

The Poems of Jane Barker
The Magdalen Manuscript

KATHRYN R. KING

MAGDALEN COLLEGE
OCCASIONAL PAPER 3

Magdalen College Occasional Paper 3

Series Editor C. Y. FERDINAND

The Poems of Jane Barker
The Magdalen Manuscript

KATHRYN R. KING

Magdalen College · Oxford
1998

B21stax
PR
3316
B28
275
1998g

© 1998 by Kathryn R. King

CONTENTS

THE POEMS OF JANE BARKER: THE MAGDALEN MANUSCRIPT

The Magdalen Manuscript and Its Significance	1
The Manuscript: Physical Description and Provenance	8
A Life 'Interlac'd' with Verse	18
The Magdalen Poems	22

SELECTED POEMS	24
----------------	----

APPENDICES	
------------	--

Contents of the Magdalen Manuscript	60
First-Line Index of the Magdalen Manuscript	65
Poems by Jane Barker Not Found in the Magdalen Manuscript	71

SOURCES	74
---------	----

ISBN 0 951374 73 7

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has benefited at every stage from the help and expertise of Peter Beal, though he bears no responsibility for what has been done with his excellent counsel. Christine Ferdinand offered support and encouragement from the beginning. David Norbrook, Paula McDowell, Carol Shiner Wilson, and Sarah Palmer read and commented on earlier versions of the introduction, and Sydney Vance advised on ocular matters. I am grateful to them all, and to the University of Montevallo for generous help with publication costs. Research for the project was supported by an NEH/Newberry Library Fellowship. A special thanks to Lea and Max Davis, who helped prepare the text and textual apparatus, and to Lea in particular for her unflinching pursuit of medical and forensic detail.

THE POEMS OF JANE BARKER THE MAGDALEN MANUSCRIPT

THE MAGDALEN MANUSCRIPT AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

One of the most important, and intriguing, figures to emerge in the current recovery of early women writers is Jane Barker (1652–1732), of Wilsthorpe, Lincolnshire. Barker was the author of three partly autobiographical novels (1713–26) and a politically encoded romance (1715), as well as a translation of a long devotional work by Fénelon (1718); and she led a long, active, and diverse life as a gentlewoman leaseholder and sometime farm manager, a London medical practitioner, a convert to Roman Catholicism, and a fervent Jacobite supporter who followed the Court of James II into exile at St Germain and continued throughout her life actively to support the Stuart cause. She also wrote a substantial body of poems, of which some 118 are known to exist.

By far the most important single text of her poems is MS 343 in Magdalen College, Oxford. This is a 272-page collection of eighty poems prepared directly under her supervision during her residence in St Germain.¹ This source can be supplemented by two other principal known texts of her verse: one, a collection of twenty poems prepared as a New Year's gift to the Prince of Wales in 1700, now in the British Library (Additional MS 21,621);² the other, a collection of fifty-three poems printed as Part I of the miscellany *Poetical Recreations* (London, 1688).³ All twenty of the poems in the BL manuscript are represented in the Magdalen manuscript, as are thirty-two of those printed in 1688. In addition there are versions of some forty poems — seventeen of which are

¹ I have counted 'The contract with the muses writ on the bark of a shady ash-tree' (fol. 76) as a separate poem.

² This is a quarto volume of ninety pages of poetry (each page measuring c. 176 × 234 mm), a title-page, dedication, preface, and table of contents. The volume appears to be in original early eighteenth-century boards (measuring c. 187 × 240 mm), later rebound with a new gilt spine spliced-in and with new paste-downs and end-papers. It bears the bookplate of Anne-Charlotte de Crussol de Florensac, Duchesse d'Aiguillon, engraved by the Parisian engraver Antoine Aveline (1691–1743) after her marriage in 1718 with Armand-Louis du Plessis-Richelieu (1683–1750). The volume was sold at Sothebys 21 November 1856 as lot 255 for 19s., where it was described as belonging to a library formed by a collector 'during his residence abroad'.

³ An alternative method of counting would yield fifty-one poems. 'The Prospect of the Landskip' is listed on the title-page of *Poetical Recreations* as a single poem, but is split into three poems in the body, as it is in the Magdalen manuscript. I have counted it as three separate poems in both.

represented in the Magdalen manuscript — scattered throughout the prose fictions.

The eighty poems in the Magdalen manuscript bear a general title-page, ‘Poems on several occasions, in three parts’, which is preceded by a preface ‘to the Reader’ asking indulgence for the inclusion of ‘a little, idle love poem or so’ and followed by a table of contents at the end. Each of the three distinct ‘Parts’ of the volume has its own title-page, the first preceded by a Dedication to the Prince of Wales and its own preface ‘To the Reader’.

Part One, ‘Poems Referring to the times’, is a group of twenty poems on Roman Catholic and Jacobite themes, some of them composed at St Germain where Barker resided on the fringes of the Stuart court-in-exile. The poems are arranged to tell the story of the trials of the Stuarts and their followers in the years following the accession of James II in 1685 and to condemn Williamite England for its stupidity, disloyalty, and treachery. Interbraided with this chronicle-cum-excoriation is a conversion narrative in which ‘Fidelia’, a Roman Catholic persona invented by Barker for these poems (and found nowhere outside the manuscript verse), traces the stages in her awakening to the errors of the Church of England and her embracing of Catholicism. It is this group of twenty poems which, late in 1700, Barker duplicated in a fair copy prepared for presentation to the twelve-year-old Prince of Wales (James Francis Edward Stuart, the Old Pretender) by way of wishing him ‘a happy Century’ (see further below).

Part Two consists of twenty-seven pieces of verse, chiefly occasional, including elegies on the death in 1700 of John Cecil, fifth Earl of Exeter, and King James II, who died in September 1701.⁴ Many of the poems are addressed to people in and around St Germain, including Queen Mary of Modena, Arabella FitzJames (the illegitimate daughter of James II and Arabella Churchill), and Princess Louise Maria, the younger sister of the Prince of Wales.

⁴ Cecil died in Issy-les-Moulineaux, just outside Paris. A nonjuror and anti-Williamite, he was head of the leading landowning family in the Stamford area of Lincolnshire, and Barker’s landlord. A copy of this poem, ascribed to ‘J. Barker’, appears in a commonplace book kept by Charles Caesar of Great Gransden, Huntingdonshire (fol. 160). The volume, dated 1705, is now in the British Library (Add. MS 43,410). Caesar was then living in Stamford, where he died in 1707. An unattributed copy of the elegy on the death of James II is found in BL Add. MS 10,118 (fol. 410v–11), a collection of materials for a history of James II brought to completion in 1706 by the Benedictine historian Ralph Benet Weldon (1674–1713), ‘y^t nothing may perish coming to my hand y^t sounds forth y^e praises of this Royall Victime of y^e True Faith’ (fol. 410). The volume is attributed in the BL catalogue to Joseph Johnston, Prior of the English Benedictines of St Edmund in Paris, but was actually the work of Weldon, one of Johnston’s monks. I am indebted to Jeslyn Medoff for both references.

Nearly all the poems in Part Two were written, according to a note in Barker’s hand, ‘since the author was in France,’ that is, since 1689 or so.

Part Three is a selection of thirty-two of the fifty-three poems that had been printed in 1688 as Part I of *Poetical Recreations*, where, according to a note in Barker’s hand, they had appeared ‘without her consent’. They are ‘now corrected by her own hand’. Many are indeed substantially altered.

The hitherto little-studied Magdalen manuscript of Barker’s poems is of considerable interest to students of English Catholicism, Jacobitism in its early phases, and spiritual autobiography, as well as students of women’s writing. By any reckoning, the manuscript represents a remarkably large and varied body of poetry by a woman in the late seventeenth century, and the revisions alone provide a wealth of materials for investigation of women’s poetic practices at this time. The collection is an extremely important source for investigation of a woman’s role, and the role of manuscript exchange, within different writing communities, two of which can be partly reconstructed: a Cambridge poetic-exchange coterie of the 1680s (Part Three) and an exiled Jacobite community in France in the 1690s (Parts One and Two). We can watch Barker-the-poet evolve from an occasional versifier engaged in witty and sometimes high-spirited exchange with a circle of young men into a writer of fiercely partisan religio-political verse written, during the decade or so following the trauma of 1688–89, to strengthen bonds within an inward-looking minority community proudly aware of its oppositionality. The collection contains, then, two quite distinct bodies of coterie verse illustrative of both the sociable and the communal functions of such poetry. The strenuous engagement with politics and affairs of state that is so marked a feature of much of this verse deserves close study, not least because it calls into question the oppositions between public and private, political and domestic that are commonplace in many accounts of women’s literary history.

The Magdalen manuscript is also an indispensable source of biographical information about Jane Barker herself, casting light on a period of her life — from the mid-1680s through roughly the turn of the century — for which very little documentary evidence exists. Barker is not named in the surviving lists of the court-in-exile, and, save a single appearance in 1691 in the parish register (as witness to a christening), the Magdalen manuscript is our only record of her life in St Germain at this time. From it we learn of her conversion to Catholicism, her association with the Benedictines, her flight to France, her attachment to the Connock relations who fought for James in Ireland, her failing eyesight, and her operation in 1696 for cataracts. We sense something of

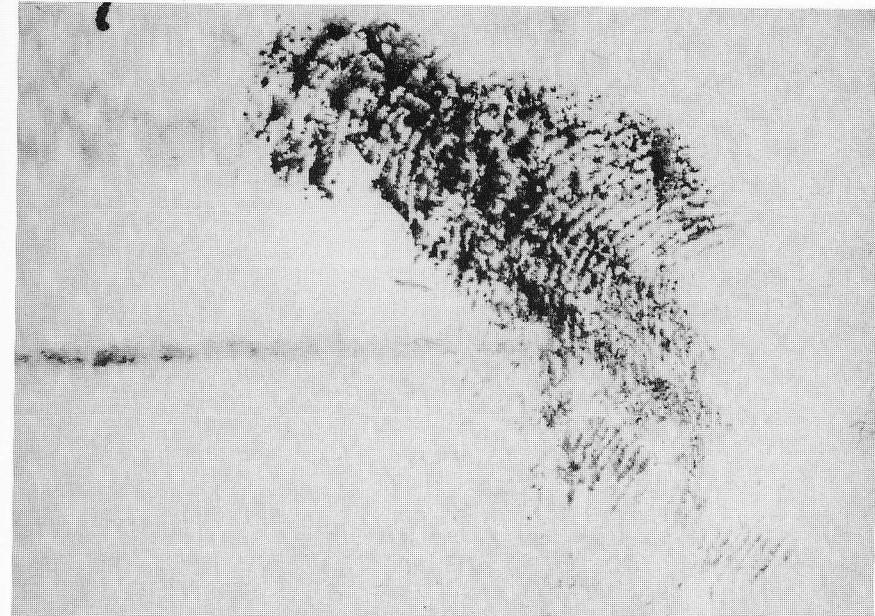
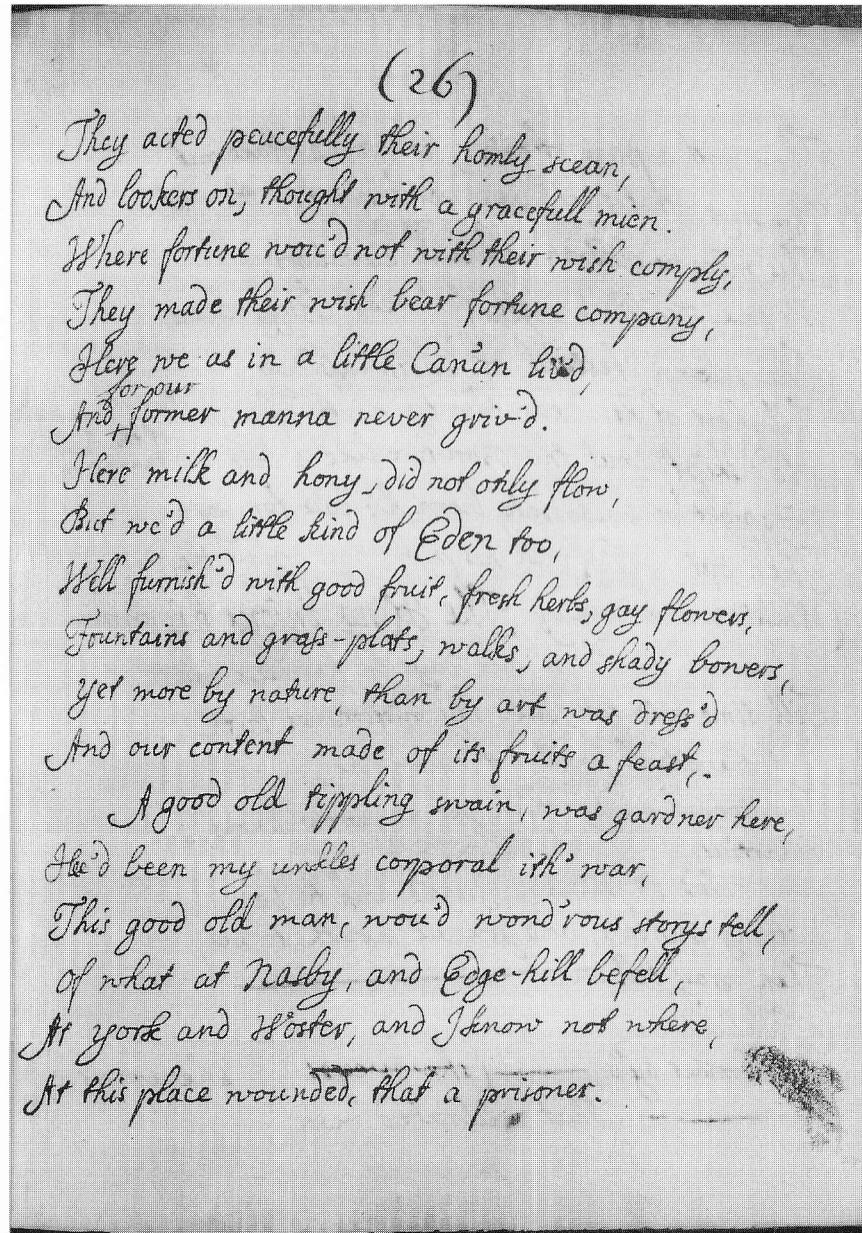


FIG. 1 (left). Part of Jane Barker's autograph copy of her poem 'A dialogue between Fidelia and her little nephew Martius . . .' in the Magdalen Manuscript with her thumb-print at the bottom right corner (original page size 220 x 159 mm). Magdalen College Oxford, MS 343, fol. 65. Reproduced by Permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford

FIG. 2 (above). An enlargement of Jane Barker's thumb-print (the original print c. 30 mm long). Magdalen College Oxford, MS 343, fol. 65. Reproduced by Permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford

the way Barker used verse to bring notice to herself within the community at St Germain, as well.

The discussion that follows looks at features of the Magdalen manuscript as they enable us to reconstruct some of the history of the volume and its place in Barker's writing life. For now it may be noted that the volume, which appears to have begun as a kind of personal poetic archive, became in time a working manuscript, subject to fresh revision. As such it affords a rare glimpse of an early modern woman writer actually at work. On the heavily marked, sometimes sloppy pages of the Magdalen manuscript we can watch Barker modernizing her spelling (sensitive, perhaps, to the ridicule routinely heaped on female orthography), adjusting her word choices, adding fresh lines in her clear

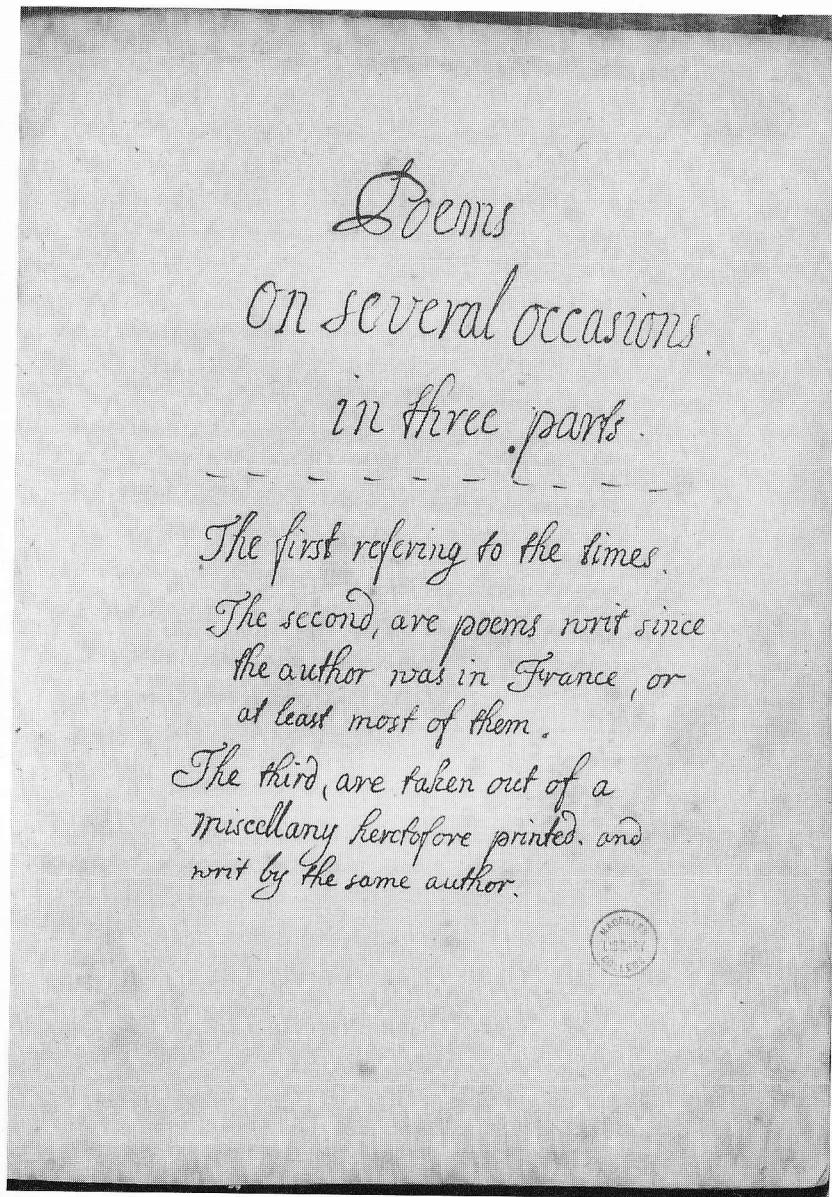
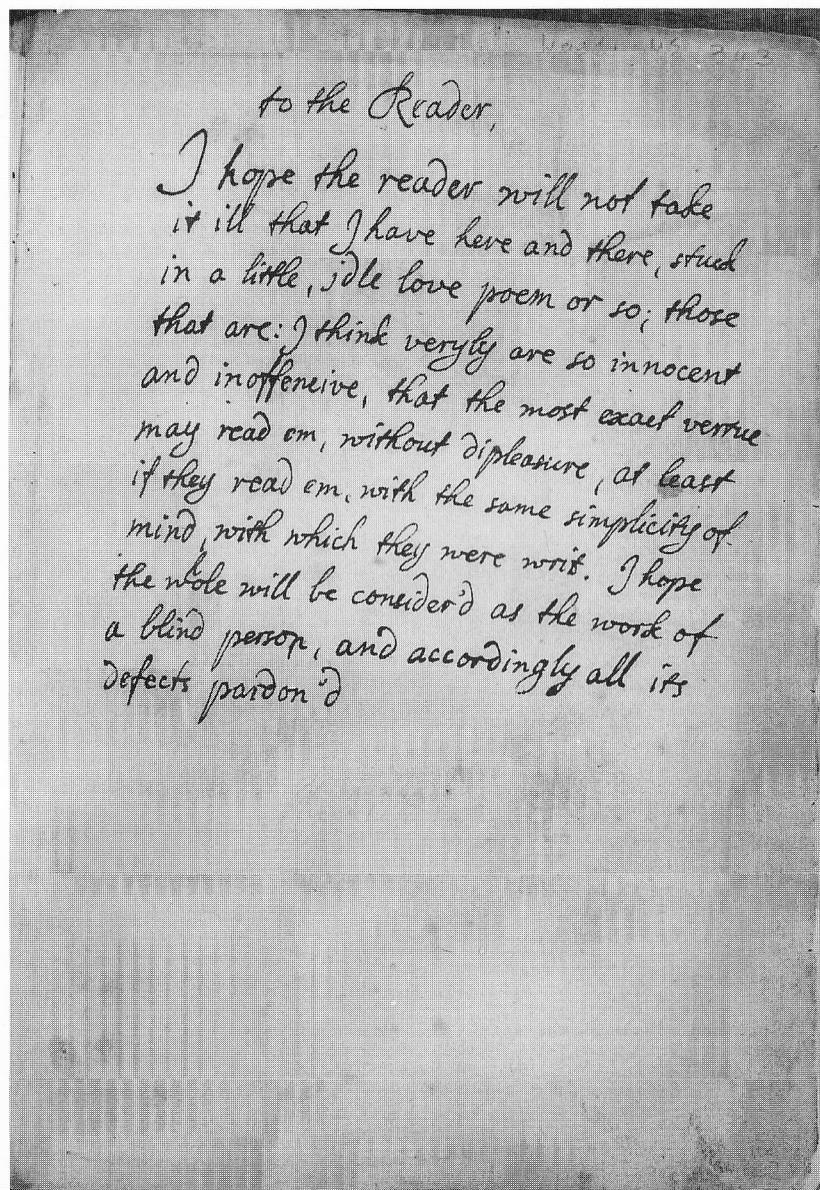


FIG. 3. Jane Barker's autograph preface 'to the Reader' at the beginning of the Magdalen Manuscript (original page size 220 x 159 mm). Magdalen College Oxford, MS 343, fol. 1^r. Reproduced by Permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford

FIG. 4. Jane Barker's autograph general title-page of the Magdalen Manuscript (original page size 220 x 159 mm). Magdalen College Oxford, MS 343, fol. 2^r. Reproduced by Permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford

but quirky hand, spilling ink, and smudging the pages — and leaving, midway through the volume, her fingerprint.

There is always something moving about the traces of a writer in the act of composing, but it is especially evocative to come upon this fingerprint: a trace, in ink, of the material body, possibly of the writing hand (see Figs. 1 and 2). And when we discover that the poet who left this imprint was nearly blind and almost certainly obliged to peer at these pages through a crude magnifying glass, her eye close to the paper, the poignancy sharpens. That fingerprint is a reminder of how awkward the physical process of writing must have been for Barker, who, stubbornly insistent, continued writing all the same. It is also a fitting emblem of a woman whose sense of her own singularity was always acute and whose desire to see her life and work honoured, if only within the covers of a personal manuscript volume, was one of the forces motivating all of her writing. It is a pleasure to reproduce the fingerprint here three hundred years later.

THE MANUSCRIPT: PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION AND PROVENANCE

The Magdalen manuscript is a quarto volume comprising 136 leaves in all (each measuring c. 220 × 159 mm), with seven remaining stubs at various points denoting leaves excised, probably by Barker herself to eliminate botched copy. It is bound in contemporary calf (measuring c. 227 × 171 mm), its spine decorated in gilt in compartments. All the leaves save a few versos are filled with writing except for a single leaf (fol. 133) where the title only of a poem already copied in the volume was entered by mistake and then cancelled. It appears that Part One was originally bound, after writing, perhaps as a separate volume, but was later disbound and amalgamated with Parts Two and Three, at which time Barker inserted a preface (fol. 1; see Fig. 3), general title-page (fol. 2; see Fig. 4), and a title-page to Part One (fol. 7) and gave the whole a table of contents at the end, making what might have been two (or three) separate collections of verse into a fresh unified volume.

The handwriting in the Magdalen manuscript has never been described accurately. The brief account in the pioneering anthology *Kissing the Rod* (1988) has the volume written entirely in Barker's hand (p. 354). There can be no doubt it is in two hands, however. G. S. Gibbons, describing the manuscript in the 1920s,⁵ notices that the first part was 'written in a stronger, different hand to the rest of the book', but incorrectly assigns the writing of Part One to Barker

herself, speculating that failing eyesight may have required her to turn to an amanuensis. The conjecture is reasonable given several internal references to the author's 'blindness', but from manuscript sources unknown to Gibbons, it is now possible not only to confirm the presence of two hands in the Magdalen manuscript, but also to establish their correct identity.

One is certainly that of Jane Barker herself. She is entirely responsible — not for Part One, as Gibbons supposed — but for Parts Two and Three. In addition, in Part One, written chiefly by an amanuensis, she makes the occasional small revision in her own hand (ranging from a single word to a whole line), and, in two instances, copies or rewrites substantial passages of eight lines or more (see Figs. 5 and 6). The identification of her hand can be confirmed chiefly by comparison with the one extant letter written and signed by Barker, dating probably from 1730, now preserved among the Stuart Papers in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle (see Fig. 7).⁶

The second hand is the 'stronger' one responsible for Part One. This is the amanuensis also responsible for BL Add. MS 21,621, the quarto volume prepared by Barker (possibly) for presentation to the Prince of Wales on 1 January 1701. The BL manuscript is entirely in the hand of the amanuensis, except for some five small alterations in Barker's hand, including expansions of two titles and three single-word additions, such as that on fol. 35, where the word *nam'd*, partly lost in the binder's cropping, has been replaced above the line in her clumsy hand.⁷ All the evidence suggests that BL Add. MS 21,621 was prepared under Barker's supervision.

The amanuensis can now be identified as her cousin William Connock. His clear, upright, distinctive, rounded script can be found in three letters from 1726–27, now in the British Library as part of Add. MS 21,896, fols. 1, 5, 11. William Connock appears to have been a distinguished figure at St Germain.

⁶ Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, Stuart Papers 208/129, misdated 1738 (Barker died in 1732). The letter, from Jane Barker to an unidentified woman whom she addresses as 'Madam' and 'your Ladyship', is difficult to date. The date reads 'Aug 14:73⁰', which may mean [17]13⁰ — the '7' possibly being a 1 — or [1]730. Internal evidence supports the latter. The letter is printed in Henrietta Tayler, *Lady Nithsdale and Her Family* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1939), 239–40, misdated 1739. Tayler thinks it was written to Lady Nithsdale's sister, Mother Lucy Theresa Joseph, Superior of the Convent of the Augustinian Nuns at Bruges, and forwarded by her to Lady Nithsdale in Rome. Barker's signature can be found elsewhere on two 1717 documents in the Lincolnshire Archives Office — 'Schedules and Letter of Attorney, 1717' and 'KQS. Papists' Estates. Rolls. 1717'. According to Carol Shiner Wilson her signature is also to be found in the 1691 St Germain parish register.

⁷ See fols. 34, 35, 36, 39, and 47. On folios 36 and 39 she supplies the words 'on the Revolution' to the title. The others are single syllables or words, to restore letters lost in cropping or in anticipation of their loss, since they jutted out into the margin.

⁵ 'Mrs. Jane Barker', *Notes & Queries*, ser. 11, no. 12 (1922), 278.

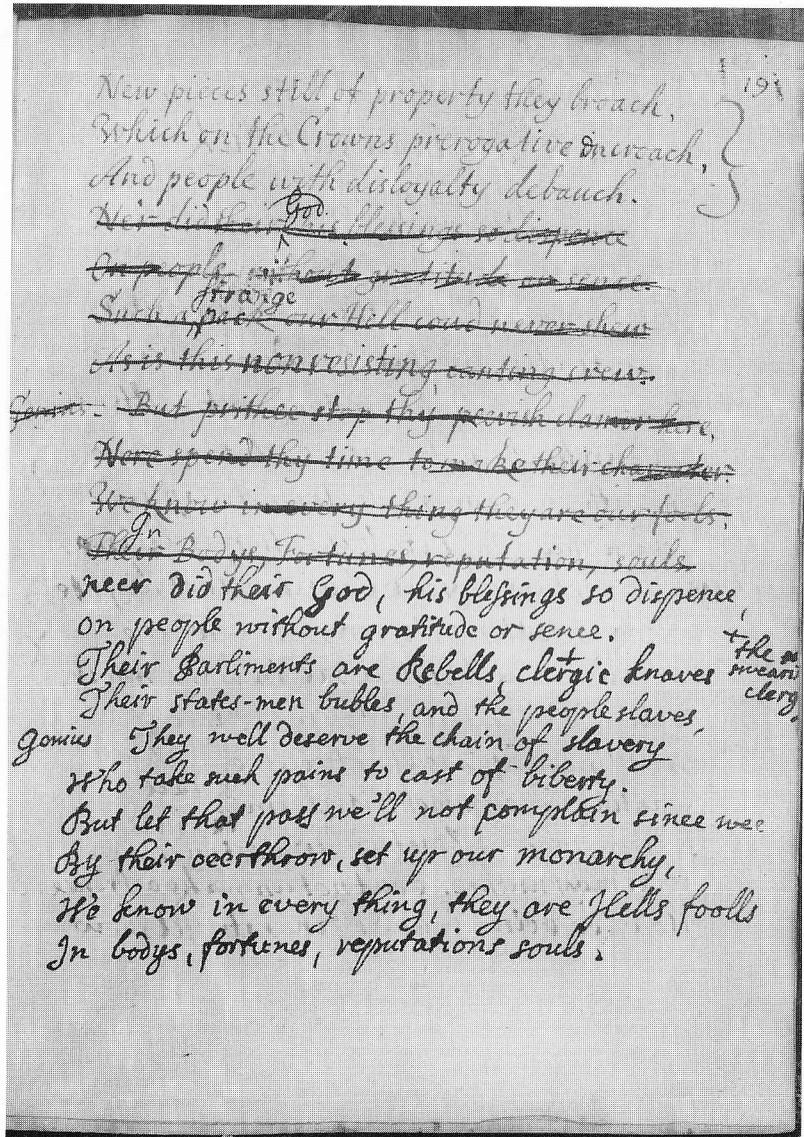


FIG. 5. A page of the poem 'A discourse between Englands ill Genius and his companion' in the Magdalen Manuscript, the first eleven lines in the hand of William Connock, the revisions and deletions of these lines, as well as a further ten lines of substitute text and side-note, in the hand of Jane Barker (original page size 220 x 159 mm). Magdalen College Oxford, MS 343, fol. 17. Reproduced by Permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford

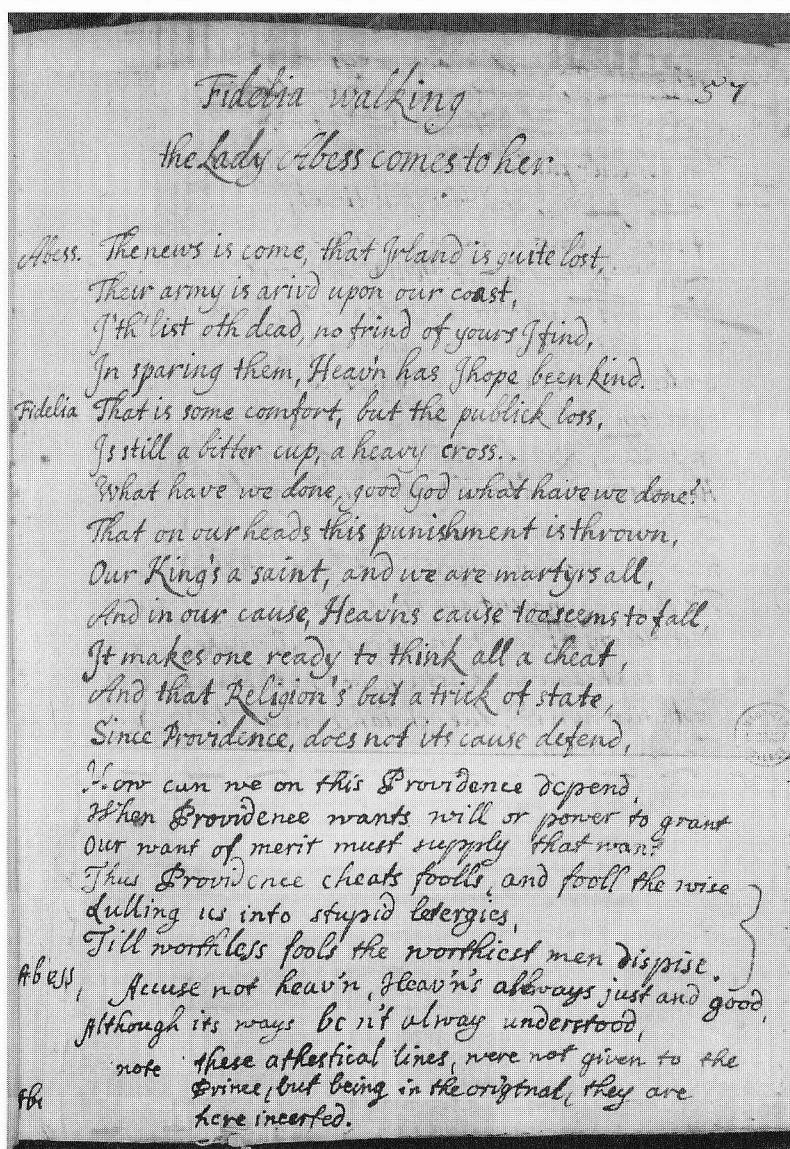


FIG. 6. The first page of the poem 'Fidelia walking the Lady Abess comes to her' in the Magdalen Manuscript, the first thirteen lines in the hand of William Connock, the next eight lines and the note in Jane Barker's hand on a slip of paper sewn in over the deleted lines (original page size 220 x 159 mm). Magdalen College Oxford, MS 343, fol. 36. Reproduced by Permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford

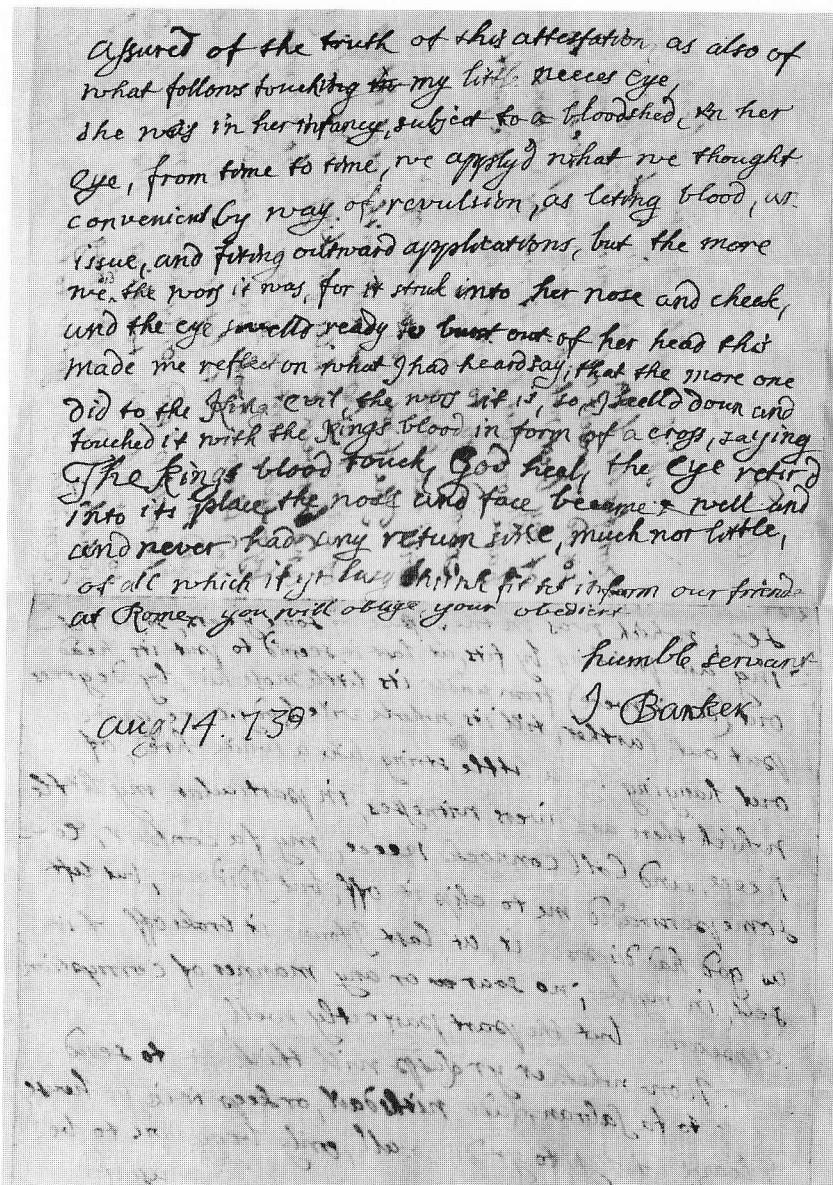


FIG. 7. The last page of Jane Barker's autograph letter signed, to an unnamed lady, 14 August 1730 [?]. The Royal Library, Windsor Castle, Stuart Papers 208/129. Reproduced by Permission of the Royal Library

He was created a baronet by James 'III' in 1732 and, according to the parish register recording his death in December 1738 at the age of eighty-nine, he had been an infantry colonel who served with Sir Toby Bourke's regiment in the Nine Years War.⁸ From Barker's verse it would appear that her 'dear cosen' had also fought for James in Ireland, seeing action at the siege of Limerick in August 1690 (see, in Part Two, 'To My dear cosen Coll - - at his return out of Ireland into france', which claims that 'the bold Rebells, did at Limerick fall/By Connocks battery, rais'd within the wall'). The scant evidence to survive suggests that the cousins had been close. Our two last glimpses of Barker in England before her final removal to St Germain come from a pair of letters written by William to his son Timon (the 'little Martius' of the Magdalen verse). On 14 January 1726 William reports receiving word that 'Cos. Barker' was 'very ill & had receivd the Blessed Sacrament'. On 26 May 1727 she is said to be on her way to France: 'I expect every day a lettre from Cosin Barker of her beeing arived at Diep' (Add. MS 21, 896, fols. 1, 11^v).

Gibbons's speculation that failing eyesight prompted Barker to use an amanuensis seems right. The Magdalen manuscript refers in several places to vision problems. The Dedication from late 1700 opens with a reference to 'blindness and misfortunes'; a preface from the same time attributes 'slips of the pen, and defects in the English' to 'long absence and blindness'; an undated preface 'to the Reader' (probably no later than 1704) asks that the poems be 'consider'd as the work of a blind person'. From these references and a marginal note to a 1696 poem in Part Two ('To Her Majesty the Queen, on the Kings going to Callis this carnival 1696:') indicating that her eyes were then 'bound doun' as a result of a cataract operation, we can reconstruct some of the history of the author's deteriorating eyesight. It appears that one or both of her eyes suffered from cataracts and that by 1696, when she was forty-three, her vision was sufficiently poor that she decided to have them couched. Couching was an ancient surgical procedure, dangerous, uncertain, and, to the modern mind at least, intensely distressing to contemplate. A needle was inserted into the eye and then used to work the clouded lens downward out of the line of vision or, in some cases, to cut the lens into small pieces to settle into the bottom of the eye. (It was the middle of the eighteenth century before cataracts would be extracted.) The eyes were annointed with something to prevent infection and then bound up. The procedure has been described as 'painless', but it is hard to

⁸ I am grateful to Edward Corp for this information.

believe that the prospect of the cataract needle, even in those less squeamish times, could have been anything but disquieting.

From what we know about the results of this operation, it is probable that Barker would thereafter have good reason to regard herself as ‘a blind person’. Assuming that it did not result in full blindness (from sepsis or injury to the eye), a person whose lens had been couched would afterwards be able to read and write, but only barely, and only with the assistance of a powerful magnifying glass. Awareness of this goes a long way towards explaining the sloppy appearance of many pages of Parts Two and Three of the Magdalen manuscript, where ink-blots and smudges, heavy deletions and messy overwriting testify to Barker’s difficulties managing pen and ink. Barker’s semi-blindness may also explain some of the peculiarities of her actual handwriting — the large, careful but often quavery letters, for example — and may even account for one of the more eccentric features of her punctuation, namely her tendency to double up terminal punctuation, as in the frequent use of a comma followed by a full-stop (‘.,’), an example of which is seen in Fig. 1, which might conceivably result from her uncertainty as to whether she had actually used an end-stop or not. Another striking feature of her punctuation is the form of her commas, which are inverted, tailing to the right. It is possible (though this is speculation) that in addition to having vision problems Barker was left-handed, but, as was common in her time, had been constrained by her childhood teachers to write with her right hand — hence the occasional unwitting aberration, which went, as it were, visually unchecked.

The actual presentation copy to the Prince, which Part One of the Magdalen manuscript closely duplicates, must have been ready in late December 1700 or very early in January 1701, for the Dedication wishes the Prince ‘not only a happy new year, but a happy new Century’, the century commencing in January 1701 (according to the New Style calendar in use in France). Moreover, the reference to the ‘coming Felicity’ that follows in the Dedication alludes to what Barker and other Jacobites hoped — devoutly but, as it proved, wrongly — would be a Stuart restoration.⁹ Jacobite hopes were soon quashed: in June 1701 the Act of Settlement established the Hanoverian succession.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to date the writing of Part One of the Magdalen manuscript with precision or even to be certain of its relationship to the actual

⁹ Two recent events contributed to the ebullience in St Germain. The first was the death in late July of Anne’s last surviving heir, the Duke of Gloucester, raising hopes among the Jacobites that Anne’s nephew, the Prince of Wales, would be named successor. The second was the naming in November of Louis XIV’s grandson, Philip of Anjou, as the successor to the Spanish Crown.

presentation copy. Indeed, even the general assumption that the volume in the British Library is the one actually presented to the Prince admits of doubts. That BL Add. 21,621 was the presentation copy itself has marginal support from the French provenance of the manuscript, since it came into the library of the Duchesse d’Aiguillon, a French noblewoman of considerable eminence (see n. 2), though of course it might have shared the same distinguished provenance had it been retained by another highly placed member of the exile community. That it was instead either a prototype or a retained copy of the presentation copy has some support from its imperfect nature, for it includes two sections on inserted leaves subsequently bound-in (as an afterthought or replacement), a thin layer of additions, the cropping of some words too close to the margins, and a few lines whited out — the effect of which, taken together, is to leave open the possibility that the BL manuscript was not quite of sufficiently prestigious a standard to be the manuscript actually given to the heir of the Stuart throne.

Whatever its relationship to BL Add. 21,621 and whatever its original purpose — whether for circulation among the St Germain exiles or for Barker’s private use — Part One of the Magdalen manuscript became in time a working book. She returned to the verse at some point to make corrections and revisions, adding marginal glosses and explanatory notes as well. The most interesting alteration is the restoration of an ‘athe[ist]ical’ passage omitted from the presentation copy. A marginal note below the restored passage — which is written on a slip of paper literally sewn into place with white silk thread over heavily worked lines — explains that ‘these atheistical lines were not given to the Prince, but being in the original, they are here incerted’ (see Fig. 6). The lines deemed unsuitable for the Prince accuse providence of almost malignant mismanagement:

Thus Providence cheats foolls, and fooll the wise
Lulling us into stupid letergies,
Till worthless foools the worthiest men dispise.

(fol. 36)

In the presentation version, as represented in BL Add. 21,621, the harsh reflection on the workings of providence is softened into a question: ‘If Heav’n be just, and good, O tell me then, / Why are the just made preys to wicked men?’ (Fidelia walking the Lady Abess comes to her, fol. 52^v).

The poems in Parts Two and Three were entered by Barker no earlier than 1701. They too were subsequently corrected and revised, in some places quite heavily. It is evident that she came to regard the volume as work-in-progress, for she continued to tinker with the poems in all three parts, many of which

would later be printed with yet further revisions in the first two autobiographical fictions, *Love Intrigues* (1713) and *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* (1723). It is impossible to know when or how often she returned to these copies.

Though Barker's revisions cannot be dated, it is possible, on the basis of internal evidence, to arrive at some probabilities regarding dates of composition. If, as it seems reasonable to assume, she began a poem not long after the event it depicts, then the verse in Part One, which chronicles the misfortunes of the House of Stuart from the Battle of Sedgemoor (1685) to the collapse of the Irish campaign (1691), was composed between 1685 and 1691 or 1692 — with one exception. The final poem dates from November 1700, and provides a triumphant coda to a sequence chiefly concerned with rehearsing the 'madness and malice which concluded the old [century]'. The poem, 'Hell's Regret, for the peace & unity like to ensue the Duke of Anjou's accession to the Crown of Spain,' gives exultant voice to the jubilation that broke out in Jacobite quarters early in November, when news reached Paris that the Duke of Anjou had been named successor to the Spanish crown — the death of Carlos II thus affording Barker materials to bring an otherwise surpassingly gloomy sequence to a happy ending. That the poem was an afterthought is evidenced by the fact that it is present in BL Add. 21,621 as an inset, a folio sheet folded into two quarto leaves and bound-in after the main body of verse (fol. 54–55^v).

Internal evidence suggests that the verse in Part Two dates from 1689–1701, which accords with the note in Barker's hand on the title-page saying that most of the Part Two poems were written 'since the author was in France', the word *since* suggesting the author was still in France when she prepared the title-page. This would date the unrevised contents of the volume as a whole to no later than 1704, when Barker is known to have returned to England. The earliest poem in Part Two appears to be a birthday poem addressed to the Prince of Wales (who was born 10 June 1688), entitled 'To His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, on His birth day 1689: or 99.' — the dates suggesting the possibility that this was composed in 1689 then revised, or updated, for 1699. Corroborating the 1689 date is a marginal note next to a passage about soldiers dying in defence of the Prince saying 'this was writ at the time of the first battell in Irland' (fol. 41). She may be referring to fighting that broke out around Enniskillen and Londonderry in April 1689. Another poem to her 'dear cosen Coll ---' (William Connock, presumably) addresses him on his arrival in France, having returned after 'Irlands loss', that is, in 1691 or early 1692.

The poems in Part Three are the earliest in composition. All had been printed late in 1687 (the title-page says 1688) in *Poetical Recreations*. If the elegies on

her brother were composed at the time of his death, then some of these poems can be dated as early as 1675.

We can conclude, then, that the verse copied into the Magdalen manuscript was composed over a period of roughly a quarter of a century, from 1675 through 1701 or 1702: Part One between 1685 and 1700, with all but the final poem having been begun probably by 1692; Part Two between 1689 and 1701 (or so); Part Three between 1675 (or earlier) and 1687 at the outside. Given that Part One was probably prepared near the end of 1700 and that Parts Two and Three were probably copied while Barker was still in France, it seems likely that the preparation of the Magdalen manuscript occurred in at least two stages between late 1700 and 1704, when Barker returned to England, presumably taking the volume with her.

The first recorded appearance of the volume is in the library of the Rev. Thomas Corser (1793–1876), the distinguished editor and book collector, of Stand Rectory near Manchester, as part of the 'magnificent collection of early English poetry which [Corser] had begun to form at an early age' (DNB). Corser was editor of the *Collectanea Anglo-Poetica* for the Chetham Society, of which he was a founder-member. His labours on the *Collectanea*, an alphabetized selection of extracts from, and biographical and bibliographical accounts of the early English poets, were taken over by the author and book collector James Crossley (1800–83), who acquired the Barker volume when it was sold, as part of the 'seventh portion' of the Corser library, by Sotheby's on 10 July 1871 (lot 204). In 1884 it was purchased by a dealer, Salkeld, for 15s. He in turn sold it for £1 1s. in February 1886 to W. D. Macray (1826–1916), librarian and historian of the Bodleian. It was Macray, evidently, who gave the volume to Magdalen College. Macray was associated with Magdalen for the better part of his long academic life, taking an undergraduate degree in 1848, serving as chaplain from 1856 to 1870, and preparing a calendar of the muniments at Magdalen College from 1864 to 1878. In 1891 he was elected to a research fellowship and for the next twenty years worked on bringing to completion the eight volumes of the college register. The inside front cover of the Barker volume bears Macray's signature and the date 1886, and his MS notes, some on the provenance of the manuscript, are tipped into the front of the volume.¹⁰

¹⁰ Mary Clapinson, 'W. D. Macray (1826–1916) Historian of the Bodleian', *Bodleian Library Record*, 15, no. 4 (1996), 300–7. Above his signature at the very top are two lines in a hand not found elsewhere in the volume (it may be early eighteenth century). They read: 'Curst is that kingdome where there Reigns a man / that can not ere he will, wills what he can.' Above that, in tiny characters in the top right corner, is what looks like 'o/o/o Br'.

A LIFE 'INTERLAC'D WITH VERSE

Galesia, the fictionalized persona Barker used throughout her writing life, describes herself in one of the autobiographical fictions as having been 'dropp'd' while still a girl into a 'Labyrinth of Poetry, which has ever since interlac'd all the Actions of my Life' (PWS 3). This next section traces the outlines of Barker's life as a poet as it can be reconstructed from documentary sources, printed self-representations, and the manuscript verse, focusing on the life up to the turn of the century when the Magdalen manuscript was begun.

Little is known of Barker's family beyond her own accounts. She was related on her mother's side to the Connocks, a Cornish gentry family. Anne, her mother, appears to have come from an unlanded branch of the family, many of whose male members made careers in the military, including the 'uncle' and 'cosen' honoured in the Magdalen verse. Barker may have had her Connock relations in mind when she commended James II's support of the army and navy, for by means of this kingly generosity 'younger brothers had their bread' and were spared being a shame or burden to the 'elder house', and 'many familys, which had not lands, / Were dayly fed' ('Fidelia in a Convent garden', fol. 31v). It is not clear how Anne Connock met her future husband Thomas Barker, whose background is even more obscure. Even the county of his birth is unknown. Thomas may have had a minor position at court prior to the civil wars, possibly as a member of the staff or household of the Keeper of the Great Seal, since, as Carol Shiner Wilson reports, the 1732 entry in the St Germain parish register recording Jane's death describes her father as having been 'Secretaire du grand sceau d'Angleterre'. Other parish records indicate that by autumn of 1648 Thomas and Anne, now married, were living in Blatherwick, a hamlet in Northamptonshire, not far from Stamford, Lincolnshire. An entry for 8 October 1648 in the Blatherwick register records the birth of what may have been their first child, a son, George, who would die five months later. The same register records the baptisms of Edward, 16 April 1650; Jane, 17 May 1652; and Henry, 31 July 1655.

Blatherwick appears to have been Jane's home for the first ten years of her life. The family was comfortable enough, it would seem, for they leased a house with four hearths, and by the early 1660s Thomas was serving as an agent for the London financier Robert Clayton. Edward, the oldest son, was sent to London in March 1663 to enter the Merchant Taylors' School, and then matriculated at St John's College Oxford, taking a BA in 1672 and an MA from Christ Church on 8 March 1675. He died, not long after, of a fever, aged

twenty-five. His sudden death was a stunning blow to Jane. She continued lamenting in print his death for the next half century. See 'A Dialogue between Fidelia and her little nephew Martius', lines 73–92 below, for one of the several elegiac passages relating to Edward among the Magdalen verse. Of Henry, the younger son, no trace is to be found in the academic registers surviving from the period, an indication, perhaps, of the family's limited resources.

In 1662, when Jane was ten, the family moved to Wilsthorpe, Lincolnshire, Thomas Barker having taken a lease on the manor house and surrounding farmland from the Earl of Exeter. (Jane would later inherit the ninety-nine year lease.) At Wilsthorpe she pursued a remarkable course of self-education that included Latin, classical poetry, and academic medicine. She read widely. Her texts suggest familiarity with a range of belletristic writings, mostly from the seventeenth century, and all royalist. She cites or alludes to Cowley, Katherine Philips, and Dryden (her favourites, it would appear), but also Butler, Otway, Rochester, Denham, and Beaumont and Fletcher; among the classical poets she seems to have preferred Horace and, with reservations, Ovid. More surprisingly, she refers to a variety of medical writers — Aristotle, Galen, Hippocrates, and, from her own century, Richard Lower (to whom she was related on her mother's side), William Harvey, and Thomas Willis. She also read in religion. One of her early printed poems thanks the man who can be identified as George Hawen, the rector of the local parish, for supplying her with religious tracts. A circle of 'witty and youthful' friends at Cambridge, students at St John's College in the 1680s, provided her with pamphlets, poems, and other items of current interest (PWS 23, 26). To them she addressed a number of the poems found in the Magdalen manuscript, including 'An Invitation to my Learned Friends at Cambridge' and, 'To my Friends', a tribute to their camaraderie and support, both printed below. The latter swells with affection for the 'band of gallant youths' who 'teach me how to sing, then praise my song', but the representation of the female poet as Daphne-as-a-tree encircled by these same admiring youths hints at ambiguities.

Barker was fortunate in her older brother, who helped her learn Latin, classical poetry, botany, herbal medicine, anatomy, and physiology. At first, according to an account offered in one of the fictions, he mocked her enthusiasm for Latin grammar as a 'Vapour of Fancy, to be blown away with the first Puff of Vanity, or new Mode' (LI 16–17), but he assisted all the same. She was an apt pupil. Using his medical textbooks she undertook the study of scientific medicine, declaring herself (in the person of Galesia) especially pleased by the writings of William Harvey, his 'Circulatio Sanguinis' in particular (LI 52), and

indicating that in time she ‘made such Progress in *Anatomy*, as to understand Harvey’s Circulation of the Blood, and Lower’s Motion of the Heart’ (PWS 10). Barker’s medical learning and her grief for the loss of her brother are reflected in one of her most interesting poems, entitled in the Magdalen manuscript ‘She begining to study phisick, takes her leave of poetry, so falls into a long degression on anatomy’. Versions of this poem can be found, annotated, in both *Kissing the Rod* and the new Wilson edition of Barker’s autobiographical writings.

Sometime after 1681, when her father died, and probably no later than 1685, Barker removed from Wils thorpe to London. Evidence from *Poetical Recreations* indicates that while in London she continued to exchange verse with members of the Cambridge circle and that she became the friend and possibly the object of the amatory attentions of a City bookseller, then in his twenties, Benjamin Crayle. It was Crayle who brought out *Poetical Recreations* in 1687. In 1685 Crayle included on the advertisement page of one of his publications a notice informing readers that they might purchase at his shop, for five shillings a roll, something called Dr Barker’s Famous Gout Plaster, which ‘infallibly takes away the pain in Twelve Hours time, with the Paroxysm of the Distemper, and in time may effect a perfect Cure’. But beyond this little can be said with assurance of Barker’s goings on in the 1680s except that, on the evidence of the manuscript verse, she increasingly sought her identity in the Roman Catholic Church and, after the Revolution of 1688–89, in the Jacobite community in France. Her conversion to Catholicism in London under the direction of ‘Benit’s sons’ — the Benedictines — may have occurred as early as 1685. (Relevant are a couple of Part One poems not printed here, ‘Fidelia arguing with her self on the difficulty of finding the true Religion’ and ‘Fidelia having seen the Convent at St James’s’.) One of her poems, ‘Fidelia weeping for the Kings departure at the Revolution’, includes an account of a cat crucifixion in London in one of the outbreaks of anti-Catholic violence that occurred after James’s flight to France. Barker must have fled herself not long after. A poem written to accompany a birthday present to the Prince of Wales suggests she was established in St Germain by 10 June 1689.

In the group of twenty poems ‘Refering to the times’ of Part One Barker writes as a member of the St Germain community. Although these poems contain quietly reflective moments, mostly touching on the dubieties of her new identity, they are more often uncompromisingly partisan — bitter, self-righteous, relentless in their indictment of English perfidy under William and

Mary. Her Dedication describes this verse as representing ‘the frenzie, mallice, and madness’ of the years since 1685 and declares her hope that it might ‘fright the future from the like proceedings even in thought’, thereby ‘cut[ting] off troops of unborn Rebells’. In addition to expressing political loyalties, these poems are vehicles for fashioning a new identity as a Roman Catholic convert and religio-political exile, an identity understood in terms of a mythology of the virtuous but persecuted outsider, at once alone in the world and part of a wandering community. (A poem from Part Two recounts how she ‘wander’d on’ from Wils thorpe to London and then tells how, driven on by ‘curssed orange’, that is William III, she and others fled from England to France, where now they ‘wander vagabons alone’.) Part conversion narrative, part semi-mystical Stuart propaganda, and part political jeremiad, the poems ‘Refering to the times’ are an outstanding example of Jacobite myth-making.

If verse-writing enabled Barker to construct an identity and a place for herself within her new community, it also, and perhaps even more fundamentally, constituted a means of self-documentation. Her female predecessor Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, wrote famously that it was the anonymity of women’s lives that drove her to set down her life story. For, Cavendish remarks, poignantly, in the final passage of her autobiography, ‘my Lord having had two Wives, I might easily have been mistaken, especially if I should dye and my Lord Marry again’. Barker was haunted by the awareness that hers too was a life easily mistaken. She came from an undistinguished family, never married or bore children, never achieved public acclaim or notoriety; hers was an ‘obscure Corner of the World’ (PWS iv). One senses that verse-writing presented her with a means to commemorate her own otherwise disregarded existence and at the same time to honour political loyalties that were increasingly the object of disregard, if not suspicion, in the post-Revolutionary world. The body of verse she accumulated over the years, the record of a poet in exile in her own country and abroad, came to constitute a kind of personal archive from which to draw when, remarkably, in the second and third decades of the eighteenth century, this aging and unrepentant Jacobite, now in her sixties and seventies, undertook to fictionalize the story of her early years, constructing around the poems of her youth and middle age the autobiographical Galesia narratives for which she is known today. The bound volume that is now Magdalen manuscript 343 may have been a central document in this process — perhaps her most comprehensive collection. It is certainly a repository of the many voices, self-constructions, and poetical practices of Jane Barker.

THE MAGDALEN POEMS

The Magdalen poems are of various kinds: religio-political polemics, amatory lyrics, elegies, poems-against-marriage, odes, verse epistles, verses of poetic vocation. Some originate within a matrix of predictably 'feminine' relationships and situations — the bereaved sister, affectionate niece, disprized victim of male perfidy — while others draw upon areas of experience and construct poetic roles largely without precedent in seventeenth-century women's verse-writing: the student of anatomy, the prescribing lay-physician, the chronicler of the Stuart cause. Some speak in the oppositional, even subversive tones that feminist criticism has taught us to hear: the beloved object talking back; the impassioned, perhaps homoerotic female friend. Much of the interest of these poems — their ironies, anger, complexities, poignancy — results from Barker's willingness to enter into and probe the oddities of her position as a spinster whose allegiance to elite male learning, an ambiguous (for women) poetic heritage, an outlawed religion, and an increasingly discredited political ideology took her well outside the ordinary sphere of the country gentlewoman.

Those seeking moments of resistance to patriarchal values or constricting constructions of 'Woman' will find plenty to work with in the Magdalen manuscript. *'Fidelia in st Germain's garden, lamenting her misfortunes'* flaunts its feminine abjection, raising self-pity to the level of the high heroic; *'On the Apothecaries filing my bills amongst the Doctors'* constructs a boastful female warrior-physician triumphing over the puny he-doctors. Poems such as these show Barker experimenting with modes of feminine excess, creating an almost campy 'larger-than-lifeness' that laughs at lesser understandings of female nature. Other poems achieve radical effects simply by translating established (male) poetic codes into female terms. The retirement poem takes on startling implications when it is recognized that the withdrawal from distraction and empty business it valorizes is at base a refusal of romance, love, marriage, and reproduction — of the whole business of heterosexual obligation. Her anti-carpe-diem poems disrupt the standard equation of love, youth, sexual pleasure, and feminine desirability, implicitly proposing modes of female worth less dependent on male approval. *'A Virgin Life'*, perhaps Barker's best-known poem, is an outstanding example. A more ambiguous one, printed below, is *'A song'* ('When poor Galæcia aged grew'), in which an abject female speaker likens herself and, grotesquely, her hymen to an overblown flower. Poems such as these take a jaundiced view of a sexual economy based upon male control over definitions of female value and point toward the need for alternative sexual

economies. Barker's poems of female community hint at one form such an alternative might take.

Also of interest are the poems of poetic vocation. Barker is unusual among early modern women writers in having left a detailed account of her coming to poetry, a process memorialized in a number of verses, including two printed here: *'The contract with the muses writ on the bark of a shady ash-tree'* and *'The Necessity of Fate'*. The difficulties of fashioning a feminine poetic identity are the subject of *'The contract'*, a poem that plays upon Barker's oft-expressed admiration for the poet Katherine Philips (1632–64), whose acclaim as the 'matchless Orinda' was an inspiration to many women in Barker's generation. Dedication to poetry is shown not only to be incompatible with the ordinary feminine destiny of romance, marriage, and motherhood but also to visit upon the woman poet loneliness, alienation, hostility, and contempt. The giddy dreams of fame and adoration, associated early in the poem with the iconic figure of Orinda, are exposed as delusions: in reality the woman poet shares in Cassandra's fate. This bleak, but also, it must be said, somewhat callow poem, replete with what one hopes are calculated sillinesses, should be read in dialogue with *'Necessity of Fate'*, which employs the 'contract with the muses' *topos* to strikingly different effect. *'Necessity of Fate'* assumes the same opposition between the poet's identity as a writer and her identity as a woman, and puts into play many of the same elements — the muses, the contractual vow, the symbolic tree, the needful renunciation of the things of this world — but recasts them in the form of an elegantly controlled Pindaric ode. Where *'The contract'* swings from the glorious Orindan heights to the bitterness of Cassandra's fate, *'Necessity of Fate'* records the mysterious rewards to be found in acceptance of an exile's destiny with its renunciation of conventional worldly — and womanly — success. It concludes with a stanza that sums up and transforms the dedicatory vow-upon-the-tree of *'The Contract'* into something deeper and more enigmatic:

For fate at my initiation
In the muses congregation,
As my respon sor promis'd then for me
I shou'd forsake those three,
Soaring honours, and vain sweets of pleasure
And vainer fruits of worldly treasure,
All for the muses melancholy tree,
E're I knew ought of its great mistery,
Ah gentle fate since thou wilt have it so,
Let thy kind hand exalt it to my brow.

(fol. 113)