I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud

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.

W. Wordsworth (1802)

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Poet William Wordsworth penned this poem two years after walking in northwestern England’s Lake District (near England’s highest mountain, Scafell Pike) in the spring of 1802.

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:

“Poetry,” said Wordsworth, “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... is gradually produced.” Do you think this poem is true to that maxim?

The use of anastrophe - inverting the normal word order to accommodate rhyme – is on display here in multiple places. How many examples of this technique can you find?

If you were responsible for translating this poem into more modern language, what words would you choose to replace the following:

vales, sprightly, glee, gay, jocund, vacant, pensive