

Charlotte Smith

Charlotte **Smith's "Sonnet Written at the Close of Spring"** is a romantic poem about nature written in the traditional form of a sonnet. ... Smith appreciates the **beauty** of nature and how it renews itself each spring, but is saddened that humans cannot do the same. "Ah, poor humanity!

Charlotte Smith's poem titled "**Sonnet Written at the Close of Spring**" emphasizes a number of themes or motifs, including the beauty of nature, the impermanence of that beauty, but also the reassuring knowledge that nature's beauty will renew itself. The poem suggests that humans, unlike nature, cannot experience an earthly rebirth, at least if they are considered as individuals rather than as a species. The last six lines of the poem emphasize the *differences* between humans and nature rather than their similarities: nature, having faded and died, returns to life with the arrival of each spring, but human beings experience no such personal regeneration, at least not here on earth. Indeed, unlike overtly Christian poets, Turner emphasizes no sense of personal regeneration even in the afterlife. She does not promise that a heavenly existence awaits us after death – an existence that other poets would have stressed as infinitely superior to our lives on earth. Instead, Smith suggests that human happiness, once gone, is gone forever. Fields of flowers may revive each year, but human joys, having perished, will never return:

Another May new buds and flowers shall bring;

Ah! why has happiness--no second spring? (13-14)

The poem opens, paradoxically, with an emphasis on endings: "THE garlands fade that Spring so lately wove" (1). Spring is presented, metaphorically, as a kind of mother that nurses "Each simple flower" (2). This language will later seem ironic, since humanity will be depicted, by the end of the poem, as possessing no kind, nurturing, parental figure (such as God). The references in lines 2-6 to all the different kinds of beautiful flowers that Spring has nurtured are somewhat ironic, since even as they are mentioned we are aware of their ephemerality and impermanence. In the case of the flowers, however,

... Spring again shall call forth every bell,

And dress with humid hands, her wreaths again. (7-8)

This kind of regeneration is not the case, however, with "poor humanity" (9), which is "poor" in the double sense of being permanently ephemeral and also in the sense of being pitiful and pathetic. In some ways (Smith suggests) humans are frailer than the frail flowers she has already described. Moreover, not only is humanity itself "frail," but so are the

dreams that people nurture in their youths. Both persons and their early ideals fade away, never – unlike the supposedly frail flowers – to be restored to vitality.

Charlotte Smith's "Sonnet Written at the Close of Spring" is a romantic poem about nature written in the traditional form of a sonnet. It shows that nature and humanity are interconnected and uses human traits in the non-human world. The sonnet starts off discussing the wonders of spring, and talks about many flowers that bud and bloom in the spring: anemonies, primrose, hare-bells, violets, and purple orchis. Every spring, these beautiful flowers come alive again. Smith appreciates the beauty of nature and how it renews itself each spring, but is saddened that humans cannot do the same. "Ah, poor humanity! so frail, so fair, Are the fond visitors of thy early day, Till tyrant passion, and corrosive care, Bid all thy fairy colours fade away!" In these lines, Smith is speculating about youth and growing old. She feels sorry for humanity because unlike flowers, we age until our colors fade away, and then we never see those youthful, vibrant colors of our personalities ever again. At the end of the sonnet, Smith asks "Why has happiness no second spring?" Since humans are most happy when they are young and vibrant, she is basically asking, "Why don't humans have a second spring?" In a way, Smith is saying that nature is far better off than humans are, because nature has the ability to start over and become vibrant over and over again.