



CRITICISM

VOLUME

91

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Preface

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Scope of the Series

PC is designed to serve as an introduction to major poets of all eras and nationalities. Since these authors have inspired a great deal of relevant critical material, PC is necessarily selective, and the editors have chosen the most important published criticism to aid readers and students in their research. Each author entry presents a historical survey of the critical response to that author's work. The length of an entry is intended to reflect the amount of critical attention the author has received from critics writing in English and from foreign critics in translation. Every attempt has been made to identify and include the most significant essays on each author's work. In order to provide these important critical pieces, the editors sometimes reprint essays that have appeared elsewhere in Gale's Literary Criticism Series. Such duplication, however, never exceeds twenty percent of a PC volume.

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The first section comprises poetry collections and book-length poems. The second section gives information on other major works by the author. For foreign authors, the editors have provided original foreign-language publication information and have selected what are considered the best and most complete English-language editions of their works.
- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. All individual titles of poems and poetry collections by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.

- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
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Jane Barker

1652-1732

English poet and novelist.

INTRODUCTION

A strong supporter of the exiled Stuarts and a convert to Roman Catholicism at a time when such affiliations were particularly dangerous, Barker composed occasional verse and political poetry, much of it dedicated to the Jacobite cause. Her novels, as well as her poems, were largely autobiographical, featuring the heroine Galesia, modeled after Barker herself. Although her work enjoyed limited success during her lifetime, it was rediscovered and popularized by feminist scholars in the late twentieth century.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Barker was born in May, 1652, in Blatherwicke, Northamptonshire, England, into a relatively prosperous family that was fiercely loyal to the House of Stuart. Her parents were Thomas and Anne Connock Barker and the family included Barker's older brother, Edward, and her younger brother, Henry. Barker lived in Blatherwicke until she was approximately ten years of age and then spent the remainder of her childhood in Wilsthorp, Lincolnshire, where her father—an agent for a London financier—leased a farm and manor house from the Earl of Exeter. Barker was an avid reader who studied at a girls' school near London for a time. Most of her education, however, was provided by her brother Edward, who attended the Merchant Taylors' School and St. John's College, Oxford, and shared his knowledge of Latin, philosophy, and medicine with his sister. Edward's death, around 1675, devastated Barker and her grief informed many of her poems for the next several years. Through her brother Barker had made the acquaintance of a number of Oxford students who provided friendship and comfort after Edward's death, and who also provided the poetry for the second volume of *Poetical Recreations*. When her father died in 1681, Barker relocated to London with her mother. She remained there alone, living on her inheritance, after her mother's death in 1685.

Barker converted to Catholicism sometime after her mother's death, and in 1688 accompanied the supporters—numbering nearly 40,000—of the Catholic King

James II into exile in St. Germain, France. That same year her two-volume collection of poetry was published. In exile, Barker continued to produce poems that were favorable to the Stuart monarchy—poems which she presented, in manuscript form, to James Edward, the exiled Prince of Wales. In 1704, she returned to England and attempted to earn a living from the family farm that she had inherited, but as a Catholic, she was subjected to double taxation and a variety of other indignities. In order to supplement her meager income, she began writing and publishing novels. In her later years she suffered from cataracts which eventually blinded her, but she continued to write by dictating to an assistant. There is some evidence that Barker returned to France in 1727; she died in 1732, although it has not been determined with certainty whether she died in France or England.

MAJOR WORKS

Barker's only published book of poetry is the two-volume *Poetical Recreations: Consisting of Original Poems, Songs, Odes, &c. with Several New Translations. In Two Parts, Part I. Occasionally Written by Mrs. Jane Barker. Part II. By Several Gentlemen of the Universities, and Others* (1688). The collection contains approximately 55 poems, most of them occasional, written during the 1670s and 1680s. The poetic persona, Galesia, modeled on the author herself, is featured in a number of these poems. The second part of *Poetical Recreations* consists of poems written by others and edited by Barker. By Barker's own account, *Poetical Recreations* was published without her consent.

Barker's later poetry, which was circulated but never published, was written during her exile in St. Germain; most of the poems from this period honored the exiled King James and his queen, Mary of Modena, and often featured Fidelia as Barker's poetic persona. This verse is contained in the first two parts of what is known as the Magdalen Manuscript, preserved in the library of Magdalen College, Oxford. The third part of the manuscript features revisions of Barker's earlier verse.

Barker's novels include *Love Intrigues; or, The History of the Amours of Bosvil and Galesia*, (1713); *Exilius, or, The Banish'd Roman* (1715); *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* (1723); and *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen* (1726). The latter two, along with *Love Intrigues*, comprise what is known as the "Galesia Tril-

ogy," featuring Barker's autobiographical heroine. In *A Patch-Work Screen*, Barker revised and reprinted several of the poems from *Poetical Recreations* and attributed them to the Galesia character.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Barker's poetry—while not as famous as her novels—provides valuable insights into the tumultuous era in which she lived and worked, as well as information on the opportunities and limitations of women writers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Toni Bowers has examined the political demarcation between Tories and Jacobites in the decades following the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89, and believes that Barker's representation of the Jacobite cause is more ambivalent than it first appears. While Barker was considered a staunch supporter of the Stuart monarchy, Bowers finds her poetry at times filled with doubt about the possibility of a successful restoration of the Stuarts to the English throne as well as bitterness over the circumstances of exile. Carol Shiner Wilson also considers Barker's work interesting as a record of the turbulent times during which she lived and wrote. According to Wilson, Barker's fiction and verse "illuminate important issues of her age from the perspective of a person several times marginalized: woman unmarried by choice, learned lady, Jacobite, convert to Roman Catholicism, and published author."

Bowers, among others, has commented on the autobiographical aspect of Barker's poetic persona, noting that Galesia, the heroine of Barker's poetry and prose, was intended as a recognizable version of Barker herself. "For Barker," according to Bowers, "writing was a process of self-definition, and that definition was largely achieved through three central delineations: single woman, Christian poet, and loyal Jacobite." Kathryn R. King has found a major difference between Barker's early "sociable" poetry and her later verse—written in exile at St. Germain—in which she cultivated the poetic persona of a "Virtuous Outsider," a persona associated with "deprivation, neglect, and banishment." Carol Barash (see Further Reading) notes that Barker's poetic persona "describes a complicated and tangled relationship to male authority." King reports that with only one exception, Barker's poetry is addressed to men rather than women and finds that "the virtual absence of female addressees is startling given Barker's reputation as poet of female friendships and is at odds with what we have learned about the female orientation of women's manuscript networks in the seventeenth century."

Wilson also notes that Barker's career spanned the period when the genteel literary tradition gave way to the demands of the marketplace, and contends that while

Barker complained about the commercialization of literature in her early poetry, she openly cultivated potential readers in her later work. Wilson reports that scholars have thus become interested in Barker's body of work for the insights it offers into the emergence of commercial print culture.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Poetry

Poetical Recreations: Consisting of Original Poems, Songs, Odes, &c. with Several New Translations. In Two Parts, Part I. Occasionally Written by Mrs. Jane Barker. Part II. By Several Gentlemen of the Universities, and Others. [editor and contributor] 1688

The Poems of Jane Barker: The Magdalen Manuscript [edited by Kathryn R. King] 1998

Other Major Works

Love Intrigues; or, the History of the Amours of Bosvil and Galesia, As Related to Lucasia, in St. Germain's Garden (novel) 1713

Exilius: or, The Banish'd Roman. A New Romance in Two Parts: Written After the Manner of Telemachus, For the Instruction of Some Young Ladies of Quality (novel) 1715

The Christian Pilgrimage: or a Companion for the Holy Season of Lent: being meditations upon the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of . . . Jesus Christ [translator; from works by François Fénelon] (meditations) 1718

The Entertaining Novels of Mrs. Jane Barker. 2 vols. (novels) 1719

A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies, or Love & Virtue Recommended in a Collection of Instructive Novels. Related After a Manner intirely New, and Interspersed with Rural Poems, describing the Innocence of a Country-Life (novel) 1723

The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen: Design'd for the Farther Entertainment of the Ladies (novel) 1726

CRITICISM

Toni Bowers (essay date 1997)

SOURCE: Bowers, Toni. "Jacobite Difference and the Poetry of Jane Barker." *ELH* 64 (1997): 857-69.

[In the following essay, Bowers examines Barker's representation of the Jacobite cause, noting that many of her poems display anxiety and a lack of confidence that the Stuart monarchy will be successfully restored.]

The more I learn about the partisan politics of Augustan England, the more difficult it becomes to trust what once seemed stable points of demarcation among the categories of players, and especially between Jacobites and Tories. “Tory” and “Jacobite” once seemed clearly distinct alternatives. But recent scholarship has complicated this view by arguing that political identities and affiliations were less than exclusive or stable in the century following the fall of King James II in 1688.¹ Augustan English men and women, it turns out, were capable of moving between camps according to shifting circumstance, even of holding dissonant positions simultaneously. Toryism and Jacobitism tend now to be seen as shifting, relational functions rather than fixed identities. The revision is important: it forces us to more complicated and historically nuanced understandings of Augustan culture, and it challenges us to define our investments there.

Despite this advance, unexamined assumptions remain, especially when it comes to our understandings of Jacobitism. My purpose here is to contribute to current explorations into the varieties of sensibility within Jacobitism by drawing attention to one assumption that has remained largely unquestioned throughout the process of revision and by testing that assumption against the work of an important and neglected Jacobite writer, the poet and novelist Jane Barker (1652-1732).

To begin, it seems appropriate to offer some account of how I understand the much-contested terms under discussion. As traditionally understood, “Jacobites” were those who continued to support the monarchical claims of King James II and his male heirs even after the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89, when the king went into exile and Parliament decided to replace him. Jacobites, in this view, are defined as those who accompanied the fallen king in his banishment or who actively plotted and fought for his reinstatement at home; they were uncompromising, unquestioningly loyal, and necessarily Roman Catholic. It has recently been pointed out, however, that this way of defining “Jacobitism” may be unnecessarily rigid: it leaves us unable to recognize Jacobitism as part of the sensibility of the many English men and women who compromised with the new government but who nevertheless continued to feel sympathy and connection with the dethroned king, to regret late seventeenth-century political developments, or to consider their participation in the new regime provisional—those, in short, who withheld full ideological commitment, or whose commitment mutated over time.²

And then we have Toryism, hardly a simpler category. Like Jacobites, Tories were royalists who found themselves out of sympathy with the prevailing directions of late seventeenth-century politics and uncomfortable with the implications of dethroning a reigning

monarch. They too held staunchly traditionalist views: Tories tended, for instance, to share with Jacobites a belief in the sanctity of hereditary kingship and in the necessary subordination of subjects to the will of the monarch. But as a party, Tories have usually been distinguished from Jacobites by their personal hostility to James II and their commitment to the Anglican Church. Though loyal to the *idea* of divinely ordained, hereditary monarchy, Tories tended to be deeply distrustful of its particular personification in James—distrustful enough to lend support (however anxious and passive) to efforts that eventually dislodged the king in 1689, even though those efforts were profoundly at odds with Tory principles. Because of this, Tories have traditionally been distinguished from Jacobites not only by their religion and detestation of James, but also according to their willingness to compromise. I shall return to this idea in a moment.

Identifying particular individuals as Tory or Jacobite has proven to be a difficult enterprise, not only because people tended to cover their tracks and measure their language, but also because there were many more shades of difference within each category, and indeed within individuals over time, than such classificatory projects presume. Though vocal Tories often represented their party as the bastion of the Anglican Church, for instance, individual Tories were not, in fact, unanimously Anglican or even necessarily Protestant, any more than every Jacobite was Roman Catholic.³ While it may be true that Tories as a group were revolted by James, it is demonstrably not true that every Jacobite revered him and though many of those who emigrated with King James sacrificed everything rather than compromise ideologically, others who might also fairly be called Jacobites stayed at home, paid taxes, even took the sacraments and oaths necessary for participation in government. There were Jacobites in Parliament, Tory Nonjurors, and many other such hybrids not adequately accounted for by traditional definitions. In short, an individual’s religion and/or opinion of King James have proven unreliable as litmus tests for Jacobitism and Toryism.

For this reason, scholars have lately resorted to the third strategy I’ve mentioned: distinguishing between Tories and Jacobites on the basis of each camp’s differing capacity for ideological compromise. The argument, briefly stated, is that Tories inhabited a self-consciously duplicitous position in relation to the fall of the king, but Jacobites operated without such duplicity. Unlike Tories, we have assumed, Jacobites did not compromise ideologically; so whatever else they may have endured after 1689, Jacobites did not suffer the pangs of self-reproach that necessarily characterized Tory existence. So powerful has this assumption grown that it hardly seems worth examining, even among those most alert to differences within Augustan ideological camps. Sze-

chi, for instance, a meticulous and insightful scholar of Jacobitism, takes it for granted that though the price of loyalty was high there was never a question among Jacobites themselves as to whether it was worth paying. "All Jacobites," he declares, "felt themselves to be following the path of rectitude toward a certain end."⁴ In contrast to this definitive Jacobite certainty, we have come to believe, stood the troubled Tory position. Whole books have been written about a *specifically* Tory crisis over the dissonant claims of principle and practical survival, but no such crisis has been identified among Jacobites.⁵

But if indeed the effort definitively to separate Jacobites from Tories is as reductive an enterprise as contemporary discussion suggests, if recent reexaminations have revealed not so much fixed and opposed ideological identities as complex, changing political organisms, then one likely result is that Toryism will begin to lose not only its presumed distance from Jacobitism, but also its monopoly on "agony of spirit."⁶ Perhaps Jacobites were not immune to the kinds of bitter misgivings and sense of personal compromise we have learned to associate with Tory sensibilities.

The point of making such a suggestion, of course—and indeed the point of the broader reconsiderations of Jacobitism now taking place—is not to reduce Jacobite radicalism or to deny any distinction between Jacobites and Tories. Eighteenth-century English men and women themselves distinguished between Tory and Jacobite ideologies and behaviors; they made personal and political alignments according to those distinctions, and not always from cynical or interested motives. For this reason, we cannot understand Augustan political history, including the writing that forms part of that history, without understanding how Tories and Jacobites defined and distinguished themselves. But what recent scholarship suggests is that these political camps cannot be—and never could be—distinguished simply or finally; the boundaries between Jacobites and Tories in Augustan England, though real enough, were permeable and changing. There can be no single, reliable point of demarcation, not even the contrast between Tory misgivings and Jacobite certainty.

As a first step toward supporting and specifying this suggestion, we might do worse than to listen carefully to the voice of Jane Barker, one of the most dyed-in-the-wool and unequivocal of Jacobites. Having followed James into exile at St. Germain, where she remained until 1704, Barker wrote a number of poems in honor of the exiled king and his queen, Mary of Modena.⁷ In 1700, Barker presented her manuscript poems to their son James Edward—the Jacobites' Prince of Wales. In 1701, she was among the loyal mourners at James II's funeral, and commemorated the event with a poem in which she extolled the departed as "Hero, saint, and

King."⁸ Financially strapped but still loyal to the cause, Barker returned to England a few years later to manage a family farm. There she continued an active Jacobite and a known Roman Catholic. In 1718 she corresponded secretly with the Duke of Ormonde, encouraging a Jacobite invasion. And in 1731, a year before her death, Barker was among those who petitioned Rome for James's canonization. In short, Barker seems to embody the very image of uncompromising Jacobite certainty, to epitomize our stereotype of the convinced and unequivocal Jacobite.

Though a devout Catholic who occasionally retreated to a convent for periods of contemplation, Barker was never a nun. Nor was she a wife, though she seems to have been pursued for many years by at least one suitor. Instead, Barker was at pains to construct herself as a kind of elective poet-virgin: she seems to have considered poetry to be a vocation requiring an almost monastic vow, at once a commitment to virginity and a kind of marriage contract, a sacred and costly calling. Moreover, as is well known, much of Barker's poetry and fiction seem directly autobiographical: her heroine Galesia, who figures in both Barker's poetry and her prose, is clearly based on the poet herself and seems designed to be recognized as such. For Barker more than for most other writers of her generation, then, writing was a process of self-definition, and that definition was largely achieved through three central delineations: single woman, Christian poet, and loyal Jacobite.

For all these reasons, it is especially telling that representations of the Jacobite cause in Barker's poetry, and indications of her own hopes for that cause's success, are by no means confident and unhesitating. On the contrary, many of Barker's most overtly Jacobite poems are charged with anxiety about the outcome of the struggle for the restoration of the Catholic Stuarts, and suggest a level of self-doubt and negative expectation quite different from what we might expect from a Jacobite of her stripe.

Now, not all of Barker's poems display agony of spirit. In the relatively early poem "**To His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, on his birth day,**" the tone is bright and confident (292-94).⁹ To the dispossessed prince the poet inscribes commonplaces that exemplify the self-righteous optimism Szechi uses to define Jacobitism:

though cross accidents your merits wrong,
Tis but like weight to make the arch more strong. . . .
Then let's rejoyce, sing, love, and with you smile
Forgetting friends, estates, or native soyle,
For having you we're here in full content,
Tis they in England suffer banishment.

(ll. 14-15, 23-26)

Even allowing for an element of wishful thinking and a certain poignant suggestion that the speaker is most of

all convincing herself, the upbeat tone of this tribute to the young prince remains palpable—especially when contrasted with the tone of another, slightly later, poem, **“The lovers Elesium, Or Fools Paradise: a dream”** (320-25). Here, as in Barker’s novels, we see a much darker representation of the life of virginity and poetry for which she has “contracted” with the Muses, described in language that invites us to recall the other form of exile this poet has chosen.

The poem’s speaker, in a dream, finds herself lost in a “pleasant labrinth” representative of “my fate, / How my lives steps, shou’d be all introcate.”¹⁰ Many others also wander in this bizarre, mazelike landscape “strew’d with flaming darts, / Knots, chains, devices, verses, [and] bleeding hearts” (ll. 9-10). The speaker strikes up a conversation with a “gentle youth,” only to discover that he is in fact the ghost of a young man who died at the battle of Sedgemore, James II’s great military triumph of 1685.¹¹ The ghost ruefully recalls that he had been fighting on the wrong side of the battle, and for the most predictable of reasons,

I lov’d . . . a shee false and ingrate:
Who having promis’d me her faith and love,
Like all her sex, did most unconstant prove.
Then to divert my griefs, I took the field,
And at Sedge-more deservedly was killed.

(ll. 21-25)

Fortunately, however, he came to see the light just before the end: “E’er I dy’d, I did in mercy trust, / I saw my guilt, and pray’d for James the Just” (ll. 26-27).

Together this converted Jacobite shade and the dreamer enter “a statly bower” called Fools’ Paradise, a jostling, cacophonous realm between Heaven and Hell where those who made love their religion during life now wander in their own peculiar purgatory.

All who live here, are given up to folly,
Some mad with mirth, and some with melancholy
Some read Romances, some love-letters writ,
Some curss’d their chain, and some were fond of
it. . . .
All was confusion here, they’d but one rule,
That none must enter, but must play the fooll. . . .
I ask’d em, what Religion they had there,
And if there any priests, or alters were,
’Twas answer’d; lovers, to each other pray’d,
The brightest altar, was the fairest maid.

(ll. 37-40, 61-62, 64-67)

Filled with disdain for such heresy, the speaker is about to leave when “an angry power” snatches her away and makes her climb a “stupendious” mountain from whose peak she views, “ith’ retrospect of time,” a climactic moment in her own past—“that very place, that seat, that pleasant shade, / Where I a contract, with the muses made” (ll. 75-77). From her present, mature vantage

point, the dreamer looks on as her younger self chooses to follow a poetic vocation at the cost of renouncing earthly love and material wealth, and hears again the muses’ promises of rewards for her self-denial.

We will, say they, assist thy flight
Till thou reach fair Orindas height,
If thou canst this worlds folls slight.

We’ll bring this to our bright aboads,
Amongst the Heroes, and the Gods
If thou and wealth, can be at odds,

Then gentle maid, cast off thy chain,
Which links thee to thy faithless swain,
And vow a virgin to remain.

Write, write thy vow upon this tree,
By us it shall recorded be
And thou fam’d to eternity.

(ll. 91-102)¹²

After the chaotic and heretical scene she has just witnessed, we might expect this review of her long-ago vow to art and chastity to bring the dreamer joy and confirm her feelings of superiority to those in the “foolls Paradise” whose lives (indeed, whose afterlives) are consumed by a foolish pursuit of romantic love. But such is distinctly not the case. Surveying the scene now, the speaker realizes that the promises the Muses made on that long-ago day, promises of glory and eternal fame in exchange for the poet’s renunciation of her lover, have turned out to be false. None of the rewards mentioned has materialized for the poet, despite her faithfulness and sacrifice. Though she renounced “all things” for the Muses, the “bough” of poetry has turned out to be, as she observes bitterly, “frutless” (l. 78).

What is more, on the heels of this realization, certainly bad enough, comes the belated revelation that the poet’s bargain was doomed from the start. The dreamer’s “uncouth guardian”—the “angry power” who snatched her from the fools’ paradise to the mountaintop—utters a curse on her idealistic younger self, a curse that, I want to suggest, extends not only to her condition as virgin poet, but also to her position as political exile. “Unlucky maid,” the guardian says,

Since, since thou has the muses chose,
Hymen and fortune are thy foes,
Thou shalt have Cassandras fate,
In all thou sayst unfortunate,
The god of wit, gave her this curss
And Fortune gives thee, that and worse,
In all thou doest, though ne’er so good,
By all the world misunderstood.
In best of actions, be dispis’d,
And foolls and knaves, above thee pris’d. . . .
Thy youth and fortune, vainly spend,
And in thy age, have not a friend,

Thy whole life pass in discontent,
In want, and wo, and banishment.

(ll. 106-15, 122-25)

"**The lovers Elesium**," in short, exemplifies what would be a major theme of Barker's work—confusion and disappointment over the choice of renunciation, whether the renunciation of marriage for poetry, or that of her homeland for political and religious principle, both of which have led to thankless "banishment."¹³

A similar connection between Barker's disappointment in poetry and in Jacobitism may be found in an intensely moving poem, "**The Miseries of St. Germain's**" (302-7). Staunch Jacobite though she remained, Barker argues here that the devastating famine that plagued the St. Germain's court in 1694 and '95 constituted a "curss" (l. 4) on the exiled loyalists, the delayed punishment for generations of blasphemy and pride. (The judgments once "deverted" by the "humility and prayer" of the Ninnevides, she says, "were hoorded up, and executed here" [ll. 10-12].) In the very palace of the court-in-exile, she laments, one encounters not "a courtly throng," but

poor widows, with their wretched train,
Crying their parents, were at Achrim slain,
My husband was at Limerick kill'd says one,
And mine in prison dy'd at lost Athlone
My father rais'd a troop, and so lost all,
And I have prisoner been e'er since the fall
Of my unhappy friends, and now am come,
To seek in Flanders, or Savoy a tomb. . . .
Some with lost armes, and some with leggs of wood,
Crying they lost those limbs because they stood,
When others fled, at Boy'n's unlucky flood.

(ll. 51-57, 59-61)

Even worse is reserved for the deposed and impoverished King and Queen, who discover—"with what regret, none but themselves can know"—that they have "nought but pitty to bestow" on these faithful petitioners, having lost practical potency with their fiscal supply (ll. 82-83). But worst of all is the condition of the "poor virgins" who, like Barker herself, have both "their fortunes and their lovers lost" for the Cause. These last suffer most for, "though both for the King were lost or slain, / Still modesty forbids them to complain" (ll. 64-67).

What is perhaps most striking about "**The Misery of St. Germain's**" in light of "**The lovers Elesium**," however, is the tolerant spirit it shows toward the foolishness of lovers. What was insupportable "folly" in the first poem is clearly preferable to the miserable returns of faithful stoicism in the second. Taking a final view of the bedraggled court-in-exile, the dreamer laments, in the poem's last lines, that

Instead of lovers meetings, assignation,
Ogling, laughing, talking of new fassions,

Whether this Borgoin lookss best plain or lace'd,
Which patch the pocket-glass says is best place'd
which periwigg does which face best befit,
the cavalier, the bobb, Hispaniolet,
The only study is, where one shou'd dine,
At least to get a crust, or glass of wine.
Thus are we more contemptible by far,
Then old wives tale, old maid, old cavalier.

(ll. 116-25)

The point is not that old wives, old maids, and old cavaliers are *not* contemptible, but that the starving loyalists, who expected to be blest for high principles, faithfulness, and sacrifice, are more contemptible still. Likewise in "**The lovers Elesium**," the dreamer shows no hesitation in deriding the foolishness of the amorous inhabitants of lovers' purgatory; but the poem's dark, even cynical, point is merely that the young woman who contracts instead for a life of virtuous renunciation and "banishment" is even more foolish than the lovers.

Perhaps none of Barker's poems more clearly reveals the degree of ambivalence and doubt that could mark the sensibility of a to-the-core Jacobite than another dream poem, "**The Virgins paradise: a dream**" (326-29). This time, Barker's speaker dreams that while flying "above the spheres," she comes to a place of joy not for lovers, but for virgins. Entrance to the palace there requires both humility (the first of seven porches is "arch'd so very low, / that to get in, one very much must bow" [ll. 26-27]) and vows of virgin chastity. Significantly, the latter "choice" is presented here as brutally overdetermined. The veil of virginity is offered by an "old portress" who, according to Barker's own note, represents "the church":

She told me if I'd not be veil'd by her,
Nothing so certain but I'd grossly err.
Not only so, but I shou'd swallow'd be,
In that three corner'd gulph I there might see,
Then looking in, I saw the gulph turn round,
And saw withall I cou'd not scape be'ing drown'd,
Then I resing'd me to her as I ought,
And through the porches, and the gate was brought.

(ll. 32-39)¹⁴

Caught between the portress and the deep blue sea, the dreamer "resigns" herself to virginity, with a good grace but something less than a freely willing heart.

After taking the vow to remain a virgin, Barker's speaker is allowed into the palace, where she beholds angels singing in "vast raptures" and "strong extasies," dancing on clouds embroidered with stars. Above the dancers are "curling lambent flames," from which the angels "take immortall fire, / When with gods love, they mortall hearts inspire" (ll. 41-51). These "wond'rous joys," however, like the fantastic scene where they take place, are nourished by fountains and

springs “made of virgins tears” (l. 54). And the place is decorated with carvings that tell the stories not of rejoicing angels, but of unfortunate women forced unwillingly to remain virgins.

Amongst whome, Jephthas daughter makes her moans,
And many who in monesterys dy’d,
Not for devotion, but their mothers pride.
Who hide their daughters to hide their own age,
Mean time spend what shou’d make their marriage.
Large were the streams, which helpless orphans
mourn,
Betwixt false guardians, and fals Lawyers torne,
But that stream was the greatest of them all
Which from balk’d lovers, took original.

(ll. 64-72)

The speaker finds, in other words, a phantasmogorical world of rapture maintained by the misery of defrauded, commodified, and abandoned women whose “choice” to remain virginal is exposed as the result of force.

It is at this point that the connection between virginity, poetry, and Jacobitism becomes explicit. The dreamer, approaching a door “which opens to the virgins Room of state,” finds it flanked by banners on which depictions of “heaven’s conquest” are embroidered. These represent “Sedge-more fight, and how Gray ran away / How the Kings guards, made there the Rebels bleed”—and realistically, too: “One wou’d have thought the blood ran down indeed” (ll. 92-94). Once again, as in “*The lovers Elesium*,” the reference is to the Battle of Sedgemoor, where the then newly-crowned King James had gloriously defended his throne against Monmouth’s rebels. (“How Gray ran away” is Jacobite shorthand for the famous cowardice of Forde Grey, Earl of Werke, the only nobleman to lead troops on Monmouth’s side of that rebellion.¹⁵) For decades, James’s rout of the Protestant bastard and his followers held an honored place in Jacobite collective memory: for the exiles at St. Germain, Sedgemoor represented their beleaguered king’s defining triumph and the last instance of God’s just distribution of rewards to virtue. But that was just the trouble. By the time Barker wrote “*The Virgins paradise*,” the victory at Sedgemoor was long past. Further, it must have seemed more than a little ironic that the Jacobites’ most glorious victory had taken place before the Glorious Revolution had even created “Jacobitism” as an oppositional category, and before the long years of misery and privation that category had entailed ever since.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that although the dreamer genuflects to the story of Sedgemoor as one for which “due thanksgiving” should be made, the tapestry representing the battle holds little interest for her: “All the rest which at that place befell,” she says, “I not minded ‘cause I knew it well” (ll. 90, 95-96). What interests her more, indeed what she is “longing” for, is

final entrance to the “virgins Room of state” (l. 87), where she hopes to glimpse not past but future heavenly conquests. That reassuring glimpse, however, is denied; in the poem’s final lines the speaker is rebuffed for the desire to see “what can’t enter human thought.”

They briskly shut the door against my face,
Saying that mortals there cou’d have no place,
At this repulse, dispite so fill’d my brest,
That I awak’d, and so lost all the rest.

(ll. 98-102)

The future remains unknown, victory cannot be assured. The speaker is left unsatisfied and alone, an exile even from her own dream of a land of joyful virginity and triumphant Jacobitism. And both virginity and Jacobitism are presented, as in “*The Lovers’ Elesium*,” as forced choices made under terrible duress and accompanied by bitterness, banishment, and loss.

Among early eighteenth-century writers, Jane Barker’s view of her own poetic vocation was inflected in unique ways by Catholicism and Jacobitism. For Barker, poetry is a sacred calling that requires virginity, poverty, and loyalty to the fallen king. But in the poems I’ve discussed as in much of the rest of her writing, Barker’s language reveals bitterness over the circumstances of that calling, and over the results of “choices” in which she retrospectively feels she had very little choice. Remembering the Muses’ promise of poetic grandeur, the older poet is overcome with “grief” (325, l. 128); surveying the ragged supplicants at the court of the impotent king, she concludes that “mutual kindness, mutual griefs create, / As lovers who love most, are most unfortunate” (306, ll. 92-93); and when, longing for reassurance about the future, she finds the door to “the virgins Room of state” shut against her, her heart is so filled with “dispite” that both the rest of the dream and dreamer’s own rest are forever “lost” (329, ll. 102-3).

The example of Barker’s work provides evidence to undermine scholarship’s continued *de facto* subscription to the myth of Jacobite certainty, ideological clarity, and unquenchable optimism, perhaps among the few remaining descriptors still assumed to distinguish reliably between Jacobites and their conscience-stricken Tory contemporaries. Where we might expect an unequivocal celebration of the Jacobite poet’s chosen path of poetry and loyalty, we find instead disappointment, uncertainty, and dark regret. In Barker we confront a Jacobite not true to type, at once wholly committed and deeply equivocal. Hers constitutes a discordant voice capable of broadening the current discussion about Jacobitism precisely because it challenges our efforts at making a difference.

Notes

1. The work that most powerfully established this revisionary argument is Geoffrey Holmes’s *British*

- Politics in the Age of Anne*, rev. ed. (1967; London: Hambledon, 1987). Holmes's influence has been enormous, and continues to exert itself in recent scholarship. See for example Daniel Szechi, *Jacobitism and Tory Politics, 1710-14* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1984); Paul Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People, 1688-1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 4-6; J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), *Samuel Johnson: Literature, Religion and English Cultural Politics from the Restoration to Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 6-8, 43-45; and John Cannon, *Samuel Johnson and the Politics of Hanoverian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 51-52, 62-67.
2. For a recent example of criticism that relies on this kind of complexity within Jacobitism, see Clark. Clark offers a portrait of Johnson as what we might call a "Jacobite Tory" who nevertheless, over the course of his career, went from uneasy accommodation with the Hanoverian solution to a belief in its practical legitimacy.
 3. Szechi, 1-3, 35, 53-54. Szechi provides a nuanced understanding of the various competing factions within Jacobitism.
 4. Szechi, 53.
 5. See G. V. Bennett's *The Tory Crisis in Church and State, 1688-1730* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975).
 6. Bennett, 10.
 7. *The Galesia Trilogy and Selected Manuscript Poems of Jane Barker*, ed. Carol Shiner Wilson (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), xxvi. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page and line number.
 8. "At the sight of the body of Our late gracious sovereign Lord King James 2d As it lys at the English Monks" (310).
 9. There is some question about the date of this poem. The full title reads, "To His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, on His birth day 1689: or 99:; The author having presented him a Calvary set in a vineyard." The recipient is James Francis Edward Stuart (1688-1766), later called the Old Pretender, but it is unclear why two dates appear in the title. See Prof. Shiner Wilson's note, 192.
 10. "The lovers Elesium, Or foolls Paradece: a dream" (320-325, ll. 2-6).
 11. At Sedgemoor, James decisively put down the popular rebellion led by James Scott, Duke of Monmouth (1649-85), Charles II's beloved Protestant bastard. For excellent modern histories of the event, see W. MacDonald Wigfield, *The Monmouth Rebels, 1685* (Somerset: Somerset Record Society, 1985) and David G. Chandler, *Sedgemoor 1685: an account and an anthology* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985). Chandler reprints King James II's own account of the battle (110-18); Wigfield includes a contemporary account from the other side, the prison confession of Nathaniel Wade, a soldier who fought with Monmouth (149-71).
 12. Orinda is most likely a reference to the poet Katherine Philips (1632-1664), known to contemporaries as "the Matchless Orinda."
 13. These lines appear tellingly in Barker's most famous work, *Love Intrigues* (1713). See *Galesia Trilogy*, 25.
 14. In addition to the note, Barker identifies this lady iconographically. The portress is "Of looks devine, in wond'rous garments dress'd, / Crowns on her head, and crosses on her brest" (ll. 30-31).
 15. A fascinating figure, Grey led one of the most scandalous lives of a scandalous era. Along with other distinctions, he did indeed flee the scene of one battle—though not Sedgemoor—and was the real-life model for the incestuous title character of Aphra Behn's racy political novel, *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684-87).

Carol Shiner Wilson (essay date 1997)

SOURCE: Wilson, Carol Shiner. Introduction to *The Galesia Trilogy and Selected Manuscript Poems of Jane Barker*, edited by Carol Shiner Wilson, pp. xv-xlv. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

[In the following essay, Wilson provides the personal and historical context for Barker's career as a poet and novelist.]

The eighty years from Jane Barker's birth in Northamptonshire in 1652 to her death in France in 1732 mark one of the most turbulent, perilous, and anxious periods in English history. Endless wars at home and abroad, virulent religious intolerance, and the very real fear of dying from plague were just a few of the crises that affected how women and men conducted their lives. Those politically complicated and dangerous years were also marked by an energy and vitality in the literary landscape that rivals any age. A publishing explosion of both imaginative literature and non-fiction accompanied a growth in the literacy rate and an increase in the number of writers, women and men, who wrote for a living rather than pursued aesthetic and intellectual ends in genteel circles. The life and literary oeuvre of

Jane Barker provide rich insights into the multifaceted, complicated, shifting intersections of public and private history in this tumultuous period. Her fiction, much of it written for popular appeal, and her poetry, much of it privately circulated, illuminate important issues of her age from the perspective of a person several times marginalized: woman unmarried by choice, learned lady, Jacobite, convert to Roman Catholicism, and published author.

Scholars such as Margaret J. M. Ezell in *Writing Women's Literary History* have focused on women writers in the 1600s and 1700s in order to expand, challenge, and reconfigure theories about a female tradition that have grown out of feminist studies of women's literature and lives in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹ In her ground-breaking 1983 article on Barker, Jane Spencer acknowledged that Barker's poems and fiction were intensely autobiographical. Spencer's enterprise was not to verify actual links to Barker's life but to investigate those parts of the texts that portrayed Barker's mythic self-definition "as a woman and a writer, and [her creation of] a self-image that would be acceptable to her self and to her public."² That self-representation—shaped primarily through Barker's semi-autobiographical protagonist and narrator Galesia—included identities as a committed literary artist, energetic spinster (the legal term for an unmarried woman at the time), student of the healing arts, devoted sister, manager of agricultural property, and fervent political partisan. Barker shaped, reshaped, and foregrounded those identities, singly or in combination, as she constructed a very particular narrative about her life as an independently thinking woman devoted to high ideals—whether in politics, art, or religion—and engaged in meaningful action in community. That identity does not ignore the practical side, since economic survival, particularly problematic for women dependent upon men, informs much of her literary oeuvre. Although Galesia is the persona who speaks most often, Fidelia is Barker's reflective poetic alter ego in the unpublished verse of the late 1600s. Barker's self-conscious presentation of her numerous identities has led scholars to list those identities in order to capture and communicate the variety of her life.³ Some conclusions about the links between the lists and Barker's actual life have proven accurate, but often, too, her recasting of material and her selective silences have misled scholars. Most scholars, for example, have assumed that Barker had only one brother since she mentions only Edward in her poetry and fiction. The discovery of a virtually disinherited brother Henry in extra-literary sources forces us to consider Barker's reticence regarding his existence and the possibility of other selective silences.⁴

How does this extra-literary evidence help us avoid biographical reductionism and appreciate other dimen-

sions of her texts? The question is central to scholars' inquiry into many women writers of the period, especially writers of so-called noncanonical literature who are being rediscovered and studied seriously. Because personal evidence such as letters or journals rarely exists for these women, literary scholars must examine kinds of documents more commonly used by social historians like Lawrence Stone in *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (1977), Natalie Zemon Davis in *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983), and N. J. G. Pounds in *The Culture of the English People* (1994). Moreover, evidence for their lives must often be traced through the records of male members of the family since, if married, a woman had no independent legal standing. Her name might appear within a document such as a will or, in this highly litigious era, in lawsuits over inheritance rights or property. For this study of Barker's life, literary works, and times, I drew on documents in France as varied as registers of baptisms, burials, and marriages in parish records; city maps; housing records; and convent and other ecclesiastical records. In England, I consulted parish records, wills, a complaint and answer at law, property leases, Papist (Catholic) oath records and oaths of allegiance to the Church of England, Coronation and Funeral rolls, and records of payments and pensions from the royal household. Scholars Kathryn R. King and Jeslyn Medoff are completing an analysis of important documents, many of which they have recently recovered, in a biographical essay on Barker.⁵ Although much has been found, much remains to be found—or, as historians have long known, never to be found.

What, then, emerges from the ensemble of legal and ecclesiastical records, Barker's fiction, her poetry, and four extant letters? Parish records note her baptism on 17 May 1652 in Blatherwycke, Northamptonshire.⁶ Her father was Thomas Barker, a Royalist who once served in the court of Charles I,⁷ and whose will shows his family bore a coat of arms.⁸ His court position is noted as "Secrétaire du grand sceau d'Angleterre" in Jane's burial notice, which I located in France.⁹ The title, translated "Secretary to the Great Seal of England," suggests that he worked for the Lord Chancellor, Keeper of the Great Seal. The title is consistent with Barker's claim, in her incarnation as narrator Galesia, that her father held an important post before the devastations of the English Civil Wars (1642-49). Jane's mother Anne, from Cornwall, was of the respectable Connock family that could trace its ancestry to the era of William the Conqueror. Many Connocks were noted for their distinguished military service for the Stuart monarchs. Barker was proud of her royalist heritage, and an important dimension of her self-representation is as a member of two families who lost lives, property, and place—but never dignity and a sense of commitment to a moral cause—in service to the rightful heirs to the English throne. As she once wrote to the Prince of