

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH - ' I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD '
AN INTROSPECTION

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Abstract

The present study gives a detailed descriptive analysis of William Wordsworth's poem 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' or 'Daffodils' as a nature poem. Wordsworth is the forerunner of the Romantic Movement in England. As a poet of nature, Wordsworth stands supreme. He is the worshipper of nature. Wordsworth is involved in the subject matter of his poetry which is genuinely simple. He takes pleasure in close observations and minute detailing of his subject. He is transcendentalist, romantic and mystic. His poetry begins in delight and ends in delight.

Keywords: Wordsworth, Nature, Style, Tone, Hyperbole, Personification, Theme

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Introduction :

The poem recaptures a moment on April 15, 1802, when William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy were walking near a lake at Grasmere, Cumbria Country, England and came upon a shore lined with daffodils. Grasmere is in northwestern England's Lake District. The area is famous for its hundreds of lakes, gorgeous expanses of its springtime daffodils and for being home to the 'Lakeland Poets: William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey and Thomas De Quincey'.

Setting and Background:

Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy moved to a cottage at Grasmere in 1799. After Wordsworth married in 1802, his wife resided there too. The family continued to live there until 1813. Dorothy who kept a diary, described what she and her brother saw on that April day in 1802.

“ When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow park , we saw a few daffodils close to the waterside and we fancied that the lake had floated the seeds ashore and that the little colony had so sprung up_____ but as we went along they were more and yet more and at last under the

bough of the trees we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore.....some rested their heads on [mossy] stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the Lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing..... _____ Rain came on, we were wet”.

This simple poem is one of the loveliest and most famous in the Wordsworth canon, revisits the familiar subjects of nature and memory with a simple musical eloquence. This poem is a result of actual visualization rather than imagination.

Type of Work :

A lyric poem presents the deep feelings and emotions of the poet rather than telling a story. The lyric gives expression to a single emotion or feeling. The lyric is a subjective poem, expresses emotion and is intensely personal. ‘ I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud’ is a lyric poem focusing on the poet’s response to the beauty of nature. An earlier version was published in ‘Poems in Two Volumes’ in 1807 as a three stanza poem. The final version was published in ‘Collected Poems’ in 1815.

Summary :

Once the poet was wandering pointlessly beside a lake that he came across a crowd of daffodils gathered by the side of the lake growing under the trees. The poet was wandering aimlessly like a patch of a cloud. This comparison presents an idea of seclusion but the idea of being alone is contradicted by the phrase ‘crowd’. Wordsworth may be at discomfort in human multitude but not amidst the objects of nature.

‘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’

Phrases like a crowd, a host, continuous as the stars, they stretched in never ending lines, presents deep implications. The daffodils seemed so happy as if they were dancing. It appeared to the poet as innumerable stars shining constantly in the sky in the form of Milky Way.

‘Continuous as the stars that shine

And twinkle on the milky way,

They stretched in never-ending line

Along the margin of a bay’

The poet’s eyes captured the whole scene, his mind worked faster for him to capture this picaresque view in his memory forever. The poet got completely lost in this beautiful view and questioned himself as to what he is gaining out of it, daffodils are mere objects of nature? But Yes, for Wordsworth nature is everything, it is nature that is his true companion.

Wordsworth beautifully pens down his feelings in the last stanza of the poem __ the feeling of happiness, joy, enjoyment, company, contentment, remembrance.

He loves his solitude for it beautifully takes him to the time of happiness in the company of nature and at this point his solitude is replaced with beautiful memories of nature. He now knows what he gained in the company of nature ___ a memory for a lifetime, the beautiful sight of daffodils which gave him a pleasure as equal to the pleasure of actually seeing them.

‘They flash upon that inward eye

Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils’.

Insights :

As the poem begins we find reverse personification which adds to the poem’s brilliance. The speaker is compared to a natural object__ a cloud and the daffodils are personified as human beings dancing and ‘tossing their heads’ in ‘a crowd’, ‘a host’ metaphorically.

This technique implies an inherent unity between man and nature, making it one of Wordsworth’s most basic and effective methods for instilling in the readers the feeling of love for nature. 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.

Wordsworth’s Style :

This poem is typically Wordsworthian. It brings out nature at its best. Wordsworth took uncommon delight in the most commonplace things. ‘ Emotion recollected in tranquility’ is the chief factor with Wordsworth and his emotion is stirred.

He does not give expression to his emotions then and there, nor does he forget it the moment he withdraws himself from the scene. The emotions are not momentary or temporary. They are stored in the mind of the poet and became permanent and everlasting. They are recollected in tranquility which fills the mind of the poet with pleasure.

At the very last stanza of the poem, we can make out few conclusions as__ (a) Nature uplifts the soul. (b) Nature gets ignored as we fail to appreciate its true beauty pressured by our very own daily routine. (c) Nature thrives unattended as the daffodils proliferate in splendor along the shore of the lake without the need for human attention.

Imagination is the source of Wordsworth's poetry. Nature is seen as a guide, a source of wisdom. Simplicity, mysticism, spontaneity and individual freedom forms the keynote of Wordsworth's poems. Throughout his work, nature provides the ultimate good influence on the human mind. Wordsworth repeatedly emphasizes the importance of nature to an individual's intellectual and spiritual development. Wordsworth's dealings with nature are his chief glory as a poet. His treatment is accurate and first hand. Even the slightest of his poems have evidence of close observation. This personal dealing with nature in all her moods produces a joy, a plenteousness of delight and is Wordsworth's most appealing charm to most readers. Edward Albert says "In his treatment of nature, however he is not content merely to rejoice; he tries to see more deeply and to find the secret springs of this joy and thanksgiving".

Structure:

The poem contains four stanzas each of six lines. In each stanza, the first line rhymes with the third and the second with the fourth. The stanza then ends with a 'rhyming couplet'. The lines in the poem are in iambic tetrameter. The meter creates a song like rhythm, a rhythm to which daffodils might dance. Wordsworth also uses alliteration and consonance to create rhythm.

Observations :

- (a) Line 1 contains a simile comparing the narrator to the cloud.
- (b) Line 7 uses a simile to compare the daffodils to the eternity of the stars in the milky way, creating a link between nature and the universe which links the narrator to the universe.
- (c) Line 9 uses hyperbole to express the vastness of the vision: "They stretched in never ending line".

- (d) Line 12 uses personification. Daffodils become a living entity: “ Tossing their heads in sprightly dance”.
- (e) Line 13 uses personification and comparison. The waves danced too but no better than the daffodils.
- (f) In stanza 3, the narrator is unaware of impact of seeing the daffodils.
- (g) In stanza 4, the narrator is now aware of the benefit and can now cherish the sweet and everlasting memory of the sight of daffodils that is pleasure in tranquility : “ They flash upon that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude”.

We should have a connectivity with nature to have a deep understanding of ourselves. Hereby I conclude quoting :

‘ Nature never did betray the heart that loved her’

_____ William Wordsworth

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