

Whāt has (Mother) Nature Done?

Spenserian Sonnet

by

Ferrick Gray

*This sonnet is from **Thě (Study of) Trees** published on **Google Play Books**, **Amazon** and **Draft2Digital**, ISBN 9780648224648. It is included here with additions, corrections and improved scansion notation which will appear later in the second edition.*

The *Spenserian*^[1] sonnet is unique in that the quatrains are interlocked by their rime. The rime scheme is given by *abab bcbc cdcd ee* with the *volta* always occurring at the final couplet. The sonnet is sometimes classified as *Italian* because it only has *five* rimes. However, the *Italian* sonnet does not have a *rime-connection* between the octave and sestet of which Spenser's does with the *c-rime*. Spenser's form was not very popular, but it is very beautiful.

Behold! The fields are flushed with color red!
Methinks not blood, but blood it may well be.
Behold the sight! Nay turn my head instead,
Avert mine eyes, this travesty I see.
Their sound! They sound as one and all agree
That greatness comes in numbers more than one.
Who strives to flee their common repartee
Of dry repeated-ness and stories spun?
But lo! Their faces greet the noonday sun;

All 'tempt to dull her with their feign eclipse—
So many, what has Mother Nature done?
She stands aside, her hands upon her hips:
I wonder if the grass is truly green;
With poppies tall, the grass is rarely seen.

What are we looking at? Something of beauty in nature or something horrific in the human-race? The point is both can occur simultaneously. It all depends how you look at it. *Oh, those tall poppies!*

Essentially, this sonnet is about groups of people who believe that the greater number in support the better, irrespective of the quality that has been presented. We find this to be quite common today in that some poetry (Is it truly poetry?) is preferred over others, and the non-preferred type is insignificant. A type of bullying in literary circles. The fact is that many of these people are worthless critics, if critics you dare call them.

Analysis

Whāt hās (Mōthēr) Nātūre Dōne?

This sonnet can be read easily keeping with the strict iambic pentameter (albeit the title itself is clipped iambic tetrameter).

01 **Bēhōld** | **Thē fiēlds** | **āre flūshed** | **wīth cōl** | **ōr rēd**

Some may prefer reversal in the first foot, **Bēhōld**, which could work—but there is still a tendency to make more of the second syllable.

02 **Mēthīnks** | **nōt blōod** | **būt blōod** | **īt māy** | **wēll bē**
03 **Bēhōld** | **thē sīght** | **Nāy tūrn** | **mý hēad** | **īnstēad**
04 **Āvērt** | **mīne ēyes** | **this trāv** | **ěstý** | **Ī sēe**
05 **Thēir sōund** | **Thēy sōund** | **ās ōne** | **ānd āll** | **āgrēe**
06 **Thāt grēat** | **nēss cōmes** | **īn nūm** | **bērs mōre** | **thān ōne**
07 **Whō strīves** | **tō flēe** | **thēir cōm** | **mōn rēp** | **ārtēe**
08 **Ōf drý** | **rēpēat** | **ēd-nēss** | **ānd stō** | **riēs spūn**
09 **Būt lō** | **Thēir fā** | **cēs grēet** | **thē noōn** | **dāy sūn**
10 **Āll 'tēmt** | **tō dūll** | **hēr wīth** | **thēir fēign** | **ēclipse**

- 11 **Sō mān | ỹ whāt | hǎs Mōth | ěr Nā | tũre dōne**
12 **Shě stānds | ǎsīde | hěr hānds | ůpōn | hěr hīps**
13 **Ī wōn | děr īf | thě grāss | ĩs trū | lỹ grēen**
14 **Wĭth pōp | piēs tāll | thě grāss | ĩs rāre | lỹ sēen**

This sonnet is correctly classified as *iambic pentameter* because there is no variation in the rhythm or of it containing metrical substitutions. Naturally, this is expected of the sonnet form. The sonnet form is one of the strictest forms in poesy, and it needs to be respected for being such.

As with most sonnets, the major variation will be starting with the *trochee*. In general, *iambic substitution* is uncommon as is demonstrated here. However, in the *feminine* verse we will find the *amphibrach* ending. On others occasions the *anapest* may finish the verse. So, not altogether impossible—but not too many please.

Ferrick Gray
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1. Spenserian: Edmund Spenser (1552/1553—January 13, 1599) His exact date of birth is unknown because the parish records for the area of London he was born were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. ↩