

Cubism in cummings and stevens



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The Cubist Poetic Movement The idea of cubism can not only be found in paintings, but in poetry as well.

Cubism is best known from artists Braque and Picasso. In their art, they created something new and different from what previous artists had done. They wanted to portray several different views of the same subject in the same moment; they wanted people to see more than one meaning or view in their paintings. This idea inspired many poets who wanted to translate what cubist artists had done in drawings to words. Cubism easily translated into the world of poetry. E. E.

Cummings and Wallace Stevens are two poets who exemplified the use of cubism in their poems by creating visual and psychological experiences to offer different viewpoints in their poems. Cummings mainly created both a visual and psychological experience in ??? l(a???. Cummings??™ poem ??? l(a??? is simple, beautiful, and profound. It is written vertically and, when written horizontally, looks like this: ??? l (a leaf falls) oneliness??? (L(a - A Poem by E. e. Cummings - American Poems). The poem depicts both the physicality of a leaf falling and the abstract feelings of loneliness. Those two things together give meaning to the poem: a single leaf falling is a symbol of loneliness.

The shape of the poem is eye catching and gives the reader a visual experience. Because the poem is written vertically, it forces the reader to read it like they are watching a falling leaf; the reader??™s eyes glide down the page. The elongated shape of the poem provides an aesthetically

pleasing view of the leaf. The spacing of the words on the page also aid in providing meaning to the poem.

The separation of the word ??? loneliness??? gives even more meaning to the word as it shows that separation is the cause of loneliness. The separation of the word also highlights the fact that it includes the word ??? one???, furthering the feeling of loneliness the poem creates. The leaf falling and loneliness can also be seen as loneliness is like a falling leaf; the leaf is experiencing its fall alone. Cummings creates many different views in this poem. He creates a visual viewpoint of the leaf, as well as different views of the meaning.

The poem can be taken literally, a single leaf falling, or symbolically, the falling if the leaf symbolizing loneliness. Cummings??™ poem ??? r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r???, grasshopper, also provides a visual experience. The first thing the reader notices about the poem is that all the letters and lines are jumbled up. There is only one clear word and it is the last word of the poem; grasshopper. The poem is extremely difficult to read.

However, because all the words are jumbled, the reader works even harder to try to make sense of it, rather than just skimming through it, to find letters that fit together. The poem itself creates the image of a grasshopper jumping; the words and letters jump around the page. The poem is not meant to be read; it is meant to be stumbled through. The punctuation is an important part of this poem. It slows the reading down and separates the words, creating new groups.

A good example of this is ??? rea(be)rran(com)gi(e)ngly??? (R-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r 14). The two words written in that line are ??? rearranging??? and ??? becoming???. The fact that they are jumbled together further reflects the meaning. It also relates to the last line where the word ??? grasshopper??? is spelled correctly. The word is rearranged, the previous spellings of it in the poem are jumbled, and it becomes ??? grasshopper???. Letter case is also an important part in creating the visual meaning of the poem. The use of capitals and lower cases give the poem energy reflecting that of the grasshopper. The first use of the word ??? grasshopper??? is in all capital letters, imitating the energy building up in the grasshopper before it starts hopping around.

When the word appears in the middle of the poem, when other words and letters are leaping across the page, capital and lower case letters are mixed: ??? gRrEaPsPhOs)???(R-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r 12). This represents the energy and movement of the grasshopper. The last appearance of the word is the last word of the poem.

It is shown in all lower case letters. At this point in the poem, the grasshopper is done moving around and the case of the letters reflects that as the smaller letters do not create an image of energy. The word jumbling, punctuation, and letter case in this poem give the poem life and it is as though the poem becomes the grasshopper. Cummings successfully creates an image of a grasshopper by combining those elements, reflecting the ??? cubist??? ideas. Wallace Stevens represents cubism through his poem ??? The Snow Man???. ??? The Snow Man??? is about the inability of humans to

see the world without passing judgment, especially if something about the world might not be considered beautiful because of its inconvenience.

This is especially true in snow storms, when the poem is set, because they are cold, wet, and not fun to be in. Stevens encourages the reader to take on a different view of winter and look through the eyes of a snowman. He says, ??? One must have a mind of winter??? to truly appreciate just how beautiful winter can be (The Snow Man 1). The poem brings up reality and imagination. He describes the difference in the way a human views a scene v.

a non-living object; a snowman. The person in the poem is miserable from the snowstorm because it is making everything difficult, Stevens wants the reader to ??? not think of any misery in the sound of the wind, in the sound of a few leaves??? (The Snow Man 7-9). Though the human is misery, the snowman remains unaffected; that is why Stevens wants the reader to imagine they are a snowman. As humans, we are often unable to see beauty in some situations. This poem is telling us to try to become numb to nature to be able to see how beautiful it is. The poem begins with a very real winter scene, with the reader imagining they are the snowman and seeing beauty everywhere. In the end, though, it loses some of its imagination, saying that ??? the listener, who listens in the snow, and, nothing himself, beholds nothing that is not there and the nothing that is??? (The Snow Man 14-15).

Stevens is saying that we cannot see because we always imagine, therefore we can never truly grasp the world. This poem presents many qualities of cubism. Stevens creates both a visual and psychological experience by

asking the reader to take on the view of a snowman. The world is then transformed to how the snowman sees it. This reflects the idea in cubism of creating different views of one subject. The reader must use their imagination to create a new visual world. Even the title can be seen two different ways.

It can be read as "?? snowman??", a man made out of snow, or, as it is written, "?? snow man??", a man in the snow. Through the use of imagination, Stevens effectively creates an experience for the reader, forcing us to view things differently. "?? 13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird??" is one of Stevens'™ best representations of cubism. It gives the reader a number of possible views of a subject, in this case a blackbird, over a span of time. The poem begins with a physical perception of a blackbird.

It shows a lone blackbird in the mountains; it is the only thing that is moving. The second stanza is similar to the first, except there are three blackbirds. The third stanza is a bit different.

The blackbird, rather than remaining mainly stationary, is being "?? whirled in the autumn winds??", suggesting a lack of control. The blackbird is also part of a pantomime, suggesting that it holds a small part in the expression of life. Rather than being an observer, like in the first two stanzas, the blackbird is moving around and taking an active part in life.

The poem then moves to depict the blackbird, man, and woman as one. It is no longer seen as a separate being; we are connected to it. Stevens goes on to create a total of thirteen ways of looking at it. He has a mixture of stanzas where the blackbird is the focus, like stanza 10: "?? At the sight of blackbirds

flying in a green light, even the bawds of euphony would cry out sharply???

(Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird 39-41). Many blackbirds seen flying together often comes with a bad connotation and this stanza reflects that.

Other stanzas include the blackbird as an afterthought. Stanza eight is a good representation of that, stating, ??? I know noble accents and lucid, inescapable rhythms; but I know, too, that the blackbird is involved in what I know???

(Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird 33). This stanza at first reads as though the poet is praising himself for knowing many things, but then humbles himself by saying the blackbird as knows what he knows.

Stevens is tracing what he knows back to nature. ??? 13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird???

is largely cubist. Stevens creates multiple perspectives for the reader to see a blackbird. He is not asking the reader to use their imagination to use their imagination to create new views; he is showing new approaches to view reality.

Stevens wants the reader to open their minds and look at the world differently from how they normally do. He offers not one new perspective, but thirteen, challenging the reader to take on as many views as they can. Stevens thus creates a psychological experience for the reader; welcoming them to think differently.???

Anecdote of the Jar???

also presents cubist elements. It relates human nature to the wilderness. Stevens forces the reader to feel the chaos between the jar and nature. The ??? slovenly wilderness???

surrounds the jar, showing the relationship of nature and humans, with humans being the jar (Anecdote of the Jar 9). The wilderness, in this instance, holds the power.

Humans have no control over it as it surrounds them. The poem also shows the power of the wilderness in line six; as the wilderness rises up to the jar, it is no longer viewed as wild. The wilderness is aware of the jar and is purposefully attempting to cover it up. Toward the end of the poem, however, man begins to gain power over the jar as ??? it did not give of bird or bush??? (Anecdote of the Jar 11).

The jar, or humans, has more control over nature as it does not give in to the natural world. This poem describes how Tennessee was before humans were there. It was wild, and still is, except for where the jar is. The place where the jar is, is ??? like nothing else in Tennessee??? (Anecdote of the Jar 12). The wilderness was still able to hold some control over what humans were doing to the state.

Humans, however, still have some control as they were able to carve out a piece of land where they were able to tame the wilderness. This poem offers different views of the situation in the poem. It can be read literally; as a jar on a hill with wilderness surrounding it, or it can be read symbolically.

The jar represents how humans have tamed the wilderness and changed a piece of land to make it different from everything else in Tennessee. The reader can also decide whether the wilderness or the jar has the most control. The reader can read it as the wilderness winning by not giving in and letting the jar take over. However, it can also be seen that the jar has the most power as it was able to conquer the wilderness and stand tall. The poem applies the cubist idea of offering many different viewpoints, giving the reader the opportunity to think and see the situation from a different

observation. Cummings and Stevens effectively use the ideas of ??? Cubist??? artists of the time.

They give the reader an experience and offer them different views of the same subject. Stevens presents many different viewpoints on his poems, challenging the reader to think and open their minds. Stevens wants the reader to use their imagination in ??? The Snow Man??? and adopt a different view point from their own. He gives the reader many different views of reality in ??? 13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird??? and he makes the reader think and come up with different views on their own in ??? Anecdote of the Jar???. Cummings, along with offering different views of a subject, also creates a visual and psychological experience for the reader. Cummings??™ poems are not written out traditionally, writing vertically and jumbling words placing them all around the page. He gives the reader a physical view of his subject, as well as offering different psychological views. He offers both literal and symbolical views of a leaf falling in ??? l(a???.

He also challenges the reader to form words and meaning in ??? r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r???. Stevens and Cummings successfully incorporate cubist ideas into their poems, creating an experience for the reader. Works Cited" L(a - A Poem by E. e. Cummings - American Poems." American Poems - YOUR Poetry Site.

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