A Voice in the Wilderness: Seeing Anne Bradstreet as a Living Person

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My subject's bare, my brain is bad,
Or better lines you should have had:
The first fell in so naturally,
I knew not how to pass it by;
The last, though bad I could not mend,
Accept therefore of what is penned,
And all the faults that you shall spy
Shall at your feet for pardon cry.
--Anne Bradstreet, "The Four Seasons Of The Year" (Appendix)

Anne Bradstreet succeeded in establishing a place in history. Just as she asked in her poem that we "accept" what she has "penned," we disregard her "faults" and study, criticize, experience, and finally understand her history. And through her legacy, which includes over 200 pages of prose and poetry written in the late 1600s, it is possible to see her as a dedicated housewife, devoted daughter, commendable friend, diligent mother, and loving wife. However, John Demos cautions modern historians that the source material they uncover through research--physical artifacts, documents, and official records--is not totally reliable when studying the personal and emotional factors in colonial families (*Little* ix). In other words, we can see, touch, and read the objects, but we cannot possibly know exact-

ly what the owner did with them or the importance that the owner attached to them. Bradstreet's autobiographical writing, together with official town records and physical artifacts, such as house foundations, land records, and deeds will fill these gaps and allow a fuller understanding and appreciation of the timelessness of her writing and the quality of her life.

History provides a link between time periods; in order to better understand the present, we must understand our past. And history is more than just a record of dates and events; it is a catalogue of human emotions, places, and experiences of living, breathing people. These "human" events are passed down through generations of historians, so that we might begin to know our past. Justly, this catalogue invites us to turn the pages and enter past worlds, to understand human struggles and see accomplishments. Anne Bradstreet's struggle for survival in the wilderness led to her accomplishment as America's first woman poet. Anne Stanford, a twentieth-century critic, asserts that Bradstreet's "accomplishment [her work] becomes clearer in the light of the circumstances, both literary and ideological, under which she wrote," and that "her work is influenced, first of all, by the ideas circulated generally among all educated people of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, ideas of the nature of man and the universe and of politics that differ markedly from those we hold today" (i). Likewise, by using Bradstreet's writing and the physical artifacts, I intend to explore the literary and physical environment in which she wrote in order to reveal the lively personality behind the writings. Therefore, it seems only fitting to use Bradstreet's poem "The Four Seasons Of The Year," written around 1642, to represent her aesthetic sense and one woman's life struggle in a muddy little colony in the wilderness of the New World.

Just as Bradstreet was influenced by seventeenth-century historians and critics, her work continues to influence historians and critics into the twentieth century. Examining Bradstreet's daily tasks and physical accomplishments in seventeenth-century New England will provide insight into this influence. By re-creating a day in her life, we can re-live her experience in the American wilderness and come to understand Anne Bradstreet as a very strong woman who persevered in her daily tasks and still made her mark in history. Curiously, it is not the nature of work that has changed for twentieth-century women; it is how their work is accomplished.

Even though Bradstreet was an isolated colonist living in the wilderness, she possessed an aesthetic sense that was reflected in her writing. A quintessential Puritan heroine, she endured affliction for many seasons, enjoyed assurance in her faith and the love of her family, and through her art offered her life as a worthy model of Christian experience and personal strength. Just as her family depended on her strength to see them through hard times, early colonists depended upon nature for survival--too much rain could destroy crops needed to sustain them through harsh winters, droughts likewise deprived these crops of needed moisture to grow, and bitter frosts could damage precious, needed fruits.

The *Arbella* arrived in the New World in the summer on June 13, 1630, after eight weeks at sea. Daunted by storms, scurvy, and death, 700 passengers in the Winthrop Fleet landed on the northern east coast of New England, and shortly after, 200 died (Banks 47-48). Anne Dudley Bradstreet, one of the survivors, lived to become one of the most intellectual women in early Colonial times. However, life in Colonial Boston must have been quite different from her grand house in England. Her father was steward to the Earl of Lincoln-

shire, and Bradstreet lived on the estate in Sempringham, where she was surrounded by educated people of the gentry. It is here she received the good education that would later give birth to America's first woman poet. Two years after her arrival in the wilderness, she began writing. That her first American experiences were the illness and death of her friend, the Lady Arbella Johnson, and the drowning of young Henry Winthrop, it seems fitting that her first poem was "Upon a Fit of Sickness" (Wharton 102). Whether Bradstreet wrote to escape the harshness of the New World or to create memories of her old world, she certainly proved her self-assertion and vitality in writing the first memorable poems in America.

The chief part of her literary work was accomplished during the ten years after her arrival in Ipswich, and these years were also her most physically productive. By the time Bradstreet had lived in Charlestown, Cambridge, and Boston from 1630 to 1634 and had settled in Ipswich for the next ten years, she was the mother of five children, and although none of her work was published, she had already become an accomplished poet. Ipswich was a frontier or border town, and by land and water susceptible to invasion from Indians. It is here that perhaps Bradstreet wrote to escape the loneliness of life, since her husband's political work in the colonies kept him away from home much of the time. Colonel Luther Caldwell describes the harsh landscape of Ipswich in his 1898 *Account of Anne Bradstreet:*

> The ocean on the east rolled three thousand miles away to her English home and friends, the north and west was a wild wilderness stretching away to Canada, only enemies in that direction; no roads or drives, an Indian trail led away out of Ipswich through these primitive forests. The prowling wolves and dashing bears, venomous rattle-

snakes and lurking red man in ambush everywhere. (10)

Did Bradstreet lie awake at night because of the "lurking" dangers? Did she write for a sense of security? Reverend John Woodridge, her brother-in-law, writes in an introduction to her first published book of poems *The Tenth Muse*, that she wrote in "some few houres, curtailed from her sleep, and other refreshments" (iii). Yet these were the hours when she was most prolific in her writing, as is evidenced in the quality of such poems as her *Quaternion*, consisting of four poems of four books each. Her expositions of "The Humours," "The Ages of Man," "The Seasons," "The Elements," and "The Four Monarchies" read like a journal of a young woman with a taste for study.

Summertime was likewise very fruitful for the settlers of these early colonies, but it also meant arduous work for women like Bradstreet. In contrast to Colonel Caldwell's harsh description, Captain John Smith, who visited Ipswich in 1614, describes this newly settled land this way: "Here are many rising hills, and on their tops and descents are many corne fields and delightfull groves. There are also okes, pines, walnuts, and other woods to make this place an excellent habitation, with many faire high groves of mulberry trees" (qtd. in Caldwell 10-11). Bradstreet's own description of these abundant fields in her poem "The Four Seasons Of The Year" further establishes the colonists' dependence on the land to survive. She speaks of "fishes" in the "cool streams," "cherry, gooseberry . . . now in th' prime," "all sorts of peas," "wheat," "barley," and "rye," the "pear, pear-plum, and apricock" (ll. 124-61). As the land is reaped of its harvest, "the forks and rakes do follow them amain, / Which makes the aged fields look young again" (ll. 141-42).

We can only research to detail the strenuous work involved for Colonial women like Bradstreet in harvesting and preparing the food for winter storage. She writes: "With melted tawny face, and garments thin, . . . / Wiping the sweat from off her face that ran, / With hair all wet she puffing thus began" (ll. 90-93). Laurel Thatcher Ulrich claims in her study of the social dimensions of daily work in northern colonial New England that nearly all "married women, regardless of social position, were responsible for cooking, washing, plain sewing, milking, tending a garden, and feeding swine" (393-94). And despite the fact that the Bradstreet household did employ a few servants, slaves were comparatively few in New England homes in the seventeenth century (Morgan 111). Although Bradstreet was part of the aristocracy in her England home, her work was clearly defined by the demands of the New World, yet she still found time to pick up her pen and write tirelessly of her experiences; for intense experience is the raw material of poetry, and so it was of Bradstreet's. A world-weary narrator, she recorded the highs and lows of her life: the joys of motherhood, her passion for her husband, her illness, fits of fainting, periods of pain, fatigue, depression, and loneliness.

With the passing of summer came the cooler months of autumn, and in moving from Ipswich to Andover, Anne Bradstreet went deeper into the wilderness, among beasts, reptiles, and Indians. Her work remained the same but was compounded by the additional chores that an absent husband could not fulfill. Yet, she was never too exhausted to write. While many women today serve many roles, it should not be overlooked that perhaps Anne Bradstreet was not totally content with her expected social sphere. Her words in some of her poems, such as "The Prologue," voice dissent, appealing for e-

quality, practicality, and respect:

> 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 acknowledgement of ours. (16)

Physical labor, however, was part of her life, and she accepted this. She only wanted some recognition for women.

Bradstreet succeeded in remaining humble yet straightforward in her writing. She suffered many disappointments in her life, and her writing may have alleviated some of her pain. Her husband's absence in 1662 must have been difficult for her, alone in the wilderness with eight children to care for. Although she missed her husband, Anne Bradstreet still carried on her daily tasks of the preservation and preparation of food, washing clothes, perhaps chopping wood in preparation for winter heat, caring for the animals, sowing wheat, and raising five children plus the three additional children born while she lived in Andover. Her resilience in her writing again testifies to her perseverance in this wilderness, as is evidenced in her poem "Autumn," which was also her favorite season of the year: "Of Autumn months September is the prime, / Now day and night are equal in each clime" (ll. 172-73).

It's hard to say which household function occupied most of her time, but it can only be assumed that the preservation, preparation and consummation of food has been and will always be a primary household function. Without electricity, creating meals involved a great deal of manual labor, and preserving the abundant fruits that

were available to the colonists in autumn must have been equally compounded by this fact. As Bradstreet was busy picking her "goodly fruits" and preserving them for winter subsistence (l. 191), she left us a history of what might have been served on her table: "grapes," "raisins," "orange [s] ," "lemon [s] ," "pomegranate [s] ," "fig [s] ," "apples," "almonds, quinces, wardens" (an old variety of baking pear, circa 1400), and "peache [s] " (ll. 176-84).

Alluding to Bradstreet's life and labors, Professor C. E. Norton of Harvard College paints a vivid picture of her:

> It is the image of a sweet, devout, serene and affectionate nature, of a woman faithfully discharging the multiplicity of duties which fell upon the mother of many children in those days when little help from the outside could be had; when the mother must provide for all their wants with the consciousness that little help without was to be had in case of even serious needs." (qtd. in Caldwell 23)

This "multiplicity of duties" worsened in the dreadful winter season. Yet her daily work would not have appeared to have interrupted Bradstreet's acquisitions. Faced daily with illness and death, she tried to find some justification and consolation for her hardships through her writing. As each new day seemed to bring a different tragedy, so the different seasons determined a family's needs. She writes of the changing needs of her family as winter approaches:

> Beef, brawn, and pork are now in great request,
> And solid meats our stomachs can digest.
> This time warm clothes, full diet, and good fires,
> Our pinched flesh and hungry maws requires:
> Old, cold, dry Age and Earth Autumn resembles.
> And Melancholy which most of all dissembles. (ll. 220-25)

Bradstreet's "melancholy" was felt by every colonist in the New World. John Demos claims that it is very difficult for us to imagine fully the predicament of the first colonists in early America (*Remarkable* 68). To experience the material hardships, the isolation, and the physicalities of disease is almost alien in our twentieth-century world. Many colonial families had to depend on support from their mother country, and it may have been possible that Bradstreet's family would have sent for certain provisions from their England home.

Two letters written in 1623 and 1630 will help us understand this dependency on England and the actual hardships that these settlers, including Anne Bradstreet, had to endure. These letters, and other documents, provide a link between our twentieth-century perceptions of the early colonists' lives and the reality of their life and death situation. Richard Frethorne wrote a letter in Virginia to his parents in England in 1623. In it, he wrote about the "scurvy and the bloody flux and diverse other diseases, which maketh the body very poor and weak" (69). He noted the lack of venison and that they were not "allowed" to get any fowl. He literally begged his parents: "But I have nothing at all--no, not a shirt to my back but two rags, nor no clothes but one poor suit, nor but one pair of shoes, but one pair of stockings, but one cap ... " (69). He stated that he was "not half a quarter so strong as [he] was in England, and all is for want of victuals" (69). Finally, he begged his parents at the end of the letter, "therefore with weeping tears I beg of you to help me" (72). Just as Frethorne wrote home in times of need, Bradstreet wrote about her home in England, perhaps to escape from the reality of this strange new land. But her poetry was more than this, according to Samuel Eliot Morrison: her art "was not an escape from

life, but an expression of life" (qtd. in Rosenmeier 1). Bradstreet wrote about what she knew--her family--which, in essence, was her life.

Pond, whose first name is not recorded, wrote a similar letter to his parents in 1630. A settler from Massachusetts, he gives equally dismal insight into these colonists' lives:

> And people here are subject to disease, for here have died of the scurvy and of the burning fever high two hundred and odd ... I would entreat you that you would send me a firkin of butter and a hogshead of malt unground, for we drink nothing but water ... We were wonderful sick, as we came at sea, with the small pox. No man thought that I and my little child would have lived. (*Remarkable* 73-75).

Many of the original settlers did return home to England, just as Pond told his parents that "I do not hear from you what I was best [advised] to do, I purpose to come home at Michaelmas" (75). Bradstreet herself contracted the small pox before her trip to America. She was still weak upon her arrival, yet she began writing within two years. The fact that these colonists withstood disease, starvation, and death to begin a new life is testimony to their strength, faith, and endurance. The fact that Anne Bradstreet wrote after her children were in bed, sometimes while she was ill or alone, and that she wrote prolifically, testifies to this poet's strength and courage to survive in the wilderness and record her history.

As these colonists struggled to build new lives and new homes where none had existed before, nature seemed to fight against them. Nature's winter was severe on the east coast, and they struggled just to keep warm. In her poem "Winter," Bradstreet states that the "Cold, moist, young phlegmy Winter now doth lie / In swaddling

clouts, like new born infancy / Bound up with frosts, and furred with hail and snows" (ll. 229-31). The "Cold frozen January next comes in, / Chilling the blood and shrinking up the skin" (ll. 239-40). It was so cold that "toes and ears, and fingers often freeze" (l. 245). In this chilling atmosphere, Bradstreet still cooked, cleaned, washed, sewed, and took care of eight children. More importantly, she left us a daily log of her duties, her thoughts, and her genius as a woman writer in the seventeenth century.

Although history has brought much change in women's daily lives through culture, politics, and technology, some elements were not radically different. It is not the work itself that has changed; it is how that work is accomplished---the "control of the products of that work" (Ulrich 394). Women like Bradstreet had control in the management of their work, but they didn't necessarily have a choice in the nature of the work. The changing seasons altered Bradstreet's daily work habits. Clothes still had to be cleaned and washed. Without electricity, all the labor was done by hand. Garments were soaked, agitated by hand, and boiled, then pressed through wringers before hanging to dry. The fireplace might have served as a clothes dryer in a seventeenth-century house. Wrinkles were smoothed with heated irons. Detachable ruffles were re-crimped with a fluting iron, then resewn in place. And obtaining water in the wintertime must have been a time-consuming, tedious chore. Laundry for eight children must have kept Bradstreet busy every single day. And without electricity, she would have to write by candlelight if she wrote after dark.

Cooking, baking, and washing clothes were both tiring and time consuming, and traditionally performed by women. But even the harsh realities of this wilderness in which Bradstreet made her new

home were not a hindrance to her creative mind; rather, they were the metaphors through which she imagined and expressed her creativity. Again, without electricity, preparing meals involved a great deal of manual labor. Butter was churned by hand from cream, produce was cooked, picked, brewed, canned or dried for storage. Fireplace cooking was hot and dirty and required weighty metal pots and utensils. Considering the ill health and frequent pregnancies that dominated much of Bradstreet's life, it is hard to imagine this frail woman performing such laborious chores. Woodburning cookstoves were not available until after 1830. Therefore, an exhaustive supply of wood in the fireplace was essential during the winter months, and there was usually a fireplace in every room in colonial houses.

John Demos, in his book *Little Commonwealth*, gives an extensive list of utensils and wrought-iron accoutrements used in a seventeenth-century fireplace. The fireplace itself was the center of attraction for "cooking, eating, spinning, sewing, carpentry, prayer, schooling, entertaining, and even sleeping" (39). Indeed, it was a necessity during the winter months. It is very likely that Bradstreet spent many hours writing her poetry and letters by her fireplace. Depending on its wealth, a family's "complement" of tools might have included "andirons," "shovels, tongs, forks, and bellows," "warming pans, foot stoves, brooms," and a "pipe box (where the master of the house would keep his pipes and tobacco)" (40). For cooking and baking, Bradstreet might have used "cauldrons," "gridirons," "mortars and pestles commonly used in pounding corn and other foods," a "posnet (a kind of saucepan suspended on its own legs)", and a "slice (a spatula used for moving bread or meat in and out of the fireplace and oven)" (41). Made from heavy materials,

these utensils transformed what we now consider an art, cooking, into an arduous and strenuous chore for colonial women.

It is obvious that planning ahead was a necessary part of survival in this early American wilderness: chopping and splitting enough firewood for the coming winter, preserving and canning food from a summer garden for winter subsistence, planting and harvesting, and perhaps bathing in the same water used later for washing clothes. With eight children, I'm sure Bradstreet planned her chores accordingly. Hence, from her experiences in the American wilderness, she developed her own responses to those events which touched her most. As we examine the physical environment in which Bradstreet wrote, the realities of her world become the nightmares of ours, and we appreciate her efforts.

Among other artifacts left from Bradstreet's time is a replica of a house, presently the Parson Barnard House, built just forty-three years after her death. The house still stands in her hometown, now called North Andover in Massachusetts, directly across the road from where Bradstreet's own house burned to the ground in 1666. The Parson Barnard House, along with some official records of archaeological diggings for the original foundation of Bradstreet's house, and a chapter on housing in John Demos's book *Little Commonwealth*, together with a poem Bradstreet wrote about the burning of her house, will provide perhaps the most intimate details about her life.

Leaving her castle in the air in England to live in a house built from logs was quite an adjustment for Bradstreet, coming from a family of aristocrats. Her body may have been frail, but her mind was always active. The fire that ravished her house in 1666 destroyed a treasured library of 800 books. According to Essex

County Probate Records in North Andover, there is no record of what happened to the original Bradstreet house. Governor Simon Bradstreet passed his property to his son, Colonel Dudley Bradstreet, and following the latter's death on November 13, 1702, the probate records mention no more than just "houseing."1 No one knows what happened to this original dwelling, but the Parson Barnard House provides historical information about these early colonists' homes.

According to John Demos, the frames of seventeenth-century colonial homes were made from "heavy oak timbers," and the windows were few in number, and quite small in size (*Little* 28). Perhaps the colonists built them small because of the difficulty in heating the houses in the bitter winter months. Since there was no electricity, and since the windows were so small, the colonists probably burned candles all day. In the Parson Barnard house, which is the closest evidence we have of a house in which Bradstreet might have lived, the finest features are the fireplace of the east chamber, the staircase, and the chimney (Cummings 10). Demos states that since none of these colonial houses had closets, "portable chests" and "trunks" provided the main areas of storage space. Bradstreet gives evidence of some of these features and laments their loss in a few lines from her poem "Here Follows Some Verses Upon The Burning Of Our House July 10th, 1666":

> Here stood that trunk, and there that chest,
> There lay that store I counted best.
> My pleasant things in ashes lie,
> And them behold no more shall I.
> Under thy roof no guest shall sit,
> Nor at thy table eat a bit.

No pleasant tale shall e'er be told,
Nor things recounted done of old.
No candle e'er shall shine in thee,
Nor bridegroom's voice e'er heard shall be. (qtd. in Hensley 293)

The poem, along with historical evidence of the structure of colonial houses, provide access into Bradstreet's personal, everyday life. We can thus speculate that she and her family probably had many gatherings around the fireplace. She also mentions household belongings, such as "trunks," "chests," and "candles." It is thus possible to assume that Bradstreet spent many hours in front of her fireplace writing her prose and poetry and perhaps reading it to her family during fireside chats.

Since nature was their enemy, the colonists built their homes to withstand the harsh winter weather and spring rains and to accommodate their chores. Therefore, most colonial houses contained two large rooms on the ground level, with the fireplace in the center of the rooms. One room was the "hall" (Demos, *Little* 30), where the family spent most of their time together. The other room, the "parlor" (47), was used for visitors and to store the family's most treasured belongings. It is perhaps in a room like this that Bradstreet placed her library of treasured books. And with the fireplace at the center, heat could be distributed evenly throughout the house. A "lean-to" built along the rear of the house was used for storage, extra sleeping areas, and perhaps where Bradstreet carried in her vegetables and fruits from the garden.

Springtime was a fruitful time for the colonists. Bradstreet's poem "Spring" reveals the kinds of food her family ate and the ongoing chores to provide subsistence for the following season. This poem also ends the cyclical seasons that revolved around these

colonists' lives and simultaneously determined the survival of early colonial families. After months of prolonged darkness, as Bradstreet states in the lines, "And now makes glad the dark'ned northern wights / Who for some months have seen but starry lights" (ll. 20-21), the colonists planted their gardens. Bradstreet once again illustrates their dependence on the weather for survival and the colonists' laborious chores: "The seedsman, too, doth lavish out his grain, / In hope the more he casts, the more to gain" (ll. 24-25). As each colonist "digs, then sows his herbs, his flowers, and roots, / And carefully manures his trees of fruits" (ll. 28-29), the earth came to life and seemed to brighten their lives, but they had to work extremely hard for the little enjoyment they had. We also get a glimpse of what Bradstreet might have seen on a spring day:

> The croaking frogs, whom nipping winter killed,
> Like birds now chirp, and hop about the field,
> The nightingale, the blackbird, and the thrush
> Now tune their lays, on sprays of every bush.
> The wanton frisking kid, and soft-fleeced lambs
> Do jump and play before their feeding dams. (ll. 32-7)

From this excerpt of the poem, we might suppose that Bradstreet's family raised lambs. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the care of these animals might have been among her chores, especially when her husband was away.

Among her other chores in the spring, besides caring for animals, were harvesting and preserving fruits and garden vegetables. Her trees yielded a good supply of pears, plums, apples, cherries, and strawberries, and her garden grew "hasty peas" (ll. 50-79). The results of these outdoor chores were cupboards and barrels full

of winter food: "The cleanly housewife's dairy's now in th' prime, / Her shelves and firkins filled for winter time" (ll. 72-3). As spring ends and another season begins, Bradstreet's poems reveal the cycles of her life.

The fact that Bradstreet wrote often and with the wilderness at her doorstep proves that she was first and foremost a poet before she was a wife or mother. Helen Campbell calls Anne Bradstreet "the grandmother of American literature" (iv). That she survived the physical rigors of daily life in this new wilderness proved her resilience and kept her wits sharp and her senses alert. What we know of Bradstreet comes to us through her autobiographical writing and historical documents. John Demos further warns that "historians must be ready to consider interpretations, hypotheses, and even 'hunches' that go some distance beyond the known facts" (*Little* xii). He continues to claim that the "study of emotional experience remains an important challenge to historians" (*Past* 16). While well aware of any self-contradiction or unwarranted historical assumptions in any system of analysis, I have sought to unveil Bradstreet's daily life and her aesthetic sense through her writing. Using the "known facts" to support my assumptions, then, I went beyond those facts to try and reveal Bradstreet as a real and vital person. As Bradstreet endured her afflictions, she penned her grief and sense of injustices and wrote her autobiographical notes and maxims, hoping to leave something of tangible value to her children. In a letter to be read after her death, she told her children,

> This book by any yet unread,
> I leave for you when I am dead,
> That being gone, here you may find

What was in your loving mother's mind.
Make use of what I leave in love,
And God shall bless you from above. (qtd. in Hensley 240)

As historians continue to "Make use" of her legacy, her past becomes our past, her experiences become our experiences, and we finally see Anne Bradstreet as a living person who made history.

Notes

1) As early as 1829, one local historian of North Andover identifies this house, now called the Parson Barnard House, as "the house said to be built and occupied by Governor Bradstreet." (Abiel Abbot, *History of Andover.* Andover, 1829: 98) A pamphlet I obtained from the North Andover Historical Society in North Andover, Massachusetts, includes detailed information about the Parson Barnard House and an annotated bibliography.

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Appendix

THE FOUR SEASONS OF THE YEAR

Spring

Another four I've left yet to bring on,
Of four times four the last quaternion,
The Winter, Summer, Autumn, and the Spring,
In season all these seasons I shall bring:
Sweet Spring like man in his minority,
At present claimed, and had priority.
With smiling face and garments somewhat green,
She trimmed her locks,which late had frosted been,
Nor hot nor cold she spake, but with a breath
Fit to revive the numbed earth from death.
Three months (quoth she) are 'lotted to my share
March, April, May of all the rest most fair.
Tenth of the first, Sol into Aries enters,

And bids defiance to all tedious winters,
Crosseth the line, and equals night and day,
Still adds to th'last till after pleasant May;
And now makes glad the dark'ned northern wights
Who for some months have seen but starry lights.
Now goes the plowman to his merry toil,
He might unloose his winter locked soil:
The seedsman, too, doth lavish out his grain,
In hope the more he casts, the more to gain:
The gard'ner now superfluous branches lops,
And poles erects for his young clamb'ring hops;
Now digs, then sows his herbs, his flowers, and roots,
And carefully manures his trees of fruits.
The Pleiades their influence now give,
And all that seemed as dead afresh doth live.
The croaking frogs, whom nipping winter killed,
Like birds now chirp, and hop about the field,
The nightingale, the blackbird, and the thrush
Now tune their lays, on sprays of every bush.
The wanton frisking kid, and soft-fleeced lambs
Do jump and play before their feeding dams,
The tender tops of budding grass they crop,
They joy in what they have, but more in hope:
For though the frost hath lost his binding power,
Yet many a fleece of snow and stormy shower
Doth darken Sol's bright eye, makes us remember
The pinching north-west wind of cold December.
My second month is April, green and fair,
Of longer days and a more temperate air:
The sun in Tauyus keeps residence,
And with his warmer beams glanceth from thence.
This is the month whose fruitful show'rs produces
All set and sown for all delights and uses:
The pear, the plum, and appletree now flourish;
The grass grows long the hungry beast to nourish.
The primrose pale and azure violet
Among the verdurous grass hath nature set,
That when the Sunon's love (the earth) doth shine

These might as lace set out her garment fine.
The fearful bird his little house now builds
In trees and walls, in cities,and in fields.
The outside strong, the inside warm and neat,
A natural artificer complete.
The clucking hen her chirping chickens leads,
With wings and beak defends them from the gledes.
My next and last is fruitful pleasant May,
Wherein the earth is clad in rich array,
The sun now enters loving Gemini,
And heats us with the glances of his eye,
Our thicker raiment makes us lay aside
Lest by his fervor we be torrified.
All flowers the Sun now with his beams discloses,
Except the double pinks and matchless roses.
Now swarms the busy witty, honey-bee,
Whose praise deserves a page from more than me.
The cleanly housewife's dairy's now in th' prime,
Her shelves and firkins filled for winter time.
The meads with cowslips, honeysuckles dight;
One hangs his head, the other stands upright;
But both rejoice at th' heavens' clear smiling face,
More at her showers, which water them a space.
For fruits my season yields the early cherry,
The hasty peas, and wholesome cool strawberry.
More solid fruits require a longer time;
Each season hath his fruit, so hath each clime:
Each man his own peculiar excellence,
But none in all that hath preëminence.
Sweet fragrant Spring, with thy short pittance fly,
Let some describe thee better than can I.
Yet above all this privilege is thine,
Thy days still lengthen without least decline.

Summer

When Spring had done, the Summer did begin,
With melted tawny face, and garments thin,
Resembling Fire, Choler, and Middle Age,

As Spring did Air, Blood, Youth in's equipage.
Wiping the sweat from off her face that ran,
With hair all wet she puffing thus began;
Bright June, July and August hot are mine,
In th' first Sol doth in crabbed Cancer shine.
His progress to the north now's fully done,
Then retrograde must be my burning sun,
Who to his southward tropic still is bent,
Yet doth his parching heat but more augment
Though he decline, because his flames so fair
Have thoroughly dried the earth and heat the air.
Like as an oven that long time hath been heat,
Whose vehemency at length doth grow so great,
That if you do withdraw her burning store,
'Tis for a time as fervent as before.
Now go those frolic swains, the shepherd lads,
To wash the thick clothed flocks with pipes full glad;
In the cool streams they labour with delight
Rubbing their dirty coats till they look white;
Whose fleece when finely spun and deeply dyed,
With robes thereof kings have been dignified.
Blest rustic swains, your pleasant quiet life,
Hath envy bred in kings that were at strife,
Careless of worldly wealth you sing and pipe,
Whilst they're embroiled in wars and troubles rife,
Which made great Bajazet cry out in's woes:
Oh, happy shepherd, which hath not to lose
Orthobulus, nor yet Sebastia great,
But whistleth to thy flock in cold and heat.
Viewing the sun by day, the moon by night
Endymion's, Diana's dear delight,
Upon the grass resting your healthy limbs,
By purling brooks looking how fishes swims.
If pride within your lowly cells e'er haunt,
Of him that was shepherd, then king go vaunt.
This month the roses are distilled in glasses,
Whose fragrant smell all made perfumes surpasses.
The cherry, gooseberry are now in th' prime,

And for all sorts of peas, this is the time.
July my next, the hottest in all the year,
The sun through Leo now takes his career,
Whose flaming breath doth melt us from afar,
Increased by the star Canicular.
This month from Julius Caesar took its name,
By Romans celebrated to his fame.
Now go the mowers to their slashing toil,
The meadows of their riches to despoil,
With weary strokes, they take all in their way,
Bearing the burning heat of the long day.
The forks and rakes do follow them amain,
Which makes the aged fields look young again.
The groaning carts do bear away this prize
To stacks and barns where it for fodder lies.
My next and last is August fiery hot
(For much, the southward sun abateth not).
This month he keeps with Virgo for a space;
The dried earth is parched with his face.
August of great Augustus took its name,
Rome's second emperor of lasting fame.
With sickles now the bending reapers go
The rustling tress of terra down to mow;
And bundles up in sheaves, the weighty wheat,
Which after manchet makes for kings to eat.
The barley, rye, and peas should first had place,
Although their bread have not so white a face.
The carter leads all home with whistling voice,
He plowed with pain, but reaping doth rejoice;
His sweat, his toil, his careful, wakeful nights,
His fruitful crop abundantly requites.
Now's ripe the pear, pear-plum, and apricock,
The prince of plums, whose stone's as hard as rock.
The Summer seems but short, the Autumn hastes
To shake his fruits of most delicious tastes
Like good old Age, whose younger juicy roots
Hath still ascended to bear goodly fruits.
Until his head be gray, and strength be gone,

Yet then appears the worthy deeds he'th done:
To feed his boughs exhausted hath his sap,
Then drops his fruits into the eater's lap.

Autumn

Of Autumn months September is the prime,
Now day and night are equal in each clime;
The twelfth of this Sol riseth in the line,
And doth in poising Libra this month shine.
The vintage now is ripe, the grapes are pressed,
Whose lively liquor oft is cursed and blest;
For nought so good, but it may be abused,
But it's a precious juice when well it's used.
The raisins now in clusters dried be,
The orange, lemon dangle on the tree:
The pomegranate, the fig are ripe also,
And apples now their yellow sides do show.
Of almonds, quinces, wardens, and of peach,
The season's now at hand of all and each.
Sure at this time, time first of all began,
And in this month was made apostate Man:
For then in Eden was not only seen,
Boughs full of leaves, or fruits unripe or green,
Or withered stocks, which were all dry and dead,
But trees with goodly fruits replenished;
Which shows nor Summer, Winter, nor the Spring
Our grand-sire was of paradise made king;
Nor could that temp'rate clime such difference make,
If cited as the most judicious take.
October is my next, we hear in this
The northern winter-blasts begin to hiss.
In Scorpio resideth now the sun,
And his declining heat is almost done.
The fruitless trees all withered now do stand,
Whose sapless yellow leaves, by winds are fanned,
Which notes when youth and strength have past their prime
Decrepit age must also have its time.
The sap doth slily creep towards the earth

There rests, until the sun give it a birth
So doth old Age still tend unto his grave,
Where also he his winter time must have;
But when the Sun of righteousness draws nigh,
His dead old stock shall mount again on high.
November is my last, for time doth haste,
We now of winter's sharpness 'gin to taste.
This month the Sun's in Sagitarius,
So far remote, his glances warm not us.
Almost at shortest is the shortened day,
The northern pole beholdeth not one ray.
Now Greenland, Groanland, Finland, Lapland see
No sun, to lighten their obscurity:
Poor wretches that in total darkness lie,
With minds more dark than is the darkened sky.
Beef, brawn, and pork are now in great request,
And solid meats our stomachs can digest.
This time warm clothes, full diet, and good fires,
Our pinched flesh and hungry maws requires:
Old, cold, dry Age and Earth Autumn resembles,
And Melancholy which most of all dissembles.
I must be short, and short's the short'ned day,
What Winter hath to tell, now let him say.

Winter

Cold, moist, young phlegmy Winter now doth lie
In swaddling clouts, like new born infancy
Bound up with frosts, and furred with hail and snows,
And like an infant, still it taller grows;
December is my first, and now the Sun
To th' southward tropic, his swift race doth run:
This month he's housed in horned Capricorn,
From thence he' gins to length the shortened morn,
Through Christendom with great festivity,
Now's held (but guessed) for blest Nativity.
Cold frozen January next comes in,
Chilling the blood and shrinking up the skin;
In Aquarius now keeps the long wished Sun,

And northward his unwearied course doth run:
The day much longer than it was before,
The cold not lessened, but augmented more.
Now toes and ears, and fingers often freeze,
And travellers their noses sometimes leese.
Moist snowy February is my last,
I care not how the winter time doth haste.
In Pisces now the golden sun doth shine,
And northward still approaches to the line.
The rivers' gin to ope, the snows to melt,
And some warm glances from his face are felt,
Which is increased by the lengthened day,
Until by's heat, he drive all cold away,
And thus the year in circle runneth round:
Where first it did begin, in th' end it's found.

My subject's bare, my brain is bad,
Or better lines you should have had:
The first fell in so naturally,
I knew not how to pass it by;
The last, though bad I could not mend,
Accept therefore of what is penned,
And all the faults that you shall spy
Shall at your feet for pardon cry.