

An analysis on Annie Bradstreet's works

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I think the three distinctive themes in Anne Bradstreet's poetry are her personal experiences and emotions, the deep love for her family, as well as religious thoughts and beliefs. And sometimes we can see combinations of these themes altogether, for she frequently conveys her love through Biblical metaphors and legends, and she also explains her life events in a religiously spiritual way.

As for the first theme, experiences and feelings deprived from real life, her poem *Author to her book* describes the mixed feeling of shame and honor after seeing her works being viewed and judged by the public. Another poem, *Verses upon the Burning of our house*, is a artistic portray of her real experience. After witnessing the house of her family being burnt down by fire and losing almost all her belongings, she went through a contradictory feeling of sorrow, distress and self-blame, and eventually found God's redemption and bless in her misfortune. These poems strike me as being filled with complex, subtle yet extremely genuine feelings in response to the experiences happened in her real life. They are also greatly influenced by Puritan beliefs. In *Verses upon the Burning of our house*, Bradstreet holds the belief that the demolishing of her house was actually a salvation from God, which is a reflection of the Puritan beliefs deeply rooted in her mind. So she wrote verses like "Let

no man know is my Desire” that reveal her secret longing for redemptive events like this. In the last part of the poem, she depicts the picture of a house standing high above the clouds, which is built by God’s wealth and bless. Real life events, truthful feelings and religious beliefs are perfectly combined in this poem.

There are also plenty of direct depictions of religious experiences in her poems. In her work ***Contemplation***, she describes a special experience of appreciating the chorus of insects. Living closed to nature, this poem is not only a reflection of her real life, but also a hearty praise to God’s genius creation of delicate creatures in the natural world. ***By night when others soundly slept*** is another work of this theme. By describing her experience of staying up at night and talking to *God* from up above, Bradstreet directly expresses her love and gratitude to God. She thanks God for “*My smarting wounds washt in his blood, And banisht thence my Doubts and fears.* ” God eases her pain and gives her relief, and she’s going to “*serve him here whilst I shall live And Loue him to Eternity*”. She conveys her thankfulness to God in ***What God is like to him I serve*** as well.

Another important theme of her poems is her sincere love for her husband and father. In the poems ***To my dear and loving husband*** and ***A letter to her husband***, she expresses her deep love for her husband

through metaphors and legends from Bible. *"If ever two were one, then surely we"* embodies her belief in the Puritan legend that if a couple are deep in love, their body and soul will be united by one. And *"Then while we live, in love let's so persevere"* shows her belief that true love can last forever. She compares herself to sere land and her husband to sun that can warm the land up and give it vitality. These religious ways of conveying love is at the same time truthful and beautiful.

I think Bradstreet's works do unveil certain aspects of puritan social life in American colony. When making the colonists first land in America, they were united by a combination of religious belief and loyalty to their kings. These are the common themes of the colonists' spiritual life, and they are also striking characteristics in Bradstreet's poems.

With further background information on the political policies at that time in American colony, I think there's also another message conveyed by Bradstreet's poems. As we have analyzed above, her poems are actually direct illustrations of a Puritan woman's life. By adding the pieces together, we can get an idea of the exact elements that made up her life. But the poems also say something about the parts that her life does not consist, the things that she was missing on, which could also be regarded as a kind of regretful loss. We can see that women at that time does not have the right to participate in political events, nor do they have

the opportunity to have a job or pursue a career of their own. Compared with women of modern days, I think this is also an important feature of American society at that time.