

MICRO REVIEW: DAVID TRINIDAD'S "ODE TO DUSTY SPRINGFIELD" AND LEARNING HOW TO LIVE (WITH YOURSELF AND DEATH)

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Serving as the introduction to David Trinidad's newest published collection of poems, *New Playlist*, "Ode to Dusty Springfield" introduces readers to two core themes of the collection: living, and simultaneously, death. One could argue that it is impossible to consider life without death, and in regard to this poem, I'd argue that Trinidad would agree. At the very least, mentioning the former is destined to drum up thoughts of the latter.

The poem weaves in death as its undertone from the very beginning – its title containing "ode to" gives it the air of a memorial, an implication that the person being addressed is no longer alive. It reads as something akin to a confession, a letter

that you would write to someone and then shove in a drawer, never to be seen by anyone but its creator. Trinidad himself asks within the poem if he should be embarrassed for admitting as much as he does, which grounds his words and offers a sense of relatability.

"Ode to Dusty Springfield" is arguably one of the more complex poems in *New Playlist*, offering a lot of meaning to those willing to dig past its initial appearance. The poem itself seems to follow no traditional format, structured by long, skinny stanzas as if he'd only had a sliver of scrap paper to work with but was too determined to put thought to paper to go in search of an alternative. If performed, it might sound like the ramble of someone who's finally had the chance to speak to someone they idolize, their mouth moving faster than their mind and causing a flurry of short, broken thoughts that ultimately make sense when looked at on paper. Again, this pulls in that sense of relatability, this awkward excitement to acknowledge someone that you've never thought to be capable of reaching. Trinidad had the unique opportunity to find himself in the same room as Dusty Springfield not once but

twice, bonded by their complicated relationship with alcohol, a subject that often leads to discussions of death in extreme circumstances.

A closer look at the poem reveals similarities in the presence that both Springfield and the AA meetings had in Trinidad's life, as well as how one bled into the other. They served as anchors, constants in a time of unstable footing and blink-fast decisions that could end in disaster. Long before finding solace in alcohol, Trinidad would let himself be lost in Springfield's music, a reflection of simpler times and juvenile emotions. As he trekked up the mountain of sobriety, he rediscovered it - and by proxy, her—by happenstance, a complete coincidence that saved him from potentially falling back into poor habits. Trinidad himself admits in the poem that the voice that had once filled his young heart with a flurry of emotions now motivated him to continue down the path to betterment. To this day, he recounts slogging through hours of boring radio just to hear a single song of hers. To recognize how okay he is doing now, he's forced to acknowledge how easily he could have not been okay back then had Springfield not re-

entered her life, and that's a line that the poem walks delicately enough to avoid tripping off the tightrope into depressing thoughts.

"Ode to Dusty Springfield" is not only a poem dedicated to Springfield's singing, but to her spirit, the same spirit that pulled Trinidad up from the depths and encouraged him to keep going. His hope that Springfield's star quality would travel down the leg of her plastic folding chair and cross over to him was fulfilled; if nothing else, the inspiration that the close encounter imbued in him ultimately brought about the creation of this collection. The poem, brought on by her death, bringing on its own creation and the subsequent building of *New Playlist*, falls into itself and echoes the cycle of life and death.

Among all the poems in *New Playlist*, "Ode to Dusty Springfield" is the longest poem in regard to the number of pages it spans across. In relation to some of Trinidad's other entries, we see the themes of living and death interchange frequently - "All Things Must Pass" recounts his relearning to appreciate movies that he'd neglected appreciating in favor of

worrying thoughts consuming his mind; “The Pen” shows a desire to reclaim a past joy in the form of a multicolored pen, akin to Trinidad turning back to Springfield as a grounding point and reliving the feelings her music originally stirred; “Periwinkle Blue” directly correlates life with death and living with bearing the memory of the death of others.

“Ode to Dusty Springfield” also introduces another pattern in *New Playlist*: the immortalization of celebrities. Throughout the collection, we are reminded of the mortality of the people these works have been dedicated to, as well as the impact that their legacy has left in Trinidad’s mind. He appreciates Kay Francis in a poem of the same name for acknowledging her humanity amid her inherent popularity; “Sylvia Plath’s Recipe Cards” weaves practicality and personal moments together into a new entity bearing the poet’s resemblance.

When reading Trinidad’s prose with these key themes in the back of your mind, it’s clear to see just how many entries in *New Playlist* follow in the footsteps of “Ode to Dusty

Springfield”. Trinidad creates a stand-out introduction that invites readers to open their minds to this modern revival of his history, aptly alluded to in the collection’s title. “Ode to Dusty Springfield” is not only a nod to Springfield’s life, but to that piece of Trinidad’s life, and its placement at the forefront declares that he still has plenty to say.