

Analysis of anne bradstreet's poems

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ENGL2010 February 10, 2013 Analysis of Anne Bradstreet's Poems Anne Bradstreet's poem In Reference to Her Children, 23 June 1659 is a poem telling of her love, care, and worries for her children. "In Reference to her Children" is both metaphorical and symbolic, expressing everything from pathos to love and a hope for her eternal reward. (www. papermasters. com) The poem is structured with a single stanza with every other line rhyming. The speaker seems to be speaking to a semi- private audience given the intimacy of the poem, and the way it speaks to the children.

The tone of this poem is familiar, using the language in an abstract way by being birds; but the language is also concrete, and it is not hard to understand what this mother is trying to say. In lines 1-40, Bradstreet sets up an image of a mother bird and her nest filled with babies: four girls and four boys, representative of a human mother and her children. The speaker seems to be Bradstreet, speaking the poem first as a story about her children, as the tone changes near the end of the poem though it is clear she is writing the poem to her children.

The speaker tells an emotional story of her time and experiences with her children over the years of them discovering their own independent lives. Bradstreet uses this poem to express her love and worries for her children as they grow and develop their own lives. The tone of this poem seems to be semi joyful, and familiar in the beginning, of a mother telling about her children being born and nursed with pain and care.

In line four, the speaker tells of sparing nothing in order to take care of her young; showing how deep her love is for them.

At first it sounds joyful as she speaks of how her young “ Mounted the trees, and learned to sing” (Bradstreet) this line gives the sense of joy that comes with learning, nature and singing. The tone then changes, while the speaker is telling of her oldest bird growing up and taking flight, she becomes very sad because she worries for and misses her son. The speaker tells how most of her young have moved on, telling of their ambitions and circumstances of leaving. She makes it clear in lines 11 and 12 she does not want to let her children go, she needs them to be with her where she can enjoy singing and caring for them.

There are five children who have left her home, leaving her with three at home. She expresses worries for the three because they soon will “ take their flight” (Bradstreet). This poem shows a sincere care for the children, wishing them well. The speaker talks of praying for her children and only wanting good to come to their lives. Her thoughts stay steady of her children throughout the whole poem, this poem is the result of the endless love and care she has for her children.

After telling of how her children came to spread their wings, the tone turns sad, while acknowledging her natural fears as a mother. She says, “ If birds could weep, then my would my tears”; “ Let others know what are my fears” (lines 41, 42) shows how much she fears for the children's safety. The speaker begins to imagine a sequence of bad events that could happen to the children. The speaker finds herself overwhelmed with sadness and thoughts of how tenderly she cared for her children.

The speaker tells of her raw emotions in line 60, expressing the intense pain her worrying is causing her body; “ My throbs such now as ‘ fore were never’.

One of the speaker's concerns are the ignorance's of danger, because of this concern line 65 warns her children saying 62, "to your safety have an eye, so happy may you live and die".

This part of the poem makes it more obvious that she is speaking directly to her children. The poem takes a slight turn in tones, the speaker goes from pure worry and stress about her children to a sense of acceptance.

Statements that stick out in showing acceptance are; "Meanwhile my days in tunes ill spend Till my weak lays (poems) with me shall end" (lines 67-68); "In shady woods ill sit and sing, And things that passed to mind ill bring"(69-70). These lines are the first ones in which she really indicated anything of herself and what she will do, without involving the children except by memories. This shows some signs of accepting her children have to do what they will and admitting she will continue to move forward without them in her nest.

The speaker goes on to speak of not lamenting her age; this shows she accepts the years that have gone by and has no regrets. The speaker is accepting her age and the fact that her flight is soon to come; but this will be the most important flight, the one to her heaven. After she begins to accept her age and the fact that her children are developing their own lives the poem takes on a sense of contentment. The poem In Reference to Her Children seems to be a sort of therapy for Bradstreet as she goes through the stages of grieving for her children.

The poem shows all the different stages of acceptance, during a situation that was started with uncertainty. Bradstreet was one of the first American poets since the movement from England.

Like many women writers in the nineteenth century, Bradstreet used print to publicize the supposedly private experiences of a woman. (VanEgen)

Bradstreet was heavily criticized for this, being as the puritan view saw women as mothers and wives and nothing more, using her poems for reasons to say she must be a bad mother, puritan or wife because of her time used to write.

In reality Bradstreet was good at all of those things finding the time to write after her work as a mother. Bradstreet found a way to find a public voice without violating cultural standards of privacy; she brought attention to the experiences of women and helped to re-envision their place in a society centered on the home (VanEgen). She uses her poems as a tool that helps her to accept and analyze the situations she finds herself in. The care and thought she puts into her words are a kind of organizer for her feelings and wants a way to see her life in a new perspective, helping her to cope or accept.

Works Cited Bradstreet, Anne. *In Reference to her Children*, 23 June 1659. New York: New York, 2012. Print, 20 Feb. 2013.

VanEngen, Abram. "Advertising the domestic: Anne Bradstreet's sentimental poetics." *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* 28. 1 (2011): 47+. Academic OneFile.

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