These novels invite us to slow down, to retire within ourselves, to remove ourselves from peripheral concerns and pressures of a madly active culture, and return to the center where life is sacred – a humble mystery and miracle. It is this ideal reader, I believe, that Joseph Epstein had in mind when he wrote of those who "seek in fiction news of the inner life, who seek solace, who seek the pleasures of a superior imagination at work on the materials of everyday life." Barbara Pym's novels meet that need.

What, then, finally accounts for our attraction and devotion to Barbara Pym? Indeed, what makes her spell so captivating? The answer, I believe, is found in an experience I had many years ago.

As a youngster of 10 or 11, I loved to explore for an hour or so before suppertime several miles of woodland behind my boyhood home in Amherst, Massachusetts. In advance of setting out on my journey, however, I always turned on my upstairs bedroom lamp. As long as I still saw the light, I knew I could find my way back.

One day I ended up in an unfamiliar area, further than I had wandered before. All at once it seemed the forest had grown dark and convulsive with shadows. The air was thickly oppressive. Worse still, I failed to see my bedroom light. No matter how I turned, I could not find my way, as if I was lost in some dark corridor that endlessly twists and turns and doubles back on itself. My heart was thumping like fireworks.

During previous journeys I had always been disappointed to hear my mother's voice calling for me because that meant it was time to stop what I was doing and return home. But now I yearned for that sound, and when I heard my name called, faint but audible, I ran in its direction. Before long there appeared the chimney, the tiled slope of the roof, finally the main body of my brown shingle-board house with its green shutters, and shining from the second-floor window, a bright light. Within minutes, and with an enormous sense of thankfulness, I had found my way safely home.

Since childhood, my mother's voice has been an undeniable presence in my head; since 1980, so has Barbara Pym's. Most of her devotees say the same. "That's how it is with Barbara," says Hazel Holt; "once you've read the novels, she is with you forever."

More than her brilliant storytelling or unforgettable, gently quirky characters, more than her gift for quotation or (in the words of Charles Burkhart) her "impeccably intelligent" humor – to read her novels is to hear her voice – a voice that is speaking directly to us, in private, in its own distinctive, soothing, and enthralling way. Unsentimental and wise, the voice behind the characters in these novels beguiles us early and will not let go. In her company, we feel safe. And although no amount of academic study will ever explain why we love one writer's voice above another's, we do know, says John Le Carré, that "Partly it has to do with trust, partly with the good or bad manners of the narrator, partly with his authority or lack of it. And a little also with beauty, though not as much as we might like to think."

So that's what I think it means to fall under the spell of Barbara Pym, and once there, we want to return, often, to grow closer to this gentle and genteel sensibility. That's why we continue to read and reread her. That's why we attend conferences and produce books and essays and talk about her with other devotees. And that's why Eudora Welty wrote in 1982, "Quiet, paradoxical, funny and sad, [Barbara Pym's novels] have the iron in them of permanence too."

Notes

1. Salwak, Dale. *Barbara Pym: A Reference Guide.* Boston: G.K. Hall, 1991.
2. Salwak, Dale. *The Life and Work of Barbara Pym.* Macmillan, University of Iowa Press, 1987.

This paper was delivered at the North American Barbara Pym Conference, Harvard Law School, 2 April 2005.

Copyright © 2005 by Dale Salwak

Pym Gleanings

In books

Marlene Wallace (U.S.) found the following in an old Robert Barnard mystery, *Fete Fatale*, published as *Disposal of the Living* in the U.K. The subject is a library book:

"Oh, Barbara Pym, how nice. So restful, with all that church activity," I said, with sardonic intent.

"She's just a little too modern for me," said Mary. "So little of what I'd call story, don't you feel? I can't see her ever replacing Angela Thirkell."

"She certainly won't now," I said. "But I'm sure there's a waiting list at the library."

Christine Shuttleworth (U.K.) reports the following in Alan Bennett's *Untold Stories:*

"Aunty Myra had too many sharp corners to be one of her characters, but they are the setting for many of the novels of Barbara Pym, and one of the reasons I find her books quite lowering to read."

Christine comments that Bennett cannot have read anything by Pym other than *Quartet in Autumn.* "It's a pity," she says, "that he paints such a bleak picture of her work."

In the press

The following is from the April 2006 *Indexer*, vol. 25, no. 1, entitled "Indexing: a work of art or a sickness beyond cure?" by John Sutherland:

"All indexers, and admirers of the craft, will have prominently on their shelves Hazel K. Bell's *Indexers and Indexes in Fact and Fiction* (2001). The graceful foreword supplied by A.S. Byatt concludes, rousingly, "A good index is a work of art and science, order and chance, delight and usefulness" — words which should be graven in brass over the entrance to every library, bookshop and classroom in the country. Bell's is a delightful volume and elegantly laid out. But it is undeniably slim. Slim verging on anorexic. The anatomy of the indexer which emerges from the anthology of fictional depictions which the editor has resourcefully gathered suggests virtual invisibility. . . .

"According to Bell, "Barbara Pym may be regarded as the patron novelist of indexers. Not only are they prominent in her narratives, but Pym's indexers present a generally sympathetic aspect, if not quite up to the superlative standards that Byatt lists as associated with the "good index."Pym's patronage is, as Bell notes, probably attributable to the fact that "she was herself for over 25 years in charge of publications of the International African Institute, and compiled the indexes; work that she greatly enjoyed."

Susan Bramson (U.S.) read this review of Anita Brookner's *Leaving Home* in the *New York Times Book Review* of 15 Jan. 2006:

"When Anita Brookner arrived in the 1980s, she seemed like the kid sister of Penelope Fitzgerald or Barbara Pym, those fine, late-blooming British authors (Brookner was 52 when her first novel appeared) known for quaintly charming novels of manners."

Virginia Wilhelm (U.S.) noted a theatre review by Charles Isherwood in the *New York Times* of 23 Feb. 2006. The play, about cats, is *Indoor/Outdoor* by Kenny Finkle. Isherwood has two cats, Jane and Prudence, critique the play:

"Jane: It's enough to give you hairballs, but let's not go there. I'm not 100% sure, but I heard a rumor that we were named after a Barbara Pym novel."

From a review by Jeremy Treglown of *Olivia Manning: A Life*, by Neville Braybrooke and June Braybrooke, in the *London Review of Books,* 9 February 2006.

"'A great many novels today are just travel books,' Ivy Compton-Burnett grumbled to Barbara Pym in 1960. 'Olivia has just published one about Bulgaria.' She hadn't noticed that the setting of *The Great Fortune* is in fact Romania."

In the media

From Yvonne Cocking (U.K.) comes this gem:

The BBC's television series, "University Challenge," is a regular quiz contest between teams of students or members of particular professions. On 2 Jan. 2006, four actors faced four writers and were asked to name three people born in Oswestry, with the clue that the last one was born in 1913, the author of *Quartet in Autumn, A Glass of Blessings*, and *Excellent Women.* The faces of the writers were totally blank. Alas, alas!

Notice Board

The annual conference of the Barbara Pym Society will be held on 2-3 September 2006 at St. Hilda's College, Oxford. The theme will be "Barbara Pym in London."

Details will appear on the Barbara Pym Society web site. For up-to-date information, please contact Eileen Roberts at eileen.roberts@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk.

Members of the Barbara Pym Society in the Boston area look forward to their second annual Pym Garden Fête on Sunday, June 25, at the home of Tom Sopko in Cambridge, Mass. For details, contact Ellen Miller at ellen@ellenmiller.net or Tom Sopko at jtsopko@speakeasy.net.