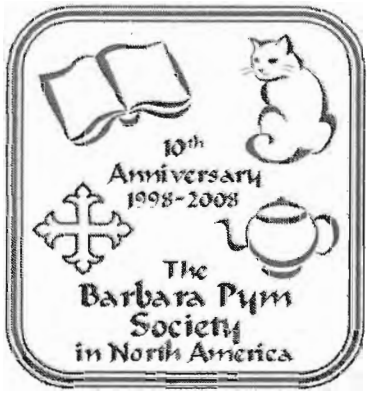
Green Leaves

The Journal of the Barbara Pym Society Vol. XIV, No. 1 May 2008

The Tenth Annual Conference of the Barbara Pym Society in North America 12-13 April 2008



Judy Horn designed this logo for the Conference.

Edwin didn't like change, and now that Gamage's had been pulled down it was a relief to do his lunchtime church crawl, though even the Church, the dear old C. of E., was not immune to change." (QIA, p. 24).

Most of us, like Edwin, are wary of change. Thus it was with some anxiety that on April 12-13, the Barbara Pym Society in North America moved its conference from Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the nearby Episcopal Divinity School (EDS). Higher costs and a long-term construction project forced us to consider alternative venues. According to the many evaluation forms, the 75 attendees were delighted with the change; many declared the site "very Pymmish." We were thrilled to welcome 12 new members to their first conference.

Conferees were also delighted with the program. The diverse program so typical of the U.S. conference explored handwork, foreigners, a lover of Barbara Pym, and a study of marriage in four early novels. In addition to the outstanding presentations, events included a book sale, Pym films, and an evening hymn-sing We ate well and socialized constantly, and even the rain, so persistent at our Cambridge meetings, could not dampen our high spirits.

The weekend opened with the traditional Friday dinner, originally scheduled so that out-of-towners could meet one another. A catered Italian dinner at EDS was enjoyed by 35 people who greeted old Pym friends and met new ones.

On Saturday morning, after a light Continental breakfast, attendees made their way to the lecture hall, where they heard Clemence Schultze, chair of the Barbara Pym Society, deliver a delightful and informative talk on handwork in the novels. Clemence examined the social and professional implications of sewing, mending, dressmaking, altering, darning, and embroidering, always with the perfect example from the novels ("Belinda offers to mend [the Archdeacon's] socks in situ.").

Next, Pym Society archivist Yvonne Cocking, who last year brought us Friedbert Gluck, Barbara's Nazi boyfriend, this year resurrected Rupert Gleadow, an ardent admirer of Barbara's from Oxford days. Yvonne's prodigious research at the Bodleian uncovered impassioned letters from Rupert – flowery, over-the-top declarations of love interspersed with long accounts of his struggle to find a career.

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

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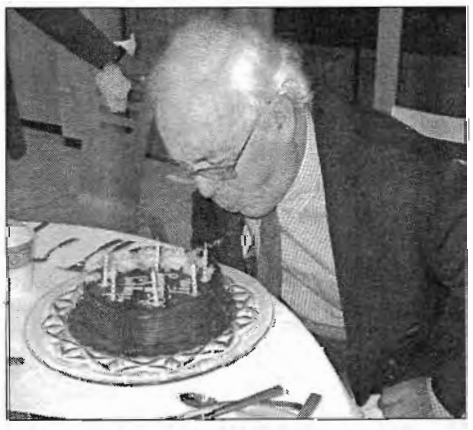
After lunch the sun appeared briefly and the afternoon sessions were devoted to Pym's views on marriage. A "Quartet in Marriage" composed of two married couples (all Pym Society members), Charles Hansmann and Eileen Kennedy and Dan and Ann DiPietro, studied Pym's treatment of marriage in four early novels. The talks provided a refreshing and hitherto unexamined comparison of marriage themes in Pym, followed by a group discussion led by Kathy Ackley. Excerpts from the presentations begin on page 4.

In the late afternoon, a book sale, ably organized by Ellen Pawlik and Donna Safreed, was held and the Pym DVDs were shown. Our sumptuous dinner was made special by Tim Burnett's talk on "Class in the Novels of Barbara Pym," in which he reprised the well known John Betjeman poem that begins, "Phone for the fish knives, Norman," to the delight of all. We all helped Tim celebrate his birthday with a cake and a rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday."

After dinner, Father Gabriel Myers led a spirited hymn-sing around the piano for those who were still on their feet. Could this be the start of a Barbara Pym Conference tradition?

Sunday morning, renewed and refreshed, we gathered again to hear Eleonore Biber's talk on "Glamorous and Not-So-Glamorous Foreigners in Barbara Pym's Fiction," which she prefaced with, "He was far too handsome to be let loose in a small town." Eleonore grouped her characters into Continental charmers, Scandinavians, spectators and commentators, exotics and evil foreigners (Frau Hilde Nussbaum of "So Very Secret" and our favorite villain, Ned, of *The Sweet Dove Died* and the short story, "Across a Crowded Room," were the evil-doers). Eleonore pointed out that with the exception of Ned and Stefan, the glamorous Hungarian in *Civil to Strangers,* Pym's foreigners do not advance the plot but act as a foil to her English characters and as a means of examining familiar values and behaviors.



Tim Burnett makes a wish and successfully blows out his birthday candles.

Dr. Eleonore Biber entertained and informed the audience with her survey of "glamorous and not-so-glamorous" foreigners in Pym novels.

Then came the finale – dramatized "Scenes from Marriages in Barbara Pym Novels," prepared by the aforementioned "Quartet in Marriage," starring Tim Burnett, Rita Phillips, Clemence Schultze, Martin Rush and Yvonne Cocking. The scenes confirmed the heightened pleasure of hearing Pym read aloud. Truths are revealed, humor once hidden steps forward and characters spring to life. As a bonus, we were treated to a brief appearance by Larry King (played by Charles Hansmann wearing red suspenders and a grouchy demeanor) interviewing several of the Pym characters from the scenes.

Before we adjourned, the conference committee — Tom Sopko, Ellen Pawlik, Donna Safreed, Judy Horn, Claudia Deane and Ellen Miller — and our gracious and efficient EDS organizer, Priscilla Burns, were thanked and applauded.

Brunch at a nearby hotel eased the transition into life-after-Pym for several of us. We hope to be back at EDS next year.

Ellen Miller

Editor's note: For another view of the conference, please see page 12.

Violets and Neirsteiner:
David Faber captivates members at the Spring Meeting in London, 27 April

by Michael Wilson

In 1937 Barbara met Julian Amery and was instantly captivated: their brief affair has been described as her perfect romance. Over sixty years later Julian's nephew by marriage, David Faber, captivated members of the Barbara Pym Society by retelling their story in his talk "Violets and Neirsteiner" at the spring meeting in London on April 27.

David amused the audience with his portrait of Julian as a schoolboy. Fantastically precocious with a pompous bearing – his schoolfellows nicknamed him Pompo – he had a highly refined view of his own abilities. From a young age his father, Leo, a prominent politician, had encouraged him to talk on equal terms with his wide circle of influential friends. The family travelled widely; Julian gave the impression that his holidays were spent in Wagons-Lits. The Alps were a favourite destination, climbing in summer – Leo was a noted mountaineer (Mount Amery in the Canadian Rockies is named after him) – skiing in winter. Julian arrived at Oxford a very sophisticated young man. No wonder that Barbara, more used, we imagine, to the company of curates, and recovering from the end of her relationship with Henry Harvey, was enthralled.

Their affair, we know, was brief yet its impact on Barbara was profound. "I don't think," she wrote, "I have ever thanked God for any happiness more sincerely than I do for the approximately twenty hours I spent with Julian Amery." Julian appears in one guise or another in many of the subsequent novels, notably as Simon Beddoes in *Crampton Hodnet*. Even Julian's mother, whom Barbara met just once, makes a number of appearances. This was Barbara's way of handling the break-up and keeping alive the memory of their romance.

David remembers his uncle, who died in 1996, with affection and it was fascinating to compare his recollections of the patrician elder statesman with the ambitious young undergraduate described in Barbara's diaries. Julian never rose to the very top in politics, partly because his views were too right-wing, but he sat in the House of Commons for almost forty years, held various

(Left to right) Michael Wilson, Clemence Schultze and David Faber at St Alban's. (Photo by Martin Rush)

Government posts, was appointed a member of the Privy Council, and was ennobled as Baron Amery of Lustleigh. It was reassuring to learn that his youthful taste for fine food and wine and expensive tailoring survived with age.

We know that Julian was approached many times for his recollections of Barbara but refused to be drawn. Barbara was never spoken about in the Amery home and her books were not in the library. David could only speculate on the reasons behind this. Perhaps at the start of his political career his uncle had felt he couldn't acknowledge the affair, perhaps it was out of consideration for his wife, or, most intriguingly, perhaps he had read Barbara's books and had recognised himself in them. Yet, there is some tantalising prospect that the mystery might still be solved. Over 800 boxes of Amery papers are currently being archived at Churchill College Cambridge and who knows what they might reveal.

Like Julian, David grew up in a political atmosphere – his grandfather was Harold Macmillan (created Earl of Stockton) British Prime Minister from 1957 to 1963. Like Julian he went to Eton and Balliol and was later elected as a Conservative MP. David clearly knows and loves Barbara's books. He recognises the hallmarks of

See FABER continued on page 10

Pym's view of marriage is revealed in four early novels

Charles Hansmann and Eileen Kennedy, and Ann and Dan DiPietro, are married couples and members of the Pym Society. At the North American conference in April, this "Quartet in Marriage" explored Pym's treatment of marriage in *Some Tame Gazelle, Excellent Women, Crampton Hodnet* and *Jane and Prudence*. The papers in their entirety will be available at www.barbara-pym.org. Page numbers herein refer to Dutton editions.

Marriages Real and Virtual in *Some Tame Gazelle*

by Charles Hansmann

Some Tame Gazelle states its theme early on: "something to *love,* that was the point."

Henry and Agatha Hoccleve are in their late 50s and have been married since their mid-twenties. They are most compatible in their common preference for the domestic discomfort of drab furniture, dim lighting and a poorly laid table. In almost all other matters, and certainly in their temperaments, they are a mismatch, and we find them often "rather snappy with each other." Belinda Bede is also in her late 50s and has loved Henry "faithfully for over 30 years." She fell in love with him at the age of 20, when they were students together, and had her heart broken at the age of 25. She has never found anyone to replace Henry, and in a figurative sense she, too, has married him, for her heart will have no other.

Agatha, the daughter of a bishop, married Henry because she knew that with her "scheming" it was the best means by which she could duplicate the life she knew as a girl. But Henry is a brooder with a penchant for melancholy posing; he sleeps late, won't pitch in with the work at church fund-raisers, is ill-prepared when called upon to deliver a prayer, and tends to break out into long poetical recitations at the most inapt moments.

The passion between them is questionable. In an early scene Henry "kiss[es] Agatha in a hasty, husbandly way, which rather surprised Belinda who had not thought that any outward signs of affection ever passed between them."(65) The Bede sisters witness another kiss, or lack of a kiss, when Agatha leaves on holiday, and while Harriet thinks Henry is "pleased as Punch" to be rid of Agatha, Belinda, perhaps remembering the earlier kiss, suggests that "they said their real goodbyes in the house." (74)

One thing, however, is clear: much of the passion between Henry and Agatha has morphed into a kind of perversion, the kind of passion that prefers suffering to sensuality. Belinda observes that Henry and Agatha "wished to outdo each other in self-denial." They vie for bragging rights about skipping lunch. Henry complains that Agatha makes "a martyr of herself"; Belinda believes that Agatha has developed rheumatism "out of self-defense." Although Henry is very much the idler, he claims fatigue from being over-worked and pouts about being under-appreciated.

By contrast, the figurative marriage that plays so prominent a role in Belinda's life is one of unilateral devotion. "I always remember everything Henry says ... Thirty years of it." She still wears light blue because Henry told her more than thirty years ago that he liked her in this color. She "flushe[s] with embarrassment and secret pleasure" when he glancingly thanks her for "put[ting] up with" his "ill-humour"; this trifling compliment leaves her feeling "somehow exalted." She mends Henry's sock while he is wearing it, and when Henry calls her work "exquisite," she goes "quite pink with pleasure and confusion." Belinda can no more "clear out" the closet of her emotions than she can willingly part with faded favorites from her wardrobe.

When she declines Bishop Grote's marriage proposal – "I don't love you" – she fends off his persistence by offering an even stronger reason: "I did love somebody once and perhaps I still do." (224) She is Henry's virtual bride and is not free to marry another.

Ironically it is Agatha, Henry's wife, who has feelings for Bishop Grote. When Belinda confesses that she would never ask a man to marry her for fear she might meet "somebody else afterwards," Agatha admits, "That can happen. One wonders how often it *does* happen when one knows that it *can."* (217) Agatha's response suggests that this has indeed now happened to her.

Henry is no slouch at affectionate wanderings. Agatha is very much his intellectual equal, and yet his petty and puerile emotions often default to the

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less-clever Belinda, simply because she dotes on him. His thoughts keep "going back to the days when Belinda's frank adoration had been so flattering" and thinks of her as "a nice, peaceful creature" compared to Agatha. He wistfully remarks to Belinda how different it is when Agatha is away, and he says with a sigh, "But there it is. We can't alter things, can we?" Of course, any regret he feels for marrying Agatha instead of Belinda is based in no small part on having "forgotten how bored he had been by [Belinda's] constancy." What he is really looking for is someone who will fully indulge his moodiness. Even Belinda recognizes that Henry doesn't really "prefer her to Agatha"; it's just that she is "the one he hadn't married."

Charles Hansmann as Larry King.

Marriage does have its privileges. Belinda thinks to herself: "I love him more than Agatha does," and yet Agatha, not Belinda, "had the privilege of seeing [Henry] in his bath." Even though she is single, Belinda is not entirely denied such intimate domestic pleasures, for the enduring close connection in her life is with her sister. She watches Harriet "splashing about in the tub like a plump porpoise," and Harriet appraises Belinda: "Yes, you look very nice," she says, "but I think I should use some more lipstick if I were you." "Oh, no, Harriet, I don't think I can use any more. I shouldn't really feel natural if I did," Belinda responds. (115)

With each other the sisters have found the life that is natural to them, the very thing other people look for, and many find, in marriage – a harmonious joining together, a cohabitation in which they feel secure and loved.

Charles Hansmann has published poetry and prose in the US, the UK, and Europe. He holds B.A. degrees in English and philosophy from the University of Wisconsin and a J.D. degree from New York Law School.

Can Excellent Women Marry?

by Eileen Kennedy

Excellent Women is set in the London Parish of St. Mary's, where Mildred Lathbury's social circle "consists of women, older men and young boys." (D. Benet, *Something to Love*) An unusual married couple, Rocky and Helena Napier, rents the flat below Mildred's, disturbing her placid, if somewhat predictable, existence.

Eileen Kennedy

Mildred is a self-described "excellent woman." She is "involved or interested in other people's business," (1) "expecting very little, nothing, really" for herself. (37) Although the implication at the outset is that excellent women do not marry, the Napiers' marriage influences the evolution of Mildred's self-perception from that of an excellent woman who will never marry to that of a woman who very well might.

Initially, Mildred holds a fairly traditional idea of marriage. When Helena states that Rocky cooks because she is too busy, Mildred thinks: "Surely wives shouldn't be too busy to cook for their husbands?" (9) And when Helena is not home to greet Rocky upon his return from service in Italy, Mildred thinks, "Wives ought to be waiting for their husbands when they come back from the wars." (29)

The Napiers appear to have very little in common, and Helena reveals to Mildred that she and Rocky probably "will go [their] own ways. That's how most marriages turn out and it could be worse." (25) Mildred later reflects that, "Such married couples as I knew ... did not talk about their difficulties to comparative strangers." (27)

Almost immediately upon meeting Rocky, Mildred senses that he is the type who would appeal, and be attracted, to the opposite sex. These suspicions are confirmed when Mildred meets a Wren

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officer who knew Rocky in Italy and describes him as "the most glamorous Flags in the Med ... He used to take people up for a week and then drop them," and "of course, he had an Italian girlfriend." (113) Helena herself is no angel. She confides to Mildred that she and Everard Bone have a "special link" because of their anthropological work, and that this would naturally predispose them to a more intimate relationship. (126) Rocky knows what's going on. Everard and Helena have just presented a paper about polygamous cultures, and he comments: "I wonder if the study of societies where polygamy is commonplace encourages immorality?" (97)

Yet Rocky does not appear to be threatened by Helena's flirtation. In fact, when she leaves him, he is more horrified by the mess she has left than by her departure. He is even sympathetic when Everard rebuffs her: "Poor Helena. When [Everard] should have been near at hand to cherish her she found he had fled to a meeting of the Prehistoric Society in Derbyshire." (225)

The Napiers' relationship does not espouse any of the values traditionally associated with marriage. This is certainly a marriage of equals, but instead of each bringing something of moral, psychological or economic value to the relationship, this husband and wife are equally capable of engaging in infidelities. This is also a marriage where the roles have been reversed. Rocky is the stay-at-home cook, concerned with domestic arrangements and outraged by Helena's messiness. Helena, on the other hand, has an intellectually challenging job and is annoyed that Rocky "knows nothing about anthropology and cares less." (26) The entire relationship is one of passion, almost to the exclusion of practicality. Saucepans burn tables, dishes pile up in the sink, casseroles are dropped on the floor because oven mitts are missing, and furniture is eaten by woodworm. The apartment is chaos, and to the extent that marriage is supposed to facilitate domesticity, the Napiers are an utter failure. Their variety of marriage goes too far for Mildred; she still believes in the traditional virtues and duties. But the Napiers have opened her eyes to the possibility that marriages can be of many kinds. Perhaps even an excellent woman can marry.

Perfect timing for Everard Bone. Even early on, Mildred is attracted to Everard, noting that he is "perhaps just a little splendid." (65) She accepts his invitation to lunch, during which he observes that Mildred is a "sensible person." A short time later, when she asks him what his ideal wife would be like, he responds, "Oh, a sensible sort of person," and "an excellent woman altogether." Mildred asks in amazement, "You could consider marrying an excellent woman? But they are not for marrying." She still resists the idea, but the notion has been planted. (188) Mildred begins to settle her affection on Everard, and realizes that she is willing to accept the wifely duties that go with marriage. She will prepare his meat after all.

However, in preparation for their dinner date, she purchases a black dress and sweeps her hair back, "trying to make myself look like the kind of person who could not correct proofs or make an index." (248) She does not wish to look like an excellent woman, still doubtful that such a woman is marriageable. Later that evening she does agree to assist Everard with his work, while anticipating the wifely duties she is now certain will follow: "before long I should be certain to find myself at his sink peeling potatoes and washing up." (225) She has sensed something in Everard that allows her to remain an excellent woman and to marry.

In the end, Mildred maintains her sense of duty as an excellent woman, but is now able to transfer that duty to those of a wife. Excellent women can, indeed, marry.

Eileen Kennedy is an Assistant General Counsel at Citigroup, in charge of their world-wide intellectual property practice. She holds an Honors B.A. in philosophy from Georgetown University and a J.D. from New York Law School.

Missing Sideboards and Faded Slipcovers: Marriage in *Crampton Hodnet*

by Ann DiPietro

In *Crampton Hodnet*, Barbara Pym presents us with numerous images of marriage. First and foremost are the Clevelands, Francis and Margaret, a 50-ish academic couple. Margaret is motherly in her behavior towards Francis, and he is comfortable and kept busy with a fairly boring, unfulfilling life. Margaret in her musings about an acceptable mate for her daughter tells us:

> It was an excellent thing for a husband to have something like research to occupy his time. After the first year or two of married life one no longer wanted to have him continually about the house.

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CRAMPTON continued from page 6

> Mrs. Cleveland hardly noticed now whether her husband was there or not, and she was too busy doing other things ever to stop and ask herself whether she was not perhaps missing something. The best she could say of Francis was that he gave her no trouble, and she thought that that was a great deal more than could be said of many husbands. (37)

Francis's life is taken up with his lectures, mild dalliances with young students, meetings with friends, and when he had "some leisure time," work on a biography of a poet ancestor. Margaret finds Francis boring, yes, but life's other pleasures make up for this:

> Margaret who had at one time helped and encouraged her husband with his work, had now left him to do it alone, because she feared that with her help it might quite easily be finished before one of them died, and then where would they be? Francis was like a restless, difficult child if he had nothing to occupy him. . . . After nearly thirty years of married life, she had come to take very much for granted the handsome, distinguished husband whom she had once loved so passionately. Indeed, she even thought Francis rather a bore sometimes. (14)

After meeting the Clevelands, we are introduced to a couple (or at least one member of a couple) that is considering marriage – Mr. Latimer and Jessie Morrow. While we do not meet them in a married state, we learn a great deal about their views on the topic. Mr. Latimer "gets an idea." He believes he will never have peace until he marries and after a violent dream/nightmare, he awakens to the realization that Jessie is the woman for him, if only he could remember her name. He recalls the passion of an affair when he was 19 "that enriched his life," but he now wants a life less disturbed by what he calls love but which is probably passion.

When Mr. Latimer tells Jessie Morrow that he holds her in high esteem and proposes marriage, she rejects the proposal. "Oh, no; it wouldn't do at all! Even Miss Morrow's standards were higher than that, so high indeed, that she feared she would never marry now. For she wanted love ... And of course, she knew perfectly well that she would never get anything like that." (94) One wonders if Jessie has made a mistake in turning down Mr. Latimer since their relationship has a strong friendship at its core (if he can only get her name straight). The relationship lacks passion, but in most of the novel's marriages passion seems to disappear inevitably with time.

Other insights into marriage come from the 70ish spinster Miss Doggett, especially in her criticism of Margaret:

> I've never liked Margaret, thought Miss Doggett, suddenly and surprisingly. There she was, quite happy and contented, making no effort to keep her husband interested in her. Wearing the same old jumper suit and comfortable shoes, the same musquash coat with its old-fashioned roll collar, bicycling into town to do the shopping, sitting by the fire smoking cigarettes, taking no interest at all in her house and family. Look at those faded slipcovers, thought Miss Doggett unreasonably....Yes, Margaret was a bad wife and mother. It was no wonder Francis was looking elsewhere. (83)

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No Soft Incense: Barbara Pym and the Church. *Edited by Hazel K. Bell*

Catholic Herald, 17 June 2005: "Not since Anthony Trollope's Barchester novels has the Church of England received such minute and detailed treatment in fiction."

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CRAMPTON continued from page 7

Lady Beddoes offers another snapshot of marriage in commenting on her late husband, an ambassador to Warsaw. They were married for 20 years, and she says his death was somewhat like having a piece of furniture removed and then being left to stare at a blank wall. She vaguely remembers that after all one does really only love once in a lifetime, and it appears the ambassador was not that one; rather he was more the missing sideboard. (112)

Pym's characters, here as in her other novels, are flawed, amusing, and richly developed. There are some prevailing themes: excellent women (Margaret Cleveland, Jessie Morrow), child-like, self-absorbed clergy and academics (Francis Cleveland, Mr. Latimer) and obtuse, cantankerous older women (Miss Doggett). These figures are prominent in many of her books but one never feels that they are stereotypes. The same holds true for her portraits of marriage. Are not these relationships but reflections of these rich characters?

In Pym's marriages, passion usually ebbs with time, women care for their husbands in many small domestic ways, and husbands often are childish, self-absorbed, and querulous. But *Crampton Hodnet* establishes that for Pym's characters, a shared, comfortable, cozy life is most important, and marriage can sometimes help achieve this goal.

Ann DiPietro was an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the English Department of St. John's University in New York for many years and is now head of the Sea Cliff, New York, Children's Library.

Mild, Kindly Looks, Spectacles and Kiddisoaps: Where Has All the Passion Gone? (*Jane and Prudence*)

by Dan DiPietro

Jane & Prudence is rich with insights into marriage. At its center are Jane, married to clergyman Nicholas Cleveland, and her friend and former pupil, Prudence Bates, ambivalently unmarried. From the first chapter, it is clear that marriage is a core construct of *J&P*: at an Oxford reunion, Jane reflects on *her* marriage even as she hatches a plot to find a suitable mate for Prudence; Prudence conveys mixed feelings about her unmarried state; Miss Berkinshaw, Jane and Prudence's former tutor, articulates the societal imperative that women marry; and the various

Dan DiPietro, Eileen Kennedy and Ann DiPietro enjoy the humor in Barbara Pym's spoken words.

clergymen's wives form a kind of Greek Chorus echoing Miss Berkinshaw's sentiments. In fact, marriage-related words appear no fewer than 34 times in Chapter One.

Companionship and passion in marriage are Pym's focus: Jane reflects upon this in her own marriage and in Fabian Driver's to the deceased Constance. The importance of passion, particularly for men, is established hilariously by Miss Doggett in her "men want only one thing" mantra.

I will explore whether passion can be maintained or whether companionship is the most one can expect in the marriage of Jane and Nicholas.

On the surface, the message appears straightforward: men are by nature more passionate than women. But in the Pymian world, things are often not as they first appear. Miss Doggett asserts that "'men only want *one thing*'... [she] again looked puzzled; it was as if she had heard that men only wanted one thing, but had forgotten for the moment what it was." (70) Pym uses humor to suggest it is not so easy to determine what men really want and perhaps it is quite different from what Miss Doggett perceives.

Jessie Morrow comments tartly on men and passion when she tells Jane about Fabian Driver's relationship with his deceased wife, Constance: "Her husband was more interested in other women than he was in her. Her death came as a great shock to him – he had almost forgotten her existence." (28)

But Pym turns this on its ear later in the novel when Jane theorizes about Fabian's philandering ways: "[Fabian] tended to make love to women – because he couldn't really think of much to say

See J&P continued on page 9

J&P continued from page 8
to them." (96)

When Jane, Nicholas and Prudence discuss Flora's qualifications as a wife, we begin to understand that passion may be a two-way street. Nicholas says: "Flora is shaping very well as a cook ... She will make a good wife for somebody one of these days." Jane counters with: "'But men don't want only that ...' Her sentence trailed off vaguely, for perhaps she too had difficulty remembering what it was men wanted." (82)

Here Pym reinforces the view that men are perhaps not as single-minded as Miss Doggett believes but hints that Jane is missing passion in her life. This theme is further developed when Jane expresses regret over the lack of garlic – a good metaphor for spice – in her life.

As the novel opens, Jane rues the onset of middle age and its corrosive effects on the passion in her marriage to Nicholas: "'Ah, those delphiniums,' sighed Jane. 'I always used to think Nicholas's eyes were just that colour. But I suppose a middle-aged man – and that he is, poor darling – can't have delphinium-blue eyes.'" (7)

Later Pym returns to this theme as Jane describes how her relationship with Nicholas has changed over the years:

> Mild, kindly looks and spectacles, thought Jane; this was what it came to in the end. The passion of those early days, the fragments of Donne and Marvel. ... all these faded into mild kindly looks and spectacles. There came a day when one didn't quote poetry to one's husband any more ... Could she have noted [that day] and mourned it if she had been more observant? (48)

Jane feels this waning of passion in her marriage more acutely when confronted with Nicholas's reaction to the heavily made-up Prudence:

> [Jane] found herself quite unable to look at Prudence, whose eyelids were startlingly and embarrassingly green ... The odd and rather irritating thing about it was, though, that Nicholas was gazing at Prudence with admiration; it was quite noticeable. ... Would [Nicholas] look at her with renewed interest if she had green eyelids? she wondered. ... (84)

This loss of passion is brought into poignant and humorous perspective in the kiddisoap incident. Pym uses Fabian and Nicholas in a wonderful counterpoint. In two contiguous passages, Jane flirts with Fabian, followed by her being displaced in Nicholas's affections by ... soap animals!

As Jane leaves Miss Doggett and Jessie, she spies Fabian coming towards her:

> Perhaps a sight of his beautiful, worn looking face was what she needed on the first evening of spring. Her heart lifted for a moment in quite an absurd way as she prepared to greet him. "'Have you been for a walk?' [Jane said]. She raised her eyes to his ... 'You take an umbrella for a country walk? ... 'Oh, I never think of things like that,' said Jane, tossing her head ..." (128)

Jane returns home and encounters Nicholas holding a package:

> The absurd first-evening-of-spring feeling came back to her suddenly and she wondered if he had perhaps felt it too and brought her a present. 'Look,' he said. 'I thought I'd put them in my little cloakroom ...' On the table stood four soap animals ... 'Kiddisoaps, for children, really ... I shall arrange them on the glass shelf'... He went happily away, humming to himself. (129)

In sharp contrast to Miss Doggett's view of "what men want," Jane reaches a different conclusion: "If it is true that men only want one thing, Jane asked herself, is it perhaps to be left to themselves with their soap animals ...?" (129)

Jane has one last encounter with the kiddisoaps: "the sight of Nicholas's soap animals reminded her of her love for him and she might have wept had she not been past the age when one considers that weeping can do good or bring relief." (137) It is crystal clear that these are not tears of joy.

Yet there is most certainly the joy of companionship – and perhaps still some passion – in Jane's marriage. In Chapter One, we gain insight into the richness of her relationship with Nicholas: "a husband was one to tell one's silly jokes to ... and do the tipping at hotels, thought Jane with a rush. And although he certainly did these things,

See J&P continued on page 10

J&P continued from page 9
Nicholas was a great deal more than that." (10) It is left to the reader to determine the exact dimensions of "a great deal more."

In Chapter Two, an exchange by our couple, who are discussing various clergymen, reinforces this point. Nicholas says, "'Not all High Church clergymen are plain looking.' 'Nor all Moderate ones, darling,' said Jane warmly, for her husband's eyes were still blue and he had kept his figure." (16).

Fabian Driver gives us a glimpse of the warm companionship shared by Nicholas and Jane when he sees them returning from lunch at Miss Crampton's: "Fabian ... had a confused feeling of irritation and envy as he watched them. It must have been Jane's smiling up at her husband and the awful coat she was wearing, the kind of coat a woman could wear only in her husband's presence, he thought." (53)

As we near the end of the novel, Jane seems to come to terms with her marriage: "But wasn't that what so many marriages were – finding a person boring and irritating and yet loving him? Who could imagine a man who was *never* boring or irritating? ... Perhaps this was after all what men liked to come home to, someone restful and neutral ..." (192)

Pym deals with the issue of passion in marriage in interesting ways. Despite Miss Doggett's mantra of men wanting only one thing, Pym is not convinced that they want it in their marriage. Fabian sought it outside his first marriage and chooses the plain Jessie Morrow as his second wife over the more attractive Prudence. Nicholas appears not to need passion and, contrary to Miss Doggett's refrain, it is Jane who possesses a much more passionate nature.

In the end Jessie gets her man, Fabian his just desserts, Prudence her dalliances, Nicholas his kiddisoaps and Jane her mild, kindly looks.

Dan DiPietro is Managing Director & Client Head of the Law Firm Group, Citi Private Bank. He has been published in a number of legal industry periodicals including regular articles in The American Lawyer. *Dan is a Visiting Professor at Harvard Law School in the Leadership in Law Firms program and an adjunct professor at George Washington University. He holds an M.B.A. from Columbia University and a B.A. from St. John's University.*

Have you seen this photo of Barbara before?
It appeared on the Internet, but we cannot determine who the photographer is. It is thought to be a publicity photo from Macmillan, publisher of *Quartet in Autumn* (the book Barbara points to) but a representative from Macmillan has no further information. It remains a mysterious, and lovely, photo.

FABER continued from page 3
her literary style and all the many characters and stories inspired by Julian and his talk was vividly illustrated with appropriate quotations and references.

If the success of a talk can be measured by the number of questions it prompts and the applause it generates, this was indeed a triumph. Finally, encouraged by the Chairman and with a degree of diffidence which would surely not have been shown by his uncle, David produced some copies of his book *Speaking for England*, which relates the romance within a wider account of the lives of Julian, his tragic older brother John, who was hanged for treason, and their father Leo. The eager crowd of purchasers who thronged the table for a signed copy was reminiscent of a scene from Pym, bargain-hunters besieging a stall at the Church bazaar.

Michael Wilson is a Founder Member of the Barbara Pym Society and a long-serving member of the Committee. He lives near Southampton, U.K., and is a civil servant in the Office for National Statistics.

The Annual Conference of the Barbara Pym Society will be held at St Hilda's College, Oxford, on 9 and 10 August. Information is posted at www.barbara-pym.org.

Very Barbara Pym

by Alexander McCall Smith
Excerpted from The Guardian (www.guardian.co.uk)
April 5, 2008

James Thurber, remarking on the difference between English and American humour, said that whereas the latter consists of making the extraordinary seem ordinary, the former turns on transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary. Readers of Jane Austen will perhaps agree, as will those who enjoy E. F. Benson's timeless *Mapp and Lucia* novels. Barbara Pym belongs in this company. Indeed she more than the others illustrates Thurber's point about English humour — it delights in tiny little things; and by that standard, *Excellent Women* stands as one of the most endearingly amusing English novels of the 20th century.

Like Jane Austen, Pym painted her pictures on a small square of ivory, and covered much the same territory as did her better-known predecessor: the details of smallish lives led to places that could only be in England. Neither used a megaphone; neither said much about the great issues of their time. In *Excellent Women* the reader is made aware of the fact that, not long before, there had been a war, but what that war was about is not touched upon. With Jane Austen, the fact that a major war was raging hardly impinges upon the consciousness of the characters.

And yet although Pym's novels are about as far away as possible from engagement with the great political and social issues, they are powerful reminders that one of the great and proper concerns of literature is that motley cluster of small concerns that makes up our day-to-day lives. This is what gives her novels their permanent appeal. ...

[*Deleted here is Pym's publishing history, culminating in her rediscovery in* The Times Literary Supplement.]

There has been no diminution of Pym's reputation after her death; indeed it has been steadily enhanced. An indication of this is the fact that she has become an adjective, the finest compliment that posterity can pay any writer. ... To say that a moment is "very Barbara Pym" is to say that it is a self-observed, poignant acceptance of the modesty of one's circumstances, of one's peripheral position. Such a moment also occurs when one realises that for those whom one is observing, one will never be an object of love. Tolerant affection, perhaps, but never deep, passionate love. Indeed, one is not really entitled to expect such an emotion, although it is ennobling, some say, to observe it in others.

The world portrayed in *Excellent Women* is one of shortages and genteel drabness. It is not a world of real poverty; that is not Pym's territory. The characters have all known better days in one way or another: they come from a vicarage background but are now in shared accommodation; they appreciate better fare than the tinned food they eke out; their lives might have had more light in them. Is this a world that the contemporary reader can recognise? I think it is. ...

Excellent Women transcends its particular historical setting, as do all of the Pym novels, because it says something about human aspirations that is as true today as it was when it was written: we all have our hopes; we are all, to an extent, and unless we are very lucky, unfulfilled in some parts of our life; we would all like things to be just a little bit better for us.

That world of vague longing is described in this novel in a way which not only shows us the poignancy of such hopes, but allows us to smile at them. One does not laugh out loud while reading Pym; that would be too much. One smiles and puts down the book to enjoy the smile. Then one picks it up again and a few minutes later an unexpected observation on human foibles makes one smile again.

It is these asides, I think, that make *Excellent Women* so beguiling. The plot itself is not without interest, but it is the narrator's comments on her world and on the scraps of pleasure it allows her that are so utterly engaging; as where Mildred says, right at the beginning: "'I have to share a bathroom,' I had so often murmured, almost with shame, as if I personally had been found unworthy of a bathroom of my own." To be found unworthy of having one's own bathroom is such an unexpected notion, but it is amu-

See SMITH continued on page 12

SMITH continued from page 11
sing because it is a *cri de coeur* of frustrated ambition, of a desire to be something that fate will clearly never allow one to be.

We all want to be happy — we all want a bathroom of our own, but this happiness, for an awful lot of us, is elusive. We fill our lives with small things, and they become immensely important to us. Barbara Pym understands that, and in celebrating these little things so vividly, she helps us, I think, to be more sympathetic to others. If it is a mark of a great novel that it should help us to feel for others, that it should touch our human capacity for sympathy in an important way, then *Excellent Women*, a novel that on one level is about very little, is a great novel about a great deal.

Alexander McCall Smith is an admirer of Barbara Pym and a member of the Barbara Pym Society. His latest book is The Miracle at Speedy Motors, *a new novel in the* No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency *series.*

Letters to *the Guardian*
From guardian.co.uk, 12 April 2008

I was delighted to learn from Alexander McCall Smith's article that Barbara Pym's *Excellent Women* is to be reissued ("Very Barbara Pym", April 5). I first met her when we were both in the WRNS and working at the Admiralty at the end of the war — we became great friends. I was instrumental in getting Barbara her job at the African Institute as my aunt was working there. I rejoiced when, at last, publishers recognised her writing and began to publish her again. Thank you for bringing her to the attention of new audiences.

Frances Atkin
London

Alexander McCall Smith's anodyne tribute to Barbara Pym hardly does her credit, and is very unlikely to attract any new readers to her brilliant, acerbic novels. Who would want to raise the occasional wan smile at an account of wet middle-class women yearning for their own bathrooms? She is far more than wry, wistful and warm. Her novels are penetrating, subtle and sad, as well as laugh-out-loud hilarious in a manner bordering at times on the surreal.

Isabella Stone
Matlock, Derbyshire

Diary of a Provincial Pymmite

This extract from a hitherto unknown MS apparently reports on the USA Barbara Pym Conference held in April 2008. Scholars in E.M. Delafield studies are undecided regarding the work's authorship. Textual comparisons with *Diary of a Provincial Lady* (1930), *The Provincial Lady Goes Further* (1932), *The Provincial Lady in America* (1934) and *The Provincial Lady in Wartime* (1940) are currently under way. It is hoped that further extracts from this newly discovered diary will resolve the vexed problem of its authenticity.

Friday, 11 April

Travel from New York to Boston on the Acela. Smooth, spacious and comfortable; self and companions cannot however sit together. (Query: why are seats not reserved?) But this means no chat to distract one from landscape. Am enchanted by the clapboard houses, painted in pretty whites, greys and pastels, which recall dolls' houses. They look as if they would be freezing cold in New England winters, but of course that cannot be: plainly the art of insulation is better understood in the USA than the UK.

Boston impressive, and am delighted that taxi passes outskirts of Beacon Hill area, a part of town I intend to visit later, in homage to favourite crime author Charlotte MacLeod. Cross Charles River (much larger than expected) and we are in Cambridge, which everybody tells me I shall find just like a piece of England.

The Episcopal Divinity School fulfils this promise: solid nineteenth-century buildings in darkish stone could be a college in Yorkshire (but are warmer). We are cordially welcomed and shown to pleasant house. Room very comfortable, but lacks mirror. Query: why? Episcopal Divinity students must be far above such considerations of vanity. Regrettably, this is a state to which I cannot aspire, being plagued by doubts about hair. But find a mirror in bathroom, and am somewhat reassured. View from window takes in Longfellow's house, with delightful formal garden.

Saturday, 12 April

Conference will doubtless be reported by other pens, so shall not dwell on the papers and formal proceedings, but confine myself to by-the-way observations. First and foremost, excellence of the food. (Query: why did this aspect spring first to mind? Am evidently not one of those ethereal beings to whom such matters are of no consequence.) All other aspects of conference's running

See DIARY continued on page 13

DIARY continued from page 12

are equally easy and unobtrusive. Am reminded of saying about the swan (serene on top, paddling like the blazes underneath). It must have taken lots of paddling to achieve this result. Meet old friends and make new ones, and am able to indulge in the joy of discussion of Pymmian personalities and personalia.

Martin Rush and Yvonne Cocking rehearse for the dramatised readings.

Have agreed to participate in dramatised readings of BP on marriage: authors of dramatised extracts want British voices, they tell us. Am not at all sure of own thespian capacities, but rehearsal goes pretty well, and authors are encouraging. "Give them time to laugh," says one.

Post-dinner period so convivial that it leaves no specific memories, but only a generalised feeling of well-being, plus a sanguine attitude towards next day's performance.

Sunday, 13 April

Performance goes well. Fellow-actors and self reach undreamt of heights, and audience is warmly appreciative, and (best of all) laughs in all the right places: a tribute to BP's sure humorous touch.

We disperse, agreeing that this BPS USA conference has surpassed even the high standard of its predecessors. Only weather has not, having observed its traditional habit of raining. Vow to return as often as possible.

When she is not channelling E. M. Delafield, Clemence Schultze serves as Chairman of the Barbara Pym Society. She is a Roman republican historian, and Lecturer in Classics and Ancient History at Durham University.

A word about dues

Well, actually, a few words. Membership renewals are due now for the 2008-09 year that runs from April 1, 2008, to March 31, 2009.

The current dues for UK members are Seniors £8, Individual Memberships £15, and Family Memberships (at same address) £22.

The current dues for US and Canadian members are Seniors $12, Individual Memberships $22, and Family Memberships (at same address) $34.

Renewal forms for UK and US/Canada are on the web site, www.barbara-pym.org. Members without Internet access will find a renewal form enclosed in this newsletter.

Dues will be raised for 2009-10, by vote of the Executive Committee at its February meeting. The new fees will be Seniors £10/$20, Individuals £18/$36, and Family Memberships £25/$50. These dues become effective April 1, 2009.

The Barbara Pym Society
2008-09
Chairman: Clemence Schultze
Membership Secretary: Eileen Roberts
Secretary: Chris Rutherford
Committee: Phil Bacon, Deborah Fisher, Jean Harker, Alex Ward, Michael Wilson, Maureen Woolley
Archivist: Yvonne Cocking
U.S. Representative: Beverly Bell
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From the Archives

by Yvonne Cocking

Barbara tells us in her diary that she started German lessons in the autumn of 1933, probably in preparation for the National Union of Students' trip she was planning to join at Easter 1934.

Written in ink on the first page of an 8 x 6 exercise book is "Barbara Pym /German Vocabulary etc. */Die erste Liebe vergist man nicht!* (First love is never forgotten)."

The next five pages contain German words and phrases in one column with their English counterparts in the other. At the top of the first of these pages is written "Von FG." I assume, therefore, that this book was started after the visit to Cologne, and that these pages contain words from a letter from Friedbert Gluck. Later there are more from another letter from FG, and some from AF, presumably her (and Henry's) friend Anton Feudrich.

Pages are devoted to words from the text books *Frische dein Deutsch auf!* ("Brush up your German!") and *Die Sprache der Mode*, translated as "Brighter German," as well as completed exercises and notes on grammatical points. Many other pages are given over to words from *Das Mädchen Manuela* [by Christa Winsloe], and *Der letzte Sommer,* by the poet and writer Ricarda Huch, books by serious contemporary writers. There are also sections with words from the works of Schiller (*Kabale und Liebe, Das Mädchen aus der Fremde*), Goethe (*Schönste Briefe*) and Rilke (*Brief an eine junge Frau*).

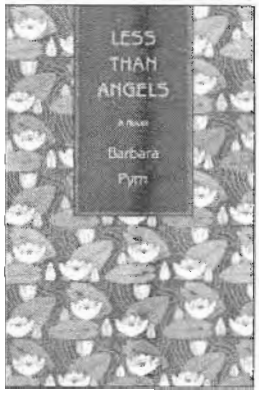
Barbara also practised the old German script. Julian Amery's name and address are written in this way, and more which I was unable to recognise. Towards the back of the book is a section dated June 1945, when she returned to Goethe's letters, with which her notes ended.

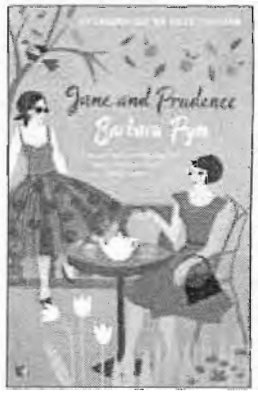
What practical use Barbara could make of this book is doubtful, since the words are all taken in order from their sources, and of course there is no form of index. However, it is an interesting item as it tells us how seriously Barbara took her study of the language, and the untrivial nature of her literary sources.

Yvonne Cocking is the Archivist for the Barbara Pym Society and a frequent speaker at its conferences.

Recently reprinted books by Pym

- *Excellent Women*, with introduction by A.N. Wilson. Penguin Classics
- *Jane and Prudence*, with introduction by Jilly Cooper, Virago
- *Less Than Angels*, Moyer Bell Books





New Book by Hazel K. Bell

Hazel Bell, long-time Pym Society member, former editor of *Green Leaves*, editor of *No Soft Incense*, and award-winning indexer, is author of a new book to be published in July.

From Flock Beds to Professionalism: A History of Index-Makers (Oak Knoll Press and HKB Press) presents brief biographies of 65 makers of indexes from the 15th to the 20th century. She considers their working methods, techniques, training, their lives and personalities. Among them is, of course, Barbara Pym, who worked at the International Africa Institute.

In the section on Barbara, her close friend and literary executor, Hazel Holt, writes:

> I think what she enjoyed most about indexing, apart from the pleasure of putting words into a certain order, was the peaceful, enclosed space an indexer inhabits. It requires a certain sort of concentration: you need to withdraw, as it were, into the world of that which is to be indexed, and this precisely suited Barbara's temperament. We can see this in those of her characters who do indexes, either as a job or as an expression of love: it is no coincidence that Mildred (in *Excellent Women*) and Dulcie (in *No Fond Return of Love*) — especially the latter — are the heroines who are most like their creator.

The book will be available in the US from Oak Knoll Press, www.oakknoll.com, and in the UK from HKB Press, www.aidanbell.com/hkbpress/welcome.htm.

Pym Gleanings

Editor's Note: We are fortunate that we can now find frequent mentions of Barbara Pym in print and online. Because of an abundance of gleanings, we will not include here instances in which Pym is briefly listed in a string of writers without further context. In addition, the numerous blogs that mention her ("Oh, she's my favorite author!") will not be noted here. Nonetheless, readers are encouraged to send substantive gleanings to the editor.

Noted in Books

• Scott Herrick (US) writes: "I began reading *Starting Out in the Evening* by Brian Morton because of the *New York Times* review of the film. I had already been taken very strongly with the novel, and its vaguely Pym-like charm when I came across this passage, expressing the thoughts of the main character":

> The only thing that stayed constant was that she didn't publish him. He didn't take this personally: he knew that his work simply didn't sell much, and that she had an obligation to publish things that would sell. Of course in his worst moods he lay awake cursing her and every other editor he knew, remembering how William Kennedy had been "discovered" after four novels, and Barbara Pym, and Henry Roth, and Daniel Fuchs — he would go over that long list of once-obscure writers who, because of one impassioned editor, and been rediscovered and turned into "hot," best-selling authors, with profiles in *Vanity Fair* and front-page reviews in the *Times Book Review* of books they had written years or decades earlier.

Noted on the Web

• From www.timesonline.co.uk, 14 Dec. 07, in a review of *Jane and Prudence* (Virago) by Christina Koning: "This book is a gem — and a fitting introduction to this inexplicably neglected writer's work, for all those still to have the pleasure of discovering her."

• From www.timesonline.co.uk, 05 Jan. 08, Barbara Pym placed 25th on a list of 50 greatest post-war British writers (the first five are Philip Larkin, George Orwell, William Golding, Ted Hughes and Doris Lessing.). Her profile reads:

> The novelist of the heroic English spinster, Barbara Pym, is wistful yet stoic in her twinset and sensible shoes. The world she created in her 12 novels is a shabby place of Bakelite and toothy curates — she is, in fact, the female John Betjeman, lovingly dwelling on these little pockets of decaying Victoriana. Her first book, *Some Tame Gazelle* (1950), is her lightest and funniest; a 1930s *Cranford*, from which few clergymen escape unmarried.

Various Virago Notes

• From www.thebookseller.com, 04 April 08: Virago's Donna Coonan has also snapped up rights in three Barbara Pym novels for the Virago Modern Classics [VMC] series, meaning that Pym's entire early canon will be available by 2010. *A Glass of Blessings*, *Less Than Angels* and *Some Tame Gazelle* were acquired through Laura Morris at Laura Morris Literary Agency and will be published following the forthcoming VMC editions of Pym's *Excellent Women* and *No Fond Return of Love.*

• From www.TheGuardian.co.uk, 26 April 08: Carmen Callil set up Virago to publish books that celebrated women, and dreamt of shelves of green paperbacks all over the world. The Modern Classics list gave voice to generations of novelists who might have been forgotten — three decades later it is as important as ever.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of Virago Modern Classics, eight hardbacks — *Excellent Women* by Barbara Pym, *The Diary of a Provincial Lady* by E. M. Delafield, *A Game of Hide and Seek* by Elizabeth Taylor, *Valley of the Dolls* by Jacqueline Susann, *A Far Cry from Kensington* by Muriel Spark, *84 Charing Cross Road* by Helene Hanff, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, *The Magic Toyshop* by Angela Carter — will be republished with cover designs by leading female textile designers.

• Christine Shuttleworth (UK) sent an "enthusiastic review" by Sarah Curtis from the *Times Literary Supplement (TLS),* 06 Jan. 08:

See GLEANINGS continued on page 16

GLEANINGS continued from page 15

> The accolade "classic" is appropriate because, although Pym's novels record the manners of a segment of society in a period of post-war England, her wit and humanity are timeless. ... The depiction of Oxford women graduates is both cruel and tender... Formality is maintained in the office where Prudence works; first names would be used by everyone today, but the tensions remain essentially the s a m e , whether between colleagues, villagers, female friends, mothers and daughters, or men and women. New readers can recognize every situation and relish every line Pym writes.

Review of *No Soft Incense: Barbara Pym and the Church*

• From *Pascha Nostrum,* a publication of the Church of The Resurrection [Episcopal], New York, December 2007, comes this excerpt:

"This little volume serves two constituencies: the Pym reader who must confront the massive 'churchiness' of her work and finds it mystifying, and the church-accustomed reader, who finds this topic fascinating."

Miscellaneous Gleanings

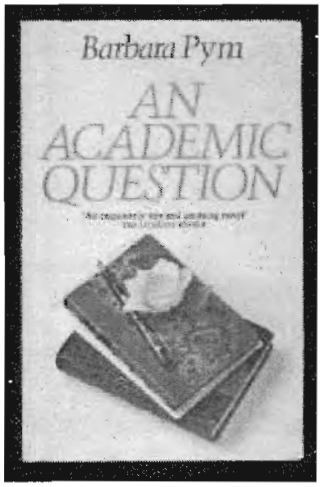
• Diana Gulland (UK) has sent this from *The Independent Extra,* "Days Like These" 07 April 1940. "Barbara Pym, novelist, writes:"

> My days pass so pleasantly but really with nothing accomplished. I have done so little writing this year. But writing is not now quite the pleasure it used to be. I am no longer so certain of a glorious future – though I still feel that I may ultimately succeed. Perhaps I need some shattering experience to awaken and inspire me, or at least to give me some emotion to recollect in tranquillity. But how to get it? ... Even the idea of falling violently in love again (which is my idea of an experience!) doesn't seem to be much helping the writing. I seem to have decided already the sort of novels I want to write. Perhaps the Home Front novel I am dabbling with now will get published. Perhaps ...

[This passage is taken from *A Very Private Eye.*]

• Christine Shuttleworth (UK) writes: In the 30 November 2007 issue of *TLS*, there is a Books of the Year section. John Bayley writes: "I have read hardly anything this year except Barbara Pym, an excellent true spy thriller by Ben Macintyre, *Agent Zigzag* (Bloomsbury), and an absorbing study of Kierkegaard, who is strangely congenial with Pym." (What can he mean?)

Looking Ahead to 2009



Plans are already underway for the 2009 Conference of the Barbara Pym Society at St Hilda's College, dates to be announced. The theme will be *An Academic Question*, perhaps Barbara Pym's least discussed work — so it's time!

If you are interested in speaking at the Conference, please send a brief proposal to the Executive Committee, c/o Eileen Roberts, St. Hilda's College, OX4 1DY, or e-mail Eileen at eileen.roberts@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk.

The North American Conference Committee has selected *A Few Green Leaves* as its theme for 2009. It garnered the most votes among 2008 conference participants who made suggestions on a topic. The dates are not yet confirmed, but most likely will be at the end of March. Proposals for papers are requested. Please send an abstract to Ellen Miller at ellen@ellenmiller.net by December 1, 2008.

> "There are various ways of mending a broken heart, but perhaps going to a learned conference is one of the more unusual."
>
> — *No Fond Return of Love*