



Tulips & Chimneys

E.E. Cummings , Richard S. Kennedy (Introduction)

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Fresh and candid, by turns earthy, tender, defiant, and romantic, Cummings's poems celebrate the uniqueness of each individual, the need to protest the dehumanizing force of organizations, and the exuberant power of love.

Tulips & Chimneys Details

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From Reader Review Tulips & Chimneys for online ebook

Bethany says

I find myself reading tulips and chimneys whilst on a busy train. I take it all in. I can't remember when I first read e.e. cummings but I've dipped into this book for months even when my eyes have wavered to other distractions I've been pulled back into it. It definitely provides me with suitable hilarity to feed hungover brain fuzz. Probably something to do with his general silliness but also very candid unapologetic thoughts. Yes he objectifies women and yes he also gathers and collects words together letting us peephole into some intensely beautiful love scenes. And these two poems are probably side by side. My interpretation is his writing is a celebration of sexual love. Although many of his poems are about this he also is buzzing with stories of mischief, discreet observation of people, life and death.

I am unable to give enough merit to the author's technical ability and experimentation. It's when poems are read aloud their full sounds will come to life. The musicality the eccentricity of the syntax is what makes it most attractive. One of his influences was Picasso whom at the time experimented dramatically with his art. As we know he didn't paint many things realistically, he would paint a face with angular shapes and block colour evoking different reactions from the viewer. Cummings took poetry's most traditional form the sonnet and cut little triangles into it punched holes all the way through sometimes masking the original shape but it's there subtly, each word has a purpose for its place and holds the poem up. He also does all of this whilst also talking on the page in lighthearted conversation.

When art is created with passion in the moment people are probably at their most authentic. We can really resonate with someone else when there is truth behind their work. Reading these are tiny snapshots into the poet's mind and life. His escapades with women, neighbours reaction to events and life. Whether you care about form and language doesn't matter, his oddity and authenticity is what makes him so distinct.

“the slow deep trees perpetual of sleep
some silver fingered fountain steels the world”

“ The horses sleep upstairs.
And you can see their ears. Ears win-

k, funny stable. In the morning they go out in pairs:
amazingly one pair is white
(but you know that) they look at each other. Nudge.

(if they love each other who cares?)
”

“your kiss was a distinct brittle
flower, and the flesh crisp set my love-tooth on edge”

Donovan Richards says

Let's Tear It Down!

Deconstruction is easy. Whenever someone takes a stand, a myriad of critics file out of the woodwork like termites scoping a new meal. Whether it is art, philosophy, theology, political theory, or a position on parenting, the easiest response is a critique—objections to an argument's premises in order to render the entire idea void.

And Put It Back Together

While I appreciate critical thinking and its ability to sharpen thought, I am inspired by the people who put a stake in the ground and provide concrete definition for a way of life.

The Aims of Poetry

As I have ventured into some poetry recently, I've become interested in the ways deconstruction relates to poetry. Classically, poetry involves two major aspects: 1. Rhythm—the number of syllables included on each line and 2. Rhyme—the ways in which words relate to each other.

Classic poetry, therefore, feels incredibly formal and expected, no matter the quality of the content.

Deconstructing Poetry

But does poetry need this structure? To find an answer to that question, I read *Tulips & Chimneys* by the father of post-modern poetry, E. E. Cummings.

Simply put, Cummings defenestrates every principle of classic poetic form. Consider this example:

“the
sky
was
can dy lu
minous
edible
spry
pinks shy
lemons
greens coo l choc
olate
s” (60).

With odd spacing, unconventional line breaks, a refusal to capitalize correctly, and irregular punctuation, Cummings cares little for rules. In fact, the lack of structure creates difficulty when reading, almost as if Cummings challenges the reader to understand the visual component of the text as a contributor to the art

form of poetry.

A Salty Dog

Thematically, Cummings confirms his adoration of the feminine form and his salty nature. In a more conventional passage, he ponders:

“If to me there shall appear
than a rose more sweetly known,
more silently than a flower,
my lady naked in her hair—
i for those ladies nothing care
nor any lady dead and gone” (23).

This passage is but an example of Cummings’ tendency to lyrically ponder the beauty of the feminine and the virtues of sexuality.

Additionally, consider this passage:

“eyes to noone in particular she
gasped almost
loudly
i’m
So
drunG
K,dear” (71).

Once again, Cummings readily admits to his licentious lifestyle. His poetry, to a certain extent, flows from a blunt and honest place. It’s pretty clear he is no choir boy.

How Can We Replace What We Tore Down?

Despite these themes, the importance of *Tulips & Chimneys* lies in its formatting. Cummings deconstructs poetry in this work. He forces the reader to question the definition of poetry and the way he or she ought to interact with the words on the page. Cummings’ content holds meaning and, therefore, *Tulips & Chimneys* is not a futile exercise. But the book feels firmly encamped on the side of criticism. No matter the importance of deconstruction in any aspect of life, I always pine for a reconstruction. What can we put in place of what we tore down? *Tulips & Chimneys* offers no answer on that note.

Originally published at <http://www.wheropenmeetspaper.com>

Leopoldo says

Cummings me mostró lo que de verdad se puede hacer con la lengua inglesa.

A caballo entre las vanguardias y el modernismo, "Tulips & Chimneys" recoge las primeras incursiones líricas publicadas del enorme poeta norteamericano. La diferencia entre, por ejemplo, "Epithalamion" y "Chansons Innocentes" (la del extraordinario dominio de la forma y la experimentación más exacerbada) nos dan una muestra del enorme rango que Cummings dominaba incluso al principio de su carrera. Me hizo recordar ese dicho de Picasso, "cuando tenía siete pintaba como Miguel Ángel"...

Cummings ha sido uno de mis más gratos descubrimientos, y espero que en algún momento le sea otorgado su muy merecido lugar en los estanteros de los lectores hispanoparlantes junto con Pound, Williams, Eliot y Yeats (todos justamente traducidos).

Valori says

"... and you will be the poem i do not write"

Jason says

I loved this! Cummings has a great sense of ironic humor and a mastery of cadence. Here's my favorite stanza:

Humanity i love you because you
are perpetually putting the secret of
life in your pants and forgetting
it's there and sitting down
on it

Darwin8u says

A quick ode to E.E. with ampersands & all(built on the sturdy body of his poem*XV):

*come poetry to my crumbling soul
which with nonfiction has conversed in vain,
O noiselessly take thy rhythmic toll,
for iambic feet this frantic heart is fain;
try me with thy accents which have seduced
the acoustic meatus of the deaf & dead,*

*feed gentility me earwormperused
by whom the quickening tug of time is fed:
& if i like not what thou singest me
to him let me complain, whose page is set
evolving poetgods struggle to be free
with the astounding everlasting bet —
but if i like, i'll post in goodreaders hands
what no man feels, no woman understands.*

I loved E.E. Cummings since my youth. He was a model for seduction, for using poems to stir young girls to action (Cummings poems + Ed Weston peppers + Cherry Slurpee + Sarah McLachlan's Fumbling Towards Ecstasy was the aphrodisiakon potion recipe of my youth). He framed for me the ability to bend words, grammar, and meter to one's own function. He inspired sonnets, songs, solicitations. I recently read his novel The Enormous Room and since it IS national poetry month and it seems a dense number of poems from E.E. Cummings's T&C deal with spring and April, this gave me an excuse to go back to his Firmage-edited Complete Poems, 1904-1962 (which before I've used to find favorites, but never read cover to cover).

So, at the notquitebeginning of April, I decided to read E.E. Cummings from beginning to end. Every book (well perhaps not every every), every poem. 'Tulips & Chimneys' (published originally as 'Tulips and Chimneys'). Cummings's original title was ignored by the publisher, who changed the ampersand to the word "and". Bastard. That is what happens when you are young, and your sway is thin. So, my next piece of Cummings will be '& [And]' which collected other of his poems that weren't originally included in Tulips and Chimneys, but later added to Tulips & Chimneys. If that is a bit confusing, that is ok. It is the words that matter and the meter (and I guess too the ampersand). The meaning will make itself clear soon & enough.

All in all, I like this first collection. It showed Cummings blossoming as an artist and poet. It shows his experimental approach, influenced by other modern artists such as Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso, Stravinsky, and Ezra Pound. It is fun reading his early stuff in sequence, as sequences go, because the readeryou starts to see this thing called E.E. Cummings become hetoHE. His first pieces seem a bit dilettante and thesaurus-heavy, but by the end, youreader see the boybecome the manIS. The artist has bloomed. There is confidence and a voice. It reminded me, in a narrow way, of reading Dickens' The Pickwick Papers: a first pieceglimpse that shows all the evidence of greatness but with the pregnant and heavy stretch marks of growth.

Emma Stockdale says

your little voice
Over the wires came leaping
and i felt suddenly
dizzy
With the jostling and shouting of merry flowers
wee skipping high-heeled flames
courtesied before my eyes
or twinkling over to my side
Looked up
with impertinently exquisite faces
floating hands were laid upon me
I was whirled and tossed into delicious dancing

up
Up
with the pale important
stars and the Humorous
moon
dear girl
How i was crazy how i cried when i heard
over time
and tide and death
leaping
Sweetly
your voice

Becky Ankeny says

As a life-long (or middle-school on) e.e. cummings fan, I am always surprised by how much of his poetry I don't really like. In this first collection (1923), I found several poems to be florid and overdone. For example, "Epithalamion" is filled with classical references I can't get myself to care about. BUT, of course, there are the poems filled with poignancy and sheer loveliness. Cummings' early poetry has themes of love, sex, and death--which, in my opinion, are three of the four main topics of poetry. There's a little about God, the fourth main topic, but not much. This collection includes the frequently anthologized "all in green went my love riding," "in Just-," "Tumbling-hair," "O sweet spontaneous," "Buffalo Bill 's," "the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls": not bad for a first collection. Cummings was 29 and had been an ambulance driver in France during WWI, imprisoned by the French on suspicion of spying, and then on his release, drafted by the US Army, serving for 11 months. I suspect that Bob Dylan owes something to this poet/painter, but I'm just guessing. Both view words (and for cummings, punctuation) as something like paint or clay.

Joe says

I've read parts of this book before, and I thought reading it would be a different (easier) experience. It is much more difficult to get through than I expected. Even though I grew frustrated with some of the repetition, there are so many poems in this collection that I absolutely adore. I respect the hell out of cummings' experimentation even when I grow tired of it. The old cliché "less is more" rings especially true with regards to his experimentation (at least from the approach of reading the collection as a continuous whole, the experiments are without a doubt more palatable when doing individual readings of poems).

This is a dense collection and I will continue to visit both the poems I enjoy and the ones that I fail to understand. cummings was a visionary and extremely progressive for time (erotic). His ideas on syntax and free-verse have had a profound influence on my own writing, but that doesn't mean perfection. There are many poems that are far too thematically repetitive for my liking. The central themes of the collection are death and the female form. However, while there are brilliant poems on these subjects, there are poems that come across one-dimensional beyond the advanced syntactic elements that permeate all of cummings' work.

Where he succeeds, cummings is close to perfection, but in a collection of this size there are also many poems that fall short. The themes grow rather tiresome over a length of 200 pages. Indeed, it is hard to

decide on a rating for this work. After I finished I felt exhausted though satisfied, but I think it's unfair to expect anything else reading a dense collection like this one. The bottom line is that cummings' poems are extremely enjoyable to re-read since there is always something new to discover. Flipping through the collection for this review has caused me to realize that many of the poems are more intriguing than their first impressions suggested. Reading the poems individually and spending time with them outside of a collective swarm elevates the reading experience entirely. It is a body of text that certainly won't grow old and you cannot ask too much of more than that.

Highlights: "i like my body when it is with your body," "who knows if the moon's a balloon," "if i should sleep with a lady called death," "humanity I love you," "gee i like to think of dead," "in making Marjorie god hurried," "the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls"

Chris March says

It's like gorging on bright blue pastels, and then gargling vanilla vodka and Pop Rocks, while listening to rhythms of an unintelligible reading of the Iliad. Oh, and he likes to objectify women :(

Jenny says

I'm a huge fan of EE Cummings and was really excited to finally have the chance to go through a considerable number of his poems in a collection. His style varied greatly from subcollection to subcollection but there was still a sort of signature rhythm that ran through each poem. Although I loved most of his work, I found reading his sonnets rather tedious and put the book down multiple times for varying lengths of boredom during these sections. I guess I'm not a particularly big fan of repetitive descriptions of anonymous sex, especially when women are reduced down to nothing but their body parts. The rest of the sections made up for it though; I found Chansons Innocentes, La Guerre, Impressions, Portraits, & Post Impressions very interesting.

Lusu says

"ke? ?lovek zachcel s vervou ešte vä?šou
seba zni?i? s celým svetom
z bude vzal bolo najdúc však len pre?o
rozmlátil ho hne? na preto"
(str85)

Jamie Grefe says

I've had this for ten years and this is the first time I've read it. If only I read this earlier in life . . . The first twenty pages or so are gorgeous, but spent too much time in my head and didn't make it into my guts, while the end, the sonnets, especially those last few, are breathtaking. Literally, I couldn't breathe. Whenever I think I'm pushing the boundaries of the way I use language, I need only to flip open this book for a wallop in

the jaws, that says, "nice try, back to the drawing board."

kate says

ee cummings is one of my favourite poets. i love the style of his poems, the games he plays with words and the fact that every time i pick him up the poems are fresh and tripping off the tongue.

this book moves from his early poems through the development of his later style, the subtle sexuality blooming and the breaking down of language to recreate it in a whole new pattern.

the design of the book, (it's oversize, and uses a typewriter style font), frames each poem as it might have originally appeared on the page when first written. The poems sit awkward and unbalanced as the words delicately float above some common expectation of alignment.

it is a beautiful book. if you are a big cummings fan, this is a must-have. (as you can probably tell from my review)

Antonio Delgado says

There is something brilliant about these poems. They are challenging but simple, simple but require a particular reading. We have been accustomed to read through the codes imposed by grammar whereas language is fluid. Cumming challenges how we read and how we think. Is it that how we learn to read the volatile changes in the yearly seasons?
