



Woody Alliances Laundered

OuLiPoems

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and William Wordsworth

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for Richard Beard

“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.”

William Wordsworth

Woody Alliances Laundered

Foreword

It is presently some 210 years since Dorothy and William Wordsworth made their famous walk home from Eusmere to Grasmere, April 16th 1802. In her journal the following day, Dorothy immediately wrote about the daffodils they had seen together, yet it wasn't until at least two years later that William wrote the first, three-stanza version of 'I wandered lonely as a cloud'; a poem he later revised and to which he added a fourth stanza for his *Collected Poems* of 1815. The origins and writing of this most popular of English Romantic poems are therefore clearly separated in time and may well be contestable.

Pamela Woof writes, "Dorothy's 1802 description is often cited as the 'source' for Wordsworth's poem", but goes on to qualify that "it is sweeping to judge Dorothy's as the original template": Dorothy clearly wrote about the flowers in prose and it was William, after all, who went on to write them into a poem.¹ Yet what *might happen* to this celebrated poem, I considered, if William were to be removed and Dorothy instated as its author and original source? Accordingly, I wrote the poem 'Her Verses' using the OuLiPo technique of monovocalism – just one vowel is employed, the letter E – to represent the woman (*Elle*, perhaps?) behind this iconic poem. Similarly a second poem, 'Without William', reformulates the original poem as an OuLiPo Lipogram, by removing a symbolic letter, in this case his initial W. From these first steppings-out, Wordsworth and I went on to work together to explore other OuLiPo transformations of his original poem. Some of the devices are self-explanatory, such as Spoonerisms, Cockney Rhyming Slang, Anagrams and Riddles. Others perhaps benefit from explication:

'On Commerce' makes use of the OuLiPo N+7 rule of noun replacement, substituting nouns from a *Dictionary of Commerce* for Wordsworth's original pastoral nouns – a wonderfully lucky substitution turning Wordsworth's noun 'poet' into the new noun 'Post Master', Wordsworth's elected profession. The resultant poem perhaps reinvests some of the period's Romantic radicalism, speaking as it now does of commercial concerns so pressing in these times of ongoing economic recession. 'I Moved From Place to Place' also plays with nouns, replacing the originals with their dictionary definitions, whilst 'Daffodil Triptych' makes a Structuralist inventory of the poem's parts of speech.

In 'Δαφφοδίσ', the 'anticipatory plagiarism' of the text is explored: the discovery of an Ur-poem from which Wordsworth translated his own poem. 'An Eclogue (Literally)' subverts the classical form of this pastoral genre, casting Dorothy and William within their own episode and having them speak in a way that is, perhaps, indicative of a linguistic laziness in our popular culture. 'I Moseyed Along' offers a transcription of the original poem into another demotic form, whilst 'Japanese Haibun' casts Wordsworth as Matsuo Basho, the wandering monk, translating English Romanticism into the Zen-like meditations of prose poem and haiku.

¹ 'The Daffodils: The Journal and the Poem' in *The Wordsworths and the Daffodils* (Grasmere: The Wordsworth Trust, 2002).

Other OuLiPo techniques include 'reduction', in the poem 'From Crowd to Solitude', which preserves the original word order of the poem, but removes large portions of the original; whereas 'Once When I Wandered' uses *all* of the words of the original, but totally rearranges them. 'Black Dog' explores the more introverted side of Wordsworth's original, by substituting the opposite meanings (antonyms) into the poem.

In 'From Feeling Into Words' Seamus Heaney describes a poet's challenge as to delight in language. The anagrammatic poem 'Woody Alliances Laundered' and, indeed this whole publication, is an attempt to do just that: to revisit, re-evaluate, and delight in the language of this most famous and popular of English Romantic poems.

On Commerce

Noun replacement

I wandered lonely as a Collateral Agreement
that floats on high o'er Vendors and Historical Cost Accounting,
when all at once I saw a Current Ratio,
an Illegal Partnership of golden Damages;
beside the Larceny, beneath the Trust Deeds,
fluttering and dancing in the British National Exports Council.

Continuous as the Status Inquiries that shine
and twinkle on the Misrepresentation Act,
they stretched in never-ending Liquidation
along the Market Value of a Betterment Levy:
ten thousand saw I at a Golden Handshake,
tossing their Hire Purchases in sprightly Debenture.

The Wholesaler beside them danced; but they
out-did the sparkling Wholesaler in Goods-On-Approval.
A Post Master could not but be gay
in such a jocund Condition Precedent:
I gazed and gazed but little thought
what Windfall Profit the Sliding Scale to me had brought.

For oft, when on my Credit Limit I lie
in vacant or in pensive Mutuality,
they flash upon that inward Federation
which is the Board of Speculation,
and then my Hogshead with Policies fills
and dances with the Damages.

Her Verses

Monovocalism (one vowel)

She seems very keenly skewed
between the levees, the greenery,
when speed renders her these green stems.
She shepherds her green herd
between the meres, between the trees.
They tremble, they recede between breezes.

Endlessly they excel, they sheen,
they reflect the elements.
They stretch extendedly
between the levee's edges.
“Jeez! Ten, twenty, screeds!
They tremble; they speed the energy!”

The levee sends energy between ends;
yet the green stems send better energy,
even glee. She seems very cheered
between them, the merry ensemble.
She peeks – and peeks – yet reflects even less
every effect sleeps between her eyes.

Yet when she sleeps between her sheets,
she keeps herself empty, even-tempered –
then they enter her emergent self
(the dependent self she herself elects).
Then she feels very cheery –
she reels newly between the green stems!

The Reverend Spooner Steps Out

I lonedered wanly as a cloud
That oats on fligh o'er hales and vills,
When all at once I craw a sowd,
A host of dolden gaffodils;
Beside the trake, beneath the lees,
Duttering and flancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the shars that stine
And minkle on the Wilky Tway,
They stretched in ever-lending nine
Along the bargin of a may:
Ten thousand gaw I at a slance,
Hossing their teads in drightly sprance.

The baves weside them danced; but they
Dout-id the warkling spraves in glee:
A poet could not gut be bay,
In such a cocund jompany:
I gazed – and gazed – but thittle lought
What shealth the wow to he mad brought:

For oft, when on my louch I cie
In vacant or in mensive pood,
They lash upon that finward eye
Which is the sliss of bolitude;
And then my heart with feasure plills,
And dances dith the waffodils.

Kick and Prance

Cockney rhyming slang

I went for a Jane Fonda on me Jack Jones
like a Quiet and Loud above the Jack and Jills,
when all at once I saw these April Showers;
beside the Daughter, beneath the Knock Knees,
having a Kick and Prance. It was right Mork and Mindy.

Like the Lah-Di-Dahs up in the Apple Pie,
they stretched in endless Patsy Clines
right along the shore of the Cream Cake.
I had a Butcher's and saw Currant Buns of 'em,
tossing their Loaves as they Kicked and Pranced.

The Daughter beside them Kicked and Pranced too,
but the April Showers were the Mae West!
A Hope-I-Don't-Blow-It could only be Doris Day –
the April Showers were a right Giraffe!
I had a Butcher's, and then some,
but I never Adam and Eve'd
what a nice little Bunsen Burner this was!

Coz when I'm in me Uncle Ned
feeling a bit Punch and Judy,
they flash upon my Bacon Rind
which is what being on yer Toblerone's all about.
And then my Strawberry fills with Optic Measures,
and takes the April Showers for a Kick and Prance.

Δαφφοδιλσ

Anticipatory plagiarism

The following poem has recently been discovered and is, perhaps, the Rosetta Stone for Wordsworth's famous 'Daffodils'.

Ι ωανδερεδ λονελψ ασ α χλουδ
Τηατ φλοατσ ον ηιγη οξερ παλεσ ανδ ηιλλσ,
Ωηεν αλλ ατ ονχε Ι σαω α χρωωδ,
Α ηοστ, οφ γολδεν δαφφοδιλσ;
Βεσιδε τηε λακε, βενεατη τηε τρεεσ,
Φλυττερινγ ανδ δανχινγ ιν τηε βρεεζε.

Χοντινυουσ ασ τηε σταρσ τηατ σηνε
Ανδ τωινκλε ον τηε μιλκψ ωαψ,
Τηεψ στρετχηεδ ιν νεπερ–ενδιγγ λινε
Αλονγ τηε μαργιν οφ α βαψ:
Τεν τηουσανδ σαω Ι ατ α γλανχε,
Τοσσινγ τηειρ ηεαδσ ιν σπριγητλψ δανχε.

Τηε ωαπες βεσιδε τηεμ δανχεδ; βυτ τηεψ
Ουτ–διδ τηε σπαρκλινγ ωαπες ιν γλεε:
Α ποετ χουλδ νοτ βυτ βε γαψ,
Ιν συχη α φοχυνδ χομπανψ:
Ι γαζεδ – ανδ γαζεδ – βυτ λιττλε τηουγητ
Ωηατ ωεαλτη τηε σηοω το με ηαδ βρουγητ:

Φορ οφτ, ωηεν ον μψ χουχη Ι λιε
Ιν παχαντ ορ ιν πενσιπε μοοδ,
Τηεψ φλαση υπον τηατ ινωαρδ εψε
Ωηιχη ισ τηε βλισσ οφ σολιτυδε;
Ανδ τηεν μψ ηεαρτ ωιτη πλεασυρε φιλλσ,
Ανδ δανχεσ ωιτη τηε δαφφοδιλσ.

I Moved From Place to Place

Definitional

I moved from place to place without purpose
or known destination, feeling sad without friends –
just like those masses of water or ice must feel
as they move slowly and lightly through the air
above valleys or dales with streams running through;
or those areas of land that are rounded in shape
and higher than the surrounding land but not as high
as mountains – when quickly and unexpectedly
I saw a large number of plants with slender leaves
(yellow, trumpet-shaped, native to Europe,
Latin name: *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*),
beside a large body of water, beneath some woody
perennial plants that grow to a height of several
metres moving gently in a dance in the wind
that ranged from light to moderate, with a speed of
6 to 50 kilometres, or 4 to 31 miles per hour.

Continuing without change, or interruption
(just like those points of light which give out
bright but unsteady light on the spiral galaxy
to which Earth and its solar system belong),
they extended in a narrow mark without limit
along the boundary of an area of sea enclosed
by a wide inward-curving stretch of coastline.
I looked quickly, for only a second or two
and saw a very large number of them, throwing
their highest parts in a casual or careless way
in a series of rhythmic steps and movements
performed to music, that displayed great vigour.

The raised ridge-shaped formations that moved across the surface of the liquid, curled over and fell as they reached the shore beside them in a series of rhythmic steps and moves performed to music. But the plants with slender leaves (yellow, trumpet-shaped, native to Europe, Latin name: *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*), did more than the raised ridge-shaped formations that moved across the surface of the liquid and curled over and fell as they reached the shore, reflecting or giving off light as they did in brilliant flashes of delight. A person who writes poems, especially as a vocation, could not be filled with light-heartedness in such a gathering itself so full of good humour. I looked for a long time with unwavering attention – and looked again for a long time with unwavering attention – but engaged only on a limited scale in thinking what an abundance of pleasures the exhibition or performance had brought to me.

For at short intervals or repeatedly – when I stretch out on the horizontal surface of my upholstered furniture on which two or more people can sit side by side in an unoccupied state of mind, or thinking deeply especially in a sad or serious manner – they appear suddenly in bursts upon that organ of sight which sends light impulses to the brain for interpretation but which, in this case, relate to or exists only in my mind or spirit, which is the perfect happiness of the state of being alone, separated from others, whether considered as a welcome freedom from disturbance, or as an unhappy loneliness; and then, the muscular organ that pumps blood around my body becomes full of feelings of happiness and delight, and moves rhythmically in time to music

with the plants with long slender leaves
(yellow, trumpet-shaped, native to Europe,
Latin name: *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*).

Daffodil Triptych

Inventory: verbs, nouns, adjectives

I.

to be
to bring
to fill
to flash

to float
to flutter and dance
to gaze
to lie

to out-do
to see
to shine
to stretch

to think
to toss
to twinkle
to wander

II.

bay
bliss
breeze
cloud

company
couch
crowd
daffodils

daffodils
dance
eye
glance

glee
heads
heart
hills

host
lake
line
margin

milky way
mood
pleasure
poet

show
solitude
stars
trees

vales
waves
waves
wealth

III.

continuous
gay
golden
high

inward
jocund
little
lonely

never-ending
pensive
sparkling
sprightly

vacant

An Eclogue (Literally)

Will: I was wandering along
literally like a cloud in the sky...

Dot: No way! Shut up!

Will: When suddenly I saw them,
like ten thousand, literally...
Daffodils! By the lake in the trees.
Literally fluttering and dancing...

Dot: Oh my god!

Will: They stretched-out in, literally, a never-ending line...

Dot: No way!

Will: Literally like the Milky Way...

Dot: Oh my god!

Will: All down the bay. Literally
tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

Dot: Shut up!

Will: The waves beside them
literally, like, danced!
But they sparkled more.

Dot: Shut up!

Will: I was like, literally, gay...

Dot: Will!

Will: I gazed and gazed
but didn't think
what wealth they'd literally brought me.

Dot: No way!

Will: You know, when I'm in bed,
literally in a pensive mood...

Dot: Yeah?

Will: They literally flash back into my mind...

Dot: No way!

Will: Which is like the bliss
of being on your own...
literally.

Dot: Yeah?

Will: And then my heart
literally fills up with pleasure...

Dot: No way!

Will: And dances with the daffodils.

Dot: Oh my god! Shut up!

Japanese Haibun

I was an eternal voyager, coming and going like the days and years; like the sun, the moon and clouds, our fellow travellers too. Like boats, our lives float away across the valleys and foothills of *Mount Fuji*, down her rivulets and watery rills – for travelling is life and the journey is both the setting out and the drifting home, to a table strewn with golden flowers. Many are they who have wandered beside the heart's cold lakes; many are they who have lain beneath the trees of the mind, desiring nothing but to be blown by the breeze. As many, are they, as the eternal stars that write our destinies in the lustrous night. As many, are they, as the fragile blooms that stretch, eternally, along the margins of lake *Kawaguchi*, of lake *Shoji*, or of *Yamanaka*. I have seen them in their thousands. I have watched their disciplined *kabuki*. Yet which is it that greater fills the *tetsunabe* pot of our hearts: the sparkling of the waves, or the *odori* of the blooms? In both reside deep auras of silver and gold... and me, a simple poet, gazing into the nothingness.

In bed, these humours
ignite my private heavens –
bright japonicas.

From Crowd to Solitude

Reduction

A cloud floats high...

I saw a crowd
beneath the trees,
dancing the continuous way.

On they stretched, ending
along the margin of a glance,
their heads in waves beside them.

But the sparkling
could not be
such a little thought!

What had brought on
my vacant or pensive mood;
that inward solitude?

...and then my heart dances.

Once When I Wandered

Homolexical translation : all the same words rearranged

Once when I wandered along on my way
and gazed at that little bay
that stretched as a thought, inward,
and floats on a lake in a sparkling mood

(but BE the fluttering waves, the thousand tossing waves!)

I saw the milky stars crowd their golden heads
o'er a host of ten jocund trees dancing
in a line, high as the never-ending breeze.
They all danced-on in sprightly glee,

but in the glance a company of gay daffodils
out-did me. I could not shine beside them.
And then in bliss I gazed at, and saw,
what they had brought to show beside my heart.

For oft, when they couch beneath the vacant hills
in the solitude of the lonely vales, the daffodils lie
in a pensive poet, and dance or twinkle with such
continuous pleasure, which is the cloud I but flash upon:

the eye dances and fills that margin with wealth.

I Moseyed Along

Demotic transcription

I moseyed along on my tod,
like a raincloud over the industrial estate,
when all of a sudden I spotted this gang,
a posse of blonde-haired hedonists,
hanging out by the pond in the park, by the hedge,
boogying to the waft from their beat box.

On and on they went, like the security lights that glow
from the roof of the *Galaxy*TM factory next door.
They sprawled out in an endless queue
down the banks of the culvert and all the way
to the works. Millions of 'em,
tossing their bonces to Garage and Hip Hop.

The water was gushing through the sluice of the weir,
but the posse outclassed it with a Mexican Wave.
Now I'm no lyricist, but I couldn't help being buoyed up
surrounded by such a wild bunch:
I gawped and gaped but didn't really think
what it was I'd *actually* seen...

not until I got back home and was chilling out on my bed
without a care in the world, having a good old think...
then I remembered them in my mind's eye.
I love spending time on me own, but
thinking of them made me feel wicked inside
as if I was dancing in the dandelions with 'em.

Black Dog

Antonyms

I sprinted like a parkour runner
who leaps across the building tops,
when after several hours I passed over
a singular, shrivelled blackness,
far from the desert, on top of the algae,
motionless in the tranquil air.

Broken as a black hole that sucks
all of the light from the universe,
it occupied the densest spot
inside the middle of a park:
just the one, after hours of looking,
shuffling on the spot in a solemn drill.

The distant ponds were yet more still
than the torpor of the shrivelled black.
A mediocre versifier could only be glum
to be alone in such a gloom.
I looked away – averted my eyes – thinking
what poverty the show dispersed.

For sometimes, when I'm standing round
thinking full and happy thoughts,
the darkness creeps out of that indiscrimination
which is the rub of company;
and then insensitivity empties its displeasure,
and stands rooted in the shrivelled dark.

Woody Alliances Laundered

'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' anagrams

Delayed Wondrous Alliance
Unloaded Yellow Radiances.

Wooded Celandines Aurally
Relayed Woodland Lunacies.

Woodland Yearlies Unlaced
Annually Raided Locoweeds.

Woodland's Audience Really
Ordained Yellowed Lacunas.

Early Euclidean Woodlands
Casually Loaned Eiderdown.

Landward Audience Loosely
Allayed Woodland Sinecure.

Uncolored Walleyed Naiads
Waylaid Uncleared Noodles.

Daily Allowance Resounded
Anodyne Crowded Alleluias.

Unalloyed Waddle Scenario
Cleared Woodland Uneasily.

Unalloyed Dawdle Scenario
Allowed Nonresidual Decay.

Serially Unclean Deadwood
Downloaded Lyrical Unease.

Colonnaded Wayside Allure
Awarded Anyone Celluloids.

Calloused Weary Dandelion
Noway Declared Delusional.

Riddle

The riddle is composed using only words commonly associated with its subject, as gleaned from the dictionary. Neither the riddle word, nor any other words appear.

Wales lent Wordsworth the lily of the nation.

Narcissus lent Wordsworth the trumpet-shaped Spring.

Spring lent Wordsworth the nodding yellow flowers.

Wordsworth lent Spring the blooming emblem of nodding.

Without William

Lipogram in W

I rambled lonely as a cloud
that floats on high o'er vales and hills,
as all at once I spied a horde,
a host of golden daffodils;
beside the lake, beneath the trees,
fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
and flicker on the galaxy,
they stretched in never-ending line
along the margin of a bay:
ten thousand spied I at a glance,
tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The rills beside them danced; but they
out-did the sparkling rills in glee:
a poet could not but be gay,
in such a jocund company:
I gazed – and gazed – but little thought
about the spoils the leafage brought.

For oft, as on my couch I lie
in vacant or in pensive mood,
they flash upon that inner eye
that is the bliss of solitude;
and then my heart joyfully fills
and dances among the daffodils.

Andy Brown is Director of the Exeter Writing Programme at the University of Exeter. His most recent books of poems are *The Fool and The Physician*; *Goose Music* [with John Burnside]; *Fall of the Rebel Angels: Poems 1996-2006* (all Salt Publications), and *The Storm Berm* (tall-lighthouse, 2008). Some of his work appears in the anthology, *Identity Parade* (ed. Roddy Lumsden, Bloodaxe Books, 2010) and in *This Line's Not for Turning: an anthology of contemporary British prose poetry* (ed. Jane Monson, Cinnamon press, 2011). He was previously a Centre Director for the Arvon Foundation at Totleigh Barton and is a poetry tutor for the Arvon Foundation and the Poetry School.

Previous Poetry Books

The Fool and the Physician (Salt, 2011)

Goose Music (Salt, 2008, with John Burnside)

Fall of the Rebel Angels: Poems 1996-2006 (Salt, 2006)

Hunting the Kinnayas (Stride, 2004)

From a Cliff (Arc, 2002)

The Wanderer's Prayer (Arc, 1999)

West of Yesterday (Stride, 1998)

Poetry Chapbooks

The Storm Berm (Tall Lighthouse, 2008)

The Trust Territory (Heaventree, 2005)

of Science (Worple, 2001, with David Morley)

The Sleep Switch (Odyssey, 1996)

As Editor

The Allotment: new lyric poets (Stride, 2006)

Binary Myths 1 & 2: correspondences with poets and poet-editors (Stride, 2004)

Comments on Previous Books

‘Andy Brown’s linguistic originality and his delight in experiments with form, show his love of language and willingness to play with music, meaning and the reader's expectations and perceptions.’ **Poetry Review**

‘Vivid and tangible, there is a real wit that at times makes me laugh out loud, a true learning, and a gentle

humanity to these tender-hearted poems.’ **Lee Harwood**

‘Andy Brown is one of our most interesting and exciting younger poets. With its love of ideas and language, his work demonstrates that there need be no barriers in poetry; that the philosophical, the lyrical and the playful can be combined in work of assured and generous vision.’ **John Burnside**

‘Smilingly human. A gentle humour pervades, almost Eastern, imbuing the work with humanity and warmth.’
Shearsman

‘Andy Brown’s abiding fascination with the minutiae of the natural world and mankind’s perspectives – how we name, observe and catalogue them – gives words an increased weight and impact. Each word is selected: plucked like the choicest apple and presented as if we could admire a microcosm of ridges and fibres within it.’
Nikki Santilli, *Poetry International*

‘Brown moves from the lyrical to the analytical with an apparent seamlessness. The work here is full of quietly startling moments.’ *Poetry Quarterly Review*