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MAKING SPACE FOR WOLLSTONECRAFT

Mary Barker's *A Welsh Story*

Mary Chadwick



AS JANE AARON OBSERVES, as a setting for novels of sensibility and domestic fiction, Wales 'could prove attractive to the Romantic radical, disillusioned by the restrictions and artifice of contemporary English culture.'¹ This certainly appears to be true of Mary Barker (1774–1853) who published the almost forgotten *A Welsh Story* in 1798. As its title suggests, Barker's text is an example of 'Wales-related fiction', Andrew Davies's umbrella term for the fashionable Romantic novels which set some part of their narrative in Wales and which contain 'a degree of Welsh interest sufficient to draw meaningful and workable conclusions about how Wales, its people and culture were viewed by the author and received by contemporary readers.'² Jane Austen's burlesque of the genre in 'Love and Freindship' demonstrates its popularity and notable examples include Anna Maria Bennett's *Anna; or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress* (1785) and *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* (1794), Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline; or, The Orphan of the Castle* (1788) and Elizabeth Hervey's *The History of Ned Evans* (1796).³ Throughout her novel, Barker focuses on female education and its effects on young women, and on the necessity of sincerity and integrity rather than artifice and deception in men's and women's dealings with each other, themes which are key also to Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Here, I read *A Welsh Story* alongside the *Vindication* as I argue that Barker utilised the radical potential which the imagined space of Wales offered her in order to create a fictionalised vision of Wollstonecraft's depictions of, and idealistic hopes for, British society.

Insofar as Barker is known today, it is as a friend of Robert Southey, whom she met in Portugal in 1800 and who described her as 'a very clever girl, all good humour and a head brimful of brains'. On their parting, Southey lamented the loss of 'one companion to whom every serious thought might be freely communicated.'⁴ Baptised in Staffordshire in 1774, by the 1790s Barker had become companion to a local MP, Sir Edward Littleton, who encouraged her to publish *A Welsh Story*. She moved between London, Bath and Staffordshire in the early years of the nineteenth century before Sir Edward died, in 1812, leaving her an income of £200 a year. Barker moved to the Lake District where she lived in the lodge house of Greta Hall, the Southey's home, and socialised with the Lake Poets and their families. With William Wordsworth, she published *Lines Addressed to a Noble Lord* (1815) in which the two writers satirised and attacked Lord Byron. By 1819, still liable for rent on Greta Lodge and having built a new house, Barker

dealt with pressing financial problems by leaving Britain to stay with relatives in Boulogne.⁵ Here, in 1830, she married a Mr Slade Smith, twenty years her junior and professedly quite smitten. Barker's friends appear to have been anxious about the match and her biographer, David Bradbury, writes that in 1833, 'Mary's husband seemed to be trying to prevent her from communicating with her friends, and seldom let her out of his sight.'⁶ She spent much of the last period of her life in France, where she died in 1853.⁷

Barker's maternal grandmother lived in Glamorgan and it is in this county that she set *A Welsh Story*.⁸ The narrative follows sisters Charlotte and Euphemia Llewellyn, raised in Wales, and Lady Cecilia Margam, who moves from London to Wales when she inherits her mother's estate, through courtships and domestic dramas to marriage and motherhood. Many of the female-authored Wales-related novels published during the Romantic period follow a particular pattern in which a naive heroine or hero leaves the secluded Welsh space of their childhood for some well-documented experiences of metropolitan life. Their virtue and fortitude are tested before they are rewarded, frequently on the very final pages, with financial security and marital bliss. In a departure from the norm, however, Barker sets the majority of her novel in Wales and marries off her main characters by the beginning of the third volume. Bradbury suggests that in this final volume she 'betrays her readers and it all begins to fall apart' as the novel descends into 'a series of loosely-linked short stories (plus one undiluted essay)'.⁹ I argue that this shift in tone, allied with the alterations made to the generic conventions of Wales-related fiction, enables a reading of *A Welsh Story* as an exploration of lives led according to the Wollstonecraftian principle of sound, rational education, productive of women possessed of real virtue and reason.

Barker does not refer directly to the *Vindication*. In the wake of the publication, in the same year as *A Welsh Story*, of William Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of the Rights of Woman* (1798) Wollstonecraft, who had died in 1797, was the subject of attacks from the conservative press. Claudia L. Johnson suggests that '[n]o woman novelist, even among the most progressive, wished to be discredited by association'.¹⁰ As Anne K. Mellor observes, however, 'Whether they endorsed her views or contested them, very few women writers of the time ignored them.'¹¹ In 1798 and 1799 Mary Hays, Priscilla Wakefield, Mary Robinson and Mary Anne Radcliffe published 'treatises' which, to different degrees, were 'inspired by Wollstonecraft's revolutionary philosophy and intent on continuing her legacy'.¹² Amongst female novelists, Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) and *Belinda* (1801) by Maria Edgeworth lampoon advocates of 'Rights for Women'. Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1804) offers a more nuanced consideration of Wollstonecraft's ideals, as does Frances Burney's *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* (1814).¹³ Although there are no outright references to the *Vindication* in Barker's novel, it demands to be added to this body of female-authored texts. Further, it offers a 'four nations' perspective on responses to Wollstonecraft's work. Isabelle Bour and Eileen Hunt Botting have recently investigated Wollstonecraft's reception outside Britain, in revolutionary France

and nineteenth-century Europe and America.¹⁴ Despite the surge of interest over the last two decades in archipelagic readings of British literature and the recovery of authors, texts and voices from the peripheries of eighteenth-century Britain, there have been few considerations of the ways that Scottish, Irish or Welsh readers and writers responded to Wollstonecraft's ideas. By focusing on the ways in which Barker's text may be read in relation to the *Vindication* this article begins to address that lack.

In the *Vindication* Wollstonecraft argued that '[t]he conduct and manners of women [...] prove that their minds are not in a healthy state, for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty.'¹⁵ Lacking rational education, British women were enervated, superficial beings who were denied autonomy. In consequence, they attempted to gain power over men by deceitfully feigning weakness and obedience with the result that 'their character is degraded, and licentiousness spread through the whole aggregate of society' (p. 107). Wollstonecraft imagined 'Utopian dreams' in which 'woman will be [...] the friend of man', women's 'rationality' would be 'proved', and men and women would enjoy 'the free use of reason' in a society which had no need of 'cunning and dissimulation' (pp. 181, 111, 105–07). More realistically perhaps, she recognised that

[m]en and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in. [...] It may then fairly be inferred, that, till society be differently constituted, much cannot be expected from education. It is, however, sufficient for my present purpose to assert, that [...] every being may become virtuous by the exercise of its own reason. (p. 89)

For Barker, Wales represents a space where the soil is not so rich as to preclude feminine 'strength and usefulness' and where 'cunning and dissimulation' might be dispensed with in favour of Wollstonecraft's 'conception of the world in which men and women would cease to *appear*; they would *be*.'¹⁶ Over the course of *A Welsh Story*, Barker constructs an idealised community in Wales which, although not immune to metropolitan vices, offers a space in which society may 'be differently constituted'. By the 1780s, as Caroline Franklin notes, still lacking a capital city, 'Wales had become shorthand for a refuge, a feminine space far from urban sophistication.'¹⁷ Barker draws on this longstanding opposition between corrupt cities and virtuous rural retreats in her depictions of the encounters between the Llewellyn sisters, unaffected young women brought up in Wales, and men and women from English and Irish cities who are characterised as worldly, shallow and artificial. On inheriting her mother's Welsh estate, fashionable young Lady Cecilia Margam leaves London, fully intending 'to set Wales in a blaze'. Lady Cecilia is the vehicle for Barker's inclusion of a range of stereotypical signifiers of eighteenth-century Wales: she expects her lap dog will chase the 'nanny goats', for example, and anticipates having great fun using 'hideous masks' to scare the superstitious locals. Barker further displays her familiarity with affairs in and common public perceptions of Wales through the unusual inclusion of a female antiquarian.

Lady Virgilia-ap-Howel demonstrates the widely-recognised Welsh trait of pride in family pedigree, being able to trace her ancestors back to Boadicea and Howel Daw [*sic*].¹⁸ As Andrew Davies observes: 'Antiquarianism is used to good effect' in the novel, serving 'as a yardstick against which one's commitment to national and cultural identity is gauged'.¹⁹ Heinously, Lady Cecilia misremembers the name of her illustrious forebear '*Nest, daughter of Justin-ap-Gweregant-ap-Cadifer-ap-Collrum ap-Tagno*' and uses portraits of her ancestors as targets when practising her archery (*WS*, I, 67–69, 119–20). The 'process of cultural rehabilitation which sees her gradually integrate herself into society and turn her back on fashionable society' demonstrates Lady Cecilia's worthiness of her Welsh inheritance and of a place in the community of rational, virtuous families seen in Barker's final volume.²⁰

In common with many Wales-related novels, Barker includes characters who travel to or have links with all four nations of Britain.²¹ She refrains, however, from giving the usual lengthy depictions of characters' experiences of metropolitan life in favour of importing corrupting influences into Glamorgan for comparison with and rejection by the Llewellyns. Three such influences arrive in Wales with Lady Cecilia in the form of Mrs Gunnings and her two daughters. Immune to the transformative powers of Barker's rural Welsh society which prompt Lady Cecilia's metamorphosis 'from a fine lady to a rational being' (III, 2), these characters exemplify the pernicious effects of fashionable education. The family's move to Wales is as much a result of Mrs Gunnings' identification of Mr Llewellyn, a worldly MP and gambler who spends the majority of his time in London, as her second husband as the young ladies' friendship with Lady Cecilia. Determined to marry off her future stepdaughters as quickly as possible to prevent them jeopardising her plans, as '*a woman of the world*' Mrs Gunnings concludes 'that girls who had been *brought up in total ignorance, who knew nothing of life, and had never seen any body*, would be very fortunate in captivating any man of tolerable respectability, and very happy in being introduced to the world' (I, 156). Throughout her text, Barker contrasts the Llewellyns' appreciation of their distance from and ignorance of metropolitan culture with the Gunnings' more worldly conceptions of ignorance, their love of 'society' and their attitudes to relationships between the sexes.

Sylvana Tomaselli identifies as a key theme of both *Vindications* Wollstonecraft's condemnation of the artifice which she perceived to characterise British society, particularly as it affected gender relations.²² Barker's own rejection of falsity and coyness in favour of honesty and integrity is demonstrated in *A Welsh Story*. It is also apparent in a letter which she wrote to the radical Welsh bard Iolo Morganwg in 1798, when her novel was in press, complimenting him on his *Poems, Lyric and Pastoral* (1794). Barker had been told that Morganwg was 'a horrible Jacobin' and she informs him that she is unable to approve such a character.²³ Nevertheless, responding to Morganwg's statement in the preface to *Poems* that 'if any sentiment or trait in my very humble productions should procure me some friendship [...] my happiness will be very much increased', she offers him hers:

which, though it comes from a woman, and a young one too, will, I am bold to say, never merit the censure which but too often apply to

professors of friendship and female ones in particular. In this respect, I can only trust to your candour, believing however that you will consider that a woman who is capable of the charms of genius sufficiently to reverence and love all who possess it, and to despise the vulgar scrupulosities of her sex, will not abate the zeal which led her to wish to be acquainted with a man who so singularly possessed it.²⁴

When read alongside *A Welsh Story*, the ‘vulgar scrupulosities’ of the female sex appear to relate directly to the ‘rank affectation’ which Wollstonecraft identifies as the outcome of a young woman’s adherence to the over-refined proprieties and ‘system of dissimulation’ (*VRW*, 181) prescribed by John Gregory in his *Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* (1761). In response to Barker’s comments on his Jacobinism Morganwg observes that he ‘long ago adopted [Quaker] principles, excepting the frivolous minutiae of thee and thou &c.’ before laying out over several pages his political sentiments including his opinions on universal suffrage: ‘my ideas are I believe very [no]vel, but they are considerably assertive of the rights of ladies. [Let] this, madam, put you in a good humor. My ideas go not the length of [Mrs] Wolstoncraft’s but implicated, if not active, rights your sex, madam, have [in] [m]y opinion a just claim to.’²⁵ Morganwg makes the same assumption in his letter as I do here, namely, that Barker was familiar with and approved of Wollstonecraft’s work.

Like many readers of the *Vindication*, the *Analytical Review* considered it to be ‘an elaborate *treatise of female education*’; the reviewer suggested that ‘[i]f the bulk of the great truths which this publication contains were reduced to practice, the nation would be better, wiser, and happier than it is upon the wretched, trifling, useless and absurd system of education which is now prevalent.’²⁶ Roxanne Eberle observes that the *Vindication* ‘begins to enact [its own] agenda’ as Wollstonecraft encourages women to ‘learn to “imagine” themselves as simultaneously rational, physical, and spiritual beings in order to resist the degrading cultural forces intent upon constructing them as frivolous, beautiful, and soulless bodies.’²⁷ Barker participates in a very similar project, stating that her characters are intended to ‘serve as useful examples of error, or objects worthy of imitation’ (I, 152–53). Although my main focus here is the influence of the *Vindication* on Barker’s text, her depictions of the early education enjoyed by the Llewellyn sisters appear to owe a debt to Wollstonecraft’s *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788). Rebecca Davies writes of Mrs Mason, the woman who begins to reform two damaged girls in *Original Stories*, that ‘in assuming rationality in her young female charges’ she ‘presents a feminist reimagining of the maternal role’ demonstrating her ‘social responsibility through her shaping of more autonomous future generations of women.’²⁸ The governess who educates the Llewellyn sisters in the wake of their mother’s death and their father’s disinterest resembles Mrs Mason in being ‘a woman qualified to train the infant mind [...] who considered that it is the natural privilege of a human being to be governed by its own reason.’ (I, 9, 190)

Although intelligent, virtuous and charitable, Euphemia is prevented by ‘constitutional weakness and timidity’ (I, 195) from truly benefiting from her governess’s precepts and she submits to her father’s sale of her and her dowry into marriage with the disreputable Captain Wilson. Drawing on the widely-used doubling technique of comparing two sisters, Barker writes that Euphemia ‘wanted that resolution which Charlotte possessed, to perform what she was thoroughly convinced was so, whether others considered it as such or not’ (I, 195–96). Charlotte’s resolution and her rational approach to the events of the narrative mark her out as the product of a system of education based on Wollstonecraftian principles and Barker flags the novelty of a female character who acts ‘according to the dictates of reason’:

Some of our readers, we fear, will think, that to make a philosopher of a young woman [...] is a little unnatural; to which we can only reply that they had much better read no more of this story [...] If they expect to find Charlotte Llewellyn act as girls usually do act, they will be disappointed; if they wish her to act so, they will be disgusted. (I, 168)

Through Charlotte, Barker demonstrates the truth of Wollstonecraft’s assertions that ‘women must develop “independence of character” and take action rather than merely “play-act” appropriate social behaviours’ and spotlights the crucial role which education plays in their ability to do so.²⁹ When her father declares that she must either marry the buffoonish but wealthy Lord Oakley or leave his house, Charlotte departs. Barker comments that she ‘must absolutely sink under, or rise superior to all earthly misfortune. Charlotte had a soul which did not permit her to do the former; and a mind so controlled by reason, that she speedily did the latter.’ (II, 105) Unable to find security with a female friend in England, or on Captain Wilson’s estate in Ireland, she accepts an offer to accompany a new acquaintance and her husband as they travel to the East Indies. In a diary later sent to a friend, Charlotte states that, as she sailed away from her ‘native country’, ‘Reason resumed her reign, I became cheerful and resigned, if not happy [...] the inestimable value of a good education [...] caused me to find, even in the most hopeless situation, duties to perform and employments to exercise my mind.’ (III, 33–36) Barker removes Charlotte from her family and neighbourhood to illustrate, in contrast to Euphemia, who pines into ill health during her time in Ireland, that she does not, in Wollstonecraft’s words, ‘stand still’ (*VRW*, 143) but draws on the resources and pragmatism instilled by her governess to overcome challenging circumstances.

In her education, as in many aspects of her character, Lady Cecilia is initially cast as a stark contrast to the Llewellyn sisters. Typifying the fashionably educated, wealthy young lady who from childhood has ‘been made the weathercock of [her] own sensations’ (*WS*, I, 145), she was

[c]onsigned to the care of a most accomplished French governess [until] her Ladyship chose to be her own mistress [whereupon] Masters of the first fashion, as well as governesses of the first respectability, attended [her] constantly, with whom she merely reserved the

privilege of learning just as much as was pleasant to herself, and of obeying none of their instructions but what she thought proper and just, according to the humour she might be in; the effect of which, her actions must declare. (I, 6–7)

Lady Cecilia's actions do indeed declare the effects of her education. At the beginning of the novel she 'torments [...] half the poor fellows' in London and although she cannot abide playing at cards she spends lavishly, rouges and gossips (I, 24–29). Over the course of the text, however, it is made clear that her 'errors proceeded from neglect in her education; that she possessed much native good sense, and so many native virtues, that, if they had been properly cultivated, might have qualified her for a very useful and shining member of society' (I, 276). Her move to Wales and the influence of her friendship with the Llewellyns enables Lady Cecilia to develop the strengths in her character in order, in the third volume, to achieve and to exercise that 'mental activity so necessary in the maternal character' (I, 275). Barker includes two other fashionably-educated young women, the Gunnings sisters who accompany Lady Cecilia when she removes from London to Wales, who do not undergo similar transformations. The younger, Miss Emma, is described as 'a *very genteel young woman*' possessed of 'a good person, a fashionable dress, a perfect knowledge of French and Italian [...] and a *stylish* manner of dancing, talking, and laughing' (I, 160). In the course of her education, however, her potential to become a sensible and a rational woman was neglected: 'not one of the many governesses by whom she had been *instructed*; from Mrs. Prim to Madam Sophister, ever mentioned [the] idea of employing her own reason to guide her actions' (I, 161). Even more than Lady Cecilia's, the education of the Gunnings sisters corresponds to Wollstonecraft's depiction of a system under which 'the cultivation of understanding is always subordinate to the acquirement of some corporeal accomplishment' (I, 91). Barker's didactic ends would not be served if she were to cause all of her female characters cast off the ignorance and frivolity imposed by governesses employed by fashionable parents but, in its distance from London, she paints Wales as a space in which young women may be educated according to rational principles and in which 'native good sense' may be cultivated.

Having introduced her young female characters, Barker develops her narrative by importing a party of potential husbands into Wales from London. In Wollstonecraft's imagined utopia, as Tomaselli notes, men and women 'would be one with themselves and devoid of the elaborate masks which polished society demanded of its members' and as she explores their attitudes to courtship and marriage, Barker draws a pointed contrast between Charlotte and the polished Miss Gunnings.³⁰ Characters, male and female, who privilege appearances, artifice or 'seeming' over nature or 'being' are condemned throughout *A Welsh Story*.³¹ On his wife's death, the London-based Lord Glendarran 'deprived himself of the consolation of [his children's] endearing caresses, till a superb mourning coach was built to convey them, in short, nothing could excel the *visible* respect and regret which [he] bestowed on the memory of his wife' (I, 5–6; my italics). Of the fashionable matron Mrs Gunnings, Barker writes that 'the despicable insignificancy

of her understanding, and the malignancy of her disposition, were so disguised by cunning, and glossed over by courtesy, that [...] no one would discover that she was a vile, artful, intriguing woman' (I, 153). And Captain Wilson, who wins Euphemia and her dowry as a result of her father's poor luck at cards, is mistrusted by Charlotte who observes that 'it is impossible to get his sincere opinion of any thing, for he seems to consider it a sin to speak truth, and always to be studying to disguise himself [...] everything he does and says, wears an appearance of deceit' (II, 65).³² Charlotte, like Barker herself, is shown to despise the 'vulgar scrupulosities', the artificial manners, proprieties and 'starched decorum' (*VRW*, 179) which young women were encouraged to adopt. When Charlotte meets her brother's friend, Mr Greville, for example, she scrutinises him with searching looks rather than casting at him 'those pretty, timid glances, which ladies, who are upon their preferment, know so well how to direct in their dealings with mankind' (*WS*, I, 164). When a gentleman falls in love with her during her time in Ireland, she 'treated him with the sincerity which I had been taught to admire and which my own reason leads me to practise' (III, 20–21). Barker brings together her own and Wollstonecraft's responses to male-authored texts which aimed to guide the behaviour of young women. Paraphrasing Wollstonecraft's own quotations from and rebuttals of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's and John Gregory's works, she gives a clear illustration of the influence which the *Vindication* had on her novel.

Wollstonecraft's attitude to Rousseau was ambivalent; 'half in love with him' and 'indisputabl[y] a Rousseauist', she nevertheless includes in the *Vindication* a 'quarrelsome' critique of his ideas about gendered education and its results.³³ Her 'caustic commentary'³⁴ on the section of *Émile* (1762) devoted to 'Sophie, or the Woman' draws attention to its author's assertion that a woman should, with manipulative deceit, 'exercise her *natural* cunning' over her husband by acting as 'a coquettish slave' and that, when educating girls, 'obedience is the grand lesson which ought to be impressed with unrelenting rigour' (*VRW*, 94). Barker constructs a conversation between her heroine and Miss Gunnings which builds to Charlotte's emphatic rejection of the 'cunning and deceit' practised by wives who wish to manage their husbands in this manner. Commenting on 'modern philosophers and reasoners' who have argued 'themselves into such wrong beliefs, and such erroneous opinions, that they quite *subvert* the order of nature', Miss Gunnings recalls that she had 'heard a very sensible woman say that she never could, *literally*, obey any man for ever!' Charlotte's approving reply causes Miss Gunnings to ask, in disbelief, if she shares this 'sensible woman's' feelings. Charlotte's response—'if I am so happy, if ever I do marry, as to find a man who is obedient to reason, I can easily be obedient to him' (*WS*, II, 23–25)—chimes with Wollstonecraft's declaration, as she outlines her 'Utopian dreams', that 'I love man as my fellow; but his sceptre, real, or usurped, extends not to me, unless the reason of an individual demands my homage; and even then the submission is to reason, and not to man' (*VRW*, 107). Further, it demonstrates Barker's support for Wollstonecraft's call for boys and girls 'to pursue the same studies together' in order to 'shut out gallantry and coquetry' and to produce rational human be-

ings.³⁵ Charlotte's ability to obey her husband would result from the fact that, as equal citizens both educated to think for themselves, they would share a common understanding of reason, thereby reducing the negative impact, on both partners, of the gendered hierarchy of eighteenth-century marriage.

Miss Gunnings, however, states that 'a woman must seem to obey her husband in every thing, and then in reality she will rule him' (*WS*, II, 28), an argument which follows Rousseau's assertion that 'it is by her superior art and ingenuity that [woman] preserves her equality, and governs [man] while she affects to obey' (quoted in *VRW*, 164). As the conversation becomes increasingly heated, Barker blends Wollstonecraft's arguments against Rousseau with her criticism of and response to Gregory, both of whom 'have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters, than they would otherwise have been' (*VRW*, 90). Rejecting Gregory's advice to young women, that they be constantly on their guard lest their behaviour fall short of what would render them 'most respectable and most amiable in the eyes of my own sex',³⁶ Wollstonecraft writes, '[w]omen are always to *seem* to be this and that—yet virtue might apostrophize them, in the words of Hamlet—Seems! I know not seems!—Have that within that passeth show!' (p. 181) In response to Miss Gunnings' animadversions on the abilities of wives to acquire authority over their husbands in the Rousseauist style which Wollstonecraft decries—through deceit, cunning and 'outward obedience' (p. 87), Charlotte exclaims:

I know not what is seem! [...] I don't understand such dissimulation [...] I should despise treating the man I ought to love and honour, like a fool, worse than that; and of pretending to be a slave in order to become a tyrant. I intend to pay my husband a higher compliment than to think it necessary to rule him – and to preserve too genuine a respect both for him and myself, to wish to deceive him.

(*WS*, II, 27–29)

Barker reproduces Wollstonecraft's reference to *Hamlet* here and, once again, Charlotte's vocabulary is distinctly similar to that of the *Vindication*. Wollstonecraft argues that the 'artificial weakness' assumed and fostered by women 'gives birth to cunning' and that by 'playing on the *weakness* of men' and 'obtaining power by unjust means' women 'become either abject slaves or capricious tyrants' (*VRW*, 78, 111, 117, 248). As a result of the principles instilled by her governess, at a geographical and philosophical remove from the fashionable world which expects and accepts that women will don 'elaborate masks' to meet artificial standards of propriety and decorum, Charlotte represents a product of Wollstonecraft's hoped-for 'revolution in female manners' (p. 117).

Unlike the majority of Wales-related novels, which end with weddings, Barker follows her characters through the early years of their marriages. Like Wollstonecraft, she considers the long term effects of the different types of female education described throughout her text. In doing so, she adapts the conventions of her genre and it is in her third volume especially that the radical, rather than the comic, potential of Wales comes into clear focus. Bradbury's suggestion that

Barker 'betrays her readers' in the third volume of *A Welsh Story* by shifting from the frequently witty commentary on education and its effects which characterises volumes one and two to a miscellaneous collection of didactic essays is not wholly misplaced.³⁷ The final volume is less cohesive and less engaging but it seems to me to represent the conclusion of Barker's reformist project as she dramatizes the attitudes to marriage and motherhood produced in women who from youth, in the case of the Llewellyns, or from early adulthood, in the case of Lady Cecilia, have internalised and acted upon principles of reason, sincerity and an appreciation of the 'indispensable duty of a mother' (*WS*, III, 231). In Barker's fictional Glamorgan, as in Wollstonecraft's 'ideal British state, well-educated women, possessing both well-developed reason and feeling, marry good husbands who help them fulfil their duties as "affectionate wives and mothers"',³⁸ aware that 'by reforming themselves' they might 'reform the world' (*VRW*, 117) through their shaping of the next generation.

With Charlotte still in India, the third volume begins six years on from the end of the second with a focus on Lady Cecilia, who is the wife of Sir Henry Llewellyn and whose metamorphosis 'from a fine young lady to a rational being' is demonstrated in her commitment to her five children. Much of the first part of this volume consists of extracts from Charlotte's diary and letters exchanged between the sisters-in-law. '[I] begin to find,' Lady Cecilia writes,

that all the pleasures of the world are nothing compared to the love and society of such a husband and such children as I am blessed with. [...] [For their] sakes I am striving to correct every error which I discover in myself, that I may be capable of assisting their father, from whom I derive all the knowledge I possess, to lead them into the path of wisdom and rectitude. (*WS*, III, 2, 54, 56)

Euphemia, happily married to Lord Margam after Captain Wilson's death in a duel, is relegated to the supporting cast in this volume although we are told that she is also 'the joyful mother of children'. Able 'to enjoy domestic pleasures [and] rejoice in the happiness she experienced' she looks 'with complacency on that hour when the pleasures or the pains of this world would be alike unimportant' (III, 6). The rewards of the next life are here made apparent in Barker's text just as they are in Wollstonecraft's.

In India, Charlotte meets and marries the governor of Bombay, a man who possesses 'uniformity of conduct' and 'rectitude of judgement'; in being 'arrived at a period when his character and wisdom is ascertained [...] the object of his choice is that of his constant affection' (III, 61–62, 64). In this description, presented in the context of the happiness to be found in marriage to a man older than herself, Charlotte's desire that her husband be obedient to reason is shown to be satisfied and she too turns her attentions to raising a large family. As the *Vindication* develops, Wollstonecraft increasingly 'privileges the educational duties of the mother to demonstrate female rationality' and to argue for improved education for young women.³⁹ The 'first duty' of women, she writes, 'is to themselves as rational creatures, and the next, in point of importance, as citizens, is that [...] of

a mother [...] it would be as wise to expect corn from tares, or figs from thistles, as that a foolish ignorant woman should be a good mother' (pp. 235, 290). Charlotte's sentiments and vocabulary continue to echo Wollstonecraft's as she writes to Lady Cecilia of her belief that

'As mothers, our endeavours to preserve our own happiness, become not only rational, but obligatory, as including that of our children. [...] How people of sense can deny the utility of women acquiring knowledge, I know not, for I perceive that it requires the most profound degree to be either a good wife or a good mother.' (*WS*, III, 70, 80)

Tomaselli argues that for Wollstonecraft, 'the family was [...] the means to social and individual redemption [...] it made or broke public-spiritedness (or, conversely, selfishness)'.⁴⁰ This mode of thinking is evident in Barker's conception of an ideal community but to drive her point home, she includes a portrait of the marriage of a selfish (and childless) woman. In the second volume of *A Welsh Story*, Miss Gunnings serves as the vehicle for Barker's rejection of Rousseau's prescriptions for female cunning and deceit in the management of men. The depiction of her marriage to Mr Greville bears distinct resemblances to Wollstonecraft's characterisation of a union between a man and the type of woman produced by Rousseau's teachings: 'The man who can be contented to live with a pretty, useful companion, without a mind, has [...] never felt the calm satisfaction, that refreshes the parched heart, like the silent dew of heaven,—of being beloved by one who could understand him.' (*VRW*, 171) When the third volume begins, Mr Greville is 'in that state of hopeless misery' brought about when a man finds 'himself deceived in the object to whom he is irrevocably united, and all his projected schemes of happiness totally defeated' (*WS*, III, 148–49). While the Llewellyns and Lady Cecilia are content to remain in Wales, far from metropolitan life, Mrs Greville demands to go to London. There, she spends increasing amounts of time with Lord Oakley before, predictably, becoming his mistress. Barker maintains that 'silence is the best comment' on this state of affairs, asserting that the 'knowledge of the wise and the good' (III, 161) will allow them to judge appropriately of Mr Greville's feelings and his wife's actions. Barker's readers, familiar with both Rousseau and Wollstonecraft, would easily trace in Mrs Greville the development from a young woman who had 'only been taught to please' to a wife who finds 'that her charms [...] cannot have much effect on her husband's heart when they are seen every day.' Will such a woman, Wollstonecraft asks, be able 'to look into herself for comfort, and to cultivate her dormant faculties? or, is it not more rational to expect that she will try to please other men; and [...] endeavour to forget the mortification her love or pride has received?' (*VRW*, 96–97) Although not made explicit, Barker's answer is clear.

The secluded location of *A Welsh Story* is significant throughout the narrative as Barker consistently juxtaposes the corrupt 'great world' against her rural, potentially transformative retreat. As her novel reaches its conclusion, the distance of her main characters from London becomes crucial. Barker regularly reminds her readers of their rejection of metropolitan pleasures and society: 'No pleasures

to be found there could increase the happiness of the brotherhood at Glendarran, nor had their wives any inclination to exchange the delight and satisfaction which their daily employments and society afforded, for entertainments which they knew to be vain and fatiguing.' (III, 230) Barker is not idealistic enough to suggest that the country is immune to the spread of metropolitan values but by the close of the novel she has begun to construct a community guided by the notion with which Wollstonecraft refreshed her 'fatigued' imagination, namely 'that society will some time or other be so constituted, that man must necessarily fulfil the duties of a citizen, and that [...] his wife, also an active citizen, should be equally intent to manage her family, educate her children, and assist her neighbours.' (*VRW*, 236) The Llewellyns, the Margams and the Leslies live in such a way as 'they imagined they could be most useful to the state':

In their own improvement, in the education of their children, and in studying to promote the welfare of all around them, they found constant as well as pleasing employment; and were firmly convinced that the purest earthly bliss consists in the consciousness of an active performance of social duties, and a diligent cultivation of domestic happiness. (*WS*, III, 233–34)

In her focus on female education and its effects, Barker makes clear that the ability of both men and women to be guided by reason is crucial to the achievement of the goals that she shares with Wollstonecraft. Mitzi Myers states that '[t]o argue for women as rational beings—educable, self-disciplined, self-dependent—is, in historical context, something of a radical claim.'⁴¹ Barker makes exactly this claim in her Wales-related fiction. In *A Welsh Story*, she demonstrates that men and women may resist the artificial and licentious manners spreading throughout Britain and portrays a model of an alternative, 'newly constituted' society, based on a Wollstonecraftian 'REVOLUTION in female manners' (*VRW*, 292) and education, as being within reach. 

NOTES

1. Jane Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 35. I am grateful to Rebecca Davies for her feedback on an early draft of this piece and to Chawton House Library for granting me a fellowship and introducing me to Mary Barker.
2. Andrew Davies, "'The Reputed Nation of Inspiration': Representations of Wales in Fiction from the Romantic Period, 1780–1829" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, 2001), p. 12.
3. Moira Dearnley, *Distant Fields: Eighteenth-Century Fictions of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p. xiv.
4. W. A. Speck, *Robert Southey: Entire Man of Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 85. See also Lynda Pratt, Tim Fulford and Ian Packer (eds), *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey* (2009–), in *Romantic Circles* <www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters>.
5. David Bradbury's *Senhora Small Fry: Mary Barker and the Lake Poets* (Whitehaven: Past Presented, 2003) is the only work to focus solely on Barker. Kathleen Jones, *A*

- Passionate Sisterhood: The Sisters, Wives and Daughters of the Lake Poets* (London: Virago, 1998), pp. 216–17.
6. Bradbury, *Senhora Small Fry*, p. 52.
 7. David Bradbury, *Senhora Small Fry (Extras & Updates)* <www.pastpresented.ukart.com/barkerextra.htm> [accessed 4 November 2014].
 8. As far as I am aware, the novel was not reviewed and it has received little critical attention since. See Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales*, pp. 47, 61; Bradbury, *Senhora Small Fry*, pp. 4–5; Andrew Davies, 'Reputed Nation of Inspiration', pp. 82, 120–21; Jan Fergus, 'The Professional Woman Writer', in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), p. 7.
 9. Bradbury, *Senhora Small Fry*, p. 4.
 10. Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. xxiii.
 11. Anne K. Mellor, 'Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and the Women Writers of her Day', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. by Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p. 141.
 12. Roxanne Eberle, *Chastity and Transgression in Women's Writing, 1792–1897: Interrupting the Harlot's Progress* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 57–58.
 13. Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain 1750–1835* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), p. 83. See also Tara Ghoshal Wallace, 'Rewriting Radicalism: Wollstonecraft in Burney's *Wanderer*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 24.3 (Spring 2012), 488.
 14. Eileen Hunt Botting, 'Wollstonecraft in Europe, 1792–1904: A Revisionist Reception History', *History of European Ideas*, 39 (2013), 502–27 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2012.725668>>; 'Making an American Feminist Icon: Mary Wollstonecraft's Reception in US Newspapers, 1800–1869', *History of Political Thought*, 34 (2013), 273–95; Isabelle Bour, 'A New Wollstonecraft: The Reception of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and of *The Wrongs of Woman* in Revolutionary France', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36 (2013), 575–87 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/1754-0208.122020>>. On the translation of Wollstonecraft's work into French and her afterlife in Europe see Laura Kirkley, 'Maria, ou le malheur d'être femme: Translating Mary Wollstonecraft in Revolutionary France', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38 (2014), 239–55 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/1754-0208.12206>>.
 15. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), pp. 74. Further references will appear parenthetically in the text with the abbreviation *V/RW* where necessary.
 16. Sylvana Tomaselli, 'The Most Public Sphere of All: The Family', in *Women, Writing, and the Public Sphere: 1700–1830*, ed. by Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Clíona Ó Gallchoir and Penny Warburton (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p. 239.
 17. Carolyn Franklin, 'The Novel of Sensibility in the 1780s', in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English, Volume 2: 1750–1820*, ed. by Peter Garside and Karen O'Brien (Oxford: OUP, 2015), p. 171.
 18. Mary Barker, *A Welsh Story*, 3 vols (London: Hookham and Carpenter, 1798), 1, 25–28, 212. Further references will appear parenthetically in the text with the abbreviation *WS* where necessary.
 19. Andrew Davies, 'Reputed Nation of Inspiration', p. 121.
 20. *Ibid.*

21. Jane Aaron, 'A National Seduction: Wales in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing', *New Welsh Review*, 27 (Winter 1994), 31–38; Franklin, 'Novel of Sensibility', pp. 169–70; Janet Sorenson, 'The Novel, the British Nation, and Britain's Four Kingdoms', in *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, ed. by Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), pp. 163–79.
22. Tomaselli, 'Most Public Sphere of All', p. 244.
23. *The Correspondence of Iolo Morganwg Volume II: 1797–1809*, ed. by Geraint H. Jenkins, Ffion Mair Jones and David Ceri Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), pp. 45–6. I am grateful to Mary-Ann Constantine for bringing this letter to my attention.
24. Iolo Morganwg, *Poems, Lyric and Pastoral*, 2 vols (London: Nichols, 1794), I, xxii; *Correspondence of Iolo Morganwg*, p. 46.
25. *Correspondence of Iolo Morganwg*, pp. 51, 56. The use of 'thee and thou' is common to both Wollstonecraft and Barker.
26. Quoted in R. M. Janes, 'On the Reception of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 39 (1978), 294 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2708781>>.
27. Eberle, *Chastity and Transgression*, p. 27.
28. Rebecca Davies, *Written Maternal Authority and Eighteenth-Century Education in Britain: Educating by the Book* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 73. See also Mitzi Myers, 'Pedagogy as Self-Expression in Mary Wollstonecraft: Exorcising the Past, Finding a Voice', in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. by Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1988), pp. 192–210.
29. Eberle, *Chastity and Transgression*, p. 22.
30. Tomaselli, 'Most Public Sphere of All', p. 244.
31. Mary Catherine Moran considers Wollstonecraft's use of the term 'nature' in 'Between the Savage and the Civil: Dr John Gregory's Natural History of Femininity', in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, ed. by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 10–12.
32. As Wollstonecraft points out, the education and demeanour of soldiers may be compared to those of fashionably educated young ladies.
33. Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), pp. 73, 85–86.
34. Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, p. 87.
35. Barker, *Welsh Story*, II, 23–25; Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, pp. 260, 264.
36. Gregory quoted in Moran, 'Between the Savage and the Civil', p. 11.
37. Bradbury, *Senhora Small Fry*, p. 4.
38. Eberle, *Chastity and Transgression*, p. 28.
39. Rebecca Davies, *Written Maternal Authority*, p. 64; Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 243.
40. Tomaselli, 'Most Public Sphere of All', pp. 249, 254.
41. Myers, 'Pedagogy as Self-Expression', p. 197.

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