

Constantine Barber

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Constantine Barber was born in 1713 in Dublin and died in 1783. He was the eldest son of the poet Mary Barber and the somewhat absent Jonathan Barber. Mary took care of the family and was able to support her children Constantine, Rupert, Myra, and Lucius financially through composing poetry.

Constantine Barber was not a renowned poet in the eighteenth century, unlike his mother. He focused on an academic career and became a physician and professor. For this reason, there is a lack of critical study of Barber's work. The five poems he published all come from his mother's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1736): "A Letter Sent to Mrs. Barber, at Tunbridge-Wells," "To Mrs. Frances-Arabella Kelly, with a Present of Fruit," "Verses Ty'd about a Fawn's Neck, which was Presented to a Very Young Lady, Call'd by her Friends the Ivory Maid," "To Mrs. Barber. New-Year's-Day, 1733," and the poem below, "To the Right Honourable the Lady Elizabeth Boyle, Daughter to the Right Honourable John Earl of Orrery, on her Birth-Day, May 7, 1733."

This is in iambic pentameter heroic couplets and dedicates itself to the two-year-old Elizabeth Boyle on her birthday. At the time of the poem, Henrietta Boyle, the Countess of Orrery, had passed away almost a year before, and the Earl would still be grieving the death of his wife. Barber's speaker wishes for the child to mature like her mother, find an eligible gentleman in time, and have a longer marriage than her parents. Barber's mother Mary Barber dedicated the book in which this poem is published to John Boyle, Earl of Orrery, so it is appropriate for her son to offer Boyle indirect praise through a poem to his baby daughter.

Further Reading

Tucker, Bernard. "Our Chief Poetess: Mary Barber and Swift's Circle." *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1993, pp. 31–34.

To the Right Honourable the Lady Elizabeth Boyle,
 Daughter to the Right Honourable John Earl of
 Orrery, on her Birth-Day, May 7, 1733²⁸⁴

May each new Year some new Perfection give,²⁸⁵
 Till all the Mother in the Daughter²⁸⁶ live!
 May'st Thou her Virtues to the World restore!
 And be what Henrietta²⁸⁷ was before!
 And when revolving Years²⁸⁸ mature thy Charms,²⁸⁹ 5
 When Pride of Conquest²⁹⁰ thy fair Bosom warms,
 May some great Youth,²⁹¹ for ev'ry Grace renown'd,⁹
 With Taste and Science¹⁰ bless'd, by Virtue crown'd;
 By Virtue guarded from Ambition's Wiles,¹¹
 Superior both to Fortune's Frowns and Smiles;¹² 10
 Who wears the Honours of a glorious Name,
 Yet to Distinction bears a nobler Claim;

²⁸⁴ Mary Barber, *Poems on Several Occasions*, C. Rivington, 1734, pp. 250–251; *Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive*

²⁸⁵ *May each new Year some new Perfection give* may you increase in merit and virtue every year as you mature

²⁸⁶ *Mother in the Daughter* embodying the virtues of the mother

²⁸⁷ *Henrietta* Countess of Orrery, mother of Lady Elizabeth Boyle and first wife of John Boyle, 5th Earl of Cork and Orrery, died in 1732

²⁸⁸ *revolving Years* cycling seasons

²⁸⁹ *Charms* attractive traits

²⁹⁰ *Pride of Conquest* feeling proud of having young men in love with you

²⁹¹ *Youth* a young man

⁹ *Grace renown'd* known to be graceful/talented in every aspect of upper-class life

¹⁰ *Taste and Science* someone with good taste in the arts and possessing great knowledge in many fields

¹¹ *Ambition's Wiles* the temptation to gain achievement through dishonest means

¹² *Superior both to Fortune's Frowns and Smiles* being unchanged by both failure and success

Like a new Star, in native Lustre bright,¹³
That boasts no Radiance from reflected Light:¹⁴ 15
Allow'd²⁹² the rising Genius of his Age;
By ev'ry Excellence thy Heart engage;¹⁶
Like Him¹⁷ who bless'd thy Mother's Nuptial State;¹⁸
But O! may Heav'n give Thine a longer Date.¹⁹

¹³ *Like a new Star, in native Lustre bright* well-known to everyone

¹⁴ *That boasts no Radiance from reflected Light* not dependent on someone else for reputation

²⁹² *Allow'd* acknowledged, declared, and praised as one of the most intelligent people of his time

¹⁶ *By ev'ry Excellence thy Heart engage* win your love through his superior character

¹⁷ *Him* John Boyle (1707-1762), 5th Earl of Cork and Orrery

¹⁸ *Nuptial State* marriage

¹⁹ *Longer Date* a wish that Elizabeth's marriage will not be cut off by death as her mother's was



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