

Understanding the tic toc of EE Cummings' poetry- An analysis of 'there are so many tictoc..'

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Abstract

EE Cummings has never respected any kind of definition or characteristics of poetry. His poetry are utter expressions of his feelings and in the process of carrying forward the intensity of his feelings he broke lose all the shackles of form and characteristics of poetry. To mention few of the poetic practices that he deliberately denied to follow are naming the poetry, grammatical and punctuation rules and beginning a line in the left hand side. This paper attempts to understand EE Cummings' technique of poetry composition through an analysis of his poem, '*there are so many tictoc..*'

Keywords: non-conformity, liberating agent, analogy, new vocabulary

Introduction

Edward Estlin (E.E.) Cummings born in Cambridge, Massachusetts published his earliest poems in *Eight Harvard Poets in 1917*. In *Modern American Poetry: Essays in Criticism*, John Logan called Cummings "one of the greatest lyric poets in our language." He created his unique poetic style by experimenting with innovative poetry crafting. He experimented with writing avant-garde poems in which he altered the conventional punctuation and syntax and in that process he successfully synced his thought process with the dynamics of the language.

The paper attempts to make an analysis of his poem, '*there are so many tictoc..*' and in the process facilitates an understanding of the poetic craftsmanship of EE Cummings. The framework of the analysis includes, viewing '*there are so many tictoc..*' as a testimony to the innovative usage of words both semantically and syntactically; as an example to the usage of analogy as an effective tool to convey a perception; as representation of visual objects on the page; as an expression on individual's rejection to conformity; and most importantly an explanation of the central theme of the poem, avoidance of overthinking and going by instincts.

'there are so many tictoc..' as a testimony to the innovative usage of words both semantically and syntactically

EE Cummings reverses the onomatopoeia tic tac. He is adamant not to be bound by the standard method of using words. He establishes his belief that words are carriers of message, and we could frame our own individualized way of using it if the standard usage is not helping us in carrying our message effectively and authentically. He felt that the clock's movement of time need not dictate our ways of living. He deliberately reverses the tic tac of clock to toctic clock and stresses that the clock's representation of time has no meaning or significance in our life.

Usage of the unique syntactic structure -He frames unique syntactic structure and deliberately denies grammar rules. *'we'll kiss each kiss other on kiss the kiss lips'*
 He places a gap between *each* and *other*. He has also eliminated *ing* from *kiss (ing) lips*. He combines two words together which are generally not put together – *'to kisskiss you...'*

Deliberate non-conformity to grammar and punctuation rules

He starts a sentence in the middle of the line- *wedo not wind it*. He skips using capital letters in the opening line *-there are so many tictoc*. The most notable non-conformity is not giving a title to his poems. His poems will have the first line as its title.

Use of poetic device with a difference

He makes use of analogy and personification, and but with a difference. His use of analogy is unconventional when he strikes a comparison between spring and clock. The analogy gets a distinctly unfamiliar touch when the spring is related to the budding of love and the procedure of the onset of spring is contrasted with the human invented mechanism of the clock. The first two stanzas of the poem, is restated below with the interpretation of the analogy within brackets, bold and underlined words.

Spring (spreading of love) is not regulated and does not get out of order (like a clock getting repaired) nor do its (spring's) hands (analogy to hands in a clock) a little jerking move over numbers slowly (movement of hands in a repaired clock)

we (people) do not wind it (initiate or control the season, spring)
 up it (spring) has no weights
 springs wheels inside of its slender self (there is nothing in spring/ nature that man could operate)
 no indeed dear (the lover) nothing of the kind.

In the last two stanzas he relates the onset of spring to the situation of loving or being loved. He states that Spring never waits for any clock to announce its arrival. It is beyond human comprehension and interpretation of time. It comes and leaves at its will and not by the dictation of any of the human's invention. He equates this phenomenon to human's instinct to love or being loved. He relates that when the time to be affectionate (*Spring*) comes we (*we'll kiss*) will or need to be affectionate with each other. He proceeds that the passage of time and the stages of life don't differentiate who is kissing whom, who is affectionate to whom he beautifully reinforces through the line, *'because tic clocks toc don't make, a toctic difference, to kisskiss you and to, kiss me'*, the prime important message of life that is receiving affection or being affectionate is significant and the gender, age or any sort of discrimination or classifications that would stand as a barrier against it need not be entertained or respected

*there are so many tictoc
 clocks everywhere telling people
 what toctic time it is for
 tictic instance five toc minutes toc
 past six tic*

*(So, when kiss Spring comes
 we'll kiss each kiss other on kiss the kiss lips
 because tic clocks toc don't make*

*atotic difference
tokisskiss you and to
kiss me)*

Conclusion

Through the poem *there are so many tictoc* EE Cummings has established his treatment of poetry as a liberating agent from the shackles created by others that are whole heartedly accepted by individuals. He reinstates that falling in love and spreading of love could be equated to spring; the onset of spring and love can't be controlled by humans as in the case of the tic toc clock. When time is ripe, both the spring and love unravels itself and no speculation needed to ponder over who shares love first just like who kisses first. EE Cummings stresses through his innovative poetic style that the individuals are not entitled to follow others' notions of life but have the liberty of coming out of it.

Works Cited

E. E. Cummings – Complete Poems, 1904–1962

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