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**Comparative Analysis of the Evolution of Feminist Poetry on Anna Laetitia Barbauld's The Rights of Women and Warsan Shire's For Women Who Are Difficult to Love**

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**Abstract:**

The astonishing transformation of feminism, as shown in *Anna Laetitia Barbauld's* and *Warsan Shire's* poetry, is the subject of this article. This research compares and contrasts two eras of poetry: the Romantic and French Revolution era's *The Rights of Women* and the modern period's *For Women Who Are Difficult to Love*, focusing on their shared and unique characteristics. This is an attempt to discuss the ideas and views of feminist poets from the past and present using *Anna Laetitia Barbauld's* and *Warsan Shire's* works as examples. In addition, this article aims to show how cultural standards and customs have affected women writers. Both poems serve as reminders of the writers' encouragement to the suffocated women of their day. Compared to the authors' ancient ideas, realities, and imaginations, how the current world is portrayed in literature has transformed the world. Feminist approaches to writing in the past and the present, as they pertain to women's literary works, are the primary focus of this paper.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Transformation.

**Introduction**

To see the world via the feminist lens is to do so from the vantage point of women themselves. The idea of patriarchy, a male-dominated system that utilizes social, political, and economic institutions to subjugate women, serves as its focal point. Source: Osborne (2001)

Although the word "feminism" did not appear in literary circles until the late 1800s, female authors impacted writing from the beginning. For the downtrodden, many ancient women authors' works shine a hopeful light. Feminist writing has

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emerged as a new genre in recent decades, yet women's emancipation from patriarchal societal norms and the pursuit of personal freedom have not diminished. There is a significant difference in how the poets portray patriarchy in their works, *The Rights of Women* and *For Women Who Are Difficult to Love*, even though both poets have used poetry to describe their society and concentrated on the patriarchal ideas of male chauvinist sections. This study analyzes the methods used by these authors to inspire underrepresented groups, historically and in the present day, by highlighting how their approaches vary.

"As the nineteenth century progressed, a class-based ideal of gentility and refinement seemed to become more restricted, and this may have contributed to the growing number of women who publicly asserted their rights. (Walters, Margaret, 2005).

The classical era's social and economic conditions further disenfranchised women by stripping them of their liberal rights and instituting a life of servitude in a society governed by males. There was a severe lack of respect for women and societal expectations that they stay at home and care for the children. There were a few female writers from the classical era, but their work was seldom acknowledged for championing oppressed people's rights. The contributions and reception of literary works have dramatically shifted in the modern world. Consequently, feminist literature saw a shift in focus, and the general public's perception of women's rights improved significantly. Poets demonstrate in their works how they portray the need for gender equality in two distinct ways: in *The Rights of Women* and *For Women Who Are Difficult to Love*. Both poems aim to inspire women in their societies.

Looking at the romantic canon authors, we see that most of them centered their work on four main themes: imagination, nature, religion, and romance. While Anna Laetitia Barbauld was a Romantic-era writer, she cared deeply about women's rights. She fought for better social, political, and economic opportunities for women through the more significant insights she offered in her works. The poet encourages the ladies in her community to break free from domestic constraints and stand firm in adversity. Meanwhile, British author Warsan Shire encourages the ladies of her community to embrace their individuality.

"Despite her prolific output across numerous genres, Barbauld's output as a poet was minimal; most of her poetry was left unpublished until her untimely demise."As Susan Rosenbaum said in 2001, Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Warsan Shire's writings have been identified by scholars as significant works that advocate for society's oppressed and marginalized groups. Despite Anna Laetitia Barbauld's considerable contributions to Romantic-era writing, scholars note that her poetry was not published until after her death. This exemplifies the unique challenges that a female writer encountered in the early romantic era's male-chauvinist culture.

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One such modern poet, Warsan Shire, who is sometimes lumped into the category of internet poets, also fights for women's rights in her community. Her poems, written modernly, encourage women to take an active role in society rather than sit on their hands. By presenting women in a positive light, far from the stereotypes, the poet hopes to arouse the interest of her female readers.

To compare and contrast the historical and modern representations of feminism, this article draws parallels between two poems by Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Warsan Shire: *The Rights of Women* and *For Women Who Are Difficult to Love*. There is a wealth of literature, artifacts, and articles about feminist writers and feminist movements. The field of feminism has been given a lot of attention recently. Still, there is a lot of unexplored territory when it comes to studying how poets from different eras depict women. The amount of change that has occurred in literature, particularly in the genre of women's works, may be better understood, as can the culture of the society at the time, the ideas and aspirations of women, and the specific historical period in question.

### Discussion

Because her fight for justice made so little headway, *Barbauld's* life's work ended on a rather depressing note. Without the joy of seeing her work pay off, she continued empowering women intellectually via her writing and made friends with and assisted several bright young women. (S.nd., Carlile)

Her gender and religion made her an even more inadmissible citizen. In her early published works, such as *Guardian* (2009), she naturally opposed injustice.

Among the great poets of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Anna Laetitia Barbauld frequently has her works overlooked by critics of the modern day. One recurring theme in her writings was the search for individual liberty. After reading Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Anna Laetitia Barbauld felt compelled to react to the author's call for women's emancipation from oppression. *The Rights of Women* was born out of her reaction to this.

Poet Anna Laetitia Barbauld consistently subverted gender norms in her poetry by imbuing traditionally male-dominated creative genres with feminine perspectives. Very few of her writings were well-received in the early 19th century, even though she used them to advocate for women's rights and equality. Having been born into a culture that treated women like property rather than people, Anna Laetitia Barbauld never had the chance to pursue her passions or realize her full potential. In the second part, after her death, the world embraced all of her poetry, and she became known as the lady of letters. She proved in all her writings that women could achieve the same social and political success as men. Although she was primarily unrecognized for her papers advocating gender equality throughout her career, she

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made significant contributions to children's literature. She was well-recognized for her works in this genre. It wasn't until after her death that the poet's works advocating for women's rights were finally acknowledged since they had been unfairly neglected during her literary career.

There were many significant shifts in how people saw women over the twentieth century. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, women had achieved equality with males, which had been lacking for decades. (Germling,2004)

On the other hand, modern British writer and poet Warsan Shire has universal acclaim for her groundbreaking work and the strength it gives to women everywhere. She was a Somali-born British writer who came from Kenya. Her writings defended the rights of Black women and women everywhere, especially those who lived on the margins of society. The degree to which society accepted female authors and their ideas throughout their lifetimes is one of the critical distinctions between historical and contemporary feminism.

Researchers note that society's acceptance of modern feminist works was higher than in the past owing to a sea shift in women's appearance. Because women have achieved more equality with men in this century than in previous decades, it is fair to state that Warsan Shire's works for women are more well-recognized and appreciated by the literary community and society than those of Anna Laetitia Barbauld.

The Rights of Woman, a poem by Anna Laetitia Barbauld, encourages women to stand out against male authority. The poem primarily addresses political concerns and challenges the dominance of males in society. The fundamental idea of the poem is that oppressed women should get up off the ground and start making their voices heard. Reminding her audience to keep going even when things become challenging, Anna Laetitia Barbauld calls on women to reclaim their rightful place in a patriarchal society. Send Man, who is so proud of his authority, packing and kissing the golden scepter that is this.

Despite social rejection, Anna Laetitia Barbauld's poetry uses forceful language. In her poem, the poet encourages the women of her culture to stand up and warn males that the time for them to submit to women and their authority has ended. The poet has done an excellent job, with very few words, of composing a poem that conveys both narrow and broad ideas.

An essential aspect of Anna Laetitia Barbauld's poem is that the poet is attempting to encourage women to stand firm, reclaim their power in a male-dominated society, and keep hope alive despite the hardships they face. The poet assures her female audience that they are not social outcasts and gives them reason to be hopeful.

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In the future, through the ages, we can also see how ideas and ideologies transform literature. Instead of urging women to seize control and establish their empires, Warsan Shire encourages them in her poem "For Women Who Are Difficult to Love" to embrace their individuality and beauty rather than conform to societal expectations of femininity to win men's approval.

In contrast to Anna Laetitia Barbauld, who is concerned with women's liberation in her society, Warsan Shire encourages her readers to value themselves and their abilities while acknowledging the limitations imposed by societal norms and expectations placed on them by women.

In her poem "For Women Who Are Difficult to Love," Warsan Shire depicts the emotional weakness and self-sacrifice that women experience when it comes to love. "Imagine yourself as an untamed horse racing alone while he tries to rein you in, all the while comparing you to an insurmountable road, a house on fire, and telling yourself that he'll never be able to leave you because you're blinding him." [Warsan Shire, 1-6]

The poem by Warsan Shire is more than just a call to action for women; it also depicts how males throughout history have attempted to control women by using deceptive language and, ultimately, by eradicating their inherent individuality. "Someone should have warned you that you can't build houses out of people, so go ahead and let him go. You're weird, beautiful, and terrifying—something not everyone understands how to love." As stated in Warsan Shire (29–35), Throughout her poetry, Warsan Shire encourages female readers to remember their power and individuality while raising awareness about the dangers of falling for men's manipulations.

### Conclusion

Women of their day found inspiration and encouragement in the works of poets like Warsan Shire and Anna Laetitia Barbauld, who used poetry to express and share their feminist ideals. While it's true that both poets have made feminist thought a central feature of their work, the beliefs they reflect in their feminist poetry from the past and the present are quite different. This article mostly ignored parallels between feminist poetry of the past and now in favor of analyzing the changes that have taken place in the genre. This study examined the several literary epochs in which feminist works evolved in response to shifting patriarchal views of women and to changes in feminist ideology, social mores, and gender roles.

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