

"The Prologue"

By Anne Bradstreet

*Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup
by Staff and Research Assistants at The University of Virginia*

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SEVERAL
POEMS

Compiled with great variety of Wit and
Learning, full of Delight;
Wherein especially is contained a compleat
Discourse, and Description of
The Four { ELEMENTS
CONSTITUTIONS,
AGES of Man,
SEASONS of the Year.
Together with an exact Epitome of
the three first *Monarchyes*
Viz, The { ASSYRIAN,
PERSIAN,
GRECIAN.

*And beginning of the Romane Common-wealth
to the end of their last King:*

With diverse other pleasant & serious *Poems* ,
By a Gentlewoman in *New-England* .
*The second Edition, Corrected by the Author,
and enlarged by an Addition of several other
Poems found amongst her Papers
after her Death.*

Boston , Printed by *John Foster* , 1678.

The Prologue

1.

TO sing of Wars, of Captains, and of Kings,
Of Cities founded, Common-wealths begun,
For my mean pen are too superiour things:
Or how they all, or each their dates have run
Let Poets and Historians set these forth,
My obscure Lines shall not so dim their worth.

2.

But when my wondring eyes and envious heart
Great Bartas sugar'd lines, do but read o're
Fool I do grudg the Muses did not part
'Twixt him and me that overfluent store,
A Bartas can, do what a Bartas will
But simple I according to my skill.

3.

From school-boyes tongue no rhet'rick we expect
Nor yet a sweet Consort from broken strings,
Nor perfect beauty, where's a main defect:
My foolish, broken blemish'd Muse so sings
And this to mend, alas, no Art is able,
'Cause nature, made it so irreparable.

4.

Nor can I, like that fluent sweet tongu'd Greek,
Who lisp'd at first, in future times speak plain
By Art he gladly found what he did seek

A full requital of his, striving pain

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Art can do much, but this maxime's most sure
A weak or wounded brain admits no cure.

5.

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who says my hand a needle better fits,
A Poets pen all scorn I should thus wrong,
For such despite they cast on Female wits:
If what I do prove well, it won't advance,
They'll say it's stoln, or else it was by chance.

6.

But sure the Antique Greeks were far more mild
Else of our Sexe, why feigned they those Nine
And poesy made, Calliop's own Child;
So 'mongst the rest they placed the Arts Divine.
But this weak knot, they will full soon untie,
The Greeks did nought, but play the fools & lye.

7.

Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are
Men have precedency and still excell,
It is but vain unjustly to wage warre;
Men can do best, and women know it well
Preheminence in all and each is yours;
Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours.

8.

And oh ye high flown quills that soar the Skies,
And ever with your prey still catch your praise,

If e're you daigne these lowly lines your eyes
Give Thyme or Parsley wreath I ask no bayes,
This mean and unrefined ure of mine
Will make you glistring gold, but more to shine: