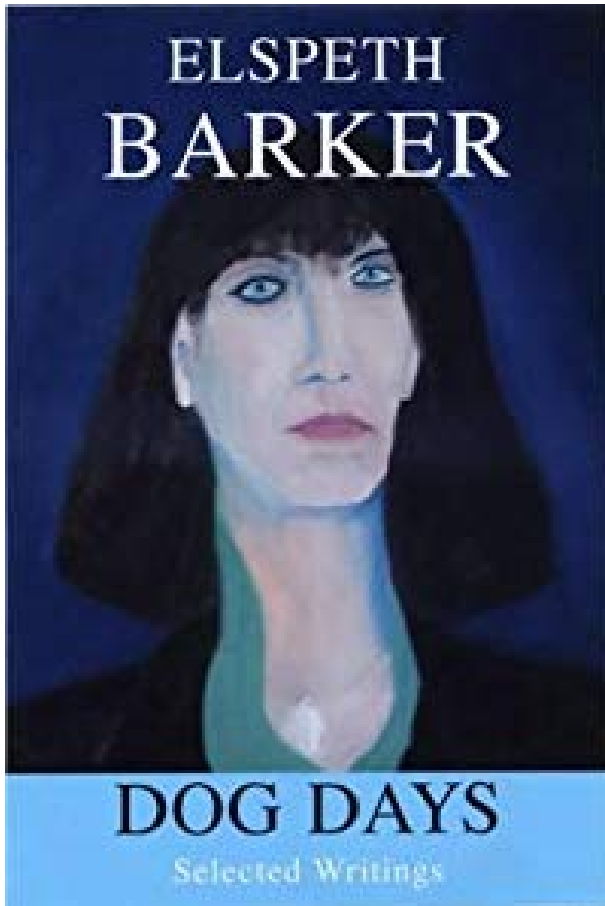


Dog Days: Selected Writings



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Since the publication of her acclaimed novel, *O Caledonia* (1991), Elspeth Barker's witty essays and incisive reviews have appeared regularly in the national press. *Dog Days*, a generous selection from these fugitive pieces, is literary journalism at its most engaging. *Moving On* traces Barker's life from her Scottish roots to Norfolk, her time with the poet George Barker and the profound sense of loss following his death in 1991. Her review of 'By Heart', the life of Barker's former lover Elizabeth Smart, and of other figures from '50s bohemia and '60s counter culture, rub shoulders with those of Jane Austen, Fanny Burney, R L Stevenson, Evelyn Waugh, Angus Wilson, Roald Dahl, Frances Partridge, John Betjeman, Edith Sitwell and others. Barker's 'Thoughts in a Garden', hilarious and moving by turn, read like dispatches from the front line. Not for her the Farrow & Ball-tinted view of country living but the vagaries of raising a large family and assorted pets in a damp and draughty farmhouse. From the litany of disasters silence descends as fur and feather are laid to rest along the margins of Barker's riverine garden leaving their mistress to contemplate 'a newt curved over a nasturtium leaf, its hands delicately splayed, its eyes reflecting the heavenly spheres' in the company of Keats. Rounded out with introductions to East Anglian writers and painters and with reviews of the work of her contemporaries – Angela Carter, A S Byatt, Beryl Bainbridge, Toni Morrison, and William Trevor among others – *Dog Days* is a wonderful anthology for anyone who loves the art of literature.