

Sam Cahill

From Eros to Agape: Pilgrimage in Deus Caritas Est and Jane Barker's Galesia Trilogy

Pope Benedict XVI's inaugural encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, presents the faithful Catholic with a unified view of love: unified because God is love, and needing to be presented as unified because of the diversity of human expressions of love. The encyclical is a careful delineation of the intimate and inextricable unity of *eros* (sexual love) and *agape* (charity).

As Pope Benedict observes, *eros* has historically been identified with selfish sexual desire, a sentiment entirely divorced from the true love that selflessly desires good for the other. This selfish "love" is an impoverishment of what *eros* could and should be. Pope Benedict stresses the selfless and spiritual aspects of *eros*, showing that *eros* not only can be reconciled to *agape* but, in fact, should always participate in it. *Deus Caritas Est* charts the concentric movement of love outward from the one-to-one erotic relationship with the beloved to care for the community to care for those who can make no special claim on us but who nevertheless need our protection. Our love ought to extend simultaneously to all people.

Unfortunately, in a fractured and fallen world, human expressions of love rarely exemplify this ideal unity. Rather, we must undertake a painful journey, a pilgrimage, in which we carry the cross of our own weakness, selfishness, and inadequacy to love in the hope that we will some day be redeemed by the perfect love and mercy of our Lord.

The encyclical itself models a pilgrimage, beginning with the erotic and moving outward to *agape* and from there to the many expressions of *agape* that we are called to live in our political and social worlds in recognition of the dignity of each individual.

Pope Benedict's argument about love has the progressive structure of a narrative, reminding us that while God's creation is united, our comprehension of its design is limited and necessarily piece-meal and constantly evolving. The encyclical models the journey each Christian must undertake as a pilgrim on earth.

This paper will examine such a pilgrimage made by a remarkable woman who practiced her Catholic beliefs in the fraught context of seventeenth-century England, a time of religious and political upheaval in a country that was increasingly hostile to Catholics. Jane Barker (1652-1732) was a Catholic convert who supported the Catholic monarch, James II, after he was ousted from the English throne in favor of the Protestant William of Orange. Parliament declared William king in February of 1689, completing an event variously known as the "Bloodless Revolution," the "Glorious Revolution," or the "Revolution of 1688." James II and his family fled to France, where they set up an exiled court at St. Germain which became the epicenter of future Jacobite uprisings, one in 1715 and another in 1745. Jacobites, of which Barker was one, were supporters of James II and his Catholic descendants, viewing them as England's legitimate monarchs.

Barker's loyalty to the Stuart monarchs in a tempestuous and dangerous period is impressive, but is even more so given her other personal trials. A single woman who worked as a professional writer at a time when such employment was very difficult, especially for women, she was also a politically and religiously marginalized individual who styled herself a virgin-healer, dedicating her medical knowledge to the care of the community. She wrote poetry, novels, and translations of devotional manuals. A Catholic exile experienced in rejection and marginalization, Barker sought to reconcile her national allegiances to her religious faith by a method of fictional and non-fictional

literary self-representation. Her main fictional self-representation, Galesia, is the protagonist of her three novels referred to by scholars as the *Galesia Trilogy*.¹ Both Pope Benedict and Jane Barker seek to establish communal unity in their audience by drawing, structurally or symbolically, on the practice of pilgrimage. Putting the encyclical and Barker's literary self-representations in conversation will highlight the narrative power of the encyclical, the depth of Barker's literary project, and the richness of both works.

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To compare *Deus Caritas Est* and Barker's work, let us first look at the structure of the encyclical, which is divided in two parts. The first part is philosophical, and examines the nature and definition of love; the second is practical and argues that love should be practiced in a global community. Pope Benedict begins Part I by noting the need to clarify what is and is not true "love" given the "vast semantic range of the word 'love'" (§ 2). Pope Benedict observes that in the Greek New Testament "love" is almost always referred to as "*agape*" rather than "*eros*" and argues that this "tendency to avoid the word *eros*, together with the new vision of love expressed through the word *agape*, clearly point to something new and distinct about the Christian understanding of love" (§ 3). *Eros*, "the love between man and woman which is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself upon human beings" (§ 3), is directed toward *agape*.

But we must be careful how we express *eros*. As Pope Benedict notes, *eros* intoxicates and delights, it "tends to rise 'in ecstasy' towards the Divine, to lead us

¹ The term is not Barker's but has been adopted in Barker scholarship. Margaret Anne Doody suggested the collective title of *The Galesia Trilogy* for the novels *Love Intrigues* (1713; revised 1719), *A Patch-work Screen for the Ladies* (1723), and *The Lining of a Patch-work Screen* (1726). Galesia figures as the central character in all three novels.

beyond ourselves; yet for this very reason it calls for a path of ascent, renunciation, purification and healing” (§ 5). *Eros* must not privilege the body over the soul, for

man is a being made up of body and soul. Man is truly himself when his body and soul are intimately united; the challenge of *eros* can be said to be truly overcome when this unification is achieved ... Only when both dimensions are truly united, does man attain his full stature. Only thus is love—*eros*—able to mature and attain its authentic grandeur (§ 5).

Eros must unite body and soul, man and woman. It is thus relational and must manifest a concern for the ‘other.’ True *eros* does not focus primarily on gratifying the emotional or physical desires of the individual. True *eros* leads to *agape* and in doing so “now becomes concern and care for the other. No longer is it self-seeking, a sinking in the intoxication of happiness; instead it seeks the good of the beloved: it becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice” (§ 6). Love—*eros* and *agape*—draws our deepest being toward another in a spirit of care and sacrifice.

Sacrifice figures prominently in Barker’s Jacobite poetry, written while in exile at the court of St. Germain. Plagues, disappointment, penury, and weariness are recurrent objects of her poetic concern. Pilgrimage becomes, for her, the means by which to explain the suffering of the good. In the poem “At the sight of the body of Our late gracious sovereign Lord King James 2d As it lyes at the English Monks,” she describes the life and death of James II, “Of his lives travells, this was the last stage, / And now in Heav’n he ends his pilgrimage” (lines 62-3). She concludes triumphantly with the characterization of James II as a saint and of his father, Charles I, executed by the English Parliament, as a martyr. Pilgrimage is a painful process, but one that is directed to eternal happiness.

Barker sees suffering as a temporally-bound phenomenon in an eternal life. She likens human experience to the flowing of water into the ocean in the poem “The Rivulet.” Addressing the rivulet, she says “in Thee / Innumerable Drops there be, / Yet still thou art but One, / Th’Original of which, from Heav’n came” (lines 22-25). She invokes the same spiritual unity argued for and demonstrated by Pope Benedict. He sees *eros* and *agape* as united, just as theory and practice are. But that unity is not always visible to the finite perceptions humans have on earth. That unity is only visible to the eyes of faith. Barker concludes “The Rivulet” wishfully,

Ah, gentle Stream! ah, happy we!
Cou’d we but learn of thee,
As thou dost Nature, we our God obey;
Gently rolling on our Way:
And as we pass, like thee do good,
Benign to all our Neighborhood;
To God and Man, our Love and Duty pay:
Then at our Ocean we Repose shall find,
The Ocean Grave, which swallows all Mankind!
 (“The Rivulet” 32-40)

Barker rejoices in the vision of a humanity that does good as naturally as a river flows to the ocean. Nevertheless, she is perfectly aware that human life falls short of this ideal benevolence and insists on the unity of the human community, the pain of life on earth, and the vast need for charity to others. It is often difficult to recognize human unity and that is why charity is so important: charity is an act of faith that declares we are all God’s children. Accordingly, the deprivation and disappointment Barker experienced at the court of St. Germain did not prevent her from reaching out to her hostile countrymen.

In 1718 Barker published a translation of famed educator Archbishop Fénelon’s work as *The Christian Pilgrimage*, a devotional manual structured on eighteen stations of

the cross with accompanying meditation and prayers.² In her translation of this Catholic author's text she explicitly states that she changed the prayer of the *Hail Mary* to that of the *Glory Be* in order to convey a useful Christian message from a Catholic source to Protestant readers without antagonizing them. As she explains in her translator's note to the reader,

*The chief Liberty I have taken, is, in having, at the End of each Station, chang'd the Hail Mary, for a Glory be to the Father, &c.—Which I did in order to prevent any sudden Disgust the Protestant Reader might take at the Sight of it, and conclude it not fit to be read, and therby throw aside the most useful and profitable Book of Devotion in the World; which bold Assertion I hope will neither surprise nor shock my Reader, when he considers it is the Commemoration of the Death of our blessed Saviour.*³

Importantly, Barker is willing to emphasize the points of commonality between Catholics and Protestants, to reach out to countrymen who have caused her real harm. Also, it is important to note, Catholicism and female imagery are associated in the exclusion of praying to a female figure in order to respect the boundaries of a Protestant audience. Barker's decision is suggestive in light of the importance of female friendship in her novels, particularly the friendship between her semi-autobiographical heroine Galesia and the Lady in *A Patch-work Screen* and its sequel. Furthermore, in her "Dedication" to the Countess of Nottingham Barker mentions that she "shall not regret the Time I pass'd in a foreign Country, where I learn'd so much of the Language, as to bring Home this valuable Book in *English*, for the Use of those who have not taken the

² François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, served as tutor to the Duke of Burgundy (oldest grandson of Louis XIV, he would one day have been king of France had it not been for his early death) and wrote several works on education, including the progressive *Treatise on the Education of Daughters* (1687) and *The Adventures of Telemachus* (1699) which influenced Jean-Jacques Rousseau in writing *Emile* (1762).

³ The "Translator to the Reader" is not paginated but is located directly before the "Author's Preface."

Trouble to learn *French*” (v). Since we know that she was at the Stuart court of St. Germain for a long period between the Revolution of 1688 and the publication of her translation of *The Christian Pilgrimage*, she learned French not only in a Catholic country but also, probably, at the Stuart court. This probable history is particularly meaningful given her bridge-building intention in translating a foreign text. As she says of Fénelon’s text, “I have made it speak *English*, in the Dialect of the Church of *England*, that it may be universally beneficial” (ii-iii). Barker’s gesture not only attends to concerns that may arise regarding her loyalty to England, but also introduces the notion that Catholicism can offer a Protestant nation something spiritually valuable. Catholics and Protestants are fellow Christians, regardless of their national allegiances. Barker’s statements remind her readers that diversity is embedded in a foundational unity: we are all human, we are all loved by the same God.

And we are all sinners for whom Christ suffered. The frontispiece to *The Christian Pilgrimage* depicts Christ, having fallen, laboring under the weight of the cross. Angels with sorrowful faces hover above Christ and the inscription below reads, “He hath born our Iniquities.” From the outset, then, Barker invokes a spiritual community centered on the recognition of Christ’s suffering and our involvement in it. The meditations on the eighteen stations of the cross invite us to examine ourselves in comparison to various female figures—the Virgin Mary, the women of Jerusalem, Veronica, Mary Magdalene—or to foreigners such as Simon of Cyrene who were present at Christ’s journey to the Crucifixion. Meditation on the Fourteenth Station, for instance, the house of Veronica, includes praise of Veronica for her bravery in comforting a suffering individual condemned as a criminal; direct address to Veronica; and a prayer to

Jesus that “I may . . . pass boldly to thee, and adore thy Divinity, though in extream Misery. And by daily meditating on this thy sad disfigur’d Face, I may in the End enjoy the beautiful Vision of thy Countenance shining with Glory” (84). The individual examination of conscience repeatedly enjoined combined with language that graphically emphasizes Christ’s corporal suffering involves the reader as a participant in Christ’s journey.⁴

This imaginative identification is a practice also found in the saying of the Rosary, a mental pilgrimage that asks us to contemplate the mysteries of Christ’s and the Virgin’s journeys on earth. In fact, given Barker’s explicit exclusion of the *Hail Mary* in order to convey a useful message to a Protestant audience, it is possibly meaningful that she invokes the Virgin in her fictional work. Barker’s introductory letter to the reader in *A Patch-Work Screen* is dated “Candlemas,” a feast associated with the Virgin, a mere four years after her translation of Fénelon. Perhaps, given the proximity of the publication dates of her translation and of her novels, as well as the association of Catholicism with prayer directed to a female figure, Barker’s use of female spaces and activities in her novels suggests the unifying power of her Catholic faith. It is the benevolence generated by shared activity, not the combative insistence on sectarian identity that Barker emphasizes. Members of all faiths ought to recognize their unity and share the good news, even if it requires creativity and patience to find the right mode of conveyance. Of course this does not mean that doctrine should be compromised; rather,

⁴ An example of the strong visual dimension of the language used is the “Author’s Preface,” which declares that this set of meditations on Christ’s Passion “is not as other Books, printed on Paper, but on the Flesh of Jesus Christ, GOD-MAN: Nor is it written with Pen and Ink, but with Thorns, Nails, and Blood, whose Binding is no less admirable than its Impression, being beaten with innumerable Strokes of the Feet, Fist, Sticks, Whips, and Hammers.” In reading these stations we read Christ’s suffering body.

Barker believes that doctrine should be conveyed in a way adapted to particular audiences. Her aim is communication.

Barker's non-fictional self-representation as community-builder in *The Christian Pilgrimage* finds an analogue in her fictional self-representation as Galesia, the semi-autobiographical heroine of her trilogy of novels. There is no way of knowing the full extent of Barker's identification with Galesia, but they share many biographical details such as their dedication to poetry, the single life, communal charity, and the Stuart cause. Carol Shiner Wilson in her introduction to the *Trilogy* explains that Barker's choice of the name Galesia "follows in the tradition of coterie writers adopting pseudo-classical literary names ... Barker's chosen pseudonym recalls the female form of the Latin name 'Galaesus,' a son of Apollo, god of poetry ... both a poet and prophet" (Wilson xxxvii). *The Galesia Trilogy* is a set of novels which survey the character development of Galesia from a young country woman disappointed in love, to an aspiring poet and virgin-healer, to a sage exile in the Stuart court of St. Germain.⁵

Love Intrigues, the first novel, details Galesia's disappointment at the hands of the unsteady Bosvil. Though nearly devastated by grief, rage, and confusion, Galesia refuses to allow her loss to define her. Wilson explains that after her erotic loss "Galesia sets out themes more important to shaping her identity, in particular the merits and difficulties of choosing to be an unmarried, independent, educated woman and her aspirations to literary

⁵ Galesia's feelings for Bosvil, the starting point of her pilgrimage, are erotic, but the relationship is never consummated and her virginity ultimately symbolizes her commitment to poetry, the healing arts, and the community. Her medical knowledge and poetic training are themselves the results of a communal relationship between Galesia, her brother (who dies prematurely), and her brother's college friends. Because women were not allowed to attend university at this time, Galesia's knowledge is the product of her own efforts and the intellectual generosity of her brother's circle of friends.

and personal excellence” (xxxviii). Though her erotic attachment to Bosvil ends unhappily, Galesia turns to a life of *agape*—of “meaningful rural activity through farm management, acts of charity, friendships, and literary pursuits” (Wilson xxxix). Galesia undergoes a pilgrimage from erotic disappointment to concern for wider and more glorious attainments explicitly invoked by a dream she has of the ascent to Mount Parnassus, home of the Muses of literary inspiration.

Of course, there are setbacks and failures. Galesia, like all sinners, must repent her weakness and renew her commitment to noble pursuits. Nevertheless the disappointment regarding Bosvil ultimately causes Galesia to turn outward, recognizing her own sins and seeking the good of others. She chooses a “path of ascent,” being literally on top of a mountain in her dream of poetry. Though she sometimes falls, she never despairs of continuing her pilgrimage. In this her experience instantiates Pope Benedict’s warning that

An intoxicated and undisciplined *eros*, then, is not an ascent in ‘ecstasy’ towards the Divine, but a fall, a degradation of man. Evidently, *eros* needs to be disciplined and purified if it is to provide not just fleeting pleasure, but a certain foretaste of the pinnacle of our existence, of that beatitude for which our whole being yearns (§ 4).

Galesia’s *eros* must certainly be purified. In her deepest moment of disappointment Galesia imagines dueling with Bosvil and impaling him on her sword. After reflecting on her own violent fantasies, she says of erotically disappointed women, “if the Feebleness of our Hands did not moderate the Fury of our Heads, Women sometimes would exceed the fiercest Savages, especially when affronted in their Amours” (32). She is a fallible individual, but one who examines her conscience and repents sinful behavior.

Galesia undergoes a painful process of renunciation, but it is the erotic drive that directs her to Bosvil that first sets her on her outward-looking pilgrimage. Likewise, the structure of the encyclical moves progressively outward from *eros* to *agape* (Part 1) to the practical expressions of *agape*—corporal charity, political witnessing—of Part II. Each of these movements is represented in Galesia’s own experiences as she moves from love affair to community-building to stalwartly supporting an exiled king.

Her development follows the movement of the encyclical, from romantic to communal love, and points toward the transcendent love found in eternity. Temporal charity and community are elevated by their participation in the soul’s journey to its Creator. The Christian life, traditional Catholic prayer, the example of the *Galesia Trilogy*, and *Deus Caritas Est* all follow the trajectory of a pilgrimage, one fraught with suffering and adorned with unexpected joys, but a journey first and foremost, in which every step is an ascent and approach to eternal communion with Goodness.

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Barker’s “patchwork” narrative organization in the novels following *Love Intrigues* resembles the creative engagement of a wide body of discourse also modeled in the Catholic practice of praying the Rosary. Though Barker never explicitly invokes the Rosary, her narrative practice is remarkably similar. Just as we meditate on different scenes of the Lord’s Passion in the Sorrowful Mysteries (for instance)—seeing in five discrete scenes a meaningful experiential unit—Barker asks that readers see a coherent unity in an array of scenes from English life. Likening her narrative organization to the feminine domestic activity of needle-work, she claims that the mental effort required to

sift information from a variety of sources will enable women who pursue the activity of “patch-work” to build their community.⁶ As she says,

whenever one sees a Set of Ladies together, their Sentiments are as differently mix'd as the Patches in their Work: To wit, Whigs and Tories, High-Church and Low-Church, Jacobites and Williamites and many more Distinctions, which they divide and sub-divide, 'till at last they make this Dis-union meet in an harmonious Tea-Table Entertainment (52).⁷

As Rivka Swenson has pointed out, Barker envisions her small community of women engaged in a familiar domestic activity to be the model for a united nation.⁸ Thus the corporal acts of charity explicitly rendered in the novels that follow invoke an idea of nation, the harmony of which is based in the merciful and generous acts of individuals.

Indeed, Galesia herself models the vulnerability of the suffering individual in need of corporal charity as well as emotional sustenance. *A Patch-work Screen for the Ladies* and its sequel, *The Lining of the Patch-work Screen*, follow the adult Galesia as she wanders the rural and urban landscape of England. We first meet Galesia as she travels in a carriage, sharing stories with fellow travelers. Ultimately, Galesia is the only

⁶ Patch-work is roughly similar to ornamental quilting; different bits of material, “patches,” are sewn together to create a work of art that can be displayed in the home.

⁷ Tories and Whigs are the opposite camps in English politics, basically representing the conservative, property-owning interest of country squires and the more urban mercantile interest, respectively. High-Church and Low-Church are the opposite ends of the spectrum of Protestant beliefs, with “high” being conservative Anglicanism, and “low” being sects less concerned with traditional religious form.

⁸ Swenson argues, “the patch-works’ authorial persona expresses clear choice in the matter of how and why her anti-novels are constructed as histories in miniature, histories in bits and pieces. Barker doesn’t merely set forth a new standard for the novel, but suggests there is something particularly appropriate about using a complicated form to express a complicated subjectivity ... she uses an aesthetics of disorder to map political dissatisfactions on to the page” (56). Rivka Swenson, “Representing Modernity in Jane Barker’s *Galesia Trilogy*: Jacobite Allegory and the Patch-Work Aesthetic.” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 34. Eds. Catherine Ingrassia and Jeffrey S. Ravel. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005. 55-80. One of the difficulties of communicating in a public forum as a member of a marginalized group is negotiating how to render one’s own position accurately yet in a non-threatening way.

passenger remaining when the carriage crashes and she is thrown on the good will of nearby villagers. The next day she is taken in by the Lady who invites Galesia to contribute to her patch-work screen. Galesia's miscellaneous literary offerings, the bits of material on which her poems are written, become the "patches" by which she shares stories as well as adds to the Lady's domestic creation. In the sequel, *The Lining of the Patch Work Screen*, Galesia journeys to London, where she continues to share stories while assisting wanderers and unfortunates before the Lady invites her to return with her to the country. One such "patch" that Galesia contributes to the Lady's screen while in the country is the poem "Upon Charity," in which Galesia declares

This *Vertue* does above all others climb;
To *give* is Noble, to *forgive* Sublime.
The *Giving*, one may call *Religion's Heart*;
The *Pardoning*, the *Animating Part*.
These *Two* conjoyn'd, make *Charity* complete,
By which our Souls of Heav'n participate. ("Upon Charity" 1-6)

Charity is the union of giving and forgiving, it joins human souls to the heavenly community, and humans to each other. Consistent with her thoughts on charity, Galesia shares the good she received from the Lady with others in her capacity as healer, listener, benefactor, and friend. Friendship and disinterested generosity from one individual to another are the foundation of a national and, given the international travels of some of Galesia's friends, even global network of charity.

As Pope Benedict emphasizes, the "direct duty to work for a just ordering of society ... is proper to the lay faithful" (§ 29). Not only must the individual Catholic "take part in public life in a personal capacity," but we must each remember that "there will never be a situation where the charity of each individual Christian is unnecessary" (§ 29). Barker is fully cognizant of the power of an individual offering of love, which Pope

Benedict characterizes as “the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern” (§ 28). Barker, and her literary persona Galesia, are both exiles. Through Galesia, Barker shows the supreme importance of the kindness of strangers. Indeed, as Pope Benedict stresses, we cannot always give love; we must also receive it. Sometimes to care for the stranger, the exile, or the pilgrim, is to entertain an angel. Barker’s work of course predates the publication of *Deus Caritas Est*. But the similarities suggest the consistency of the Catholic Church’s position on hospitality, a position with strong roots in the Old Testament, as well as the rich uses of pilgrimage as a metaphor and model of the Christian life.

Moreover, both authors instantiate the unity they praise: Barker through connecting her stories to the national scene; Pope Benedict through the unity of *eros* and *agape* and the two united parts (theory and practice) of his encyclical on God’s love. By modeling their own argument, Pope Benedict and Jane Barker ensure that their message of unity reverberates in each part of the narrative whole.

Barker longed for the reunification of her country; Pope Benedict emphasizes that *eros* must be purified in order to participate in *agape*. Both writers are aware that true love takes time to develop, that it is a long and painful journey outward. Psalm 37 tells us “Take delight in the Lord, and he will grant you your heart’s request.” (Ps. 37:4). And He will, but we must make a pilgrimage to receive it.

-- Sam Cahill

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