

*As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou grow'st
 In one of thine, from that which thou departest,
 And that fresh blood, which youngly thou bestow'st,
 Thou mayst call thine, when thou from youth
 convertest.
 Herein lives wisdom, beauty, and increase;
 Without this, folly, age, and cold decay.
 If all were minded so, the times should cease,
 And threescore year would make the world away:
 Let those whom nature hath not made for store,
 Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish;
 Look whom the best endowed, she gave the more,
 Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty cherish.
 *She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby
 Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die.**

The tone shifts markedly: this sonnet is far less harsh and commanding. The subject is growth, specifically that of reproduction, of new blood being passed along to a new generation. Growing is as quick as waning, the speaker maintains; as you depart, your offspring will increase. What you pass on in your youth you may call yours when you are no longer young. All of this is said rather quickly and brightly in the first quatrain, and the effect is partly produced by the feminine rhymes, which are rather rare in the sonnets.

More solemn and preacherly is the second quatrain, though no *thou's* are used. The argument is that what he is urging—procreation, still—must be sought. If not, population would dwindle, and the world would be depleted in sixty years. It is Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* who exclaims in a moment of self-recognition, “The world must be peopled.” Clearly, the youth of the sonnets has not had that moment.

Therefore the speaker, returning to his logical mode, wishes for a natural selection of the “best endowed” (l. 11). Nature has not chosen to keep everyone “for store” (l. 9); let the “harsh, featureless, and rude” (l. 10) perish childless. The speaker seems too harsh here, more like Falstaff in his comments on the sad lot of men he admits recruiting for cannon

fodder in the king's army. As the speaker's character develops, his inconsistencies begin to be more obvious. For the moment, he asks us to believe that those who are affluent deserve more. It is the powerful goddess nature who has made the youth a model. He is likened to an engraved seal that can reproduce that model, and therefore his image shall not die. Once more the speaker is carried away by his own superlatives. Cloning does not give him pause.

It should be noted finally that the speaker has dropped the first person pronoun and has returned to the argument of Sonnet 1, as if for safety.