

# A backlash of emotions in anne bradstreet's poem author to her book

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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **Bradstreet's Opposing Emotions Toward Her Work**

In the "Author to Her Book," Anne Bradstreet describes the creation and involuntary publication of a piece of her writing, as well as her resulting feelings surrounding the affair. These feelings, though, elude any one label. As a result, throughout the poem Bradstreet chooses to compare the book she authored to a child she might have born, allowing her to more precisely articulate the kind of complex emotions she feels toward it. By likening her work, published without her permission, to a premature and flawed human being, Bradstreet can understandably harbor both feelings of shame and love for her work.

At the start of her poem, Bradstreet establishes the analogy with which she explains her work and the negative emotions she associates with it. She begins by decrying how her companions "expos'd to public view" her "ill-form'd offspring of [her] feeble brain" (Bradstreet lines 4, 1). Without her knowledge, well-intentioned friends have made public her premature child. As this work was regrettably unfinished, it still contained errors in her eyes, errors that "were not lessened" in the process of their publication (Bradstreet line 6). Indeed, they were only magnified for all the world to pick apart and judge, contributing to Bradstreet's disdain for this work. Already evident in the words used to describe her work's creation, Bradstreet's shame is highlighted with the image of her not insignificant "blushing" at the sight of her "rambling brat (in print)" (Bradstreet lines 7, 8). This latter line clarifies exactly how Bradstreet sees her own book: an embarrassing, idiotic child. Much like how a child exhibits the characteristics of its parents

in its own appearance and tendencies, a book reveals something about its author; it puts on display a part of him/her within the text. In this way, any critique of her writing feels like an evaluation of her own character, adding to her humiliation. Bradstreet is ashamed and resentful, finding her creation “irksome” with all its defects to the extent that it is “unfit for light” (Bradstreet lines 10, 9). She is so annoyed by her own writing that she wishes her published work to have never seen the light of day.

However, shame and disgust are not the only emotions Bradstreet exhibits in response to her work; she admits that still has some fondness for her book. Despite her distaste for being confronted with her book’s mistakes, Bradstreet yet feels some warm sentiment for it, as it is “[her] own” (Bradstreet line 11). She expends the effort to “wash [its] face,” hoping that her remaining “affection / Would [its] blemishes amend” (Bradstreet lines 13, 11-12). This shows that Bradstreet has not completely scorned her creation; she takes the time to try to ameliorate its flaws, as a doting mother might clean up her child’s messy appearance. Even though this attempt is unsuccessful, Bradstreet’s care for her work maintains its presence in the poem, which takes on the tone of a cautionary and apologetic guardian. Warning her child to avoid “Critics’ hands,” Bradstreet releases her book into the world with the explanation that she “is poor” and can therefore not afford to keep it to herself (Bradstreet lines 20, 23). In the end, Bradstreet must come to terms with her book’s publication and learn to appreciate it, for her financial situation precludes her from not profiting from its sale.

Anne Bradstreet illustrates her conflicting feelings for her work in “ Author to Her Book” by comparing it to a troublesome child she loves despite everything. Although beginning the recount of her experience by focusing on her negative emotions, she eventually embraces her warmer feelings for her creation. As a complex human being elicits complex emotions toward it, so Bradstreet can feel both shame and tenderness for this work that she endeavors to equate with her child in the eyes of the reader.