

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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From the 1815 revised version (by Wordsworth himself) of the original 1804 poem.

The Daffodils

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine
and twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
in such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
what wealth the show to me had brought.
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Los narcisos

Vagaba solitario como una nube
Que flota alto sobre colinas y valles
Cuando súbitamente vi una multitud
De acogedores narcisos dorados.
Junto al lago, bajo los árboles bailando trémulamente
en la brisa
Persistentes cual estrellas resplandecientes
Que titilan en la Vía Láctea,
En perpetua línea
A lo largo de la bahía.
Vi miles de un vistazo,
Agitando sus corolas en alegre danza.
Las olas bailaban a su lado, pero ellos,
Superaban a las olas con su alegre resplandor.
Un poeta no puede encontrarse más feliz
En tan maravillosa compañía.
Les observé sin parar, sin pensar
En la dicha que me reportaba el espectáculo.
Ahora, cada vez que reposo en mi diván,
Con ánimo sosegado o pensativo,
Resurgen fugazmente en mi consciencia,
-Que es bendición de la soledad-,
Y entonces mi corazón se llena de dicha,
Y baila con los narcisos.

The poem was inspired when Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy came across a sight of beautiful daffodils on 15 April 1802, during their visits to the Lake District. It was written in 1804, according to Wordsworth's own account, and after Dorothy's journal entry describing the walk. Mary Moorman has pointed out the important influence of Dorothy on his brother's poetry (1965, 27 & 96-7). Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, moved to a cottage at Grasmere in 1799. After Wordsworth married in 1802, the family continued to live there until 1813.

When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow park we saw a few daffodils close to the water side, we fancied that the lake had floated the seed ashore & that the little colony had so sprung up – But as we went along there were more & yet more & at last under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about & about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness & the rest tossed and reeled and danced & seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the Lake, they looked so gay ever dancing ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here & there a little knot & a few stragglers a few yards higher up but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity & unity & life of that one busy highway – We rested again & again. The Bays were stormy & we heard the waves at different distances & in the middle of the water like the Sea. (Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Grasmere Journal* Thursday, 15 April 1802, p. 85)

Published in 1807 in *Poems in Two Volumes*, a volume that was poorly reviewed by Wordsworth's contemporaries including Lord Byron, the poem is now taught in many schools in the English-speaking world. The poem contains four stanzas of six lines each. In each stanza, the first line rhymes with the third and the second with the fourth. The stanza then ends with a rhyming couplet. Wordsworth unifies the content of the poem by focusing the first three stanzas on the experience at the lake and the last stanza on the memory of that experience.

The four six-line stanzas of this poem follow a quatrain-couplet rhyme scheme ababcc: Each line is metered in iambic tetrameter. In the first stanza, line 6 appears to veer from the metrical format. However, Wordsworth likely intended *fluttering* to be read as two syllables (flut' 'RING) instead of three so that the line maintains iambic tetrameter. The poem makes use of 'Enjambment' which converts the poem into a continuous flow of expressions without a pause.

.....1.....2.....3.....4
 The WAVES.|.be SIDE.|.them DANCED;|.but THEY
1.....2.....3.....4
 Out-DID.|.the SPARK.|.ling WAVES.|.in GLEE:—
1.....2.....3.....4
 A PO.|.et COULD.|.not BUT.|.be GAY
1.....2.....3.....4
 In SUCH.|.a JOC.|.und COM.|.pa NY:
1.....2.....3.....4
 I GAZED—|.and GAZED—|.but LIT.|.tle THOUGHT
1.....2.....3.....4
 What WEALTH.|.the SHOW.|.to ME.|.had BROUGHT:

Figures of Speech

Stanza 1

Alliteration: *lonely as a cloud* (line 1).

Simile: Comparison (using *as*) of the speaker's seclusion to that of a cloud (line 1).

Personification: Comparison of the cloud to a lonely human. (line 1)

Alliteration: **h**igh o'er vales and **H**ills (line 2).

Alliteration: **W**hen all at **o**nce (line 3). (Note that the *w* and *o* have the same consonant sound.)

Personification/Metaphor: Comparison of daffodils to a crowd of people (lines 3-4).

Alliteration: **B**eside **t**he Lake, **b**eneath **t**he trees,

Personification/Metaphor: Comparison of daffodils to dancing humans (lines 4, 6).

Exaggeration/hyperbole: ten thousand at a glance...

Themes

Nature's beauty uplifts the human spirit. People sometimes fail to appreciate nature despite the inherent unity between man and nature characteristic of the Romantic period (human emotions inspired by nature are neglected due to our busy lives). Nature thrives unattended. Reminder of the arrival of the spring season, when the field is full of daffodils; the flowers symbolize the joys and happiness of life. The daffodils proliferate in splendour along the shore of the lake without the need for human attention. Loneliness (The feeling of loneliness was marked by the death of his brother John). The power of memory to freeze time (in solitude, when his mind is unrestrained by disturbing elements of the real world, he revives the memories of the daffodils. Daffodils is not ephemeral but rather permanent and everlasting. Notice the recreation of sensations attached to different perceptual senses (sight, sound, touch, smell) also by means of synaesthesia.

Questions for discussion

In the preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), written by Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Wordsworth presents his definition of poetry:

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind.

Discuss this point of view in relation to the poem. How does the poem make the reader feel the sensations

Wordsworth and his sister felt?

Works Cited

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Moorman, Mary. *William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Early Years, 1770–1803 v. 1*, Oxford University Press 1957

Moorman, Mary. *William Wordsworth: A Biography: The Later Years, 1803–50 v. 2*, Oxford University Press 1965

Wordsworth, Dorothy (ed. Pamela Woof). *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*. Oxford University Press 2002. See also <http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/cumbria/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8586000/8586626.stm>