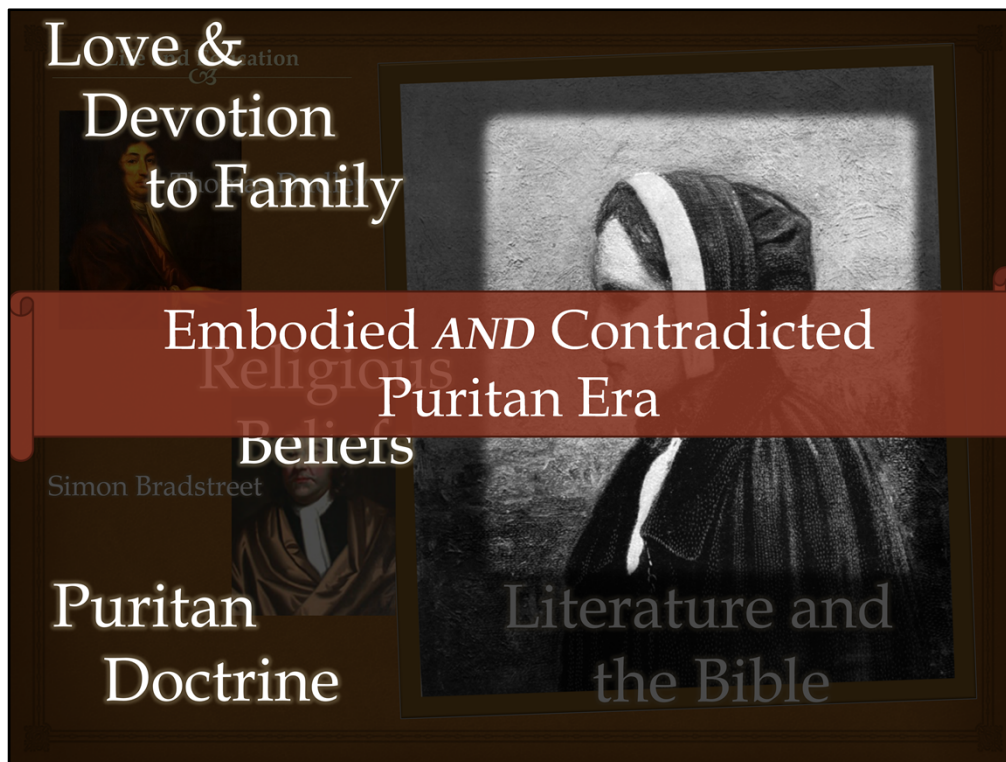


Module 3: The Influence of Faith on Colonial American Literature
Topic 5 Content: Anne Bradstreet Presentation Notes

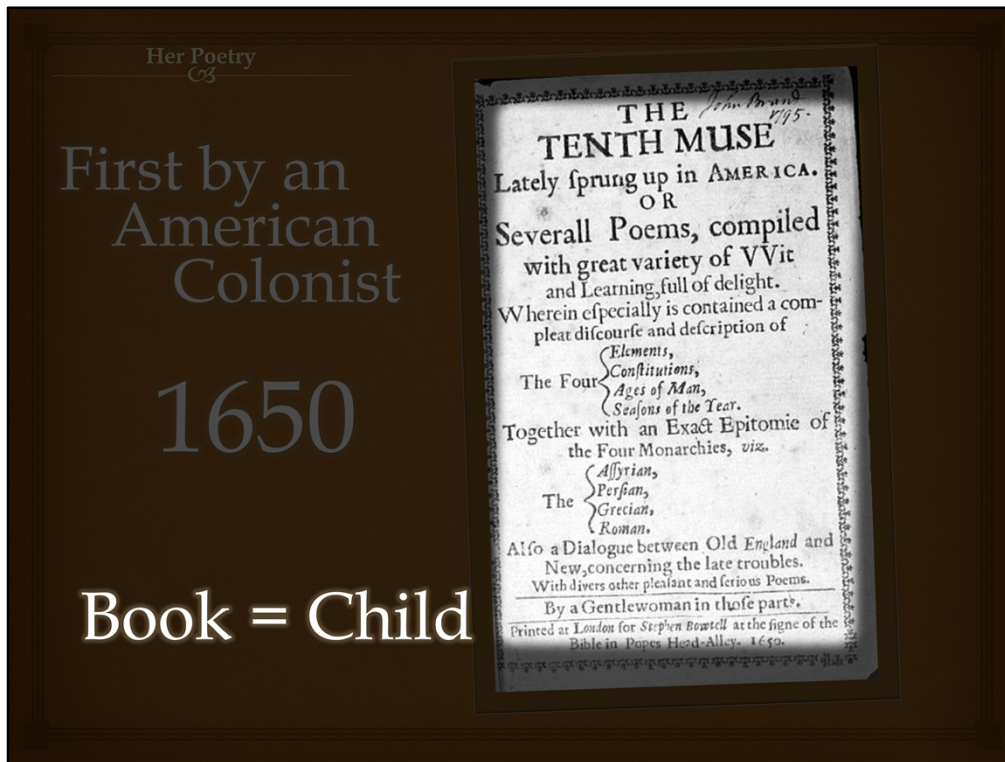


Anne Bradstreet
Figurative language, imagery, and sound



Anne Bradstreet was the daughter of Thomas Dudley, who managed the Earl of Lincoln's estate. Her education was uncommon to most seventeenth-century girls, not only because she had access to the Earl's library, but also because her father and a series of tutors schooled her in literature and the Bible. Her father encouraged her to write throughout her life.

After Anne married Simon Bradstreet in sixteen twenty-eight, she followed him to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, where he later became governor. His duties required him to travel often, leaving his wife alone. Bradstreet wrote poetry about the human existence, the four elements, and the seasons. The poems that examine domestic concerns of family, home, and faith are the most widely read today. She wrote a lot about her love and devotion to her family. She also showed her struggle with questions about her religious beliefs and with the Puritan doctrine. Because she both embodied and contradicted the Puritan era, she continues to be read as an important part of the American literary tradition.



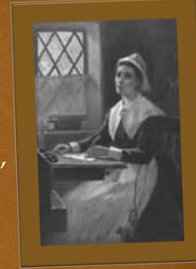
The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America was the first published collection of poetry written by an American colonist, but Bradstreet did not originally intend for the work to be published. Her brother-in-law took a copy of her work to London, where he arranged for its publication in sixteen fifty without her knowledge.

In the poem “The Author to Her Book,” Bradstreet expresses mixed feelings about the publication of the book, which she compares to a child.

"The Author to Her Book"

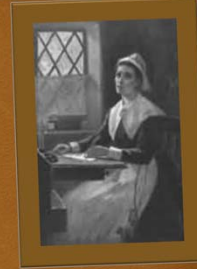


Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,
Who after birth did'st by my side remain,
Till snatcht from thence by friends, less wise than true,
Who thee abroad exposed to public view,
Made thee in rags, halting to th' press to trudge,
Where errors were not lessened (all may judge).
At thy return my blushing was not small,
My rambling brat (in print) should mother call.
I cast thee by as one unfit for light,
The visage was so irksome in my sight,
Yet being mine own, at length affection would
Thy blemishes amend, if so I could.
I washed thy face, but more defects I saw,
And rubbing off a spot, still made a flaw.
I stretcht thy joints to make thee even feet,
Yet still thou run'st more hobbling than is meet.



Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,
Who after birth did'st [didst] by my side remain,
Till snatcht [snachd] from thence by friends, less wise than true,
Who thee abroad exposed to public view,
Made thee in rags, halting to th' [th] press to trudge,
Where errors were not lessened (all may judge).
At thy return my blushing was not small,
My rambling brat (in print) should mother call.
I cast thee by as one unfit for light,
The visage [vis-ij] was so irksome [urk-suhm] in my sight,
Yet being mine own, at length affection would
Thy blemishes amend, if so I could.
I washed thy face, but more defects I saw,
And rubbing off a spot, still made a flaw.
I stretcht [stretchd] thy joints to make thee even feet,
Yet still thou run'st [ruhnst] more hobbling than is meet.

"The Author to Her Book"



In better dress to trim thee was my mind,
But nought save home-spun cloth, i' th' house I find.
In this array, 'mongst vulgars may'st thou roam.
In critic's hands, beware thou dost not come,
And take thy way where yet thou art not known.
If for thy father askt, say, thou hadst none;
And for thy mother, she alas is poor,
Which caused her thus to send thee out of door.

-- Anne Bradstreet

In better dress to trim thee was my mind,
But nought [nawt] save home-spun cloth, i' [ih] th' [th] house I find.
In this array, 'mongst [muhngst] vulgars [**vuhl**-gerz] may'st [meyst] thou roam.
In critic's hands, beware thou dost [duhst] not come,
And take thy way where yet thou art not known.
If for thy father askt [askt], say, thou hadst [hadst] none;
And for thy mother, she alas [**uh-las**] is poor,
Which caused her thus to send thee out of door.

Interpretation



Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,
Who after birth did'st by my side remain,
Till snatcht from thence by friends, less wise than true,
Who thee abroad exposed to public view,
Made thee in rags, halting to th' press to trudge,
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To analyze this poem, it may help to summarize it using color-coded sections. Note that although Bradstreet does not use stanzas in her poems, she does use periods. This means her poem is comprised of eight “sentences.” In the first sentence or section, she feels her poem was only an infant when it was snatched from her and dressed in rags. In the second sentence, she expresses her embarrassment of her rambling. In the third sentence, she admits that she hid her poems because, though she liked them, she felt they were marred [mahrd]. As she says in the fourth sentence, the more that she corrected them, the worse that they seemed. She continues in the fifth sentence to explain that the more she worked on the poems, the more childish they seemed.

Interpretation



In better dress to trim thee was my mind,
But nought save home-spun cloth, i' th' house I find.
In this array, 'mongst vulgars may'st thou roam.
In critic's hands, beware thou dost not come,
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-- Anne Bradstreet



She wanted the poems to be grand, she says in the sixth sentence, but she did not know how to make them that way. In the seventh sentence, she feels that the critics will rip the poems apart and everyone will see them. She closes by saying that the poems had only her as their “parent” and she feels like an ill-prepared creator.

Analysis
❧

- ❧ Purpose: Reaction to publication
- ❧ Title: Speaker is poet addressing poems
- ❧ Word choice: Frustrating, embarrassing, apologetic, critical
- ❧ Figurative Language:
 - ❧ Extended metaphor: Poem is a child
 - ❧ Imagery: “ill-formed offspring,” “rags,” “trudge,” “blushing”
 - ❧ Simile: “I cast thee by as one unfit for light”
 - ❧ Symbols: Depicts poem as child and she as the mother



The purpose of the poem was a reaction to her brother having her poems published. The title lets you know who the speaker is and what the poem is addressing. The speaker is the poet talking about her poems. The word choice she uses in describing her poems creates a frustrating, embarrassing, apologetic, and sometimes even critical tone.

She uses a variety of figurative language, including an extended metaphor [**met-uh-fawr**] with the poem being a child, which is also personification [**per-son-uh-fi-key-shuhn**]. She uses an abundance of imagery with word choices like “ill-formed offspring,” “rags,” “trudge,” and “blushing”. In line nine, she uses the simile [**sim-uh-lee**] “I cast thee by as one unfit for light,” expressing how she cast aside her poetry as someone might do a person he or she does not want to show in public. There are no traditional archetypal [**ahr-ki-tahy-puhl**] symbols, like a dove for peace or a heart for love. However, Bradstreet uses a lot of images that act as symbols to bring home the extended metaphor [**met-uh-fawr**] that the poem is a child and she is a mother who could only do so much in stretching “thy joints to make thee even feet,” in clothing it in home-spun linen, and in trying to amend its blemishes.

❧ Sound Devices

❧ Alliteration:

Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,
Till snatcht from thence by friends, less wise
than true,
At thy return my blushing was not small,

❧ Rhyming Couplets:

I cast thee by as one unfit for light,
The visage was so irksome in my sight,

❧ Assonance:

I stretch thy joints to make thee even feet



Writers or creators often feel frustrations over their work,
which they love, but never feel as quite ready to publish.

The following are a few examples of sound devices: Lines one, three, and seven use repeated alliteration [*uh-lit-uh-rey-shuhn*]; there are rhyming couplets [*kuhp-lits*] throughout the poem with the last words of two lines rhyming; and line fifteen is one of several examples of assonance [*as-uh-nuhns*]. These sound devices give a simple, steady flow to the poem.

This poem takes on a straight-forward theme in that writers or creators often feel frustrations over their work, which they love, but never feel quite ready to publish.