

# The Family Tradition

*by* Angela Brett

Your father, his father, and his before that,  
Your mother, her mother, and all the way back  
Have kept a tradition by chance or by will  
To each have a baby (or several) until  
The flame's passed to you, but now you have a choice  
So don't join the choir till you find your own voice.  
Creating a person's a huge thing to try;  
You can if you want, but first think about why:  
    Not to continue this age-old tradition  
Not to be sure that your life has a mission  
Not for a god or a country or norm, oh  
Not for a lark, or the whim of a hormone  
Not for a vague or instinctive desire  
Not just to copy the folks you admire  
Not out of fear you'll leave nothing behind  
(Not that your DNA outdoes your mind)  
Not 'cause you're bright so you should spread your genes  
Not 'cause you're dim and don't know what that means  
Not to rebel against Mum and Dad's view  
Not because they want their vengeance on you  
Not as a snake oil to quiet your fears  
That you might feel a twinge of regret in ten years  
Not when your body clock's ticking through dates  
And you're always a sucker for 'Buy now! Don't wait!'  
Not because well-behaved babes tug your heart  
Not so your parents can relive that part  
Not 'cause your partner would like to have some  
Not 'cause you're grateful that Dad convinced Mum  
Not 'cause you've thought of a name you must give  
Or things you'd do better if you could relive  
Not when a thoughtless mistake involved sex

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Not 'cause you're married and that's what comes next  
Not because all of your friends ask why not  
Not because they're doing well with their lot  
Not 'cause you're told that it's selfish to live  
without making a beggar to whom you can give  
Not because parents say nothing else matters  
Not to add glue to a romance in tatters  
Not because children learn more tricks than cats  
Not to prove *your* kids would never be brats  
Not so your welfare amount will be goin' up  
Not 'cause you think it'll make you a grownup  
Not so they'll pay for your food in old age  
(for pyramid schemes have to collapse at some stage)  
Not to fulfil a perceived need for love  
Not if you're not sure, when push comes to shove  
Not 'cause you read this and thought, "This'll show 'em!"  
Not for the sentiment closing this poem.

But only because you adore helping youth  
and can't think of life without living that truth.  
You know that their life-long love's not guaranteed  
and you're yearning to face unconditional need  
of a boy, girl or intersexed, well, sick or crippled  
dunce, saint or murderer, one, twins or tripled.  
You're deeply concerned the resources you borrow  
may add to the hardship of grandkids tomorrow  
and realise your efforts to curb your consumption  
are more than undone if you make the assumption  
that your kids survive and continue to breed  
and their kids spawn ever more hungers to feed.  
If raising a person is *your* lifelong dream,  
and not just a gesture to race with the team  
then go ahead, try to conceive, but know this:  
it's not just a baby that's made in all this.  
You remake yourself as you start your new quest,  
as parent first up, and then some of the rest.

From baby's perspective you've made the whole world;  
you've led them from nowhere to cosmos unfurled.  
So enjoy your big bang and enjoy your inflation,  
And cherish your well-informed act of creation.

