

Torrential Adoration

by Michael Warman

Every day, people experience expressions of love, like interlocked hands, a kiss in the doorway or subsequent smile, or simply the subtle mien of a man with a crush. Love is the most striking emotion a human can feel, so it is a popular topic, yet the general public overlook the more negative aspects of it due to the high expectations surrounding them. However, some poems display both the good and bad qualities of relationships. By using literary elements like imagery, diction, periphrasis, anacoluthon, and rhythm in “I Have Found What You Are Like,” poet E. E. Cummings masterfully illustrates the bliss and disorientation caused by new love.

Cummings applies vivid imagery and interesting diction to stun readers and paint the picture of his theme. Despite the intensity of his depictions, they represent admiration rather than intimidation:

wields

easily the pale club of the wind

and swirled justly souls of flower strike

the air in utterable coolness (Cummings lines 4-7).

Wind is described in many ways, but Cummings describes it as a club with flowers’ souls in its wake. With a club being a weapon, the aggressive image contradicts the awestruck, ardent tone of the poem. “(Who feathers frightened fields / with superior dust-of-sleep” is another powerful image—this time of the rain (Cummings 3-4). The speaker seems enamored, but the descriptions he uses seem unfitting at times, which blurs the line between positive and negative and tugs the reader back and forth contradictorily to induce a feeling of confusion.

The speaker reveals his subject, his lover, periphrastically in the title and first line. “i have found what you are like /” he says, “the rain,” (Cummings 1-2). The speaker weaves an elaborate example to explain that his lover is striking, powerful, and captivating. Toward the beginning of the comparison, he says, “wields / easily the pale club of the wind” (Cummings 4-5). There could have been a more direct way to describe the lover and their power. However, Cummings chooses to describe their power as the wind. In addition, the speaker substitutes his lover's grace with a disturbed forest :

—in the woods

which

stutter

and

sing (Cummings 12-16).

The use of periphrasis adds a feeling of importance and excitement, which displays the speaker’s feelings about his new relationship.

The most prevalent device Cummings uses in his poem is anacoluthon, which imitates the speaker’s underlying perplexity. A prime example exists while the speaker is describing his utmost desire—a kiss from his lover. He says, “I should rather than anything / have(almost when hugeness will shut / quietly)almost,” (Cummings 19-21). The abrupt break off in the poem's flow is bound to puzzle any reader. Anacoluthon is present in the entire poem with unexpected punctuation or lack thereof. An example begins on line ten when the speaker says, “newfragile yellows / lurch and.press / --in the woods” (Cummings 10-12). During the speaker’s description and comparison in these lines, there are three examples of a break in sequence: the lack of a

space between new and fragile, the misplaced period, and the unnecessary hyphen. By doing this, Cummings causes deep confusion and makes the reader feel the same disorientation that the speaker experiences by being in love.

Cummings's poem is free verse with no discernible rhythm, and this is amplified using anacoluthon. The ways he formats his lines and uses punctuation and capitalization interrupt the sentences and flow. To demonstrate, "lurch and.press" is preceded by negative space and is isolated from the rest of the sentence (Cummings 11). The random pauses make this line read slowly. Later, "stirringofbirds between my arms" lacks the proper spacing and feels rushed (Cummings 18). The repeated pattern of uneven rhythm mimics the roller coaster of emotions the speaker feels in his relationship.

E. E. Cummings reinforces that new relationships are a mixture of affection, intimidation, and disorientation. Each element he uses, from pauses in rhythm to powerful imagery, effectively conveys the true daze of love. The speaker's enamored language contradicts the subtle stresses woven into the poem but exposes that passion can be blinding. Rain is an unwavering, vital force of nature, capable of anything, from supplying water to a dehydrated plant on the brink of death to flooding communities. It can bring miracles or devastation. For this reason, there is no better comparison than love and rain.

Works cited

Cummings, E.E. "I Have Found What You Are Like." 1925. *Hello Poetry*,

<https://hellopoetry.com/poem/1586/i-have-found-what-you-are-like/>. Accessed on 4 April

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