

The Prologue

Prologue

Anne Bradstreet

To sing of Wars, of Captains, and of Kings,
Of Cities founded, Common-wealths begun,
For my mean pen are too superior 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.
But when my wond'ring eyes and envious heart
Great [Bartas](#) sugar'd lines do but read o'er
Fool I do grudge the [Muses](#) did not part
'Twixt him and me that over-fluent store.
A Bartas can do what a Bartas will
But simple I according to my skill.
From School-boy's tongue no rhet'ric we expect,
Nor yet a sweet [Consort](#) from broken strings,
Nor perfect beauty where's a main defect:
My foolish, broken, blemished Muse so sings
And this to mend, alas, no Art is able,
'Cause nature, made it so irreparable.
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.
Art can do much, but this maxim's most sure
A weak or wounded brain admits no cure.
I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who says my hand a needle better fits.
A Poet's 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 stol'n, or else it was by chance.
But sure the Antique Greeks were far more mild
Else of our Sex, why feigned they those Nine
And poesy made, [Calliope'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 and lie.
Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are.
Men have precedency and still excel,
It is but vain unjustly to wage war;
Men can do best, and women know it well
Preeminence in all and each is yours;
Yet grant some small acknowledgment of ours.
And oh ye high flown quills that soar the Skies,
And ever with your prey still catch your praise,
If e're you design these lowly lines your eyes
Give [Thyme or Parsley](#) wreath I ask no [Bays](#),
This mean and unrefined ore of mine
Will make your glist'ring gold, but more to shine.