Stan.tk Study Guide

William Wordsworth, 'I Wandered lonely as a cloud'

(1) BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION
For biographical information on William Wordsworth please refer to the study guide on “Lyrical Ballads”, or read his biography at the Academy of American Poets: http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/296, or a host of other websites, or in Dizdar’s “Poezija engleskog romantizma”, p. 103.

(2) TEXT OF WORK
'I Wandered lonely as a cloud' (c. 1804, p. 1807)

I Wandered lonely as a cloud¹
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.

¹ Dorothy Wordsworth [his sister, whose influence on Wordsworth’s poetry many critics claim has been immense, both by her direct suggestions and her journals] made a note in The Grasmere Journal on April 15, 1802: “I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and about them, and rested their heads upon these 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 the over the lake, they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing.”

(3) ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY (includes summary of poem)
The speaker says that, wandering like a cloud floating above hills and valleys, he encountered a field of daffodils beside a lake. The dancing, fluttering flowers stretched endlessly along the shore, and though the waves of the lake danced beside the flowers, the daffodils outdid the water in glee. The speaker says that a poet could not help but be happy in such a joyful company of flowers. He says that he stared and stared, but did not realize what wealth the scene would bring him. For now, whenever he feels "vacant" or "pensive," the memory flashes upon "that inward eye / That is the bliss of solitude," and his heart fills with pleasure, "and dances with the daffodils."
The four six-line stanzas of this poem follow a quatrain-couplet rhyme scheme: ABABCC. Each line is metered in iambic tetrameter.

This simple poem, one of the loveliest and most famous in the Wordsworth canon, revisits the familiar subjects of nature and memory, this time with a particularly (simple) spare, musical eloquence. The plot is extremely simple, depicting the poet’s wandering and his discovery of a field of daffodils by a lake, the memory of which pleases him and comforts him when he is lonely, bored, or restless. The characterization of the sudden occurrence of a memory—the daffodils "flash upon the inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude"—is psychologically acute, but the poem's main brilliance lies in the reverse personification of its early stanzas. The speaker is metaphorically compared to a natural object, a cloud—"I wandered lonely as a cloud / That floats on high...", and the daffodils are continually personified as human beings, dancing and "tossing their heads" in "a crowd, a host." 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 reader the feeling the poet so often describes himself as experiencing.

(SparkNotes)

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (also known as "The Daffodils") is an 1804 poem by William Wordsworth. It was inspired by an April 15, 1802 event in which Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy came across a "long belt" of daffodils. It was first published in 1807, and a revised version was released in 1815.

The memory of the daffodils is etched in the speaker's mind and soul to be cherished forever. When he's feeling lonely, dull or depressed, he thinks of the daffodils, and cheers up. The full impact of the daffodils' beauty (symbolizing the beauty of nature) did not strike him at the moment of seeing them, when he stared blankly at them but much later when he sat alone, sad and lonely and remembered them.

(Wikipedia)

(5) GLOSSARY

o'er prep. (short for “over”) – preko

vale n. – dolina

daffodil n. (a bulbous plant, Narcissus pseudonarcissus, of the amaryllis family, having solitary, yellow, nodding flowers that bloom in the spring) – narcis, sunovrat

host n. – mnoštvo (čega)

flutter v. – lepršati (krilima), lepetati; lebdjeti

breeze n. – povjetarac, lahor, vjetrić; fluttering and dancing in the breeze – kako lepršaju i plešu na povjetarcu

twinkle v. – treperiti, blistati, svjetlucati

milky way n. (or Milky Way; the spiral galaxy containing our solar system; with the naked eye it is observed as a faint luminous band stretching across the heavens, composed of approximately a trillion stars, most of which are too distant to be seen individually) – mliječni put/staza (Milky Way – Mliječni put)

sprightly adj. – živahan, veseo; toss one's head idiom – zabaciti (prezirno, nestrpljivo) glavu; tossing their heads in sprightly dance – kako zabacuju glavama u veselom plesu

out–do (outdo, outdid, outdone) v. – nadmašiti, natkriliti

glee n. – veselje, veselost, radost

gay adj. – veseo, živahan

jocund adj. – veseo, raspoložen

what wealth the show to me had brought – kakvo mi je bogatstvo ta predstava donijela
often adv. – često, mnogo puta
vacant adj. – prazan; nezauzet, nezapremljen, nenastanjen, napušten; slobodan, besposlen, dokon; izgubljen, prazan, glup
pensive adj. – zamišljen, ozbiljan, zabrinut; sjetan; in vacant or pensive mood – slobodnog ili sjetnog raspoloženja
they flash upon that inward eye – zasijaju/zatrepere u tom nutarnjem oku
bliss n. – blaženstvo, ushit, velika sreća

(5) SOURCES CITED


(6) RECOMMENDED READING
