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Excellent Women Excellent Women Excellent Women Excellent Women Jane And Prudence Quartet in Autumn The Adventures of Miss Barbara Pym Less Than Angels Some Tame Gazelle A Glass Of Blessings A Few Green Leaves The Sweet Dove Died What She Ate: Six Remarkable Women and the Food That Tells Their Stories No Fond Return of Love An Academic Question The Reality behind Barbara Pym's Excellent Women An Unsuitable Attachment An Unsuitable Attachment Dear Amy Crampton Hodnet A Lot to Ask Three Women and a Boat The Barbara Pym Omnibus Independent Women Jane And Prudence Quartet in Autumn The Women in Black The Little Library Cookbook The Reality Behind Barbara Pym's Excellent Women A Very Private Eye Tea Is So Intoxicating The Collected Stories of Shirley Hazzard Excellent Women by Barbara Pym The Barbara Pym Cookbook The Barbara Pym Collection Volume One Loved and Missed Because of the Lockwoods Reading Barbara Pym Lullaby Beach The Rhetoric of Women's Humour in Barbara Pym's Fiction

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Mildred Lathbury is one of those 'excellent women' who is often taken for granted. She is a godsend, 'capable of dealing with most of the stock situations of life - birth, marriage, death, the successful jumble sales, the garden fete spoilt by bad weather'. As such, she often gets herself embroiled in other people's lives - especially those of her glamorous new neighbours, the Napiers, whose marriage seems to be on the rocks. One cannot take sides in these matters, though it is tricky, especially as Mildred, teetering on the edge of spinsterhood, has a soft spot for dashing young Rockingham Napier. This is Barbara Pym's world at its funniest and most touching. 'Barbara Pym is one of my most favourite novelists. Few other writers have given me more laughter and more pleasure.' Jilly Cooper 'Could one write a book based on one's diaries over thirty years? I certainly have enough material,' wrote Barbara Pym. This book, selected from the diaries, notebooks and letters of this much loved novelist to form a continuous narrative, is indeed a unique autobiography, providing a privileged insight into a writer's mind. Philip Larkin wrote that Barbara Pym had 'a unique eye and ear for the small poignancies of everyday life'. Her autobiography amply demonstrates this, as it traces her life from exuberant times at Oxford in the thirties, through the war when, scarred by an unhappy love affair, she joined the

WRNS, to the published novelist of the fifties. It also deals with the long period when her novels were out of fashion and no one would publish them, her rediscovering in 1977, and the triumphant success of her last few years. It is now possible to describe a place, situation or person as 'very Barbara Pym'. A Very Private Eye, at once funny and moving, shows the variety and depth of her own story. 'I was in the story, feeling everything. I cared about every character . . . She writes beautifully. It was a total pleasure' Philippa Perry, author of The Book You Wish Your Parents Had Read Susie Boyt writes with a mordant wit and vivid style which are at their best in Loved and Missed. When your beloved daughter is lost in the fog of addiction and you make off with her baby in order to save the day, can willpower and a daring creative zeal carry you through ? Examining the limits, disappointments and excesses of love in all its forms, this marvellously absorbing novel, full of insight and compassion, delights as much as it disturbs. ~ 'She takes the study of love into uncharted territory and every sentence has its depth and pleasure' Linda Grant 'I am so moved: it carries a huge emotional power... I ache for them all. Poignant, witty, lyrical and perceptive' Joan Bakewell This book analyses Barbara Pym's published and unpublished work through a new image, that of the troublesome woman. It details the political nature of her work, highlighting her feminist ideas which are hidden in village-like settings and revealed by troublesome women. By exploring Pym's written work, published, and unpublished, diaries and notebooks, the book shows that this material gives credence to Hilary Pym's interpretation of her sister as a complex person. Set in St Basil's, a North London parish, Barbara Pym's novel is full of high comedy. Her depiction of characters begins with Mark the vicar, and his wife Sophia who is quite obsessed with cats, as is Daisy Pettigrew, the vet's sister. Three

lonely people come together in this poignant, witty novel of star-crossed romance from the New York Times–bestselling author of *Jane and Prudence*. After being jilted by her fiancé, Dulcie Mainwaring despairs of ever finding true love. For a distraction, she goes to a publishing conference, where she meets Viola Dace, a dramatic woman who refuses to live without romance, as well as Aylwin Forbes, an editor whom Viola adores. The fact that Aylwin is married doesn't stop Viola. When her amorous pursuit prompts Aylwin's wife to leave him, the academic heartthrob is wide open to Viola's romantic attentions. That is, until Dulcie's eighteen-year-old niece moves in with Viola, and the young girl soon catches Aylwin's roving eye. Set in London in the early 1960s, *No Fond Return of Love* is a delightful comedy of manners that comes full circle as Dulcie discovers a love as unexpected as it is liberating. INTRODUCED BY MAVIS CHEEK 'I'm a huge fan of Barbara Pym' Richard Osman 'She is the rarest of treasures; she reminds us of the heartbreaking silliness of everyday life' Anne Tyler Together yet alone, the Misses Bede occupy the central crossroads of parish life. Harriet, plump, elegant and jolly, likes nothing better than to make a fuss of new curates, secure in the knowledge that Count Ricardo Bianco will propose to her yet again this year. Belinda, meanwhile, has harboured sober feelings of devotion towards Archdeacon Hoccleve for thirty years. Then into their quiet, comfortable lives comes a famous librarian, Nathaniel Mold, and a bishop from Africa, Theodore Grote - who each takes to calling on the sisters for rather more unsettling reasons. 'Some Tame Gazelle is my personal favourite for its sparkling high comedy and its treasury of characters . . . [Pym] makes me smile, laugh out loud, consider my own foibles and fantasies, and, above all, suffer real regret when I reach the final page. Of how many authors can you honestly say that?' MAVIS

CHEEK Three comedies of manners set in postwar England by the New York Times–bestselling author of Excellent Women and “the rarest of treasures” (Anne Tyler). Often characterized as the twentieth-century literary heiress to Jane Austen, and heralded by Phillip Larkin as “the most underrated novelist of the century,” Barbara Pym explored female friendship and the quiet yearnings of British middle-class life—not the least of which, unrequited love—with sharp wit and deep compassion for her characters. No wonder Eudora Welty called her work “sheer delight” and the New York Times raved, “her entire canon is a treat.”

A Glass of Blessings: Wilmet Forsyth is bored with her everyday routine: teatimes, local gossip, even with her husband, Rodney, a civil servant who dotes on her. But Wilmet’s conventional life takes a turn when she runs into the enigmatic brother of a close friend. Piers Longridge is a mystery Wilmet is determined to solve. Driven by a fantasy of romance, the sheltered, naïve Englishwoman sets out to seduce Piers—only to discover that he isn’t the man she thinks he is.

Some Tame Gazelle: Pym’s debut novel invites readers to “step into the Jane Austen–like lives of Harriet and Belinda Bede,” sisters who live together in a small English village (The Christian Science Monitor). Shy, sensible Belinda has been secretly in love with the married archdeacon of their church for thirty years. Meanwhile Belinda’s more confident younger sister, Harriet, is herself pursued by an Italian count whose proposals of marriage are always graciously declined. But it’s a new arrival in their midst who has everyone talking. For now, in this poignant novel of unrequited love, that is enough.

Jane and Prudence: Jane Cleveland and Prudence Bates were friends at Oxford, but now lead very different lives. Jane is married to a vicar in a proper English parish with a daughter she adores. Prudence lives in London, career-minded and fiercely independent—until Jane

decides she should be married. Jane has the perfect husband in mind. What follows is a delightfully trenchant story of manners, morals, family, and female bonding that redefines the social novel for a new generation. A hugely charming, genuinely uplifting story that shows it's never too late for new adventures and unexpected friendship - for fans of HAROLD FRY, DEAR MRS BIRD and THE LIBRARIAN. Meet Eve, who has departed from her thirty-year career to become a Free Spirit; Sally, who has waved goodbye to her indifferent husband and two grown-up children; and Anastasia: defiantly independent narrowboat-dweller, suddenly vulnerable as she awaits a life-saving operation. Inexperienced and ill-equipped, Sally and Eve embark upon a journey through the canals of England, guided by the remote and unsympathetic Anastasia. As they glide gently - and not so gently - through the countryside, the eccentricities and challenges of canalboat life draw them inexorably together, and a tender and unforgettable story unfolds. Disarmingly truthful and narrated with a rare, surprising wit, THREE WOMEN AND A BOAT is a journey over the glorious waterways of England and into the unfathomable depths of the human heart. Excellent Women is probably the most famous of Barbara Pym's novels. The acclaim a few years ago for this early comic novel, which was hailed by Lord David Cecil as one of 'the finest examples of high comedy to have appeared in England during the past seventy-five years,' helped launch the rediscovery of the author's entire work. Mildred Lathbury is a clergyman's daughter and a spinster in the England of the 1950s, one of those 'excellent women' who tend to get involved in other people's lives - such as those of her new neighbor, Rockingham, and the vicar next door. This is Barbara Pym's world at its funniest. A giftable cookery book with over 100 delicious recipes taken from the author's favourite works of fiction. Collected Stories includes both volumes of National Book

Award-winning author Shirley Hazzard's short story collections - Cliffs of Fall and People in Glass Houses - alongside uncollected works and two previously unpublished stories. Twenty-eight works of short fiction in all, Shirley Hazzard's Collected Stories is a work of staggering breadth and talent. Taken together, Hazzard's short stories are masterworks in telescoping focus, 'at once surgical and symphonic' (New Yorker), ranging from quotidian struggles between beauty and pragmatism to satirical sendups of international bureaucracy, from the Italian countryside to suburban Connecticut. In an interview, Hazzard once said, 'The idea that somebody has expressed something, in a supreme way, that it can be expressed; this is, I think, an enormous feature of literature'. Her stories themselves are a supreme evocation of writing at its very best: probing, uncompromising and deeply felt.

INTRODUCED BY LOUIS DE BERNIERES 'I'm a huge fan of Barbara Pym' RICHARD OSMAN 'I'd sooner read a new Barbara Pym than a new Jane Austen' PHILIP LARKIN

Formidable Miss Doggett fills her life by giving tea parties for young academics and acting as watchdog for the morals of North Oxford. Anthea, her great-niece, is in love with a dashing undergraduate with political ambitions. Of this, Miss Doggett thoroughly approves. However, Anthea's father, an Oxford don, is carrying on in the most unseemly fashion with a student - they have been spotted together at the British museum! But the only liaison Miss Doggett isn't aware of is taking place under her very own roof: the lodger has proposed to her paid companion Miss Morrow. She wouldn't approve of that at all. 'Brilliant, hilarious and so very, very English' DAILY MAIL 'My favourite writer . . . I pick up her books with joy' JILLY COOPER 'I'm a huge fan of Barbara Pym' Richard Osman 'Barbara Pym is one of my most favourite novelists. Few other writers have given me more laughter and more pleasure.' Jilly

Cooper 'The day comes in the life of every single man living alone when he must give a dinner party.' The parish of St Basil, on the fringes of North Kensington, is all of a flutter due to the arrival of Rupert Stonebird, a most eligible bachelor, in the neighbourhood. The local matchmakers are sure he will make a suitable husband for the vicar's wife's sister, Penny, or perhaps for local librarian Ianthe Broome? But Ianthe is in danger of forming a most unsuitable attachment for her new library assistant, John, a man of questionable background with not a penny to his name... Owing a debt to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Barbara Pym's *An Unsuitable Attachment* is an elegant and witty comedy of manners from an acclaimed author who Philip Larkin called: 'the most underrated novelist of the century'. INTRODUCED BY SALLEY VICKERS 'I'm a huge fan of Barbara Pym' RICHARD OSMAN 'She is the rarest of treasures; she reminds us of the heart-breaking silliness of everyday life' ANNE TYLER Catherine Oliphant is a writer and lives with handsome anthropologist Tom Mallow. Their relationship runs into trouble when he begins a romance with student Deirdre Swann, so Catherine turns her attention to the reclusive anthropologist Alaric Lydgate, who has a fondness for wearing African masks. Added to this love tangle are the activities of Deirdre's fellow students and their attempts to win the competition for a research grant. The course of true love or academia never did run smooth. 'Her best [novels] are sheer delight, and all of them companionable. Quiet, paradoxical, funny and sad, they have the iron in them of permanence too' JOHN UPDIKE, *NEW YORKER* 'She can be seriously, hilariously funny - no other novelist has celebrated our national silliness with such exuberance' KATE SAUNDERS Barbara Pym's sister Hilary teams with cookbook author Honor Wyatt to bring together this mouthwatering collection of family recipes, memories, and anecdotes

drawn from Pym's diaries and letters, as well her most acclaimed novels Straight from the kitchen of Barbara Pym, this winning cookbook delivers a delectable treat for readers who like their meals served with a generous helping of literary aplomb. Sharing favorite family recipes that Pym incorporated into her novels, The Barbara Pym Cookbook reveals how the author's life intersected with those of her memorable characters. Inside you'll find British classics such as steak and kidney pie, plum cake, sausage rolls, and toad-in-the-hole--dishes that Pym's characters would often prepare for each other. Other treats, such as moussaka and risotto, reflect Pym's fascination with Greece and Italy. Throughout, the recipes are interwoven with references to Pym's novels; Dulcie's musings on "love apples" from No Fond Return of Love accompany directions for tomatoes à la Provençale, for instance. There are glimpses of Pym's personal life, too, such as her description of kipper pâté for lunch with Philip Larkin. The Barbara Pym Cookbook is a must-have for both budding cooks and Pym aficionados.

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY CLARE CHAMBERS 'I'm a huge fan of Barbara Pym' **RICHARD OSMAN** 'The subtlest of her books . . . the sparkle on first acquaintance has been succeeded by the deeper brilliance of established art' **PHILIP LARKIN** Wilmet Forsyth is well dressed, well looked after, suitably husbanded, good-looking and fairly young - but very bored. Her sober husband Rodney, who works at the Ministry, is slightly balder and fatter than he once was. Wilmet would like to think she has changed rather less. Her interest wanders to the nearby church, where she can neglect her comfortable household in the more serious-minded company of three unmarried priests, and, of course, Piers Longridge, a man of an unfathomably different character altogether. 'My favourite writer . . . I pick up her books with joy, as though I were meeting an old, dear friend who

comforts me, extends my vision and makes me roar with laughter'
JILLY COOPER 'Barbara Pym is the rarest of treasures' ANNE TYLER 'I'd sooner read a new Barbara Pym than a new Jane Austen' Philip Larkin
Over the years, as Barbara Pym replaced Nancy Mitford, Georgette Heyer, even Jane Austen, as my most loved author, I devoured all her books, but JANE AND PRUDENCE remains my favourite. Even an umpteenth reading this weekend was punctuated by gasps of joy, laughter and wonder that this lovely book should remain so fresh, funny and true to life' Jilly Cooper
'The setting of this very funny novel, one of Barbara Pym's earliest, is an English village where Jane's husband is the newly appointed vicar, and where Prudence will pay Jane a visit and find herself courted by a fatuous young widower. Prudence, at twenty-nine, has achieved nothing in life but a dull research job in London and a string of dud affairs; Jane, now in her forties, was Prudence's tutor at Oxford. Jane cheerfully concedes that she is an incompetent housewife, but she hopes that the move to a rural parish may transform her into a Trollopean vicar's wife, as well as a crafty matchmaker. There are many comic complications here, as Jane learns that matchmaking has as many pitfalls as does housewifery' The New Yorker 'Captures both Barbara and her writing so miraculously' JILLY COOPER
Picked as a Book to Look Forward to in 2021 by the Guardian, The Times and the Observer A Radio 4 Book of the Week, April 2021 'Faultless storytelling . . . Wise, generous, atmospheric' Observer
Growing up after the war in Westmere, an English seaside town, Kitty has been sheltered by her parents, but meeting Danny changes all of that. She decides to leave everyone and everything she knows to follow Danny to London, in pursuit of glamour and opportunity, and this sets in motion a series of events that will echo down the generations. Over fifty years later, when Kitty's body is found in her

beach hut with a suicide note by her side, her great-niece will help to unravel all the secrets which the family has kept hidden over the decades. 'Explores familial legacy, generational secrets and the effects of long-lasting trauma with a distinct tenderness' New Statesman 'A portrait of sisterhood . . . powerful' Daily Mail 'A writer who never lets you down' Ali Smith

In 1970s London, Edwin, Norman, Letty and Marcia work in the same office and suffer the same problem - loneliness. With delightful humour, Pym takes us through their day-to-day existence: their preoccupations, their irritations, their judgements; and, perhaps most keenly felt, their worries about having somehow missed out on life as post-war Britain shifted around them. This book analyses Barbara Pym's published and unpublished work through a new image, that of the troublesome woman. It details the political nature of her work, highlighting her feminist ideas which are hidden in village-like settings and revealed by troublesome women. By exploring Pym's written work, published, and unpublished, diaries and notebooks, the book shows that this material gives credence to Hilary Pym's interpretation of her sister as a complex person. "The book I most often give as a gift to cheer people up." —Hilary Mantel "A deceptively smart comic gem." —The New York Times Book Review "Witty and delicious." —People

The women in black, so named for the black frocks they wear while working at Goode's department store, are busy selling ladies' dresses during the holiday rush. But they somehow find time to pursue other goals... Patty, in her mid-thirties, has been working at Goode's for years. Her husband, Frank, eats a steak for dinner every night, watches a few minutes of TV, and then turns in. Patty yearns for a baby, but Frank is always too tired for that kind of thing. Sweet, unlucky Fay wants to settle down with a nice man, but somehow nice men don't see her as marriage material. Glamorous Magda runs the

high-end gowns department. A Slovenian émigré, Magda is cultured and continental and hopes to open her own boutique one day. Lisa, a clever and shy teenager, takes a job at Goode's during her school break. Lisa wants to go to university and dreams of becoming a poet, but her father objects to both notions. By the time the last marked-down dress is sold, all of their lives will be forever changed. A pitch-perfect comedy of manners set during a pivotal era, and perfect for fans of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *The Women in Black* conjures the energy of a city on the cusp of change and is a testament to the timeless importance of female friendship. 'Barbara Pym is one of my most favourite novelists. Few other writers have given me more laughter and more pleasure.' Jilly Cooper

Barbara Pym was an incomparable chronicler of ordinary, quiet lives. With warmth, humour, precision and great vividness, she gave her best characters an independent life we recognise as totally familiar. In *A Few Green Leaves*, her last novel, her heroine is Emma Howick, anthropologist. Through her eyes Barbara Pym examines in her own ironic and individual style the quiet revolution in English village life, combining the rural settings of her earliest novels with the themes and characters of her later works. The result is a compelling portrait of a town that seems to be forgotten by time, but which is unmistakably affected by it. Romance shares the pages with death in this engaging novel that is the culmination of Barbara Pym's acclaimed writing career. 'I could go on reading her for ever' A L Rowse, *Punch* 'A vivid sense of how we live now' *New Statesman* 'Her sense of brilliant comedy is a direct inheritance from Jane Austen' *Hibernia* 'A beautifully written, very delicate comedy' *The Times Literary Supplement*

The story of the Hunters and the Lockwoods, neighbours in a Northern, provincial mill town, whose lives take very different paths after the early death of Richard Hunter. With an introduction

by Alexander McCall Smith, author of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series. One did not drink sherry before the evening, just as one did not read a novel in the morning. In 1970s London, Edwin, Norman, Letty and Marcia work in the same office and suffer the same problem – loneliness. Lovingly and with delightful humour, Barbara Pym conducts us through their day-to-day existence: their preoccupations, their irritations, their judgements, and – perhaps most keenly felt – their worries about having somehow missed out on life as post-war Britain shifted around them. Deliciously, blackly funny and full of obstinate optimism, *Quartet in Autumn* shows Barbara Pym's sensitive artistry at its most sparkling. Its world is both extraordinary and familiar, revealing the eccentricities of everyday life. 'I'd sooner read a new Barbara Pym than a new Jane Austen' Philip Larkin Over the years, as Barbara Pym replaced Nancy Mitford, Georgette Heyer, even Jane Austen, as my most loved author, I devoured all her books, but *JANE AND PRUDENCE* remains my favourite. Even an umpteenth reading this weekend was punctuated by gasps of joy, laughter and wonder that this lovely book should remain so fresh, funny and true to life' Jilly Cooper 'The setting of this very funny novel, one of Barbara Pym's earliest, is an English village where Jane's husband is the newly appointed vicar, and where Prudence will pay Jane a visit and find herself courted by a fatuous young widower. Prudence, at twenty-nine, has achieved nothing in life but a dull research job in London and a string of dud affairs; Jane, now in her forties, was Prudence's tutor at Oxford. Jane cheerfully concedes that she is an incompetent housewife, but she hopes that the move to a rural parish may transform her into a Trollopean vicar's wife, as well as a crafty matchmaker. There are many comic complications here, as Jane learns that matchmaking has as many pitfalls as does housewifery' *The New Yorker* "I shall

turn this into a tea-house, with lunches if requested, and shall serve pleasant meals in the orchard," announced David, "and with my penchant for cooking I ought to make a fortune." "Oh dear!" said Germaine. David Tompkins thinks it is a splendid idea to open a tea garden at his Kentish cottage. His wife, Germaine, is not so sure. The local villagers are divided on the matter, and not necessarily supportive, particularly Mr. Perch at the Dolphin, who sees it as direct competition to Mrs. Perch's own tea garden. It doesn't bode well when the official opening coincides with a break in the beautiful weather. Things are further complicated by the arrival of the "cake cook" Mimi, a Viennese girl with a mysterious past, Germaine's daughter Ducks, and finally her "rather stolid" ex-husband Digby. With rumor rife that the couple is - whisper it - not actually married, the lady of the manor, who has failed to realize that nowadays that title carries no real weight, makes it her mission to shut the enterprise down.

*British Library Women Writers 1950's. Part of a curated collection of forgotten works by early to mid-century women writers, the British Library Women Writers series highlights the best middlebrow fiction from the 1910s to the 1960s, offering escapism, popular appeal, and plenty of period detail to amuse, surprise, and inform. A delightful comedy of manners with a touch of mystery, *An Academic Question* is prime Barbara Pym territory. In a provincial university town Caro Grimstone, a dissatisfied faculty wife, becomes the unwilling accomplice to her husband Alan's ambitions. When she volunteers as a reader to a blind, esteemed anthropologist, Alan seizes the opportunity to steal his papers - research that could both advance his reputation while refuting the findings of a respected colleague. Between the amorous antique dealer Humphrey and his good-looking nephew James glides the magnificent Leonora, delicate as porcelain, cool as ice. Can she keep James in her thrall? Or will*

he be taken from her by a lover, like Phoebe . . . or Ned, the wicked American? 'A highly distinctive and - ultimately - charitable novel' Financial Times 'Faultless' Guardian 'Her Characters are all meticulously impaled on the delicate pins of a wit that is as scrupulous as it is deadly' Observer 'A coldly funny book' Sunday Telegraph 'Highly distinctive . . . the critics who have recently insisted on Miss Pym's too long neglected gifts have not been wrong' Financial Times

*In this study of three of Barbara Pym's novels, Naghmeh Varghaiyan, drawing on examinations of women's humour by Eileen Gillooly, Regina Barreca, and others, shows how the humorous female discourse in *Some Tame Gazelle*, *Excellent Women*, and *Jane and Prudence* undermines patriarchal culture and subverts both female and male stereotypes such as that of the spinster and of the Byronic hero. Varghaiyan reveals how the rhetoric of women's humour enables Pym's female characters to survive in the patriarchal culture and to unsettle it.*

THE UNMISSABLE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLING PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER

*Would you risk your life to save a stranger? A local schoolgirl has been missing for weeks when Margot Lewis, agony aunt of the 'Dear Amy' advice column, receives a letter: Dear Amy, I've been kidnapped by a strange man. I don't know where I am. Please help me, Bethan Avery This must be a hoax. Because Bethan Avery is another young girl, who went missing twenty years ago. As more letters arrive, Margot becomes consumed by finding the sender and - unlike the police - convinced that the girls' disappearances are connected. Solving this puzzle could save someone's life - but could it also cost Margot her own? 'A first-rate psychological thriller. It's simply impossible to guess what's coming next' Irish Independent 'Terrific - delivers suspense, twists and smart writing' Julia Heaberlin, Sunday Times bestselling author of *Black-Eyed Susans* 'Haunting . . . this story will*

stay with you' Jane Corry, author of My Husband's Wife 'Skilfully handled. An accomplished psychological twister' Daily Mail 'I'm a huge fan of Barbara Pym' RICHARD OSMAN 'One of the most endearingly amusing English novels of the twentieth century' ALEXANDER McCALL SMITH Mildred Lathbury is one of those 'excellent women' who is often taken for granted. She is a godsend, 'capable of dealing with most of the stock situations of life - birth, marriage, death, the successful jumble sales, the garden fete spoilt by bad weather'. As such, she often gets herself embroiled in other people's lives - especially those of her glamorous new neighbours, the Napiers, whose marriage seems to be on the rocks. One cannot take sides in these matters, though it is tricky, especially as Mildred, teetering on the edge of spinsterhood, has a soft spot for dashing young Rockingham Napier. This is Barbara Pym's world at its funniest and most touching. 'I pick up her books with joy, as though I were meeting an old, dear friend who comforts me, extends my vision and makes me roar with laughter' Jilly Cooper 'If you find the subject of food to be both vexing and transfixing, you'll love What She Ate' Elle Barbara Pym's sense of English social life is captured in these three novels. In Some Tame Gazelle, for instance, the undercurrents of a vicarage garden party are no less important than an unexpected proposal of marriage. "Excellent Women" is one of Barbara Pym's richest and most amusing high comedies. Mildred Lathbury is a clergyman's daughter and a mild-mannered spinster in 1950s England. She is one of those excellent women, the smart, supportive, repressed women who men take for granted. As Mildred gets embroiled in the lives of her new neighbors anthropologist Helena Napier and her handsome, dashing husband, Rocky, and Julian Malory, the vicar next door the novel presents a series of snapshots of human life as actually, and pluckily, lived in a vanishing

world of manners and repressed desires. Barbara Pym is a writer of whom it may be truly said that her life is reflected in her work. This definitive biography puts Barbara in her setting and relates her life to the age and the world in which she lived. Drawing on a wealth of previously unpublished material and with the help of Barbara's sister Hilary and her friends (including Philip Larkin, Robert Liddell, Henry Harvey and Robert Smith, Hazel Holt, her friend and literary executor, has drawn a perceptive portrait of Barbara Pym, the woman as well as the novelist. From the heady atmosphere of pre-war Oxford where she embarked upon a series of highly romantic love affairs, through her wartime service in the WRNS, to early success as a published writer, we come to know a person whose humour and sharp observation were uniquely combined with a compassionate acceptance of human nature – qualities that made her such an outstanding novelist. Hazel Holt also describes the dark period from 1963, when Barbara Pym's novels were rejected as unpublishable, through the wilderness years until 1977 when her literary reputation was triumphantly re-established by Philip Larkin and Lord David Cecil. Barbara Pym emerges from these pages as an entertaining companion with an insatiable curiosity and an unquenchable delight in the eccentricities of her fellows. Readers already acquainted with her novels will find great pleasure in this biography and those who are not will be irresistibly drawn towards the world of Barbara Pym. Reading Barbara Pym stakes out new territory in Pym criticism by questioning the assumptions and predispositions by which her novels have been received and judged. Early in Pym's career, reviews of her novels likened her books in relaxed fashion to delicious tastes and smells. Later (when mentioned twice in a TLS survey as one of the century's ten most underrated novelists secured and altered her critical reception), and since her

death in 1980, commentary in oppositelyvigilant fashion discovered in Pym's novels academic themes andgender/political issues ripe for exploration. But the traditional concernsof academic and popular criticism have sidestepped the morechallenging task of locating the power and quality of Pym's narrative, the reasons her novels are important to read personally as well asstudy academically

- [*Excellent Women*](#)
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- [*Less Than Angels*](#)
- [*Some Tame Gazelle*](#)
- [*A Glass Of Blessings*](#)
- [*A Few Green Leaves*](#)
- [*The Sweet Dove Died*](#)
- [*What She Ate Six Remarkable Women And The Food That Tells Their Stories*](#)
- [*No Fond Return Of Love*](#)
- [*An Academic Question*](#)
- [*The Reality Behind Barbara Pym's Excellent Women*](#)
- [*An Unsuitable Attachment*](#)

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- [*Dear Amy*](#)
- [*Crampton Hodnet*](#)
- [*A Lot To Ask*](#)
- [*Three Women And A Boat*](#)
- [*The Barbara Pym Omnibus*](#)
- [*Independent Women*](#)
- [*Jane And Prudence*](#)
- [*Quartet In Autumn*](#)
- [*The Women In Black*](#)
- [*The Little Library Cookbook*](#)
- [*The Reality Behind Barbara Pym's Excellent Women*](#)
- [*A Very Private Eye*](#)
- [*Tea Is So Intoxicating*](#)
- [*The Collected Stories Of Shirley Hazzard*](#)
- [*Excellent Women By Barbara Pym*](#)
- [*The Barbara Pym Cookbook*](#)
- [*The Barbara Pym Collection Volume One*](#)
- [*Loved And Missed*](#)
- [*Because Of The Lockwoods*](#)
- [*Reading Barbara Pym*](#)
- [*Lullaby Beach*](#)
- [*The Rhetoric Of Womens Humour In Barbara Pym's Fiction*](#)