



# Anna Letitia Barbauld and Eighteenth-Century Visionary Poetics

*Daniel P. Watkins*

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In this first critical study of Anna Letitia Barbauld's major work, Daniel P. Watkins reveals the singular purpose of Barbauld's visionary poems: to recreate the world based on the values of liberty and justice.

Watkins examines in close detail both the form and content of Barbauld's *Poems*, originally published in 1773 and revised and reissued in 1792. Along with careful readings of the poems that situate the works in their broader political, historical, and philosophical contexts, Watkins explores the relevance of the introductory epigraphs and the importance of the poems' placement throughout the volume.

Centering his study on Barbauld's effort to develop a visionary poetic stance, Watkins argues that the deliberate arrangement of the poems creates a coherent portrayal of Barbauld's poetic, political, and social vision, a far-sighted sagacity born of her deep belief that the principles of love, sympathy, liberty, and pacifism are necessary for a secure and meaningful human reality. In tracing the contours of this effort, Watkins examines, in particular, the tension in Barbauld's poetry between her desire to engage directly with the political realities of the world and her equally strong longing for a pastoral world of peace and prosperity.

Scholars of British literature and women writers will welcome this important study of one of the eighteenth century's foremost writers.

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