



Tikrit University

Collage of Education for Women

English department

Stage: Second Class

Subject: Poetry

Lecture title: The Analysis of “To Daffodis” Poem

Lecturer name: Majeed Hammadi khalifa

Lecturer email: maj50715@tu.edu.iq

## The Analysis of "To Daffodils" Poem

By Robert Herrick

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see  
You haste away so soon;  
As yet the early-rising sun  
Has not attain'd his noon.  
Stay, stay,  
Until the hasting day  
Has run  
But to the even-song;  
And, having pray'd together, we  
Will go with you along.  
We have short time to stay, as you,  
We have as short a spring;  
As quick a growth to meet decay,  
As you, or anything.  
We die  
As your hours do, and dry  
Away,  
Like to the summer's rain;  
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,  
Ne'er to be found again.

**Robert Herrick** was born in London on August 24, 1591. His father, Nicholas Herrick, was a jeweler and goldsmith. When Robert was just over a year old, his father committed suicide by falling from a window. Left without the head of their family, Herrick's mother Julian took care of two of his siblings while Robert and two older brothers were tended to by their uncles. From age 16 to 22, Robert was an apprentice for his uncle William, a goldsmith. The apprenticeship was supposed to last ten years, but Herrick only served six of them.

After apprenticing with his uncle, Herrick enrolled at Saint John's College in Cambridge and graduated at the age of 26. Following his education at Cambridge, Herrick began his religious career. When he was 32, he

became ordained and served as a "domestic chaplain to the Duke of Buckingham on his ill-fated expedition to La Rochelle", a siege in the Anglo-French War in 1627.

In the next stage of his religious career, Herrick became the Vicar of Dean Prior in Devon in 1629. Herrick served in this vicarage until his death in 1674, though his time in this role was interrupted between 1647 and 1662. During the English Civil War and due to Herrick's Royalist ideology, he was removed from his religious office.

It is contested whether Herrick married. Some sources state he never married, while some acknowledge a marriage to Lettice Yarde in 1639. However, "literary gossips have reveled] in speculations about the identities of the 14 'mistresses' (in the 17th century, inamoratas, lady friends, or merely admired acquaintances) to whom he addressed 158 poems".

Herrick's authorship of over 1200 poems remain uncontested. His publications include a collection of religious verse, *His Noble Numbers*, published in 1647. Included in the same volume as *His Noble Numbers* is another collection of poems published in 1648 titled *Hesperides; or the Works Both Humane and Divine of Robert Herrick, Esq.* Herrick was an admirer of Ben Jonson's work and is counted among the "Sons of Ben", men who adhered to Jonson's theory and style of writing. Herrick even wrote five poems about

Jonson. Herrick imitated and sought inspiration from the Greek and Roman classics as well, his works ranging from pastorals to declarations of love, religious musings, and even bawdry.

## **Summary**

Herrick's poem begins with the speaker directly addressing the daffodils, who are only partly the subject of his verses. The speaker conveys the sadness when flowers fade away experienced by all of humanity. The speaker likens the daffodils' wilting to a sun losing its momentum before reaching the noon position in the sky. They beg the daffodils to stay a little while longer until evening when the rest of mankind will go with them on their end-of-life journey once they have all prayed together.

In the final stanza of the poem, the speaker equates the situation of the daffodils with that of humans. Just like the flowers, the youth and vigor humans experience are short-lived. Just like the daffodils, humans age, change, and pass away. The prime of life is soon over and death quickly arrives. The speaker parallels this sense of things passing away with a summer rainstorm drying up, or morning dew evaporating.

## **The elements of the poem**

### **Speaker or Narrator, and Point of View**

In, *To Daffodils*, Herrick employs the first-person inclusive voice, 'we,' denoting multiple people viewing the daffodils and observing them or more likely representing humanity as a whole. However, the poem itself takes on the tone of an address as Herrick also uses the second person 'you,' and entitles the work *To Daffodils*, cementing the presence of two characters or entities - the body of people, however large or small, and the daffodils themselves.

### **Form and Meter**

The poem *Discontents in Devon* is written in one verse, an octet.

## **Metaphors and Similes**

To Daffodils uses a lot of similes to compare people and human nature with the daffodil, for example 'we have a short time to stay, as you.' This direct comparison speaks of the fleeting nature of life and is continued throughout the second stanza.

## **Alliteration and Assonance**

Robert Herrick employs alliteration in the phrase 'private protonotary,' in the poem To his Conscience to highlight the scathing and exasperated tone with which the speaker addresses his conscience.

## **Irony**

'Stay, stay' is ironic as the daffodils themselves cannot control when they stay or go. This metaphorically represents the fact that humans cannot control the time of their death.

## **Genre**

The poem The Argument of his Book is a nature poem.

## **Setting**

Possibly a field, as the poet is addressing daffodils. The poet does not explicitly reference the time in which the poem takes place, but does refer to both 'spring,' and 'summer,' as well as the 'morning,' showing that time in general is an important theme. (To Daffodils)

## **Tone**

The tone of the poem To the Sour Reader is sarcastic and satirical.

## **Protagonist and Antagonist**

The protagonist in the poem *To the Sour Reader* is the poet, Robert Herrick and the antagonist is the sour reader, as addressed in the title.

## **Major Conflict**

In the poem *Delight in Disorder* there is a subtle conflict between the way things are and the way they are supposed to be, for example, 'A sweet disorder in the dress / kindles in clothes a wantonness.' This highlights the imperfections in everyday items, yet the title *Delight in Disorder* allows these conflicts to exist in a positive light.

## **Climax**

The climax of *To Daffodils* is the very last line 'Ne'er to be found again.' This predominately monosyllabic line finalizes the poem and gives the sense of a final death that can't be reversed. As the climax, it encapsulates the essence of the poem and the abrupt, finite nature of death.

## **Foreshadowing**

The line, 'Weak I am grown, and must in short time fall,' in the poem *His Return to London* foreshadows the speaker's death as he perceives it looming over him.

## **Understatement**

In his poem *His Farewell to Sack*, Robert Herrick addresses the sack, 'Farewell thou thing,' in the opening line, which is an understatement of his love and dismay at losing it, which is evident in the passion of the poem.

## **Allusions**

To Daffodils is in some ways an allusion to the Biblical imagery of humanity and life being fleeting like the grass or flowers, here today and gone tomorrow.

### **Metonymy and Synecdoche**

In, To Daffodils, the daffodil is representative of humans' inevitable deaths.

### **Personification**

In addressing the daffodil as 'Fair Daffodil,' Herrick is personifying the flower as a being in order to naturalize human death and humanize natural death. He also personifies the sun in 'As yet the early-rising sun / Has not attain'd his noon,' to contrast the fleeting life of the daffodils with the constant nature of the sun, which also represents the passing of time in this poem.

### **Hyperbole**

By stating 'We have short time to stay, as you,' in the poem To Daffodils the poet implies that the lifespan of the daffodil and that of humans are similar or the same, which is an exaggeration aimed at emphasizing the fleeting nature of life in general.