AN EXAMINATION OF THE SONNETS OF E. E. CUMMINGS

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ERRATA

1) Page 27, line 20: the reference to Fowler designated a173 pertains to Alastair Fowler's "The Silva Tradition in Jonson's 'The Forrest'" from the volume *Poetic Traditions of the English Renaissance*. Ed, Maynard Mack and George deForest Lord. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982: 163-80. All other references to Fowler are to *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

2) Page 44, line 14: the reference to Kidder 17 pertains to Rushworth M. Kidder's *E. E. Cummings: an Introduction to the Poetry*. Columbia Introductions to Twentieth Century English Poetry. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

3) Page 93, line 7: Rossetti's definition of the sonnet appears in the first line of the liminal poem to *The House of Life*, in *The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*. Ed. William M. Rossetti. London: Ellis, 1911: 74.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines E. E. Cummings's writings in the sonnet genre and in those genres to which the sonnet is related in various ways. Its fundamental point is that, despite the surface impression of poetic iconoclasm for which Cummings has a popular reputation, in choosing to write sonnets he engages in a traditional literary practice. He does this because his purpose is always to be an artist, as defined by the Aesthetic movement which influenced him. In order to argue his embracing of a traditional artistic role, the theory of genres espoused by Alastair Fowler in his book, *Kinds of Literature*, is used.

Chapter 1 of the thesis comprises general introductory material, both to the range of Aesthetic ideas to which Cummings subscribed, and to Fowler's theory of genres. Several key generic kinds are also described. The second chapter makes use of two of these generic models, the sonnet sequence and the *silva*, as a way of examining Cummings's deployment of the sonnet within the larger context of his poetry collections. It is a survey of the structure of the anthologies he compiled from *Tulips & Chimneys* (1922) to *95 Poems* (1958).

The third chapter explores the three sonnet modes which Cummings first identifies and names when compiling the manuscript of *Tulips & Chimneys*, and continues to use in his collections up to and including *is 5* (1926). Chapter 4 shows how certain themes and concerns from these early sonnets are altered and synthesised as Cummings matures from an aesthete to a Romantic poet. Sonnets from his later books are taken to be representative of three central kinds in all of his work after *is 5*. Chapters 3 and 4 proceed by means of relatively close readings of individual sonnets. This practice ful-

fils a double role: it penetrates the apparent obscurity of the more difficult poems, and it attempts to preserve the integrity of individual poems which exemplify different generic tendencies in Cummings's work. One of Cummings's reasons for writing sonnets is that the form favours the achievement of what Wordsworth calls "a feeling of intense unity". In undertaking close readings of a few sonnets I have attempted to preserve that feeling.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
A NOTE ON THE TEXT	vi
PREFACE	vii
CHAPTER 1	1
CHAPTER 2	39
CHAPTER 3	62
CHAPTER 4	107
CONCLUSION	142
APPENDIX 1	145
APPENDIX 2.1	150
APPENDIX 2.2	152
BIBLIOGRAPHY	154

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A NOTE ON THE TEXT

Because I have devoted a chapter to the study of Cummings's use of the sonnet within the structure of his collections of poetry, with particular reference to the long-unpublished 1922 Manuscript of *Tulips & Chimneys*, I have chosen to use the two-volume *Complete Poems 1910-1962*, edited by George James Firmage (Granada 1981), in which the 1922 version of *Tulips & Chimneys* is reconstructed. In the case of Appendix 1, in which all of Cummings's sonnets in print are listed, I have supplanted the "Uncollected Poems" section of *Complete Poems 1910-1962* with the more comprehensive *Etcetera: the Unpublished Poems*, edited by George James Firmage and Richard Kennedy (New York: Liveright, 1983).

The following abbreviated titles of frequently-cited works by Cummings are used to keep parenthetical references as short as possible:

CP: *Complete Poems* 1910-1962. 2 vols. Ed. George James Firmage. London: Granada, 1981.

nonlectures: *i-six nonlectures*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953.

Misc: *A Miscellany*. Ed. George James Firmage. London: Peter Owen, 1966.

Letters: *Selected Letters*. Ed. F. W. Dupee and George Stade. London: Andre Deutsch, 1972.

PREFACE

This thesis has its origin in my surprise that a poet with E. E. Cummings's reputation as an iconoclast should write sonnets, an exacting form with a formidable tradition of high sentiment. Nonetheless, Cummings wrote over two hundred sonnets throughout his career. The question which arises is "why does E. E. Cummings write sonnets?". A single sonnet is examined here in order to provide an example of the kind of material to which this question applies, and to gain an intimation of what a Cummingsian sonnet looks like before the introductory material is presented in Chapter I.

The first sonnet to appear in *Complete Poems* is "the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls" (*CP* 115). It is the first sonnet of the "Realities" sequence, which in turn is the first of three sequences in *Tulips & Chimneys*, Cummings's first volume of poetry.

> the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls
> are unbeautiful and have comfortable minds
> (also,with the church's protestant blessings
> daughters,unscented shapeless spirited)
> they believe in Christ and Longfellow,both dead,
> and are invariably interested in so many things—
> at the present writing one still finds
> delighted fingers knitting for the is it Poles?
> perhaps. While permanent faces coyly bandy
> scandal of Mrs.N and Professor D
> ....the Cambridge ladies do not care,above
> Cambridge if sometimes in its box of
> sky lavender and cornerless,the
> moon rattles like a fragment of angry candy

It is a satirical sonnet in which Cummings dispraises a group of people whom he sees as being either hostile or indifferent to beauty, signified by their lack of awareness of the natural world represented by the moon. They are the conservative WASP women of his native Cambridge, and he speaks of them in a tone of scornful disparagement. Plainly, the speaker in the poem is Cummings himself. His antipathy toward the ladies is a personal feeling rooted in his family background and upbringing, and he uses the sonnet's traditional role as a personal poem to express this feeling. In his love sonnets, Cummings's tone is very different, but again it is clear that it is Cummings as poet, rather than a literary persona (like that in a Dramatic monologue), who speaks in each poem. The only exception is the literary manner he adopts in his

"Unrealities" sonnets from *Tulips & Chimneys*, with their archaic diction and artificial sentiments.

The division of the poem into an octave and a sestet resembles the Italian sonnet form more than the English, but it has been modified extensively. The unconventional a b c d d c b a rhyme scheme of the octave forms a palindromic pattern, with a rhymed couplet at the third and fourth lines. It could be that it is made up of one brace-rhymed quatrain (c d d c) inserted into the middle of another (a b b a), so that the couplet provides a kind of link between the two unrhymed quatrains (a b c d and d c b a).

The women of the Massachusetts university town are described bluntly: "the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls / are unbeautiful and have comfortable minds" (ll.1-2). They come with mental and emotional furniture already in place, allowing them no scope for individuality. This renders their minds "comfortable", undisturbed by new and exciting thoughts. In their lack of response to what is fresh and exciting, Cummings believes these ladies have no beauty.

These ladies also have "with the church's protestant blessings / daughters, unscented shapeless spirited" (ll.3-4); with the approval of their religion, the ladies have produced unexciting, undifferentiated daughters, whose only attribute is their enthusiasm. The ladies "believe in Christ and Longfellow, both dead" (l.5), in their spiritual and intellectual lives showing the smug conventionality of an unquestioning belief in what was believed before them. To Cummings, both Christ and Longfellow would have seemed to be pillars of the middle-class society in reaction to which this poem is written.

The extreme conformism of the ladies includes their interests. They

> are invariably interested in so many things—
> at the present writing one still finds
> delighted fingers knitting for the is it Poles?
> perhaps (ll.6-9).

They involve themselves in a variety of activities, even their charitable works arising from social pressure rather than a wish to serve. This is borne out by the fact that their "delighted fingers" are engaged in knitting for a cause of which the details are unclear—and immaterial, for it is the sem-

blance of charity and not the cause itself which is important. The "perhaps" which continues the octave's syntax into the sestet gives an impression of the pervasive indifference with which the ladies view the cause for which they are working.

The sestet also has a palindromic rhyme scheme: c d e e d c. While their fingers are busy with this ostensibly charitable work, the ladies' "permanent faces coyly bandy / scandal of Mrs. N and Professor D" (11.8-10). The contrast between busy hands and idly chattering faces emphasises the hypocrisy of what the ladies are doing: they are exchanging gossip about members of their community, who remain "coyly" identified by their initials, as if this will save the ladies from the sin of gossip. The application of the adjective "permanent" to the ladies' faces suggests their conformity to the unchanging ways of their kind.

The final four lines illustrate the Cambridge ladies' indifference to the cosmos of which they and their insular world are a part. While they are gossiping

> ....the Cambridge ladies do not care, above
> Cambridge if sometimes in its box of
> sky lavender and cornerless, the
> moon rattles like a fragment of angry candy (11.11-14).

Such is the ladies' complacency that no matter how beautiful and arresting the moon may be in its spacious and subtly-coloured sky, it will not move them. They are too absorbed in the worldly concerns about which they are talking. As a symbol of time's cyclical nature, the moon ought to be recognised and accepted as a reminder that time passes and things change, but the Cambridge ladies are devoted to things which are rigid and unchanging. To Cummings, appreciation of the moon's ever-changing beauty is what the ladies ought to feel, and it is what he, a poet, does feel. His poetry is dedicated to the joy of such beauty, and to pouring scorn on those who, like the Cambridge ladies, are too caught up in the affairs of their own world to appreciate it. By placing such a poem at the beginning of the selection of sonnets in his first volume of poetry, Cummings nails his colours to the mast: he is for beauty, spontaneity and love, and therefore is opposed to drabness, conformity

and apathy. This fundamental dichotomy underlies all of his poetry, including his sonnets.

CHAPTER I — INTRODUCTION

The beliefs about art which Cummings assimilated at Harvard between 1911 and 1916 owe much to the loose group of ideas associated with the late-Victorian phenomenon known as Aestheticism. Some of these aesthetic ideals remain fundamental to his work throughout his career and help to explain his devotion to the sonnet. Cummings does not forge the ideas into a system, and neither does he subscribe to any one of the many formulations of Aestheticism, such as symbolism, pre-Raphaelitism and the Decadence; he prefers to borrow from them all and to incorporate their various characteristic stylistic features into his work. While some of these features are limited to Cummings's early poetry, others remain constant, becoming more refined in his later work.

Because the sources of Cummings's aesthetic ideas are many and disparate, for my purposes the writings of the English scholar, Walter Pater, will suffice as a summary of the movement. One of the most influential formulators of Aesthetes' ideas about art, Pater inspired a generation of young Aesthetes on both sides of the Atlantic.

Pater sees existence as consisting in a perpetual flux of elements in reaction with each other. Like Heraclitus, he employs the metaphor of a flame to illustrate this idea:

> this at least of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways (234).

This concept of existence is also true of the inner, subjective life. In our perception of the outside world's flux, ". . . the flame is more eager and devouring" (234): the world presents an overwhelming mass of fleeting impressions which demands a response, but reflecting on such impressions fragments them and cuts us off from their immediacy and brevity. Reflection is a process which isolates the individual from the world. Pater declares that thought is a habit which must be broken, so that the immediacy of passing sensations may be apprehended unadulterated: "not the fruit of experience, but experience itself is the end" (236). Ideally, one must exist in a state of constant pleasurable sensation. Again, he uses the metaphor of a flame to

describe the perfection of this state of being: "to burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life" (236).

Poets' attraction to this new way of thinking about art occurred in reaction to Victorian artists' preoccupation with contemporary social or religious issues, which, in the case of poetry, necessitated work that was realistic and didactic. Such poetry has an immediate moral, ethical or philosophical application to the lives of both the poet and the audience. This is the kind of poetry Cummings means when he says that the Cambridge ladies "believe in" Longfellow. Aestheticism denies the necessity and desirability of such a purpose for art. In his loose formulation of aesthetic ideals, Cummings concurs. Works of art are not to be valued for any didactic purpose, but for the sheer enjoyment they inspire in those who perceive them. So ingrained is the idea that his role must not be that of instructor that, in *i—six nonlectures*, Cummings's lectures as the Charles Eliot Norton Professor at Harvard in 1952-3, he refuses to deliver a conventional lecture because of the didactic function of such discourse. He explains, "lecturing is presumably a form of teaching; and presumably a teacher is someone who knows. I never did, and still don't, know" (3). He chooses to tell the story of his life as a way of showing how his poetry came about; in this way, he can be an artist rather than a teacher.

Instead of instruction being the prime function of art, Aesthetes posit the alternative concept of *l'art pour l'art*: art for the sake of art. All art, poetry included, must have no other purpose than to be beautiful. It is to inspire immediate pleasure in its audience rather than to instruct or edify them in any way, for, in the ever-changing flux of existence, only beauty and the pleasure it evokes can be of value. This belief lies behind Oscar Wilde's statement in the Preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that all art is "useless". He maintains that art must have no function, purpose or goal, but to be beautiful. In one of Cummings's few critical essays, "T. S. Eliot" (*Misc* 25-9), he attributes Eliot's greatness to the fact that ". . . before an Eliot we become alive or intense as we become intense or alive

before a Cézanne or a Lachaise" (*Misc* 26). He sees these artists as having the power to inspire powerful emotions in their audiences through the beauty of their work. Because of this, Cummings sees Eliot as an Aesthete: he "prefers above everything and within everything the unique dimension of intensity, which it amuses him to substitute in us for the comforting and comfortable furniture of reality" (*Misc* 27).

Related to the idea that art must be untrammelled by considerations of morality is the less extreme doctrine that poets should not write in response to the dictates of society's taste, but should rather be able to express their own vision of the world, whatever moral ramifications this might entail. In this assertion of their individuality, Aesthetes strike a blow against the comfortable conformism they believe is required of poets by the rest of society. This undivided loyalty to one's own individual vision is a central tenet of Cummings's artistic creed throughout his life. In defense of Ezra Pound's radio broadcasts for Italy in the Second World War, Cummings affirms that "an artist doesn't live in some geographical abstraction, superimposed on a part of this beautiful earth by the non-imagination of animals . . .. Every artist's strictly illimitable country is himself" (*Misc* 313).

To many Aesthetes, alienation from society is the inevitable result of the primacy they place on the value of art. Their unique vision is what separates them from the majority of people, and causes that majority to regard them as different. To Cummings, maintaining this kind of individuality is a constant struggle with society's requirement that he conform:

> To be nobody-but-yourself—in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else—means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight; and never [to] stop fighting (*Misc* 335).

This is because the concept of *l'art pour l'art* applies as much to the way in which one must live one's life as it does to the way in which art is to be regarded. The denial that art can, or ought to, have didactic content presupposes that life itself is devoid of knowable purpose. Pater argues that just as one must be awake to art as a source of pleasurable stimulus, so must one

be awake to the fleeting beauty of life, for this is all that can be done with life. Life, if apprehended in the same spirit as art, will inspire the same pleasurable response in the perceiver as art does. The Aesthete becomes an observer of life, determined to be open to every passing sensation, seeking no involvement in, or analysis of, the events witnessed. To the Aesthete, this way of life is a liberation from the humdrum business of getting by in life, allowing him to concentrate on what he believes is important about living: its beauty. Thus Cummings believes that the Cambridge ladies' existence is "unbeautiful" and "comfortable". They are completely unaware of the strange beauty represented by the moon, whereas to him, the poet and Aesthete, the moon's beauty is of paramount consequence.

Cummings dubs those whose lives remain unanimated by an awareness of beauty "mostpeople" and stresses the void between them and those who live life in the spirit of art: ". . . it's no use trying to pretend that mostpeople and ourselves are alike. Mostpeople have less in common with ourselves than the squarerootofminusone" (*CP* 461). "Mostpeople" gain no joy from being alive, preferring a womb-like insulation from life: "what do mostpeople mean by 'living'? They don't mean living. They mean the latest and plural approximation to singular prenatal passivity . . ." (*CP* 461). It is clear that the Cambridge ladies qualify as "mostpeople".

In contrast to "mostpeople", the person who experiences life as he would art enjoys the immediacy of life's beauty:

> the now of his each . . . gesture, his any birth or
> breathing, insults . . . millenniums of slavishness.
> He is a little more than anything, he is democracy; he
> is alive . . . (*CP* 461).

Just as one comes "alive" at experiencing a work of art, so one is "alive" when experiencing life as art. Being "alive" means to realise one's own unique vision, to be an individual. Cummings devotes much of his poetry to describing and evoking moments of being "alive", while frequently stressing the difference between people who can experience this state and those who cannot. In "the Cambridge ladies", he, the poet who describes the moon and sky so strikingly, is "alive", and the ladies, who "do not care", are not.

Although Pater's ideas are dedicated to high principles in the admiration of beauty and the joy it inspires, Aestheticism taken to extremes can be used as justification for a merely hedonistic lifestyle. This gave rise to the Decadence of the 1890s, of which Wilde was a leading figure. The Decadence also drew on the French concept of *le Poète maudite*: the cursed poet, doomed to suffer privation and degradation for his art and for the experience of new sensations. Wilde's figure of Dorian Gray typifies this tendency: bored with the old sensations, ever driven to experience new ones, and uninhibited by considerations of right or wrong, he finds himself on a downward slope to corruption and death. Cummings courted the life of the *Poète maudite*, especially in his experience of drink and prostitutes while in Paris, but this was always done in a self-consciously "artistic" way, as if he were gathering material for his poems. He never lapsed into the degradation of a Dorian Gray.

To many Aesthetes, their ideas about art and about life lived in the spirit of art are a logical extension of those held by the English Romantics earlier in the nineteenth century. The aspect of Romanticism which stresses the imagination in art in preference to the neoclassical ideals of order and realism underlies the Aesthetes' rejection of realism and didacticism. The poet, who is blessed with a heightened imaginative faculty, has a unique vision and therefore is different from other people. Poets need not conform to the norms of society, but must rather be true to the dictates of their special insight into the world. The English commercial and industrial middle class subscribed to a puritan ethic which valued work and its material rewards; morality was conventional and conformist, and action was favoured above intellectual pursuits. The Romantics saw themselves as embracing a superior ethic which stressed subjectivity and detachment: their only moral imperative was to be true to their own individual vision. Their idea of a personal morality went against the prevalent moral climate and resulted in the ostracism of such figures as Byron and Shelley, who lived in a manner which scandalised contemporary society.

Romantic poets regarded their poetry as being animated by imagination. Every poem has an independent, organic life, making it separate and different from the objective world. It must be read using the imagination, subjectively rather than objectively. An objective, unsympathetic approach, using reason, will not allow the reader to experience the imaginative vision of the poem. In "The Tables Turned", Wordsworth says that in poetry, as in life,

> Our meddling intellect
> Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things: —
> We murder to dissect (11.26-28).

Cummings believes his poetry, and indeed all art, must be approached in the Romantic way, through the imagination. In "T. S. Eliot" he asserts that it is pointless to approach Eliot rationally because,

> . . . as always in the case of superficial because vertical analysis, to attempt the boxing and labeling of genius is to involve in something inescapably rectilinear—a formula, for example—[created by] not the artist but the 'critic' (*Misc* 26).

Cummings sees the limited, objective approach required to analyse Eliot's poetry rationally as being inadequate. He characterises critics' formulae as working in straight lines, and of standing above the poem, instead of allowing the poem to affect them on a subjective, emotional level. Cummings describes this difference as a contrast between the rigidity of the geometric and the living freedom of the organic.

In stressing submission to the power of a work of art to inspire pleasure in its audience rather than attempting to analyse it, Cummings echoes the practice of many Aesthetic critics. At one point in "T. S. Eliot", rather than analysing several lines of one of Eliot's poems,Cummings opts to quote them with the comment, "at the risk of being jeered for an 'uncritical' remark, we mention that this is one of the huge fragilities before which comment is disgusting" (*Misc* 28). Because the meaning of a work is deemed to be unimportant, explication is neither necessary nor desirable. The critic's response must be the same as that of any other Aesthete: he must allow the work's form and content to inspire pleasurable sensations in him. In writing

about his response, he must endeavour to recreate as nearly as possible for his reader the particular sensations he has obtained from the object under discussion. In this way, critical writing becomes another form of art, rather than being about art, with the result that there is no real difference between a critic and an artist.

That reason and thought are inadequate ways of dealing with life and art is one of the pillars of Cummings's philosophy. He rejects reason because it attempts to "box and label", or to pigeonhole, experience. In his "Foreword to an Exhibit: I" (1944), he says that "nothing measurable can be alive". To be truly "alive" is to allow oneself to respond emotionally rather than rationally: "to feel something is to be alive". Cummings's term for things which are "alive" in this way is "mystery", because "a mystery is something immeasurable". The moon's paradoxical "box of / sky lavender and cornerless" in "the Cambridge ladies" is a mystery. To Cummings, "art is a mystery" and must not be apprehended with the reason (*Misc* 314). Like Pater, he believes that rational thought is a habit which must be broken in order to experience the passing wonders of life.

The effect of the Aesthetes' ideas on the poetry written by poets who hold these views is far-reaching. If new poetry cannot exemplify a moral or be a vehicle for exposition, but instead must be a source of immediate aesthetic pleasure, such poetry must differ from the poetry which precedes the formulation of these beliefs.

The undesirability of didactic or realistic content in poetry immediately highlights the question of poetic form. If content is devalued, form assumes a correspondingly higher profile. First, Aesthetic poets and critics tend to give precedence to the short lyric as opposed to the long poem or epic; a short lyric is the ideal vehicle for the stimulation of immediate pleasure in the reader. The very brevity of aesthetic delight means stimulus cannot be maintained in a long poem. Cummings is true to this idea, in that he gives up attempting to write long poems early in his career; his longer works are his novels and plays. As a poet he devotes himself to short lyrics,

often depicting moods or moments of particular beauty, or describing the uniqueness and intensity of his love for his lady. The small, highly-structured sonnet, with its amatory tradition, is particularly suited to these poetic aims.

A second result of the Aesthetes' concern with form is that the formal elements of the poem themselves become the source of the reader's pleasure. The appreciation of a poem's technical felicities for their own sake stimulates aesthetic pleasure. Such attention to form brings into fashion complex, traditional European verse-forms like the ballade, the rondeau and the villanelle, which can be appreciated as objects apart from the meanings they are used to embody. Cummings's description of his initial response to the forms he discovered in *The Rhymester*, a children's versification manual, reveals a similar idea of form:

> I learned that there are all kinds of intriguing verse-forms, chiefly French; and that each of these forms can and does exist in and of itself, apart from any use to which you or I may not or may put it. A rondeau is a rondeau, irrespective of any idea it may be said to embody; and whatever a ballade may be about, it is always a ballade—never a villanelle or a rondeau (*nonlectures* 29).

The concern with form means that although poems must inspire brief and beautiful emotions in the reader, their composition must be a lengthy and careful process. Aesthetic poets stress the difficulty with which an object of beauty is created and take pride in their abilities as craftsmen. The task is to create work that satisfies an Aesthete's cultivated tastes, rather than to appeal to the lower sensibilities of the common herd. Dedication to art makes them artificers, with all the attendant qualities of skill, patience and hard work. In his advice to students (1955), Cummings points out the necessity of hard work: "as for expressing nobody-but-yourself in words, that means working just a little harder than anyone who is not a poet can possibly imagine" (*Misc* 335). He believes in the value of artistic technique: in "T. S. Eliot" he is impressed by "an overwhelming sense of technique". This is because his technique is the means by which Eliot expresses his individuality:

> by technique we . . . mean one thing: the alert hatred

> of normality which . . . asserts that nobody in general and someone in particular is incorrigibly and actually alive (*Misc* 27).

Artistic ability is what separates Eliot, the artist, from the rest of society. Through the exercise of that ability he constantly shuns the demand that he adhere to its idea of "normality". In the same way, by repeatedly challenging the technical limits of the sonnet—its rhyme and prosody, even its shape on the page—Cummings is asserting his individuality against a highly conventional art form.

The idea that form in a work of art can be appreciated for itself presupposes that form is separable from the matter or meaning of that work. However, not all Aesthetes believe this. Pater subscribes to a more moderate view. He asserts that form and meaning must be indissolubly bound together, and that their seamless unity is what evokes pleasure in the reader. He believes that all art must strive to emulate music, in which form and substance are the same.

Whether a poet subscribes to the extreme view of artistic form or to Pater's milder view, his preoccupation with form has the same implications for the quality or surface of the verse he writes. The content being less important, rhythm, rhyme, and aural and decorative effects become correspondingly more important. Such Aesthetic poets as Swinburne and, later, Bridges became excellent metrists in order to produce formally-pleasing work. Bridges wrote in both traditional and experimental verse-forms, and became known as a writer of beautiful lyrics which are more notable for their technical excellence than for the sentiments they express. Cummings shows a similar concern for form over meaning in his account of Eliot's poetic style. He singles out for admiration "an extraordinarily tight orchestration of the shapes of sound [and] the delicate and careful murderings—almost invariably interpreted, internally as well as terminally, through near-rhyme and rhyme—of established tempos by oral rhythms" (*Misc* 28). He does not mention the contribution of these features to the thematic concerns of the poetry.

Cummings's mention of "the shapes of sound" is typical of the

Aesthetes' concern with the aural effects of their verse. Because the Aesthetic short poem is dedicated to the inspiration of enjoyment in the reader, and shuns any didactic design on him, it concentrates instead on the senses, through which all pleasure is experienced. Thus words are selected and arranged as much for their alliterative, assonantal and onomatopoeic effects as for their meaning. Such sounds are often arranged in repetitive patterns, so as to create a sonorous or euphonious effect. A good example of this tendency is Swinburne's "The Garden of Proserpine":

> Here, where the world is quiet;
> Here, where all trouble seems
> Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
> In doubtful dreams of dreams;
> I watch the green field growing
> For reaping folk and sowing,
> For harvest-time and mowing,
> A sleepy world of streams (ll.1-8).

A related method of stimulating the reader's imagination is the description of sensuous objects or experiences, frequently achieved through the meticulous, cumulative rendering of visual detail. Rossetti, with his painter's eye, is a poet who makes frequent use of such description, and Cummings, who admired Rossetti, followed suit in some of his poems. An early poem, "All in green went my love riding" (*CP* 15), relies on repeated descriptions of colour and on the number four for its detailed visual effect:

> All in green went my love riding
> on a great horse of gold
> into the silver dawn.
>
> four lean hounds crouched low and smiling
> the merry deer ran before (ll.1-5).

Many Aesthetes' poems are written with the sole purpose of evoking moods, both pleasant and melancholy. The language may be vague, as the poem is not designed to be read in search of a moral or message. Vagueness does not detract from, and may even favour, poetry of this sort, by not diverting attention from form. For Example, Bridges's "Triolet", while being a careful rendition of the form, evokes little more of the speaker's psychological state than his mood of weariness and his listless pondering:

> When first we met we did not guess
> That Love would prove so hard a master;

Of more than common friendliness
When first we met we did not guess.
Who could foretell this sore distress,
This irretrievable disaster
When first we met?—We did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master.

Quite apart from this concern with form for its own sake, the idea of *l'art pour l'art* had ramifications for the subject-matter chosen by Aesthetes. The denial that poetry needs to concern itself with the issues of the day, be they moral, philosophical or religious, results in a hostility towards realism. This means that poets need not write about the contemporary world at all. They see themselves as being detached from matters of the everyday world, and they respond by exploring alternative worlds in their verse. Accordingly, the Aesthetes show a fascination with antiquity, be it the Medievalism of Rossetti, the Arthurian legends treated by Morris, or Bridges's interest in biblical times. Exotic, often Eastern, settings and characters also constitute this Aesthetes' fantasy world. Wilde's fascination with Salomé owes something to this vogue. As a young poet Cummings devoted a number of poems to exploring themes of antiquity, such as the medieval "Of Nicolette" and "All in green went my true love riding". A whole subsection of *Tulips & Chimneys*, "Orientale", is made up of poems with an Eastern flavour. The petrarchist mode appears in sonnets written throughout his career. A stylistic ramification of this interest is the archaic language which Cummings employs as a way of evoking the spirit of ancient times, in much the same way as the Aesthetes who influenced him:

my love
thy hair is one kingdom
  the king whereof is darkness
thy forehead is a flight of flowers

thy head is a quick forest
  filled with sleeping birds
thy breasts are swarms of white bees
  upon the bough of thy body . . .
(*CP* 33, ll.1-8).

Just as, carried to extremes, life in the spirit of art produces the Decadence, so the extreme application of the Aesthetes' anti-realist and anti-moralist ideas produces decadence in poetry. Drawn to the portrayal of

anything which will evoke pleasure in the reader, and unhindered by any concern with morality, poets seek out subjects and sentiments usually regarded as distasteful or taboo. These are *not* presented realistically, however, but with detachment, allowing them a status on a par with more conventional ideas of what is beautiful. The poet's wish to express a personal vision free of the requirements of society's tastes encourages the exploration of unusual or perverse states of mind, also rendered in a detached manner. The desire to shock the complacent middle class adds spice to such endeavours. The eroticism of Wilde's *Salomé* provides a good example of this aspect of Aestheticism in poetry, as does Dowson's poem, "Cynara":

> Last night, ah, yesternight, between her lips and mine
> There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
> Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
> And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
> Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:
> I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion
> (ll.1-6).

Cummings's experience of the seedier parts of New York and Paris provided him with the material to write decadent verse. A large proportion of his early poetry depicts a kind of urban underworld, populated by gangsters like Dick Mid (*CP* 120, 124), and prostitutes like Kitty (*CP* 126), a world he explores in a number of ways. In some poems, such as the prostitute sonnets of "Five Americans" (*CP* 223-227), or the prose poem "i was sitting in mcsorley's" (*CP* 110), he is a detached observer, and in others, like "the bed is not very big" (*CP* 207), he is a cynical participant. Some of the inhabitants of this world are the subjects of portraits which celebrate their faithfulness to their own individuality in the face of a disapproving society exemplified by the Cambridge ladies, whose poem is placed at the beginning of a group of sonnets on the *demimonde*. They are the people he imagines will be shocked by his prostitutes and rogues.

Cummings's interest in the *demimonde* is an aspect of Aestheticism which he adopted as a young man but which he later relinquished. This is also true of his interest in the exotic, and in his use of archaic language. As he matured, the poems which evoked moments of beauty and joy, often shared with

his lover, became more intense and more Romantic. However, "the Cambridge ladies" reveals that he also has a satiric bent, which is uncharacteristic of Aestheticism, as the satirist usually believes in the power of his work to change things for the better. Those aspects of Aestheticism which he retained are the absolute belief in the poet's right to express his unique vision, even in the face of public censure; the value of joyful emotion above ratiocination; and the necessity to toil unceasingly as a craftsman in order to express that vision artistically. Cummings's preoccupation with, and constant transgressions of, the conventions of the sonnet, show him to have inherited the Aesthetes' fascination with form and their belief in expressing their individual vision regardless of the dictates of tradition. In his early work he shows an Aesthete's concern with antiquity, including the conventions of petrarchism, and a Decadent's attraction to the *demimonde*. As he matures poetically, he becomes more interested in using the sonnet to capture moments of intense sensation or emotion.

II

This thesis focuses on one aspect of Cummings's practice as a poet: his use of the sonnet. His awareness of the sonnet begins in his childhood. The children's versification manual he received as a gift, *The Rhymester*, had a chapter devoted entirely to the sonnet (Kennedy 495n), and in his college versification class he had the opportunity to learn how to use a plethora of forms and genres (Kennedy 64). In *i—six nonlectures* he recalls the occasion when the sonnets of Dante Gabriel Rossetti inspired him to attempt the genre for the first time (29-30). He wrote sonnets throughout his career, with the result that there are 210 in the *Complete Poems* of 1981, and 35 more in *Etcetera: The Unpublished Poems of E.E. Cummings* (see Appendix 1). Clearly he regards writing sonnets as a significant part of his poetic activity.

Cummings acknowledges some familiarity with the formal aspects of the sonnet in two letters. In the first, written in 1959, he says, "for me 'sonnet' implies a poem of fourteen iambic pentameters, none of them unrhymed" (*Letters* 262); and in the second, written in 1961: "a[n Italian] sonnet has 2

parts,the octave(lines 1-8)& the sestet(lines 9-14)" (*Letters* 270).

While admitting that a sonnet must rhyme, he makes no mention of the patterns in which the rhymes of a sonnet are traditionally composed. "the Cambridge ladies" reveals that Cummings takes extensive liberties in the structuring of his sonnets. He is capable of writing standard English and Italian forms, and sometimes combines elements of the two, but often he prefers a loose pattern which, while not conforming to the two traditional forms, generally fulfils his brief that all lines must rhyme. In his anthologies, sonnets with traditional rhyme schemes rub shoulders with those of his own devising, suggesting that he never prefers one to the other, but turns his hand to whichever seems to suit the subject. Many of the sonnets in which Cummings relays a series of sensory perceptions seem to benefit from the loose, unconventional pattern, while the epigrammatic love sonnets, in which he seeks to define the mysterious nature of love, work well when written in the orderly quatrains of the English form.

Cummings shows a similar freedom in his use of the rhymes which help to establish the form a sonnet takes. He frequently makes use of words which, strictly speaking, do not rhyme. Instead, he uses partial rhymes, eye-rhymes, and the merest aural consonance to fulfil the functions traditionally performed by full rhymes. For example, in "the Cambridge ladies", the a b c d d c b a e f g g f e rhyme scheme is made up of some full rhymes, such as "souls" (l.1) and "Poles" (l.8), and the vaguest of aural consonance, like "Professor D" (l.10) and "the" (l.13), which must be pronounced "thee" in order to rhyme. In pairing "blessings" (l.3) with "things" (l.6) he rhymes an unstressed syllable with a stressed one. Other unconventional rhymes include words which are broken by the line-endings, such as in the sonnet "goodby Betty" (*CP* 117), in which the third line of the quatrain must rhyme with the first:

> goodby Betty, don't remember me
> pencil your eyes dear and have a good time
> with the tall tight boys at Tabari'
> s,keep your teeth snowy,stick to beer and lime (ll.1-4).

Despite his injunction that a sonnet can have no unrhymed lines, Cummings

occasionally inserts a word which can neither be seen nor heard to rhyme with any other in the poem. In the second sonnet of the "Five Americans" sequence, "Mame" (*CP* 224), the single word uttered by Cummings, "'novocaine?'", finds no rhyme elsewhere, which stresses the incongruity of his question in the context of Mame's narration.

The unusual way in which the poems are arranged on the page constitutes one of his major modifications of the sonnet form. Cummings's use of typography is one of his most distinctive and effective poetic techniques. While some of his sonnets are instantly recognisable as such by their appearance on the page, most have been rearranged, attenuated, or fragmented typographically.

Broadly speaking, Cummings's typographical arrangements have two functions. First, they define the sense-units of his sonnets by isolating them. In such English sonnets as "in time's a noble mercy of proportion" (*CP* 683) and "joyful your complete fearless and pure love" (*CP* 761), each quatrain is separated from the next by a space on the page. In sonnets lacking a conventional rhyme pattern, the typographical arrangement becomes a way of constituting the parts of the poem. For example, Cummings's expression of his craving to be in New York, "by god i want above fourteenth" (*CP* 119), is a series of remembered sensory impressions. The rhyme scheme (a b b c c d e f a g e f g d) is loose and favours the associative nature of the impressions, so that it is left to the typographical groups to indicate the limits of each sense unit. In line 4 Cummings comes to the end of his first statement, and indicates the beginning of the next by moving the second part of the line downward, so that "(i pant" begins on a new level. This occurs again in line 7, where Cummings begins, "give me the Square in spring . . ." on a new level in the middle of the line. New sense units are indicated typographically at the beginnings of lines 9 and 14.

Second, rather than defining the sense units in a poem, Cummings's typographical arrangements are often used to fragment them. This causes a delay in the reading of the poem. In "the Cambridge ladies" Cummings uses

typographical dislocations in the middle of sentences to impart a sense of movement and energy to the verse. This technique has the effect of stressing the first word after the break, so that "fifth's" (line 2) gains emphasis, and the contrast between "rich" and "frail" is enhanced by the gap between lines 3 and 4. Attenuations of this kind draw out and alter the proportions of the sonnet form, a strategy which is effectively used in poems about the ability of love to defy time, such as "upon the room's / silence i will sew" (*CP* 215) and "i like my body when it is with your" (*CP* 218). By typographically forcing a series of delays in the completion of the poem's argument, Cummings is able to mimic the suspension of time's passage experienced by lovers.

In the letter quoted above, Cummings states that sonnets are made up of "iambic pentameters"; that is, ten-syllable lines realising five beats. Cummings pays as much regard to this formal requirement as to any other, preferring lines which impart the desired effect despite their inexact number of syllables. As a result, his lines often have between nine and eleven syllables, and he does not hesitate to insert more, or leave a line short, if he feels the effect is right. The syllable-counts for the fourteen lines of "the Cambridge ladies" are 11, 11, 11, 10, 11, 13, 9, 12, 12, 11, 10, 9, 9, 12. Despite several elisions in line 6, it is still thirteen syllables long. Regardless of their non-standard length, most of these lines do contain five beats, so that the rhythm approximates that of pentameter.

Some of Cummings's sonnets are obviously designed to have particularly long or short lines. Such variations are not without precedent in the history of the sonnet: Shakespeare's Sonnet 145, "Those lips that love's own hands did make", is in octosyllables, and *Astrophil and Stella* I is in Alexandrines. The syllable-count of Cummings's "the bed is not very big" (*CP* 207), from the "Sonnets-Realities" group in *Tulips & Chimneys*, is 7, 9, 6, 8, 6, 7, 8, 9, 6, 9, 9, 7, 6, 9. These short lines are mimetic of the narrow bed which is the poem's setting, and they also help to establish Cummings's clipped, laconic tone. The lines of "little joe gould has lost his teeth and doesn't know where" (*CP* 410) have the following numbers of syllables: 13, 14,

14, 13, 17, 13, 15, 16, 17, 15, 17, 17, 13, 17. With lines of this length, the poem would appear not to be a sonnet at all, except that it has a conventional English rhyme scheme, the four subdivisions of which are distinctly demarcated by typographical gaps. But in spite of such extensive transgressions of the sonnet's traditional formal limits, it is generally obvious which of Cummings's poems are sonnets. Many retain distinct sonnet structures, rhymes and typographic arrangements. When a poem is not plainly a sonnet, several consistent characteristics identify it as such. First, in his early anthologies, he collects the sonnets into groups under the labels "Sonnets-Realities", "Sonnets-Unrealities", and "Sonnets-Actualities" and the poems in these groups offer an indication of Cummings's own idea as to what qualifies as a sonnet. Second, in all sonnets he is careful to retain the basic fourteen lines, even if the typography gives the illusion of greater length. Furthermore, the lines usually approximate the traditional five beats of iambic pentameter, unless the poem is a rare experiment in longer or shorter lines. Finally, his use of rhyme is more consistent in the sonnets than in any of the other forms of verse he writes. The presence of these features in combination allows Cummings's sonnets to be identified among his poems, even though he takes many liberties with the traditionally exacting form.

Quite apart from its form, the sonnet is associated with certain themes, conventions and attitudes. These substantive elements are the accretions of centuries of the form's use by countless poets. The sonnet has a long history of development with which the would-be sonneteer must be familiar before he can begin to make sense of what he is doing. Whatever else the sonnet implied to Cummings, it must have meant more than merely a prosodic form. For this reason, the sonnet is best discussed not merely as a form, but as a genre or kind, so that the many themes, conventions and attitudes appropriated by Cummings as his material for experimental poetic creation may be considered.

My summary of the theory of genre is based on that formulated by Alastair Fowler in *Kinds of Literature* (1982). In my discussion of specific

genres, the help of Rosalie Colie's *Resources of Kind* (1973) is enlisted. Fowler argues that genre is an essential part of the meaning of a literary work, so that no work can be understood adequately without cognisance being taken of its genre. It is a hermeneutic tool, not the prescriptive straitjacket it is sometimes criticised as being. To be of any use, the genres cannot be regarded as a rigid system of classification. Classes are by nature fixed and definite, whereas genres must be seen diachronically: they are always in a state of metamorphosis. Indeed, reference to a work's genre is only useful because the genres are continually changing as time passes. A work gains significance through the ways in which it differs from the conventions to which it is related. Every new literary work belongs to one genre or another, and, when such membership is recognised, will change the genre as a whole. This means that, in order to be specific about the kind one is discussing, reference must be made to what stage of its historical development one is examining.

Because the genres are slowly metamorphosing, it is most accurate to regard them as types or "kinds". Fowler uses the analogy of a family to illustrate the relationship between exemplars of a kind: "representatives of a genre may . . . be regarded as making up a family whose septs and individual members are related in various ways, without necessarily having any single feature shared in common by all" (41). Each genre or kind has a repertoire of potential features which individual members of the kind may contain. Not every work will have all these features, but a work's possession of key features in combination qualifies it for membership in the genre of whose repertoire those features are typical. The repertoire is made up of features which are either substantive (such as attitude, tone, and theme), or formal (structural elements like form, size, and design).

The individual works belonging to a kind are capable of considerable variation. One of the ways in which exemplars of a kind may differ widely is through modal extension, in which a poem will belong to one kind, but may contain elements of another kind's repertoire. These imported elements con-

stitute the presence of a mode within the kind. Because it is a hybrid, such a work's kind is determined by its external form, rather than by its modal elements:

> . . . modal terms never imply a complete external form. Modes have always an incomplete repertoire, a selection only of the corresponding kind's features, and one from which overall external structure is absent (Fowler 107).

Thus it is possible to encounter an elegiac sonnet, in which the external form is that of a sonnet, but some of the substantive elements of elegy have been employed, modifying the kind modally.

Not to be confused with modes, and more commonly encountered in the sonnet, are subgenres. Whereas a mode imports features from the repertoire of another kind, in effect a subgenre is a specialised instance of a kind. Fowler puts it this way: "subgenres have the common features of the kind—external forms and all—and, over and above these, add special substantive features" (112). There may also be subdivisions of subgenres: the Elizabethan love sonnet is a subgenre which can be divided into such secondary subgenres as *blasons*, and even further, into the tertiary subgenre comprising sonnets derived from the *blason* which deal with individual features of the beloved, such as her eyes. The existence of these subgenres in no way constitutes a system of classification, however: the subgenres are the area in which a genre is developing at its fastest—where it is most "volatile"—and such numerous secondary and tertiary subgenres within a kind are evidence of great activity on the part of writers of that kind at a particular time.

But the genres do not have a life of their own; they cannot develop and multiply of their own volition. The agents who bring about generic change are the writers, who are continually adding their own developments to the genres. Authors need not consciously set out to imitate exemplars of genres with which they are familiar, but their notions of what it is they are writing are influenced by works they have read. No work can be *sui generis*, even if its writer is unaware of the tradition to which he is adding. Still, many writers do create by consciously imitating the works they esteem. In the case

of the Elizabethan sonnet, the imitative practices of many poets in a short period of time resulted in an explosive development of the kind. Even if a new work conforms very closely to the generic models it is meant to imitate, the whole genre will be changed by the addition of a new member. Thus, at any time the extant members of a genre serve as the pattern with reference to which writers produce the very works that in turn alter the genre:

> What produces generic resemblances . . . is tradition: a sequence of influence and imitation and inherited codes connecting works in the genre. As kinship makes a family, so literary relations of this sort form a genre (Fowler 42-3).

This is not to imply that writers only take their lead from those who immediately precede them. Like Cummings, they may well read the literature of previous eras and inherit their generic ideas from these more remote sources.

Fowler's view of the nature and function of genre concurs with that of Rosalie Colie:

> . . . though there are generic conventions all right, they are also metastable. They change over time . . . .. At the time of writing, the author's generic concept is in one sense historical, in that he looks back at models to imitate and to outdo. The work he writes may alter generic possibilities . . . almost beyond recognition (30-31).

She adds that a writer also takes the kind and uses it for his own purposes, and is not bound by the history of the kinds he chooses: ". . . the writer's view is also synchronic in that he considers the array of relevant works as important for him *now*, not himself as the bearer of their traditions" (31, original emphasis).

Cummings's own critical writings reveal that some idea of genre characterises the way in which he sees literature. In "the New Art" (*Misc* 5) he defends contemporary innovations in painting, music and poetry, saying that "in each of these there is a clearly discernible evolution from models". His defence is based on his confidence that even revolutionary artists must refer to their predecessors when creating new works. This is consistent with Cummings's notion of the "delicate murderings" of established forms which Eliot commits in order to bring them "alive": fresh, exciting poetry occurs when

conventions are reinterpreted. The process of evolution entails the assimilation of new work into the genre, which in turn will provide fresh models to which future artists will refer. Cummings is confident of the value of experimentation in this process: "the great men of the future will most certainly profit by the experimentation of the present period".

Although it is unclear exactly how we acquire competence in recognising genres, such competence must be learnt. In certain facts about Cummings's education one finds the basis of his familiarity with the extensive range of genres which is evident in his poetry. First, he was well-read in the classics in which most genres have their origins. At preparatory school he studied Latin for four years and Greek for two (Kennedy 39). From Anacreon, Catullus, and the Greek *Anthology* he acquired a sound knowledge of all kinds of epigram (Kennedy 56), while Sappho provided him with a grounding in love lyric. Second, he studied English, American and European literature at Harvard. This included a course on poetic composition in which emphasis was placed on imitation of the forms and conventions used by many poets from the ancients to the late nineteenth century (Kennedy 91-100). Apart from the formal practice he gained, he was able to see how the genres had developed over time. Third, at least some of the courses at Harvard seem to have been designed with particular genres as their central principle. Cummings spent a semester studying "The Nature and History of Allegory" (Kennedy 63), and another on "The English Critical Essay" (Kennedy 65). Fourth, in *Tulips & Chimneys* there are poems in which Cummings's knowledge of certain kinds is plain: there is an epithalamion (*CP* 3), and "All in green went my love riding" (*CP* 15) is a pre-Raphaelite literary ballad. This suggests that he set about composing at least some of his poems by conscious imitation of the kinds with which he had become familiar. His sonnets constitute the best evidence that he approached his writing with as much of an awareness of his role as an imitator as he had of being an experimental poet.

Given that he was aware of genre and its functions, what did Cummings perceive the sonnet genre as being? As shown by the excerpts from his

letters quoted above, he was conversant with at least the basic formal aspects of the kind. His choice of subjects, themes and situations owes much to established sonnet practice, but he was never limited by these and employed many modal extensions from other kinds. His sonnets show modulations from such other kinds as pastoral invitation, the greater Romantic lyric, satire, and elegy. In addition, the traditional sonnet subgenres he wrote included *blasons*, *antiblasons*, sonnets on paintings, and sonnets on the sonnet.

Thus Cummings, like earlier sonneteers, was able to turn the sonnet to numerous uses, a flexibility which Colie suggests is inherent in the genre itself: "the sonnet, so firmly established in its size and metrical structure, proved extraordinarily open to the topics, styles, and tones of other literary modes and genres . . ." (107). However, this is only one of two aspects of the genre which make it so readily adaptable generically. Quite apart from exploiting its internal versatility, poets have also always aspired to make something greater with the sonnet than is possible within the limited scope of a single sonnet. One of the ways this ambition can be realised is through the writing of many sonnets on a related theme, which results in a new genre, the sonnet sequence.

The paradigmatic sonnet sequences were written by Petrarch and Dante in Italy, followed by Du Bellay in France and by the Elizabethan English sonneteers, most notably Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare. Individual sonnets became the building-blocks for larger works, which, by virtue of their amplitude, had repertoire features of their own:

> . . . one could write . . . in a sequence or cycle, which offered a more or less connected narrative of love, with elements of psychological investigation and literary criticism intrinsically related, in the genre, to the love-situation (Colie 104).

The sonnets are often arranged according to a complex numerological structure, which contributes symmetry and symbolic complexity to the work. Such sequences, although dominated by sonnets, often include other forms. Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* has songs, Spenser's *Amoretti* includes Anacreontics and an epithalamion, and both Daniel and Shakespeare end their sequences with a

complaint. In the introduction to his edition of Shakespeare's sonnets Kerrigan argues that, following the example of Samuel Daniel's *Delia* (1592), sonneteers designed their sequences so that the sonnets and the additional poems would be "mutually illuminating" (14). In other words, poems in different forms on themes related to those of the sonnets are one of the features of the sonnet sequence's repertoire.

These additional repertoire-features are not the only outcome of accumulating sonnets into sequences. The increased scope of the sequence makes possible a more complex expression of the themes and ideas already inherent in the sonnet genre: "the 'more' of the sonnet-sequence lies . . . in the deepening of analytical themes already present in the thematics of the single sonnet" (Colie 105). These were love sonnets, composed according to conventional themes and attitudes which the medieval Provençal poets had called *fine amour*, or courtly love, and which Petrarch had introduced into the sonnet genre. Each was dedicated to a virginal lady whose perfection came to represent spiritual goodness to which the poet aspired: ". . . the poet learned, through his love of a lady, to love her abstractly, and then to love heaven and truth . . ." (Colie 105). In other words, it was a small step to identify the love of a perfect lady with the love of the One: ". . . Renaissance Platonism domesticated itself in sonnet-sequences, infusing new ideological strength into the love-themes subscribed to already by sonneteers" (Colie 105). Thus Drayton addressed a sequence to a lady called "Idea", and Chapman's sequence was dedicated "To his Mistresse Philosophie". By gathering sonnets together, a long philosophical poem was created, more complex and profound than the best individual sonnet could ever be. As Petrarch was its innovator, the body of attitudes and poetic conceits which developed from his models has become known as petrarchism.

Colie suggests that the second way in which the sonnet becomes a part of a larger work, thereby gaining a significance beyond the limited size of a single sonnet, is by appearing in long works other than sonnet sequences. Petrarch's influence had the result that the sonnet became associated with a

certain kind of behaviour or decorum, practised by the lover who was also the sonneteer. The act of writing sonnets was one of the ways in which a sonnet-lover behaved: by writing a sonnet dedicated to a lady, he is conforming to the sonnet-lover type. When Orlando pins sonnets to the trees of Arden in *As You Like It* (III ii 11.1-10), the sonnet itself, rather than whatever it might say, is his way of showing his love for Rosalind. Another kind of behaviour associated with the sonnet genre is the language used by the lover, such as the conventional conceits, the tone of self-abnegation, or the complaints that the lady is cruel. In *Othello* the appearance of sonnet language and of events which are similar to those of a sonnet-sequence amounts to the conversion of the personal, psychological narrative of a sonnet sequence into a dramatic tragedy. The addition of whole sonnets, or of distinctive sonnet repertoire-features, to the repertoires of other kinds, meant that "as a thematic genre itself, as a *topos* even, the sonnet could be used with other forms" (Colie 107).

Romeo and Juliet serves as a good example of this aspect of the sonnet's adaptability. Sonnets are used in at least two ways in the play. The first is as an organising principle for the Prologues to Acts I and II. Both are English sonnets. The form's brevity adds economy, and its rhymes add euphony to these passages. In each case, the formality of the language contributes to the portentousness of the Prologue's message.

More importantly, the first Prologue also serves as an introduction to the second function of sonnet elements within the play. In his introduction to the Arden edition, Gibbons argues that it "attun[es] the audience to the play's verbal music and, subliminally, to its sonnet-like symmetries of feeling and design" (42-3). Initially, in his infatuation for Rosaline, Romeo is depicted as indulging in behaviour characteristic of a lover in a petrarchist love sonnet: he has "the attitude of a typical Elizabethan melancholy lover", to the point of parody (Gibbons 47). His speech is made up of sonnet-like conceits:

> . . . O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
> Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!

> Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
> Still-waking sleep that is not what it is!
> This love feel I that feel no love in this (I i 176-80).

He is untried in true love, so that he resorts to imitation of literary commonplaces to augment his lack of experience; or, as Friar Lawrence puts it later, his "love did read by rote that could not spell" (II iii 84).

The first meeting of the lovers at the Montagues' banquet occurs with a dialogue which not only uses sonnet-language, but which also takes on the structure and argument of an English sonnet:

> *Romeo.* If I profane with my unworthiest hand
> This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:
> My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
> To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
> *Juliet.* Good Pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
> Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
> For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
> And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.
> *Romeo.* Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
> *Juliet.* Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
> *Romeo.* O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do:
> They pray: grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.
> *Juliet.* Saints do not move, though grant for prayer's sake.
> *Romeo* Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.
> [*He kisses her.*]
> (I v 92-105).

The dialogue of the play has become a sonnet, an almost-ritualistic seduction in which Romeo begs, and Juliet grants, their first kiss. The conceits of palmers and saints are exchanged within the measured increments which make up the sonnet. In the public setting of the banquet they disguise their flirtation with a sonnet's formality, which only results in a heightened sense of their barely-suppressed passion. Conversely, the embedding of a love sonnet in the dialogue has brought the special concerns of the sonnet genre to the stage: it is

> . . . a means to realise, on the stage, what had
> hitherto only been depicted in non-dramatic poetry:
> each lover's intimate and delicate states of consciousness, subtle and potent movements of feeling,
> intuition of heart's mysteries (Gibbons 43).

Thus within the context of a larger work the sonnet takes on new generic roles: "the sonnet can be seen to act mythically—as a way of life, or perceiving the world: as a system of values in *Othello;* as a gesture, metaphorically, in *As You Like It*" (Colie 107-8). In *Romeo and Juliet* it is

Romeo's petrarchist way of seeing his world which betrays his youthful self-indulgence, and it is the formality of petrarchist conceits which sees the lovers through the initial steps toward their first act as lovers, a kiss.

A non-dramatic longer genre which is little-known today, but which might also include sonnets in its repertoire, is the *silva*. Like so many, this genre has its origin in the classics, in the work of the Roman poet Statius (*c* A.D. 45 - *c* A.D. 96). Statius's *Silvae* is a collection of short poems in five books. They are in diverse metres, appear to have been rapidly composed, and deal with a variety of social and occasional topics. The qualities of miscellaneousness and roughness remain the diagnostic features of a *silva*. Fowler relates that the Renaissance genre-theorist Scaliger

> . . . explained the term [*silva*] as derived 'either from the multifarious matter, from the crowds of things crammed in, or from their roughness . . .. For they used to pour out unpolished effusions and polish them afterwards' (135).

The term refers both to the individual poems within the collection, each of which is a *silva*, and to the collection itself, which might be entitled *silvae*, or some variation of this idea. Collections produced along these lines include Ronsard's *Bocages*, Ben Jonson's *The Forest* and *Underwoods*, Phineas Fletcher's *Silva Poetica*, Cowley's *Sylva, or, divers copies*, Herrick's *Hesperides*, Dryden's *Silvae: or, the Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (Fowler 135, Colie 15). From these, Fowler traces a series of more recent volumes whose titles at least make them part of the *silva* genre: "Coleridge's *Sibylline Leaves*, Leigh Hunt's *Foliage; or Poems Original and Translated*, Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, Stevenson's *Underwoods*, Lowell's *Notebook*, and Edwin Morgan's *New Divan*" (135). He goes on to suggest that, even if the poet is aware of the genre within which he is writing, his readers may not be, and that the genre is no longer perceived as such by readers: "we tend to take for granted the idea of a collection of poems on various subjects and in various forms, without reflecting that such collections constitute a specific genre" (135).

In an essay called "The Silva Tradition in Jonson's The Forrest",

Fowler shows that, while the *silva* genre is characterised by miscellaneousness and roughness, Ben Jonson added a new feature, that of thematic arrangement, to its repertoire. He arranged *The Forest* in a specific order. The first poem is a renunciation of worldly love, and the remaining fourteen poems form a progression culminating in an expression of divine love, so that "*The Forrest* is a ladder of love, ascending to God" (a173).

Although the *silva* predates the sonnet by more than a millennium, the sonnet is an apt inclusion in the *silva* repertoire. It is short, as individual *silvae* ought to be; because it is adaptable to many subgenres and modes, it brings with it the requisite variety of ideas, subjects and attitudes; it is capable of the necessary spontaneity of effect; and, finally, it is closely related to the epigram, which has excellent qualifications as *silva* material.

The epigram's complex relationship with the sonnet is an important aspect of the development of both genres. The two have become so intertwined as to radically alter their generic natures. The epigram, like the sonnet, has proven especially prone to react with other genres, creating new hybrids and modal variations, particularly with the sonnet itself. Renaissance scholars believed that the epigram had its origin in monumental engravings (Colie 67, Fowler 137), a circumstance which dictated that the form be brief (often a distich), and that it contain a pointed, witty message. Despite their restricted size, classical epigrams deal with a wide variety of subjects, in a variety of ways:

> an epigram might be epideictic (praise of a ruler, a hero, a servant); it might be an epitaph; it might celebrate a public event, a victory, a great building, a significant person living or dead. Depending on its subject or topic, it might use a variety of styles . . .. In tone, the epigram could range from celebration to insult, its topic from emperor to prostitute, its style from high to low (Colie 67).

Common to all of these variables is the exercise of the poet's wit, which, expressed briefly and economically, gives the epigram its sharpness or point.

For many years the Latin poet Martial was taken as the model epigrammatist, but his works reflected the coarse, public aspect of epigram,

and the genre was relegated to "low" status in opposition to lyric, and, therefore, to the sonnet. Estienne's publication of the *Anacreontea* in 1554 and the Planudean Anthology in 1556 showed English poets that the ancients had also written many love epigrams (Fowler 138). Because love had been regarded as the preserve of lyric, this revelation had the effect of dividing genre-scholars as to whether the epigram and sonnet were linked: "some theorists made plain their opinion that epigram and sonnet were closely connected . . .; others felt that they were parallel but entirely different thematic genres" (Colie 68). Colie believes that the sonnet came to be associated with the *mel* epigram in the scholars' search for a classical precedent to legitimise the type: ". . . they came up with Catullus as the Latin analogue . . . and with the sonnet as the equivalent of this kind of epigram in modern times" (68). Poets who had regarded the sonnet merely as a stanza in a sequence saw the form anew: "the sonnet came to be thought of not only as part of a sequence but as a separate form—not unlike the *mel* or emotionally sweet epigram" (Fowler 138).

The sonnet was not only influenced by *mel* epigrams, which shared its amatory subject-matter. There were other kinds of epigram whose modulation with the sonnet proved to be even more fertile because they brought something new to the genre. Scaliger classified these epigram types into flavours or what Colie calls "metaphorical larder-terms" (68): these are *fel*, for epigrams containing "pungent malediction voiding gall"; *acetum*, signifying vinegar or "mordant satire"; *sal*, meaning salt or "salty joking"; *foetidas*, meaning "foul ugliness"; and *mel*, or honey, the term for sweet, mellifluous love sonnets (Fowler 138).

Colie cites Shakespeare as a master of the new epigram modulation in sonnet. Those of his poems addressing praise to the young friend are *mel* sonnets, whereas when the friend earns his censure, such as in sonnet 95, a modulation with epigram style occurs. In his sonnets to his mistress, Shakespeare uses the full range of epigram styles to portray the complexity of the emotions he feels for her.

According to Fowler, using epigram topics and style within the sonnet form in this way produces only one kind of hybrid; a second sonnet-epigram hybrid occurs when elements of both sonnet and epigram style are present together within one sonnet. Thus Shakespeare uses the three quatrains of the English sonnet form to write lyric, and appends an epigrammatic couplet or distich to give the poem closure. Sidney uses the Italian sonnet form to reverse effect in a few of his *Astrophil and Stella* poems. His love for Stella is mentioned only in the couplet, after three quatrains of epigrammatic wit. Drayton's Sonnet 61, "Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part", has a combination of sonnet and epigram styles in its Italian sonnet form: it comprises an epigram octave which gives way to a sonnet sestet (Fowler 185).

The ultimate effect of such hybrid genres is the expression in verse of a viewpoint previously impossible in either genre. Colie says of Shakespeare that he extends "the fundamental enterprise of sonneteering —namely, the exploration of emotional complexity" (73).

Sonnets come to be part of the *silva* repertoire through the combining of the epigram and the sonnet. Epigram is the ideal *silva* form, not only being brief, but also various in topic and style. Many *silvae* were epigrams; indeed, Herrick's *Hesperides* is an exercise in generic miniaturisation, in which many of the larger kinds are condensed into epigrams and arranged as a complex garden, a kind of refined *silva* in its variety (Colie 25-6; Fowler 197-8). With sonnet so closely associated with epigram, it is inevitable that sonnets become part of the *silva* repertoire. Fowler points out that *Hesperides* contains "sonnet-epigrams on amorous subjects" (197), and that Drayton's sequence, *Idea*, approaches the miscellaneousness of the *silva* by virtue of its sonnets' strong epigram modulation: "in the liminal poem to *Idea* he rejects the 'passion' (amorous mode) and the 'ah-me's' of 'whining sonnets,' claiming the variety of 'a true image of my mind' 'in all humours'— the variety, in fact, of a *silva* of epigrams" (185).

A common locus for the combination of epigram style with the sonnet genre is that of antigenre. One of the ways in which a writer may choose to

respond to the historical burden of the genre he has chosen is to react against the genre, which brings about an antigenre. This may happen in several ways, of which one is the use of antithesis, in which the characteristic repertoire features of the established genre are inverted. Thus it is possible to dispraise by inverting conventional methods of praise (Fowler 176). The petrarchist mode, so closely associated with praise, has a parallel history of dispraise, in which the well-established conventions of praise provide the perfect opportunity for dispraise by inversion. This is known as anti-petrarchism (Forster 56). Such inversion may take place with the praise of ugliness or corruption rather than of beauty and virtue. In the context of the sonnet genre, anti-petrarchism gives rise to the antisonnet, a sonnet subgenre in its own right. This may be seen as a result of the epigram modulation with the subgenre, in which subject-matter and styles associated with the epigram are incorporated into the sonnet form (Fowler 184-5). Whereas a sonnet praising a lady is sweet or *mel* in flavour, the witty inversion of the conventions of praise will render it *sal*, *fel*, or even *foetid*.

The majority of antisonnets take the *blason* as their model. A way of praising the beauty of the mistress, the *blason* is a "catalogue of the beloved's features" (Fowler 113), in which her physical attributes are listed in a series of formulaic similes:

> . . . the lady's beauties were codified—the golden hair, the fine white hands, the black eyes, the ebony eyebrows, the roses and lilies in her cheeks, her pearly teeth, her coral lips, her breasts like globes of alabaster (Forster 9-10).

This highly conventional form of praise is perfect for comic treatment, as in Thisbe's lament for Pyramus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

> These lily lips,
> This cherry nose
> These yellow cowslip cheeks,
> Are gone, are gone!
> Lovers, make moan;
> His eyes were green as leeks (V i 317-22).

Although not confined to the sonnet genre, so many *blasons* were included in sonnet sequences that the conceit gained the status of a sonnet subgenre. In his Sonnet 130, "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun", Shakespeare

attacks the conventional *blason* conceits, not to dispraise his mistress, but because to praise her through a series of stock comparisons would do her particular beauty no justice. Having dispensed with the conventions in the three quatrains of the English sonnet, he explains in the couplet that they are inadequate: ". . . And yet I think my love as rare / As any she belied with false compare" (11.13-14). This is not a true *contreblason*, as the poet's purpose is still to praise his mistress, but more wittily than the writers of ordinary *blasons* have done.

Drayton's *Idea* 8 is a fine example of the *fel* malediction possible in the *contreblason*. He says that he will show his mistress the poems he has written in praise of her beauty when she is old and her beauty has fled, and in this way punish her for mocking his love:

> There's nothing grieves me, but that Age should haste,
> That in my days I may not see thee old,
> That where those two clear sparkling Eyes are placed
> Only two loop-holes, then I might behold.
> That lovely, arched ivory, polished Brow,
> Defac'd with wrinkles, that I might but see;
> Thy dainty Hair, so curled, and crisped now,
> Like grizzled Moss upon some aged Tree;
> Thy Cheek, now flush with roses, sunk, and lean,
> Thy Lips, with age, as any Wafer thin,
> Thy pearly Teeth out of thy head so clean,
> That when thou feed'st, thy Nose shall touch thy Chin:
> These lines that now scorn'st, which should delight
> thee
> Then would I make thee read, but to despite thee.

The *blason* describes the ruin of her beauty with the same wit a doting lover normally uses to praise the unspoilt beauty of his mistress, emphasising the poet's tone of bitterness.

The petrarchist love sonnet, the sequence of love sonnets, the *silva*, and the various epigram modulations with the sonnet genre which include the anti-sonnet, are all aspects of the genre as it developed during the outburst of sonneteering which began in the 1590s and continued until the end of the first decade of the seventeenth century. This was the first and greatest efflorescence of the various sonnet genres in English, and, due to this fact, most of the later sonnets in English were written according to this precedent. Cummings's sonnets owe much to these models, not least because he is a love

poet who is dedicated to the praise of his lady and of the state of love itself. Although he wrote sonnets which are clearly descended from those of the Elizabethan sonneteers, Cummings's knowledge of the sonnet genre was not confined to this era of the genre's development. Being widely-read, Cummings could assimilate or borrow the stylistic and formal features of sonneteers from any era of the genre's existence. For this reason an account of his own use of the genre must follow the later formulations of the genre which were his models. As well as to the influence of the Renaissance amatory sonneteers, Cummings's sonnets reveal a significant debt to Milton's and Wordsworth's innovations. In attempting to capture brief moments of aesthetically-pleasing sensation or emotion, particularly in his later sonnets, he writes circular sonnets reminiscent of the Greater Romantic Lyric, while his extremely free alterations of the traditional proportions of the sonnet are an extreme development of the kind of bold adaptation to the Italian form made by Milton.

Milton's revolutionary alterations of the genre's repertoire features broadened and invigorated the genre. The sudden outbreak of sonnet-writing in the 1590s and early 1600s produced a more serious reaction against the petrarchist conventions of the sonnet sequence than the antisonnet. Interest in the genre waned as the conventions became clichés as a result of over-utilisation by unimaginative imitators. To understand the extent of Milton's innovations, something must be said about the distinctive formal features of the sonnet genre.

The earlier of the two main sonnet forms, the Italian, was originated in the early thirteenth century by poets in the Sicilian Court of Frederick II. The octave employed by these early sonneteers followed an a b a b a b a b rhyme scheme: the brace-rhymed octave with which the modern reader is familiar—a b b a a b b a—was introduced by d'Arezzo (1230-94), and was adopted in the fourteenth century by Cavalcanti (c1255-1300), Dante (1265-1361), and Petrarch (1304-74). The form which was associated with Petrarch's influential ideas became the norm: the octave's eight lines of enclosed rhyme

are followed by the open or progressive six lines of the sestet, divided into two tercets, rhyming c d c d c d; c d e c d e; or one of several other variations. This bipartite structure encourages a two-part argument in the poem, with a volta or "turn" at the ninth line. The sestet's six lines, following the eight of the octave, encourage a brief, compressed conclusion to the argument. This is the form used, with minor variations, by the Italian and French sonneteers throughout the Renaissance.

The first sonnets in English were Sir Thomas Wyatt's translations of Italian sonnets in the sixteenth century. Wyatt (c1503-43) ended his sonnets with a rhyming couplet, so that the sestet could be read as a third brace-rhymed quatrain rounded off with a couplet: c d d c e e. Wyatt's co-pioneer, the Earl of Surrey (1517-47), changed the form still further, eventually arriving at the now-familiar English sonnet form, rhyming a b a b c d c d e f e f g g. Whereas the bipartite Italian form has its volta after the octave, the English form favours a series of three quatrains, with a volta before the concluding couplet. This design proved ideal for the epigram's surprise ending and was pre-eminent in the work of all sonneteers until Milton's time.

Milton (1608-74) chose not to use the English form: he returned to the sonnet's Italian origins, so that all eighteen of his sonnets in English are designed after the Italian model. Only one ends with a couplet. Yet Milton was not content to write conventional Italian sonnets, and he introduced radical new developments to the Italian model. His contribution to the evolution of the Italian sonnet was not achieved by modifying the rhyme scheme, but by changing the way in which the syntax fits into the framework of rhyme and metre. In their sonnets, his Italian and English predecessors had generally been careful to observe the pauses at the line-endings and at the divisions between quatrains, and they had avoided strong pauses within the lines. Milton made use of enjambment to override the endings of the lines and of the divisions between quatrains, and he made use of strong pauses within the lines to set up subtle cross-rhythms. In other words, he used techniques

similar to those in his blank verse (Havens 484). Because of this new approach, the *volta* of a Miltonic sonnet might be delayed until a point within the ninth line or later, changing the ratio of eight lines to six which the Italians had carefully preserved in their sonnets. The effect of Milton's prosodic innovations was to stress the impression of the sonnet as a single, unified stanza, rather than the two-part Italian model or the four quatrains and a couplet of the English model.

Whereas during the Elizabethan era most sonnets were written as parts of sequences, Milton wrote only occasional sonnets. That is, his sonnets are single poems written to commemorate an important event or at moments of strong emotion. In this and in their elevated tone and concern with political and religious matters, his sonnets show a modulation with the ode or epic (Fowler 196). Unlike the Elizabethans, who in general applied themselves to the writing of "sweet", charming and witty love sonnets aimed to praise and cajole, Milton's higher concerns required a more austere style. The language of his sonnets is not decorative, but plain, direct and infused with the ardour of his feelings. For example, "On the late Massacre in Piedmont" is an effusion on the massacre of his fellow Protestants in 1655, lamenting the barbarity of their murders and predicting retribution. His prosodic innovations favour the expression of overwhelming emotion, allowing the syntax to run across the restraints of the line-endings in emulation of barely-restrained feeling. Other sonnets deal with his feelings at significant events in his own life: Sonnet VII records his thoughts on his twenty-third birthday, Sonnet XVI is on his becoming blind, and XIX recounts a dream in which his late wife appears to him. Like verse epistles, many are addressed to friends, such as "To the Lady Margaret Ley", "To Mr H. Lawes, on his Airs", and two to Cyriack Skinner. Others are addressed to public figures like Cromwell and Sir Henry Vane the Younger.

Thus Milton brought the Italian sonnet form into English and established the prototype of the single, occasional sonnet expressing strong personal emotion on both private and public topics. These features combined with

the strong sense of unity resulting from his prosodic innovations to produce a distinctive new resource on which subsequent sonneteers could draw.

The greatest poet to benefit from Milton's innovations in the sonnet genre was Wordsworth. By Wordsworth's own admission it was Milton's sonnets which inspired him to attempt the genre. Writing about his impressions of Milton's sonnets, he said:

> . . . the sense does not close with the rhyme at the eighth line, but overflows into the second portion of the metre . . . it has struck me, that this is not done merely to gratify the ear by variety and freedom of sound, but also to aid in giving that pervading sense of intense Unity in which the excellence of the Sonnet has always seemed to me mainly to consist. Instead of looking at this composition as a piece of architecture . . . I have been much in the habit of preferring the image of an orbicular body, —a sphere —or a dew-drop (*Letters 1831-1840* 653).

Wordsworth's idea of the sonnet as an organic whole is a result of its modulation with what Abrams calls the Greater Romantic Lyric. This genre developed from the eighteenth-century loco-descriptive poem, pioneered by Denham in his "Cooper's Hill" and practised by most poets of the era. In the poems of this genre, the poet looks on a natural scene or landscape and is led to contemplate higher moral principles by the analogies he detects between concrete landscape features and these abstract principles (Abrams 84). This process is based on the idea that nature, being God's creation, bears the impress of God's character. Therefore, contemplation of the natural world amounts to contemplation of the nature of God. A related idea is that God designed nature as an analogy of moral and psychological states, so that illustrative and enlightening examples of moral and psychological states may be found by studying the landscape (Abrams 95). William Bowles (1762-1850) modified this way of seeing nature, finding in natural scenes the stimulus for more personal reflections, so that his personality replaces the scene as the subject of the poem (Abrams 90). Bowles's *Sonnets* of 1789 is a sequence composed of poems which follow this pattern, and was of great influence on Coleridge, the first writer of fully-fledged greater Romantic meditations.

Coleridge adapted Bowles's method in his development of the perfect

lyric strategy for expressing his Romantic philosophy. He wanted to depict man's mind and the natural world, which the dualistic thinkers of the eighteenth century had declared to be totally divorced from each other, in a state of dynamic integration (Abrams 95). Coleridge believed that the outcome of the dualists' separation of the mind of man from the natural world was a removal of all significance from the universe, leaving it dead. Instead, he thought that the vital interrelationship of all things, including the mind of man, with the universe as a whole should be recognised (Abrams 95-6). To Coleridge this relationship of parts to the whole is familiar to those who look for it. In *Natural Supernaturalism*, Abrams points out that many Romantic philosophers and poets, including Coleridge, "testified to a deeply significant experience in which an instant of consciousness, or else an ordinary object or event, suddenly blazes into revelation" (385), as mind and external entity coalesce. This is an experience in which time seems to stop: ". . . the unsustainable moment seems to arrest what is passing, and is often described as an intersection of eternity with time" (385). The poets who described this experience called it "the Moment" (386).

Abrams argues in his essay on the Greater Romantic Lyric that this genre is a way of poetically depicting man's mind in a dynamic relationship with nature. Like the eighteenth-century loco-descriptive poem and Bowles's sonnets, it begins with the contemplation of a natural scene by a lyric speaker. This speaker, who narrates his thoughts to an auditor or to himself, is stimulated by the specific details of the scene to recall a memory or to re-experience a past emotion. During his meditation the speaker experiences a powerful identification with the scene, in which the boundaries between it and himself are dissolved so that he is aware of no distinction between the two, and he is able to arrive at an insight, solve a troubling problem, or reach a difficult decision (102). Often the speaker, who has replaced the scene as the subject of the poem, returns to the original scene, which is now seen in a different way due to the new frame of mind he has reached (76-7).

Thus the greater Romantic lyric enacts the moment of fusion between

the poet's mind and the outside world, during which mind and scene interpenetrate and combine, and all sense of disjunction between the two is lost. Coleridge devised the strategy of a circular movement, from the natural scene to the poet's mind and then outward again, "in a deliberate endeavour to transform a segment of experience into a significant aesthetic whole" (Abrams 81-2). The circle, being complete and infinite, makes the poem a microcosm of the universe as a whole, with its parts held in a dynamic interrelationship. Many longer Romantic poems follow this pattern, Coleridge's *Frost at Midnight*, Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, and Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* being but a few.

The sonnet is too limited in scope to contain the sustained flow of thought and feeling characteristic of the greater Romantic lyric. However, in the hands of the Romantic poets it took on several of the longer genre's traits. Although Bowles had paved the way by casting his loco-descriptive poems in the sonnet form, it was Milton's innovations which struck Wordsworth as making the sonnet the ideal form for the portrayal of the Moments which he expressed in more detail in his longer lyrics. The "intense unity" which could be achieved using Milton's techniques replicates the brief sense of oneness and wholeness of the Moment. In many of his sonnets Wordsworth depicts a scene or setting where he achieves the state of tranquillity which he associates with the Moment. Some of these are set at dusk or dawn, when the earth's continuous cycles seem temporarily passive and the process of introspection is encouraged (Johnson 103). For example, in the well-known "Composed upon Westminster Bridge", Wordsworth contemplates London as it slumbers in the early morning. Although this is a cityscape rather than a landscape, its mood still reflects and reinforces his tranquil state of mind: ". . . Ne'er saw I, ne'er felt, a calm so deep!" (1.11). The syntax conforms to the octave and sestet of the Italian sonnet form but, because the transition is not clearly demarcated, the syntax follows the train of Wordsworth's thought as he describes the scene, comments on its tranquillity, and then returns to the scene again. The plain diction results in a sense of spontaneous speech which is emphasised

by Wordsworth's reverent tone; the brevity of the poem has the effect of containing or framing this spontaneity.

III

The various kinds described above, all of which are related to the sonnet in some way, give an idea of the general matrix of possible forms, modes, and subgenres which faced the writer who approached the sonnet genre at the time Aestheticism was prevalent. A poet like Cummings, whose education had steeped him in the poetry of virtually all eras of the sonnet genre's development since its beginning, had an enormous variety of models to imitate and alter in the pursuit of his own means of poetic expression. The eclectic assortment of sonnet kinds Cummings produced is an inevitable result of this selection; how he managed to contain that variety within single volumes of poetry while maintaining the Aesthetes' ideals of proportion and unity is the subject of chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

As discussed in chapter 1, the sonnet may become part of a larger work's repertoire in at least two ways: by the accretion of many sonnets into a sequence, or by the importation of whole sonnets or distinctive sonnet features into the larger work. In this chapter I shall attempt to account for Cummings's use of the sonnet as a repertoire feature of his larger poetic works, that is, the ten volumes of poetry he arranged during his lifetime: *Tulips & Chimneys* (1922), *XLI Poems* (1925), *& [And]*(1925), *is 5* (1926), *W [Viva]* (1931), *No Thanks* (1935), *50 Poems* (1940), *1x1* (1944), *Xaipe* (1950), and *95 Poems* (1958). *Tulips and Chimneys*, the edited version of the original 1922 manuscript of *Tulips & Chimneys*, will only be mentioned in passing for reasons discussed below. *73 Poems* comprises poems which were unpublished at the time of Cummings's death in 1962. The volume was edited by Firmage who placed the poems in what he considered to be a pleasing order. Since the poet himself had no hand in their arrangement, *73 Poems* will not be considered here.

When arranging his volumes of poetry, Cummings faced a challenge known to all poets who wish to publish short, often occasional poems which are written in a variety of forms. If the poems are not to be published individually—in periodicals or newspapers, for example—they must come out in a book. The problem is that as a body the poems do not have the inherent structural unity of an epic, and nor does their formal variety allow them the stanzaic status of sonnets in a sequence. But binding such poems together in a single volume raises the possibility that some organisational principle will give the volume a unity similar to the homogeneity of these other, longer poetic works.

Cummings, the inheritor of many ideas from the Aesthetes, was dedicated to producing works of which the form was aesthetically pleasing. His commitment to the ideals of harmony and unity in art made it necessary for him to give considerable thought to ways of conferring unity on his anthologies. In the course of his career three consecutive stages may be discerned in which he evolved different methods of arranging his poetry. The first stage, which

includes *Tulips & Chimneys*, *XLI Poems*, & [*And*], and *is 5*, is the tendency to separate the poems into loose groups labelled according to theme or kind. The number of these subdivisions, and their names, are related to the volume's title. It is characteristic of this first phase that the sonnets are separated from the other kinds of poetry, being placed in their own subdivisions. In addition to this, there is a second principle at work in these books. In a letter written toward the end of his life, Cummings comments in retrospect that in "all [his] booksofpoems after the original T&C manuscript", he has "a tendency to begin dirty (world:sordid; satires) and end clean (earth:lyrical, lovepoems)" (*Letters* 261). This he calls a "seasonal metaphor". It is a general tendency which operates either in conjunction with, or independently of, other organisational principles.

After *Tulips & Chimneys*, *XLI Poems*, & [*And*], and *is 5*, Cummings resorts to complex structural arrangements which he calls "schemas". The volumes in which these occur are *W* [*Viva*] and *No Thanks*. In these books the poems are no longer placed in named subdivisions, but are arranged according to a numerical pattern, as well as to the "seasonal metaphor". The sonnets are no longer in separate groups, but are dispersed among other kinds as part of the numerical arrangement.

In the remaining volumes, *50 Poems*, *1x1*, *Xaipe*, and *95 Poems*, Cummings abandons the idea of a schema and arranges the poems according to the "seasonal metaphor", in which all of the poems, including sonnets, are arranged purely thematically.

Cummings's first volume of poetry was a long time in preparation. In 1919, tired of his poems being rejected by the magazines to which he had been submitting them, he decided to publish them as a volume, to be called *Tulips & Chimneys*. By 1922 he had compiled a manuscript of 152 poems, but was unable to find a firm willing to publish the manuscript in its entirety. The publisher, Thomas Seltzer, eventually agreed to print a selection of sixty-six poems, but he ignored Cummings's stipulation that an ampersand be used in the title, so that the volume came out as *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923). Forty-one

of the poems left over were selected by the Dial Press for *XLI Poems* (1925), and Cummings had the remaining poems, plus some he had written after the compilation of *Tulips & Chimneys*, privately published in & [*And*] (1925). It was left to George James Firmage to reassemble and publish the original 1922 manuscript in 1976. The order of the original manuscript will be examined first, as it represents Cummings's original intentions regarding the publication of his poems.

The complicated history of *Tulips & Chimneys* is due in part to Cummings's own perfectionism. From the very beginning, he shows an Aesthete's pride in his craftsmanship, in the belief that the writer's control over his material must be absolute, and that his wishes in connection with its publication must be honoured. He will not tolerate editing or censorship of any kind, including the arrangement of his volumes of poetry. The strength of his feelings about this issue is evident in a letter to the publishers of his first book, the novel *The Enormous Room* (1922) in which he includes a detailed list of the misprints and omissions in the first edition, and demands that "each and all of the . . . errors be <u>immediately</u> and <u>completely</u> rectified," or that the book be "immediately suppressed, thrown in a shitoir". He states, ". . . I know how it should be, and if anyone thinks he knows better than I, let him <u>F</u> him- or her-self" (*Letters* 87). Cummings contends he will not compromise: rather than see his novel altered by another hand, he prefers not to have it published at all.

This principle also applies to his poetry. The year after the above letter was written, he says of some sonnets he sent to the magazine *Broom*,

> [I have] sent . . . some sonnets which I beg . . .
> will be either (1) printed as typed, in order, etc.
> (2) rejected entirely (*Letters* 101).

Not only must the poems be produced faithfully, but they must also appear in the order in which Cummings has placed them.

How is it, then, that Cummings is able to countenance the expurgated *Tulips and Chimneys*? Perhaps because a compromise will see his first volume of poetry published after numerous rejections, he seems to be prepared to bend

a little. In a letter quoted by Friedman in *The Growth of a Writer*, he says, "provided the arrangement isn't changed, I'm meek as to omissions— Not misprints or improvements" (37). His first priority is to see the volume published although, as before, poems are to be excluded rather than censored or edited. Of particular interest here is that those that remain must be printed in the order stipulated by Cummings; his second priority is that the design of the volume be preserved as far as is possible. Although Cummings's overriding concern is to see his poems printed, and printed accurately, he also sees their arrangement as a larger work as being essential to the way in which the poems appear to his readers.

On looking at the contents of *Tulips & Chimneys*, one is struck by the great variety or miscellaneousness of the poetry and by the complex structure within which this variety is contained. The necessity for such a structure is explained by the fact that many of the poems in the book date back to his first year at Harvard, nearly a decade before *Tulips & Chimneys* was compiled. This means that Cummings had the fruits of ten years' sustained poetic experimentation in a variety of kinds and forms at hand when he compiled the manuscript. The complex structure of *Tulips & Chimneys* was evolved in order to unify within one volume the many forms and kinds to which he had turned his attention over the previous decade, and to avoid the possible confusion of publishing the poems as an undifferentiated mass. The result is a kind of catalogue of the kinds and forms he was capable of writing.

The first clue to what Cummings may have been thinking of in arranging his first volume as he did may be found in its title. Fowler suggests that the title of any work is the first generic signal encountered by its readers, and is therefore crucial to shaping their expectations of the work (92). The same is true of the subdivisions within the volume, to which Cummings appended labels suggestive of the contents' kinds. There is precedent for this practice. Sometimes the writers of sonnet sequences chose not to name their sonnet sequences after the lady who symbolised spiritual virtue, but instead gave their sequences titles which were metaphorical of a theme

common to all of the poems within the sequence. For example, the French poets of the *Pliéade* used such titles for their sonnet sequences: Du Bellay called his *Regrets*, and Ronsard's sequence was dubbed *Amours*. In England, Spenser drew on this tradition in naming his *Amoretti*. Choosing a title like this identified a single theme shared by all poems in a sequence and made this theme its unifying principle. The implication is that each poem in the volume is a single "regret" or "amour"; collectively, they represent a thorough exploration of the theme of love or regret.

As is the case with many generic conventions, this metaphorical titling convention can be traced to classical models: Ronsard's *Amours* owe their title to Ovid's *Amores*, and Statius' *Silvae* is the antecedent for the many variations of *silva* which followed. It is a metaphorical label which describes the unifying principle of his miscellaneous volume, and implies that the volume contains poems whose roughness and whose variety of forms are similar to those of a forest containing many different kinds of tree. Its unifying principle is a kind of *concordia discors*. Other poets, following his example, invoked the same principle by using similar metaphorical labels for their collections of miscellaneous verse, resulting in the development of the *silva* genre. The *silva*'s title is the key to recognising roughness and spontaneity as the genre's distinctive qualities.

Statius' choice of a metaphor which refers to vegetable or plant life for his title is not revolutionary, but arises in response to a tradition of naming verse anthologies as metaphorical arrangements of flowers. The word *anthology* itself is Greek for a collection of flowers, and the Latin term *florilegia* means the same thing: a culling or gathering together of the flowers of verse. In English the term "posy" or "poesy" works in the same metaphorical way. Originally, it referred to a bunch of flowers or a collection of the "flowers" of poetry or rhetoric. Similarly, a garland, such as Skelton's *Garland of Laurel* or Drayton's "Shepherd's Garland", is a bouquet or posy of poems in the form of a crown. By choosing a forest as his metaphor, Statius avoids suggesting the sweetness and polish of the above examples and

stresses his poetry's roughness and variety.

It seems possible that Cummings drew on this same vegetable-metaphorical titling convention in choosing *Tulips & Chimneys* to be the title of his first volume. Certainly the use of "Tulips" suggests that at least some of the poems in the collection may be tulip-like in some way. "Chimneys" might suggest a more modern, perhaps more urban, element in the volume. Yet the relationship between title and content is not so straightforward. Cummings's notes show that in arriving at *Tulips & Chimneys* as his title he tried, and then rejected, many titles based on the same formula of two contrasting elements. Some do include a vegetable element, such as "lilacs and monkeywrenches", or an organic element, such as "starfish and phonographs" and "squirrels and efficiency", but many, such as "fishhooks and pajamas", "doughnuts and tranquillity", "creeds and syringes", and "hangmen and teakettles", have neither (Kidder 17; Kennedy 206). These alternative names suggest that Cummings chose the two elements of the title not so much for their individual metaphorical value, but for the contrast they suggest. In *Tulips & Chimneys*, the contrast suggested between flowers and chimneys indicates that the forms and concerns the reader will encounter in the book range from the pretty freshness of the tulip to the smutty plainness of the chimney. These are the elements of "clean" and "dirty" which Cummings will use in arranging his later volumes.

Tulips & Chimneys is the first of Cummings's volumes in which title and arrangement are linked. The bipartite theme of the title is echoed by a division of the volume's contents into two major parts. "Tulips" comprises eighty-nine poems of various kinds, while all of the sonnets in the volume are in the "Chimneys" section, which comprises sixty-three sonnets. The sonnets in "Chimneys" fall into three sequences, each with a title which is suggestive of the sonnets' content, whereas "Tulips" is divided into eleven sub-groups, each with its own title suggesting a common generic or thematic element to the poems it contains. The subdivisions of both "Tulips" and "Chimneys" constitute a second tier in the separation and labelling of kinds which makes the

arrangement of *Tulips & Chimneys* even more complicated.

It is necessary to examine briefly the eleven sub-groups in "Tulips", for these are made up of the various kinds with which Cummings mixed the sonnets in his later arrangements, instead of separating them, as he does here.

Three of the "Tulips" subdivisions consist of one long poem each: "Epithalamion", "Of Nicolette" and "Puella Mea". The inclusion of these long poems adds to the sense of the miscellaneousness of *Tulips & Chimneys*. They are early exercises which Cummings thought enough of to include in his first exhibition of his poetic abilities. None of his later volumes contains poems as long as this, for by the time he came to assemble these volumes, he had long since relinquished the idea of writing long poems.

The labels of three sub-groups, "Epithalamion", "Songs", and "Chansons Innocentes", suggest that they consist of single genres, but the poems they contain do not always conform to such simple labelling. Of only one, a single poem, can it be said that the label provides an apt description. "Epithalamion" (*CP* 3) is a long poem in twenty-one stanzas, written in 1914 to celebrate the wedding of his friend and patron, Scofield Thayer. Related to its traditional epideictic function are the poem's three-part ode-like design and its elevated, ceremonial tone, in which Cummings invokes the classical gods to bless both the union and the poet who celebrates it. It is obviously written in full awareness of the genre's traditions. "Songs", whose title suggests a very broad generic group, has nine lyrics bearing various resemblances to the folk-song or ballad family. In subject and diction they are archaic: "all in green went my true love riding" (*CP* 15) is a carefully-crafted literary ballad on a medieval subject; "when life is quite through with" (*CP* 11) and "when god lets my body be" (*CP* 19) both evince a pagan acceptance of death as part of nature's course; "Where's Madge then" (*CP* 16) has a gentle elegiac tone, and "Doll's boy's asleep" (*CP* 17) narrates the enigmatic dream-vision of a boy asleep beneath a stile. Only "thee will i praise" (*CP* 9), with its stanzas of nine ten-syllable lines and complex

syntax, may be said to be un-songlike in form. As the title implies, the "Chansons Innocentes" are songs about children, and display a childlike innocence in tone and sentiment. The last, "Tumbling-hair" (*CP* 31), is the exception, being a more subtle poem which uses the myth of Pluto and Proserpina to suggest a loss of innocence, its placement at the end of the group serving as a kind of conclusion to the group.

One subdivision of "Tulips" is labelled in such a way as to suggest, rather than to state, a genre. "Amores", with its title taken from Ovid, implies a series of sophisticated, witty love poems like those of Ovid. The eleven poems are indeed love poems, some of which are erotic, particularly "consider O" (*CP* 44) and "after five" (*CP* 51), and others of which consider the possibility of the lovers' deaths, such as "the glory is fallen out of" (*CP* 49), "i like" (*CP* 50), and "O Distinct" (*CP* 52). As a sequence it is more cohesive than "Songs", perhaps because the ambit delineated by the title is more limited and, for a writer of love poetry, easier to fulfil.

The remaining "Tulips" subdivisions are organised thematically rather than generically, and are labelled accordingly. That is, their labels identify a theme common to all poems in a group, rather than a traditional kind to which they all belong. Thus, "Orientale" is a group of six poems which have in common the exotic and archaic treatment of love and sex, each relying on motifs of incense, jewellery and languorous women for their opulent atmosphere. "La Guerre" gathers together five poems that seem to follow a sequence dealing with Cummings's war experiences in France. The first is "Humanity i love you" (*CP* 53), a satiric view of mankind, which Cummings says he "loves", "because you / unflinchingly applaud all / songs containing the words country home and / mother" (11.6-8), and which ends with the sudden reversal of this sentiment, "i hate you" (1.25). In the next three poems he adopts an aesthete's detachment in his description of the destructiveness of shellfire, cannon (in which he sees a kind of sensuality), and the conversation of Parisian prostitutes. The sequence concludes with "O sweet spontaneous", a song celebrating the arrival of spring despite man's depreda-

tions of the earth.

The last three sub-groups of "Tulips" follow a more ambitious organising principle. They are related, in that the titles—"Impressions", "Portraits", and "Post Impressions"—are all taken from painting, to which Cummings devoted as much time and effort as to his poetry. Certainly the organising principle of each group is a visual one. All of the "Impressions" except for the last two deal with sunrises, sunsets, and the night sky. The penultimate "Impression", "the hours rise up", deals with the complete cycle of a day, and therefore lacks the painterly effect achieved in "writhe and" and "the / sky / was". The last poem, "i will wade out" evokes a strong tactile impression as well as a visual one.

In "Portraits", the longest section of "Tulips", the urban underworld theme that occurs in the "Sonnets-Realities" section of "Chimneys" is presented through twenty-nine views of urban people and places. Some of the people, such as the gonorrhea-infected child (*CP* 78), the ragtime pianist (*CP* 78) and the roller-skating child, with its father and the prostitute to whom he talks (*CP* 81), are anonymous individuals whose uniqueness has inspired the writing of the poem. Others are celebrated by name: the prostitutes Marj and Lil (*CP* 85), Buffalo Bill (*CP* 90), Cleopatra (*CP* 91), and Picasso (*CP* 95). The mixture of obscure and legendary, anonymous and named, indicates that the criterion for a poem's inclusion in this group is that it must be about a person or people: a broad qualification. The places described in these poems are the portraits' settings: the bar where a dancer appears on stage (*CP* 80), a Turkish cafe populated by "5 / derbies-with-men-in-them" named a, b, c, x and y (*CP* 82), a Greek cafe (*CP* 84), and various other gathering-places where the poet observes the subjects of his portraits.

Initially it would seem that the "Post Impressions" section contains poems which would not be out of place in either "Impressions" or "Portraits". "Windows go orange in the slowly" (*CP* 103), "beyond the brittle towns asleep" (*CP* 104), and "riverly is a flower" (*CP* 106) portray sunsets or dusk scenes

like those of "Impressions". The poems "at the head of this street" (*CP* 109), "i was sitting in mcsorley's" (*CP* 110), and "at the ferocious phenomenon of 5 o'clock" (*CP* 111) are all urban scenes worthy of being "Portraits". However, the title suggests that, like the Post-Impressionist painters, Cummings wished to go beyond mere representation in these poems, attempting instead to portray some spiritual element inherent in the subject. Thus the poems with urban settings concentrate less on individual people and more on the total atmosphere of the place, while the sequence ends with one poem about the thaw ("SNO", *CP* 113), and one on the powerful germinative forces of spring ("i am going to utter a tree" (*CP* 114). A group of three poems in a form associated with the French Symbolist movement, the prose poem ("at the head of the street", "i was sitting in mcsorley's" and "at the ferocious phenomenon of 5 o'clock"), suggests a symbolist element in this group which corresponds to the idea that these poems may be intended to suggest more than a surface impression.

It is clear from this brief view of the "Tulips" subsections that Cummings's effort to separate and label the different thematic and generic elements he observed in his work met with mixed success. Often these subsections were loose and inchoate. For example, the poems of "Impressions" and "Post Impressions" are so similar in their evocations of the visual effects of evening and dawn that they might exchange places without affecting the perception of the group as a whole. The broad criteria for inclusion in "Songs" and "Portraits" result in groups which are tenuous rather than unified. Such lack of unity indicates that the groups and labels Cummings devised were not always adequate for organising the variety of his work. It remains to be seen if the subsections of "Chimneys" are more homogeneous.

Cummings discerned three kinds of sonnet in those he considered for inclusion in *Tulips & Chimneys*, so the sonnets of the "Chimneys" section are divided into three groups. There are twenty-one "Sonnets—Realities", eighteen "Sonnets—Unrealities", and twenty-four "Sonnets—Actualities". The "Realities" portray an urban underworld similar to that in the "Portraits"

section of "Tulips". The first sonnet in the group is "the Cambridge ladies", which functions as a liminal sonnet to the sequence. In it Cummings identifies the kind of people (at whom the subsequent sonnets are aimed) who embody the unfeeling attitude which he believes is typical of "mostpeople", in contrast to the "irreproachable ladies firmly lewd", the prostitutes whom he praises later in the sequence. Generally speaking, the "Unrealities" are concerned with an idealised, literary idea of love which draws on the conventions of petrarchism and chivalric romance. The Aesthetes' fascination with antiquity and the influence of Rossetti made this a particularly interesting mode to the young American poet. The sentimental tone and the use of archaisms are similar to those of the "Songs" in "Tulips". The "Actualities" deal with a more realistic kind of love which combines the sexuality of the "Realities" with the tenderness of the "Unrealities". This is due to his real relationship with Elaine Thayer, the wife of his erstwhile patron, as opposed to the literary origin of the "Unrealities" (Kennedy 237). These three sonnet groups make up a sequence which follows a three-part dialectical pattern: there is a thesis, in which Cummings presents the rough, sordid, but "alive" *demimonde* of "Realities"; then an antithesis, in which the contrasting set of idealised, literary ideas in "Unrealities" is offered; and finally a synthesis, the "Actualities", in which aspects of both are blended.

It is clear from the above examination of the various groups in *Tulips & Chimneys* that Cummings went about arranging the volume by selecting and naming different groups of poems according to their kind or mode. Of the "Tulips" groups, some are indistinct as a result of their broad criteria for inclusion, whereas the sonnet groups, which constitute the largest and most easily-identified category in the collection, are more successful, and Cummings's decision to include them in their own major division of the volume is a sound one. "Chimneys" has a unity which "Tulips" lacks, and this is due to the sonnet's inherent capability to be gathered into sequences. In each of the three subdivisions there are poems which seem out of place, resulting in a laxity in the groups which, strictly speaking, prevents them from being true

sonnet sequences.

Although the design of *Tulips & Chimneys* is of considerable interest, it must be remembered that the 1922 manuscript was not published in this form until 1976. Instead, the much-edited *Tulips and Chimneys* was published by Seltzer, who retained the structure designed by Cummings, but drastically cut the contents of each subdivision (see Appendix 2). The result was a much smaller version of the original manuscript, which, although it retained Cummings's subdivisions, made no improvement on the unity of the volume and, through over-zealous editing, marred the sense of variety which is the chief virtue of the original manuscript.

Cummings submitted the poems which had been pruned from the 1922 manuscript to the Dial Press, where Lincoln McVeagh selected forty-one for publication in a new volume. The volume, *XLI Poems*, is based on a simplified version of the two-part *Tulips & Chimneys* pattern, but not all of the "Tulips" poems remain in the divisions to which Cummings originally consigned them (see Appendix 2.1). It starts with a group of twelve poems entitled "Songs", in which several of the *Tulips* subdivisions are conflated. There are three poems from the original "Songs", three from "Amores", one from "Portraits" and five from "Impressions". This group is followed by the two "Chansons Innocentes" rejected from the original manuscript, in a section of the same name; nine "Portraits", eight of which were originally "Portraits" in *Tulips & Chimneys* and one of which was transferred from "Post Impressions"; and "La Guerre", which comprises two of the poems rejected from the section of the same name in the original manuscript. As in the original manuscript, the sonnets make up the second half of the book, but, like the "Songs" group with which the volume opens, this division is a conflation of the original groups: it contains poems from all three sonnet groups, without labels to distinguish their differing kinds (see Appendix 2.2). "Sonnets" comprises three of the original "Realities", twelve "Unrealities" and one "Actuality".

It would seem that Cummings's approval was given to the structure of the volume, because he proof-read it in January 1925 (Kennedy 270). Perhaps,

despite his spirited defence of his right to stipulate the exact order in which his poems were to be published, he was prepared to compromise his principles again in order to get a volume published. It could also be that he saw the new volume as needing a new and different shape due to its different proportions from *Tulips & Chimneys*. *XLI Poems* is a simplified version of the original *Tulips & Chimneys*, but the major distinction between sonnets and non-sonnets remains the key to the volume's design.

The volume which preceded *XLI Poems* off the press was *& [And]*, but it was compiled from the poems which remained after *XLI Poems* had been assembled and, for the purposes of this chapter, must be seen as being a subsequent volume. *& [And]* was published at Cummings's own expense in order to bring to the public the poems which both Seltzer and McVeagh had rejected. It contained the forty-five poems remaining from the *Tulips & Chimneys* manuscript, as well as thirty-four poems which he had either passed over for inclusion in *Tulips & Chimneys*, or which he had written after the publication of his first volume. As before, Cummings proceeds by separating and labelling, but again some poems appear in different groups from those they had occupied in the manuscript (see Appendix 2.1). The volume's title is the ampersand which Seltzer left out of the title of his *Tulips & Chimneys*, and Cummings divided the volume into three sections corresponding to this title: "A", "N", and "D". "A" is subdivided into "Post Impressions" and "Portraits". "Post Impressions", which contains four of the "Post Impressions" from *Tulips & Chimneys* and two poems from the "Portraits" section of that volume and eight new poems, precedes "Portraits", a selection of eight poems from the *Tulips & Chimneys* "Portraits" group, three new poems, and one poem which was originally placed in the "La Guerre" section of *Tulips & Chimneys*. "N" is subtitled "&:Seven Poems", none of which had appeared in *Tulips & Chimneys* and none of which is a sonnet. As in *Tulips & Chimneys* and *XLI Poems*, the final section,"D", is made up of sonnets only, divided into "Sonnets—Realities" and "Sonnets— Actualities" (see Appendix 2.2). These "Realities" are more sexually-explicit than those in *Tulips & Chimneys*, but this is not because

Cummings's writing was becoming progressively more bold; rather, they date back to the same period in which the other prostitute poems were written but never included in the 1922 manuscript for fear of censorship. *& [And]*, being privately published, was in no danger of this. The reason for the absence of an "Unrealities" section is simply that these more conventional poems had appealed to the editors of *Tulips & Chimneys* and *XLI Poems* and all possible "Unrealities" had been published in those volumes. One of the "Realities", "even a pencil has fear to", has moved from its original place in the "Actualities" section of *Tulips & Chimneys*.

What is of interest about both *XLI Poems* and *& [And]* is the number of poems which have been moved from their original *Tulips & Chimneys* subdivisions. Of the twelve poems in the "Songs" section of *XLI Poems*, only three were originally designated "Songs"; the remaining nine poems are imported from "Impressions", "Amores" and "Portraits". The "Sonnets" section contains poems from all three of the original "Chimneys" groups. Similarly, the "Post Impressions" section of *& [And]* contains two poems which were originally "Portraits", and the "Portraits" section contains one poem which was initially placed in "La Guerre". One sonnet in the "Sonnets—Realities" sequence was originally included in the "Actualities" section of *Tulips & Chimneys*. These changes indicate that Cummings's original placement of poems in the named subsections of *Tulips & Chimneys* was not the hard and fast matter he made it out to be in his letters and that, given the opportunity to rearrange the poems once the original order had been broken by Seltzer, he seemed happy to do so. The looseness of affinity between poems in the various *Tulips & Chimneys* subsections allows him to regroup some poems without noticeably disturbing the thematic unity of the groups. But this is more so of the poems which originate in "Tulips" than of the sonnets of "Chimneys". Only one of the original "Chimneys" sonnets is transferred into a different sequence. In *XLI Poems*, no distinction is made between the three kinds in "Sonnets", which label is designed to indicate the mixed nature of the group by avoiding mention of the three different kinds of sonnet it contains, so it cannot be said

of them that they have been moved into different groups. Instead, no idea of different sonnet kinds is apparent at all.

The fact that only one sonnet is moved to a different group, and the observation that in each of the volumes which arises from *Tulips & Chimneys* a clear distinction is made between poems which are sonnets and those which are not, suggests that Cummings used the sonnet's strong generic identity in a number of ways in these first three books. First, the sonnet, being easily-recognisable, is the initial group which Cummings chooses to separate and label in his attempt to create structured volumes. The sheer number of sonnets makes them even more obviously homogeneous. Second, the existence of the sonnet sequence genre provides a precedent for gathering these poems together in thematically-related groups, and this is what Cummings chooses to do with the sonnets in these first volumes in his quest to render his volumes harmonious, whole works of art.

The final volume in which Cummings's organisational principle was to separate and name different kinds of poem is called *is 5* (1926). The title is explained in the volume's Foreword: Cummings says that poets have an advantage over "mostpeople" or "nonmakers" because to a poet, with his enhanced vision of the world, the product of two plus two "is five" (*CP* 221). As in *& [And]*, the number of sections into which the volume is divided is directly related to the volume's title. Here there are five sections: "One", "Two", "Three", "Four", and "Five". "One" begins with a group of five sonnets, entitled "Five Americans", each of which portrays a prostitute. "Five" consists of five love sonnets, so that the volume is framed by two groups of five sonnets. Again, as in *Tulips & Chimneys* and *& [And]*, the sonnets are seen as a separate kind and are given their own sections. The only exception to this is the sonnet "'next to of course god america i" (*CP* 268), which is part of "Two", a group of ten poems which, like the "La Guerre" poems of *Tulips & Chimneys*, is satiric of war. It is possible that Cummings perceived this as the best place for this sonnet for, not only would it be thematically dissonant in either of the framing sequences, but it would also spoil the numerical symmetry of the

frame.

"Five Americans" is the most thematically-unified sequence Cummings ever wrote, and is the culmination of the "Portraits" poems and "Realities" sonnets in which he indulges his fascination with prostitutes. Each sonnet presents the *contreblason* of a prostitute, who is named in the sonnet's title. The portraits present a minute examination of each woman, in which Cummings tries to capture what it is that makes her unique. Cummings, the detached Aesthete, is a constant presence in the sequence, as he searches for the words to describe the details of each woman's dress and mannerisms.

The five sonnets which make up the "Five" section are all love poems of the "Actualities" kind, addressed by a lover to his lady, with their tender tone and celebration of the lovers' sensual and spiritual unity. By beginning the volume with the "Five Americans" and ending it with "Five", Cummings indicates a general progression from "dirty" to "clean", and from "satiric" to "lovepoems".

W [Viva] was published five years after *is 5*, and takes its title from a form of graffiti Cummings had observed while on his travels in Europe (Kennedy 307). In it Cummings tries a new ordering principle. Instead of separating and naming the different kinds of poem, with particular emphasis on the sonnet, he chooses to arrange the poems according to the number seven, and to integrate the sonnets into the arrangement as a structural element. Thus the volume contains seventy poems which are not placed in separate sections, but which are numbered consecutively, 1 to 70. Every seventh poem is a sonnet until the last group of seven poems, which are all sonnets, so that the volume ends with a sequence of eight sonnets. In total there are sixteen sonnets, not fourteen as calculated by Kennedy (319). Cummings's perception of the strong identity conferred by the similarity of its form which had made sonnets a logical group in his early volumes, makes them the ideal material for the new kind of internal framework he devised for *W [Viva]*. As well as being arranged according to the number seven, the volume follows the "seasonal metaphor". It begins with satiric and humorous poems and ends with love poems,

the sonnets falling within this progression. The first, "Space being (don't forget to remember) Curved" (*CP* 317), is a virulent attack on man's scientific and materialistic ways of approaching the world; "what time is it i wonder never mind" (*CP* 324) is a humorous rendition of two lovers' conversation; and "helves surling out of eakspeasies" (*CP* 331) deals with the progress of a drunken couple on their way home from a bar. The seven sonnets which close the volume are all love sonnets.

The volume that followed *W [Viva]* was *No Thanks*, which appeared in 1935 after being rejected by several publishers. The title is a jibe at these companies, for the volume is dedicated to them, so that Cummings announces that it has appeared no thanks to the fourteen publishers he lists on the flyleaf. The way in which the seventy-one poems in *No Thanks* are arranged is the most complex Cummings ever devised. A diagram is needed to describe this accurately.

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1 to 2 [moons]                                    2 poems [stars]
3 (sonnet)                                             69 (sonnet)
  4 to 6                                             66 to 68
  7 (sonnet)                                         65 (sonnet)
    8 to 10                                        62 to 64
    11 (sonnet)                                    61 (sonnet)
      12 to 14                                   58 to 60
      15 (sonnet)                                57 (sonnet)
        16 to 18                               54 to 56
        19 (sonnet)                            53 (sonnet)
          20 to 22                           50 to 52
          23 (sonnet)                        49 (sonnet)
            24 to 26                       46 to 48
            27 (sonnet)                    45 (sonnet)
              28 to 30                   42 to 44
              31 (sonnet)                41 (sonnet)
                32 to 34           38 to 40
                35 (sonnet)        37 (sonnet)
                        36
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(Adapted from Kennedy, 352)

Once again the sonnet's distinctive identity is used as a kind of marker, providing the internal framework of the volume. The volume opens with two poems about moons and, thereafter, every fourth poem until the thirty-sixth or central poem is a sonnet. This half of the volume Cummings imagined to be the "descending" half. After number thirty-six every fourth poem is a sonnet again, in what Cummings saw as the "rising" half of the volume. This half

closes, and with it the whole volume, with two poems about stars. Not only does the arrangement follow the "seasonal metaphor", but it is also symmetrical. Kennedy explains that "Cummings visualised it in the form of a V: the movement from the two 'moon' poems, descending to 'earth' poems at the center of the book, and then rising to two 'star' poems at the conclusion" (351), depicting a movement that is almost circular, like that of the Greater Romantic Lyric, in that the volume ends at the same point at which it began, but with a modified perspective.

The use of intricate structures in *W [Viva]* and *No Thanks* marks the second and most complex phase of Cummings's search for a way to arrange the variety of his work within the limits of a single volume. In both, the sonnet is the key to the structure, being used to make a kind of framework which lends weight to the "seasonal metaphor". In the remaining books he relies on the "seasonal metaphor" to give his books a more organic structure. Thus in *50 Poems*, *Xaipe*, and *95 Poems*, the poems are arranged in a loose progression, from those which portray winter or which are satiric, to the poems about spring and love. *1x1* is divided into three sections, "1", "x", and "1", which, on the face of it, would seem to be a return to Cummings's early practice of arranging the poems into named groups derived from the title. This, however, is refuted below (p.57). In most of these volumes some of the poems do fall into small groups or sequences with related thematic content as part of the larger seasonal progression, and this is true of sonnets as well as of other forms.

50 Poems includes twelve sonnets, none of which comprises a group. The volume closes with a sonnet, "what freedom's not some under's mere above" (*CP* 538), which, with its celebration of freedom and timelessness, is a fitting conclusion to the "seasonal metaphor" and whose distinctiveness and compression confers a sense of closure on the volume.

The title of *1x1* is taken from the final poem in the volume, "if everything happens which can't be done" (*CP* 594), which celebrates the excitement and power resulting when two lovers come together as one. Although the

volume's title is clearly related to its three parts—"1", "x", and "1"—the arrangement of *1x1* does not represent a return to the early strategy of separating and naming the different kinds. There are two reasons why this is not so. The first is that the poems are numbered consecutively, I to LIV, so that their progressive arrangement overrides the three divisions, and the second is that the sonnets are not gathered together into a single, separate group, as they are in *Tulips & Chimneys*, *& [And]*, and *is 5*. As in all volumes published after *No Thanks*, the sonnets are placed according to how they add to the thematic progression of the volume. The first section of *1x1*, "1", contains sixteen poems, including five sonnets. Three sonnets form a group which concludes the sequence: XIV (*CP* 554) and XV (*CP* 555) are satirical of contemporary society, while the third, XVI (*CP* 556), closes the section with a definition of the unified love which Cummings saw as the antidote to the ills of that society. "X", the second section, is made up of twenty-four poems, eight of which are sonnets. The third section, also called "1", has fourteen poems, only two of which are sonnets. The final poem, LIV, "if everything happens which can't be done" (*CP* 594), is a sonnet celebrating the themes of unity which appear throughout the book and which give it its title.

Xaipe, the title of which is Greek for "rejoice!", begins with a sonnet on sunset, "this (let's remember) day died again and" (*CP* 599), and ends with one on the rising of the new moon, "luminous tendril of celestial wish" (*CP* 669). The "seasonal metaphor" is used concurrently with this framing arrangement wherein some of the poems fall into sub-groups within the larger metaphorical arrangement. The first five poems deal with various aspects of the night, including a sonnet containing a dialogue between two lovers on the nature of infinity, inspired by the darkness (*CP* 603). This is followed by a poem in which Cummings's idea of death is explained, and this in turn introduces three elegies, two of which are sonnets: "we miss you, jack" (*CP* 605), and "possibly thrice we glimpsed—/ more likely twice" (*CP* 607). These two sonnets frame "o" (*CP* 606), another elegy mourning a nameless "round / little man". Poem 10 is a sonnet dedicated to a man still living, the

sculptor Aristide Maillol, and 63 is a sonnet devoted to the prologue of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, forming part of a sequence on spring. This sequence includes the sonnets "i thank You God for most this amazing / day" (*CP* 663), a fervent prayer of thanks for spring, and "now all the fingers of this tree" (*CP* 667), a philosophical poem about the seasons and the passing of time.

One other group is apparent in *Xaipe*: poems 37 to 45 make up a series satirising Roosevelt's administration and the war in which it had involved America. In tone and subject matter they represent a development of the "La Guerre" poems in *Tulips & Chimneys*. The poems include "F is for foetus" (*CP* 635), which uses the initials F.D.R. as a framework for a scurrilous attack on the president; the sonnet "why must itself up every of a park" (*CP* 636), a criticism of the reasoning which landed America in the war; the sonnet "whose are these (wraith a clinging with a wraith)" (*CP* 639), a directive that readers apply their imaginations to the consequences of the use of the atom bomb; and "o to be in Finland / now that Russia's here)" (*CP* 641), a bitter jingle about America's refusal to intervene in the Russian invasion of Finland.

Of *95 Poems*, the last volume Cummings saw into print, he wrote

> 95 poems is . . . an obvious example of the seasonal metaphor—1, a falling leaf; 41, snow; 73, nature (wholeness innocence eachness beauty the transcending of time&space) awakened. (*Letters* 261)

The sonnets in the volume seem to be more thickly concentrated in the second half. Just after the half-way point there is a pair of sonnets, 48, "someone i am wandering a town" (*CP* 720), and 49, "noone and a star stand, am to am" (*CP* 721), in which the speaker meditates on the coming of evening and the significance of the first star. Prior to this pair there are five sonnets, whereas after it there are thirteen. The five which fall before the halfway mark are not satiric, but nevertheless the concentration of sonnets after halfway may be an indication that by the end of his career Cummings preferred to use the sonnet to express the kind of sentiment which is associated with the latter half of the "seasonal metaphor": "wholeness innocence eachness

[and] the transcending of time&space". Two such sonnets, "someone i am wandering a town" (*CP* 720) and "noone and a star stand, am to am" (*CP* 721), depict the process by which he loses his identity and becomes briefly united with the natural world, symbolised by a star, and two are written in praise of the benevolent forces of nature in the form of the rain, "now comes the good rain the farmers pray for" (*CP* 754) and the sun, "how generous is that himself the sun" (*CP* 756).

Groups within the metaphoric progression of *95 Poems* include 1 to 4, which deal with autumn, including the sonnet "now air is air and thing is thing" (*CP* 675); poems 29 to 33, which are impressionistic portraits of anonymous people reminiscent of the "Portraits" section of *Tulips & Chimneys*; poems 40 to 44, which deal with winter, especially snow, and including the nativity sonnet "from spiralling ecstatically this" (*CP* 714). Following the two star sonnets, 48 and 49, there are two poems addressed to the moon: 50, "l" (*CP* 722), describes the roundness of the moon, and 51, "f" (*CP* 723), describes the moon in its last phase before it disappears completely. Poems 63 to 66 celebrate the coming of spring, beginning with the sonnet, "precisely as unbig a why as i'm (*CP* 735), and poems 79 to 87 are nature lyrics.

Whereas in the first four volumes that Cummings published, the sonnets were separated from the rest of the poems and gathered into sequences according to the tradition of sonnet sequences, and whereas in the following two volumes they were used as markers in his experiments with complex, patterned arrangements, in the remaining volumes the sonnets were integrated into the "seasonal metaphor". However, it is of interest to note that while only two of these volumes begin with a sonnet, seven out of the ten end with a sonnet: *Tulips & Chimneys*, *XLI Poems*, *& [And]*, *is 5*, *W [Viva]*, *50 Poems*, and *Xaipe*. Cummings used the sonnet's strong closural qualities to lend a sense of finality to these volumes.

Cummings abandoned the strategy of separating and naming the kinds of poetry in his volumes as an organising principle after *is 5* because his purpose in seeking an organising principle for the volume was to make it a

single, unified work, and he found that separating and naming was too close to the "boxing and labeling" he abhorred in the analysis of poetry. The fact that the poems did not always fit comfortably into their groups proved to him that each poem should stand on its own, as an individual work, to be appreciated on its own merits. The more subtle interior framework established by his schemas in *W [Viva]* and *No Thanks* appealed to his aesthete's sense of form and artistry, while the "seasonal metaphor", working alongside the schema, provided the volume with a broad and unobtrusive sense of unity. When the schema was relinquished leaving just the "seasonal metaphor", the volumes still retained this organic unity. The idea of his books emulating the seasons is in keeping with the circular structures he gave individual poems as a way of stressing their wholeness and distinctness.

In generic terms, Cummings's accumulation of the sonnets under collective labels in earlier volumes approaches the making of sonnet sequences. But these groups are not as thematically cohesive as true sonnet sequences, and they lack such features of the sequence's repertoire as complementary lyrics or odes, and numerological or thematic arrangement. The closest he comes to a true sequence is "Five Americans" in *is 5*. Once the practice of separating and labelling is relinquished, his collections closely resemble the *silva*. They are assemblies of miscellaneous forms, many of which are epigrams or sonnets, which are characterised both by their brevity and by their air of spontaneity. As in Jonson's *Forest*, Cummings's examples of the *silva* are arranged in ways which lend the whole a sense of progression, and therefore of unity. In these later volumes he uses the sonnet in various ways: as the material for the interior framework established by a schema; at the end of a volume, to encourage closure; and, less frequently, at the beginning, to act liminally.

The use of the sonnet as an element within his larger works is a useful gauge of the way in which Cummings's ideas mellow as he develops as a poet. His early volumes are the result of his Aesthete's notion that a work must be a structured whole, the formal intricacy of which is an object for

appreciation, just as the form of a poem can be appreciated apart from whatever is said in the poem. When it becomes clear that the principle of separating and naming the different kinds of poem in a volume is too like the rational "boxing and labeling" he despises, Cummings tries the internal schema as a means of conferring unity and harmony on his volumes. In time this is relinquished in favour of the loose, organic "seasonal metaphor", which is reflective of his growing interest in the timeless processes of the natural world. Whereas *Tulips & Chimneys* is the product of an enthusiastic young Aesthete, *95 Poems* is the work of a more mature Romantic.

Cummings's belief in the ideas of individuality, wholeness, and unity, in accordance with which his volumes are arranged into wholes that will still allow the individual poems to stand on their own, is inherent in all of his poetry to some degree. The way in which he goes about discussing and portraying these themes in different kinds of individual sonnet is the subject of chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter I shall examine the three sonnet modes which Cummings first identified and gathered together in the 1922 manuscript of *Tulips & Chimneys*. Because he continued this practice in *XLI Poems*, *& [And]*, and *is 5*, the sonnets of these volumes are included in this chapter. The titles Cummings first used for the groups in the 1922 manuscript of *Tulips & Chimneys* are "Sonnets—Realities", "Sonnets—Unrealities", and "Sonnets—Actualities". The same three titles survived in Seltzer's *Tulips and Chimneys*, while the two sonnet groups in *& [And]* were designated "Realities" and "Actualities". I also categorize the two sequences of five sonnets which frame *is 5* as "Realities" and "Actualities".

As mentioned in chapter 2, the three groups of sonnets in "Chimneys" are only loosely unified. Nevertheless, generally speaking, they contain three complex modes which Cummings identifies in his work. The sonnets in each group are the result of Cummings's extending a variety of modes to the sonnet genre. Thus the "Realities" show signs of traditional petrarchist love poetry, but in dealing with their *demimonde* subject matter they also reveal traces of popular fiction, an array of epigram styles, and features of the decadent poem; the "Unrealities" have the archaic diction and sensuousness of pre-Raphaelite poetry; and the "Actualities" combine the directness and eroticism of the "Realities" with the love themes of the "Unrealities". In all three, Cummings includes the themes of love, time, and death which are his major poetic concerns throughout his career.

There is a total of ninety sonnets in these four volumes. For this reason it is not possible discuss them all. Instead, as each successive group is considered, poems that are particularly representative of each mode will be examined. The dual aspects of form and of content will be mentioned together in the context of the individual poem, rather than separately, in order to preserve an impression of each poem as a whole object.

I

The inventiveness with which Cummings approached the sonnet genre is

nowhere better illustrated than in his poems in the "Realities" mode. Like many of the poems in the "Portraits" section in *Tulips & Chimneys*, the theme of the "Realities" group is the *demimonde* of wartime Paris and Prohibition-era New York. Cummings's sonnets describe characters and events from this colourful milieu, with the detachment of the Aesthete and the sophisticated urbanity of such classical epigrammatists as Catullus. The subject of these poems is also the poet himself. One is always aware of Cummings's presence as he interacts with his *demimonde* acquaintances, searching for the words to capture the individuality of the people he encounters. In this he is motivated by the Aesthetes' belief in the uniqueness of all experiences. As an Aesthete, he is unconcerned by the moral turpitude of the prostitutes and pimps he chooses as the subjects of his poems: he views them as individuals and as artistic subjects. In a letter to his sister in which he encourages her to think for herself, he offers as an example of his own freethinking attitude his feelings about prostitutes:

> I am taught to believe that prostitutes are to be looked down on. Before believing that, I will . . . make the following experiment: I will talk with, meet on terms of perfect equality, without the slightest attempting to persuade, a prostitute. Through my own eyes and ears a verdict will arrive, which is the only valid verdict for me in the entire world—unless I take somebody's word for something, which (because I desire to be alive) I do not (Letters 85-6).

He sees the ability to mingle with prostitutes as an exercise of the freedom which makes him "alive". The process of coming to an opinion about these people through what his senses report to him is the process he describes in several of these sonnets, particularly in the *contreblasons* of "Five Americans".

Often Cummings's attitude toward the people of the *demimonde* has an air of wonder, and one of his major concerns is how to portray the cause of that wonder in his poetry. He admits that complete success is not possible because these people are unique. In his parlance, each unique individual is a "mystery", and, as we have seen, "a mystery is something which is immeasurable". In the sonnets in which he depicts the sensations of sex with

a prostitute he loses his Aesthete's objectivity and his wonder is replaced by a gloating tone as he descends into an epigrammatic *foetidas* which is purely scatological.

Broadly speaking, Cummings's interest in the *demimonde* results in an epigram modulation in these sonnets. The direct language and pointed wit of the epigrammatist are ubiquitous. These are not *mel* love sonnets: their wit is often of the *sal* or spicy, comic flavour, as well as containing elements of the *acetum*, *fel*, and even *foetid* flavours. Cummings found a particularly fertile area of experimentation in the application of the *demimonde* mode to traditional sonnet subgenres, such as the *contreblason*. In accordance with his determination (expressed in the letter to his sister) to let his senses inform him about the people he encounters, he describes his subjects' appearances in acute detail, reproduces their speech, often rendering their accents phonetically, and uses synaesthesia to impart an impression of the sensory experiences he undergoes.

Paradoxically, in portraying these people who are "alive", the poet refers repeatedly to death. Most of the prostitutes are closely associated with death and, while it is acknowledged that Cummings was likely to be aware of the conventional idea of the orgasm as "the little death" (Forster 20-21), the association of prostitutes with death is so frequent in these poems, and death is such a frequent concern in most of his poetry, that death is obviously an important factor in his beliefs about life. Cummings is convinced that to be "alive" involves an acceptance of death. In his poem, "dying is fine)but Death" (*CP* 604), he differentiates between what he calls "dying" and "Death". What he means by "dying" is the movement through time toward death which is experienced by all living things, which he sees as being both natural and necessary. He says that the process of dying is "miraculous" because "dying is / perfectly natural;perfectly . . . lively" (11.12-15). "Death", on the other hand, is what "mostpeople" fear about living. Fear of the natural process of dying makes it into an abstraction, "Death", which is "strictly / scientific / &artificial& / evil&legal" (11.18-21). "Mostpeoples'"

constant fear of "Death" is what removes the savour of its beauty from their lives. Cummings believes this is a "sin": "we thank thee / god / almighty for dying / (forgive us,o life! the sin of Death" (11.22-25). In these early sonnets the distinction between "dying" and "Death" is not fully developed, but his approval of the prostitutes' easy co-existence with death is obvious.

The liminal sonnet to the "Realities" group, the *acetum* antisonnet "the Cambridge ladies", has been discussed briefly in the preface to this thesis. In "the Cambridge ladies" Cummings identifies a group of people from his own social background who exemplify the complacency and hypocrisy he claims is typical of "mostpeople". His antipathy toward them is also due to the fact that they are unaware of the message the moon "rattles" to them: that time is passing and that their lives must be savoured. In its role as liminal poem to the "Realities" group, "the Cambridge ladies" operates by means of a contrast, for the remaining poems portray a world of which the Cambridge ladies would not approve, and in which they would not belong. The "Realities" group is a reaction against the "dead" world of the Cambridge ladies.

Cummings's intention in the "Realities" group to consciously turn away from the world of the Cambridge ladies is immediately obvious in the second poem, "when i am in Boston i do not speak" (*CP* 116), and the fifth, "by god i want above fourteenth" (*CP* 119). These sonnets are examples of the realistic *demimonde* settings which Cummings also describes in the "Portraits" group of "Tulips". The first evokes the atmosphere of a tawdry Greek café, complete with billiards table, flies, and a partly-obscured view of a neon sign. The tone of the poem is one of detachment, as Cummings notes the people, sounds and flavours of the place, and in this quiet observation there is a sense that Cummings feels more at home and relaxed here than he is in Cambridge. The second sonnet of this kind also evokes a Greek café scene, this time in New York, but the poem begins with an expression of Cummings's fierce longing for that city's animal excitement:

> by god i want above fourteenth
>
> fifth's deep purring biceps, the mystic screech
> of Broadway, the trivial stink of rich

frail firm asinine life (ll.1-4).

By beginning the sequence with revulsion at the Cambridge ladies and then embracing these more decadent scenes, Cummings is expressing his rejection of Cambridge, where he was born and raised, in favour of what he regards as more stimulating places.

In the "Realities" it is most often the people of the *demimonde*, particularly the women, that attract Cummings's interest. In his portrayal of women in sonnets, Cummings takes up one of the central traditional concerns of the genre, the praise of a lady. But these women are very different from the traditional sonnet lady. They are prostitutes, and his attitude is not that of the typical sonnet lover. He does not offer the outright praise of beauty and virtue which is the petrarchist norm; his tone varies from tenderness to disgust, and from humour to anger. In his use of the word "lady", Cummings stresses the contrast between the Cambridge ladies and the prostitutes, and also between both of these kinds of women and the traditional petrarchist sonnet mistress. Normally in the sonnet genre, "lady" implies the conventional sonnet mistress: the blonde, blue-eyed, distant beauty, the poet's unrequited love for whom is an ennobling emotion. Cummings says that the Cambridge ladies, although accustomed to thinking of themselves as ladies, do not resemble the usual kind of lady praised in sonnet because they are "unbeautiful". In "irreproachable ladies firmly lewd" (*CP* 122) he establishes a contrast with "the Cambridge ladies". Whereas the Cambridge ladies are "unbeautiful", the *demimonde* "ladies" are seen as being fascinating and exotic:

. . . your smiles accuse
the dusk with an untimid svelte subdued
magic
while in your eyes there lives
a green egyptian noise (ll.3-6).

Paradoxically, what makes these women "alive" is their close relationship with death: they are

. . . ladies with whom time

feeds especially his immense lips

On whose deep nakedness death most believes,
perpetual girls marching to love (11.6-9).

Although the prostitutes are fascinating to the poet, his praise for them is not based on their physical and spiritual beauty, but on their individuality and freedom. Far from being chaste, they are available to any man who will pay them; they are not blonde, cool beauties, but have an aura of mysterious passion. By choosing to praise a group of prostitutes whom he calls "ladies" Cummings displays his rejection of the dead world of Cambridge in favour of the *demimonde*, which is "alive". He ends the poem with a catalogue of the "irreproachable ladies'" names:

....Cecile,the oval shove
of hiding pleasure. Alice,stinging quips
of flesh. Loretta,cut the comedy
kid....

Fran Mag Glad Dorothy (11.11-14).

Fowler points out that the names of protagonists in works of literature can be important generic signals. Thus typical names for Elizabethan sonnet ladies (such as Delia, Parthenope, Cynthia) are derived either from mythology, or "they refer rather abstractly to the heavens, or to exalted moral qualities, or simply to beauty" (Idea, Coelia, Stella, for example) (Fowler 76-77). Cummings stresses the difference between the conventional sonnet lady and his "irreproachable ladies" by giving the latter humble names, often shortened into nicknames, which suggest their air of familiarity with the men around them as opposed to the formality of relations between the petrarchist sonnet lover and his mistress.

Several of the "Realities" sonnets belong to the *contreblason* genre, in which Cummings proves himself to be particularly adept at praising the "irreproachable ladies" he has met. In these *contreblasons* Cummings selects certain distinctive qualities of the woman who is his subject, and exaggerates them, much as a caricaturist might, resulting in a bizarre or grotesque portrait. For example, Cummings's *blason* of the madam at Dick Mid's Place, the establishment where many of these prostitutes work (*CP* 120), emphasises

her grotesqueness:

> hair,in two fists of shrill colour,
> clutched the dull volume of her tumbling face
> scribbled with a thick grin. her sow-
> eyes clicking mischief from thick lids.
> the chunklike nose on which always the four
> tablets of perspiration erectly sitting (11.4-9).

As in several of these *contreblasons*, the madam's own speech is introduced into the poem as a way of rendering the foreign accent which is part of her unique character: "'eet smeestaire steevensun / kum een,dare ease Bet,and Leelee,an dee beeg wun" (11.12-13) ("it's mister Stevenson; come in, there is Bet, and Lily, and the big one"). The poem offers an acute visual impression followed by an equally acute aural one, the result of the poet's concentration on the sensory impressions he gains from the world around him.

Perhaps Cummings's most skilful *contreblason* is the nineteenth "Realities" sonnet (*CP* 133). In structure the sonnet is Italian, but the tone is blunt, almost brutal, as if its author is one the underworld toughs he admires:

> my girl's tall with hard long eyes
> as she stands,with her long hard hands keeping
> silence on her dress,good for sleeping
> is her long hard body filled with surprise
> like a white shocking wire . . . (11.1-5).

The adjectives "hard" and "long" replace the conventional petrarchist descriptions, so that instead of eyes like stars or suns, this woman has "hard long eyes", and instead of fine white hands, she has "long hard hands". Her body, given none of the veneration afforded that of a sonnet-mistress, is seen purely in sexual terms, as "good for sleeping [with]". Conventional *blasons* frequently likened the lady's hair to golden wire, but here the woman's body is compared to a "white shocking wire", combining the qualities of hardness and length with the idea of sexual electricity.

Like the conventional sonnet-lover, Cummings notes the effect his mistress's beauty wreaks on him, but his lustful feelings do not pose a spiritual problem:

> . . . when she smiles
> a hard long smile it sometimes makes
> gaily go clean through me tickling aches,

and the weak noise of her eyes easily files
my impatience to an edge . . . (ll.5-9).

The volta of the sonnet occurs at line 9, where the first long sentence, with its relentless piling-on of detail, ends at the dash, and Cummings initiates a new idea. He re-states the qualities peculiar to his lover, and describes the nature of their sexual encounters:

. . . my girl's tall
and taut,with thin legs just like a vine
that's spent all of its life on a garden-wall,
and is going to die. When we grimly go to bed
with these legs she begins to heave and twine
about me, and to kiss my face and head (ll.9-14).

His tone is blunt and direct, not betraying in any way that his liaison with this woman may contain love. Like most of the prostitutes he describes, this woman is strongly associated with death. The simile of the vine effectively combines the idea of her mortality with the qualities of hardness and length already established in the poem. Like the tough vine on the wall, she will eventually die. There is a sense of violence and desperation about the unromantic coupling described at the poem's end. That this occurs "grimly", without passion, reiterates the deliberate unsentimentality of the poem.

The last "Realities" sonnet in & [*And*], "in making Marjorie god hurried" (*CP* 211), follows a pattern very similar to that of "my girl's tall". First, Marjorie's body is described through the witty conceit of recounting God's slapdash construction methods:

in making Marjorie god hurried
a boy's body on unsuspicious
legs of girl. his left hand quarried
the quartzlike face. his right slapped
the amusing big vital vicious
vegetable of her mouth.
Upon the whole he suddenly clapped
a tiny sunset of vermouth
-colour. Hair. (ll.1-9).

The curt declarative sentences fragmented by the short lines contribute to the impression of God's inept haste. As in "my girl's tall with hard long eyes", physical description is followed by Cummings's admission of the sexual arousal this woman provokes in him, and his frank description of the sexual intercourse for which he pays her:

. . . he [God] put between
her lips a moist mistake,whose fragrance hurls
me into tears,as the dusty new-
ness of her obsolete gaze begins to. lean....
a little against me,when for two
dollars i fill her hips with boys and girls (11.9-14).

These lines, which consist of a single complex sentence less broken than the first nine (the fullstop in line 12 forces a pause which emphasises the sensation of Cummings's swoon; it does not indicate a period), evoke a sense of Cummings's sensory transport. His deliberate ambiguity as to whether "moist mistake" refers to Marjorie's mouth or to her vagina heightens the unromantic tone of the poem.

The poet's attitude in his *contreblasons* is not always one of Aesthetic remoteness. In "kitty" (*CP* 126) he expresses his outrage at the hypocrisy that calls a sixteen-year-old prostitute immoral and ignores the harshness of her existence. The staccato description of the girl and her lifestyle, with its short sentence-fragments and dislocated typography, is at odds with the standard Italian rhyme scheme:

'kitty'. sixteen,5'1",white,prostitute.

ducking always the touch of must and shall,
whose slippery body is Death's littlest pal,

skilled in quick softness. Unspontaneous. cute (11.1-4).

Kitty seems appealing and vulnerable, but this is a persona—epitomised by her pseudonym—which has been assumed out of a need to survive. She constantly avoids the imperatives of the law, preferring to live in league with death as a prostitute. Cummings looks to her eyes in an attempt to ascertain what makes her unique: "the signal perfume of [her] unrepute / focusses in the sweet slow animal / bottomless eyes importantly banal" (11.5-7). He finds a complex of things. While they retain a vestige of the sweetness of her youth, they are also the eyes of an animal made wary by her need to survive, and they are unfathomable, as if Kitty guards her expression, only allowing herself to reveal the "unspontaneous" emotions of her profession. They are also "importantly banal" eyes, arrogantly presenting their guardedness to the world.

In the sestet Cummings rhetorically addresses the kind of man who

keeps a girl like Kitty in business, stressing her tender years:

> Kitty. a whore. Sixteen
> you corking brute
> amused from time to time by clever drolls
> fearsomely who do keep their sunday flower (11.8-10).

To him, Kitty's customers are hypocritical "brutes". They sleep with her, but will also be aroused by flirts who cling to the "sunday flower" of their virginity in the fear that its loss will render them disreputable. In the poet's opinion, Kitty's "unrepute" is more honest than the sexual games played by such people.

Cummings's defence of Kitty leads him to interrupt his meditation to countermand a bar order on her behalf: "beer nothing, the lady'll have a whiskey-sour" (1.12). Being a "lady", she deserves better than a beer. He concludes the poem by commenting on Kitty's smile:

> The babybreasted broad "kitty" twice eight
> . . . . . .
> whose least amazing smile is the most great
> common divisor of unequal souls (11.11-14).

It is an amazing smile, the "least" example of which has the power to appeal to all of the "unequal souls" on which it is bestowed. It strikes the humanity of all people. In his anger over Kitty's treatment, Cummings loses the aesthete's lack of concern with morality. His vilification of the "corking brute"'s hypocrisy comes from a profound sense of moral outrage.

The *contreblasons* reach their ultimate refinement in the "Five Americans" sequence which opens *is 5* (*CP* 223-7). These poems are the last collected group of sonnets in the "Realities" mode. Although Cummings does not label them as "Realities", they have so much in common with the "Realities" poems in earlier volumes that they are clearly part of the same mode. Each sonnet contains the *blason* of a prostitute, whose name is the sonnet's title: "Liz", "Mame", "Gert", "Marj", and "Fran". Like those already mentioned, these *contreblasons* are characterised by a sense of wonder at the uniqueness of the individuals portrayed and consequently by his avowal that poetry cannot capture their uniqueness. In doing this, Cummings adapts the petrarchist hyperbole which claims that language is inadequate to describe the

perfection of his beloved. None of these poems has an Italian or English form. Each has a loose rhyme scheme, and the poet's frequent use of typographical dislocations enhances the random movement of his thoughts.

The first two poems in the sequence skilfully counterbalance Cummings's detached musings about the women with their own interpolations, humorously undercutting his fantasy ("Liz"), or causing his Aesthete's sensibilities to reel with surprise ("Mame"). In "Liz", his attention is devoted to a description of Liz's breast, foot, shoulders, arms, hands, and lap. It is an account which would please any decadent poet:

> with breathing as(faithfully)her lownecked
> dress a little topples and slightly expands
>
> one square foot mired in silk wrinkling loth
> stocking begins queerly to do a few
> gestures to death,
> the silent shoulders are both
> slowly with pinkish ponderous arms bedecked
> whose white thick wrists deliver promptly to
> a deep lap enormous mindless hands (ll.1-8).

The physical impression of Liz is one of apathy and coarseness. Her kicking foot is large and clumsy, its movement is perfunctory, and her shoulders, arms and wrists are unanimated. In the sestet Cummings wonders what she might be thinking about behind the dreary surface he has just described, and guesses that it may be a kiss, one that is at odds with Liz's outward appearance: it is "sinuous and lean", while she is inert and plump; and "entirely melting", whereas she is decidedly solid. Liz's own bored, unromantic comment dispels Cummings's musing: "'business is rotten'the face yawning said" (l.11). He concludes that such a person could only have experienced such a passionate kiss if she had read about it in a book.

The second lady in the sequence, Mame, is depicted as holding a handmirror, like traditional depictions of Venus at her toilet. Mame's childishness and grotesqueness parody that tradition:

> she puts down the handmirror. 'Look at'arranging
> before me a mellifluous idiot grin
> (with what was nose upwrinkled into nothing
> earthly,while the slippery eyes drown
> in surging flesh) (ll.1-5).

She is viewing the hole in her gum left by a recently-extracted tooth, and is

so proud of this wound that she displays it, simultaneously attempting to supply details of the operation:

> A thumblike index down-
> dragging yanks back skin'see'(i,seeing,ceased
> to breathe). The plump left fist opening
> 'wisdom.' Flicker of gold. 'Yep. No gas. Flynn' (ll. 5-8).

Fragments of Mame's monologue are used to describe Cummings's sensory impressions as she shows him the tooth clutched in her hand and tells him that it was a wisdom tooth, that no gas was used in its extraction, and that her dentist's name is Flynn. Like Liz, Gert, and Marj, an important element of Mame's character is imparted in her own words: "'I'll tell duh woild;some noive all right. / Aint much on looks but how dat baby ached'" (ll.10-11). She is keen to point out how much the extraction hurt, and is affronted when she is asked whether an anaesthetic was used in the operation:

> and when i timidly hinted 'novocaine?'
> the eyes outstart,curl,bloat,are newly baked
>
> and swaggering cookies of indignant light (ll 12-14).

The eyes which disappear when she grins at the beginning of the poem now protrude indignantly.

In "Marj", Cummings's attention is divided between the theory of existence which Marj is explaining to him, and her legs, which she provocatively crosses and then opens again to distract him:

> 'life?
> Listen'the feline she with radishred
> legs said(crossing them slowly)'I'm
> asleep. Yep. Youse is asleep kid
> and everybody is.' (ll.1-4).

So distracted is the poet by these legs that he does not realise that Marj's theory is bogus and that she is teasing him. He is the one who is asleep. As in "Mame", he provokes a response from the woman with a question. His gullible inquiry as to whether even the Madame is asleep prompts Marj's mirth. After her confidential whisper Marj's laughter is loud and boisterous, shocking him into a bemused realisation of her duplicity:

> —Marj's laughter smacked
> me:pummeling the curtains,drooped to a purr...
>
> i left her permanently smiling (ll.12-14).

Marj is described as being "feline", and the "purr" to which her laughter fades adds to this effect. She has been playing cat-and-mouse with him.

Cummings's admission to the difficulty of portraying these women in his poetry is not only an adaptation of petrarchist hyperbole, but is also a factor in his own idea of his artistic purpose. He makes it clear that finding the right language to describe what his senses experience is a challenge. In "Gert" he begins by musing on the precise word to capture the movement of her breasts: "joggle i think will do it although the glad / monosyllable jounce possibly can tell / better how the balloons move" (11.1-3). He then goes on to seek the word to describe her "three- / cornered always moist mouth": "jazz, / for whose twitching lips,between you and me / almost succeeds while toddle rings the bell" (11.5-7). He decides that there is no single word for the distinctive way in which Gert adjusts her garters as she sits down:

> But if her tall corpsecoloured body seat
> itself(with the uncouth habitual dull
> jerk at garters)there's no sharpest neat
> word for the thing (11.8-11).

Finally, the poet admits that language is inadequate to describe Gert's voice, and allows her to conclude the poem in her own words:

> Her voice?
> gruesome:a trull
> leaps from the lungs'gimme uh swell fite
>
> like up ter yknow,Rektuz,Toysday nite;
> where uh guy gets gayn troze uh lobstersalad (11.11-14).

This means, "'give me a swell fight like up at, er, you know, Rector's, Thursday night, where a guy gets gay and throws a lobster salad.'" It represents a significant departure from the *blason* convention to have the subject interject with her own, often coarse, comments, skilfully implying that no other means of portraying Gert's character is possible.

The sequence ends with a more serious meditation along similar lines. In "Fran" Cummings concludes that he will always be mystified by women such as these. Although he knows his questions will never be answered to his satisfaction, he will continue to ask them:

should i entirely ask of god why
on the alert neck of this brittle whore
delicately wobbles an improbably distinct face,
and how these wooden big two feet conclude
happeningly the unfirm drooping bloated
calves
      i would receive the answer more
or less deserved,Young fellow go in peace.
which i would do,being as Dick Mid once noted
lifting a Green River(here's to youse)
"a bloke wot's well behaved"...and always try
to not wonder how let's say elation
causes the bent eyes thickly to protrude—

or why her tiniest whispered invitation
is like a clock striking in a dark house

The final simile evokes the stirrings of desire Cummings sometimes feels when he speaks with these women. He admits to it as a part of his total experience of them, for in these poems his observation is directed as much at his perceptions as it is at the women. He is in a dilemma, simultaneously enqiring about the women and knowing that enquiry is useless. These women are "mysteries": they are both "alive" and "immeasurable", even by poetry.

By calling the sequence "Five Americans", Cummings makes two points. First, he stresses that although to most of society these prostitutes are considered to be contemptible, they are still citizens of America, like every other member of society. But he is not so much saying that the prostitutes are Americans, but that Americans are prostitutes. If they see themselves as citizens of a country rather than as individuals, then they have sold themselves to an ideal. The title adds a new satirical dimension to the sequence, and he returns to this vilification of patriotic America in many of his sonnets.

The good humour of these portraits is lacking in some of the other sonnets in the "Realities" mode. Those which Cummings's editors found particularly offensive, and which they avoided when assembling *Tulips and Chimneys* and *XLI Poems*, depict his sexual experiences with the women of the *demimonde*. Most of these were printed in *& [And]*, which, being privately published, was not liable for prosecution. Although Cummings undoubtedly took these experiences as being a challenge to his skill as a poet, and wrote with the Aesthete's lack of concern for moral considerations, his detachment is easily

replaced by scatological glee, and his wit takes on the *foetid* epigram flavour. At times his distant attitude toward these women seems to lapse into a kind of disgust, as if he believes he is doing something indecent. It is significant that these women are never named. The poet is not seeing them as individuals, but as objects. His concern is with himself and his own perceptions.

In "life boosts herself rapidly at me" (*CP* 135), Cummings sets out to render the sensations he experiences during sexual intercourse with a prostitute. Because his concern is with what he experiences, there is a corresponding lack of the care he takes in his *contreblasons* to capture and to praise the individuality of the person who is his subject. Whereas in "kitty" or in the "Five Americans" poems there is a sense of his fascination with the person described, here the Aesthete's distance seems to dehumanise the woman:

> she
> lifts an impertinent puerperal face
> and with astute fatuous swallowed eyes
> smiles,
> one grin very distinctly wobbles
> from the thinning lips me hugely which embrace (11.8-12).

The eight "Realities" sonnets in *& [And]* which deal with the same subject matter have even less to say about the individuality of his partner, which, despite the wit employed in them, makes these poems less interesting than his *contreblasons*.

When Cummings uses his sexual experiences as a counterpoint to some other experience, instead of using the whole sonnet merely to recount them, more interesting poems result. Skilful use is made of the Italian octave-sestet division in "the dirty colours of her kiss have just" (*CP* 205) to parody the *aubade*, or the parting song of lovers at dawn. In the octave the speaker describes the sensations he experiences as he couples with a prostitute, using the present tense to heighten the impression of immediacy:

> . . . i bite on the eyes' brittle crust
> (only feeling the belly's merry thrust
> Boost my huge passion like a business
>
> and the Y her legs panting as they press
>
> proffers its omelet of fluffy lust) (11.4-8).

The sestet depicts a squalid morning-after scene in the past tense:

> she got up
>
> with a gashing yellow yawn
> and tottered to a glass bumping things.
> she picked wearily something from the floor
>
> Her hair was mussed,and she coughed while tying strings
> (11.11-14).

Here, observation of detail is sharp, as the ungraceful vigour of the octave is contrasted with the vague, half-asleep movements of the sestet. Once again the purpose is to be deliberately unsentimental and to eschew any moral statement.

Cummings uses this design again in "the poem her belly marched through me as" (*CP* 208), an Italian sonnet. The octave is dedicated to a description of the effect wrought by the woman on the speaker's senses. He employs synaesthesia to depict these sensations: "from her nostrils to her feet / she smelled of silence" (11.2-3), a sensory experience which recalls an event in his memory:

> One day i felt a mountain touch me where
> i stood (maybe nine miles off). It was spring
>
> sun-stirring. sweetly to the mangling air
> muchness of buds mattered. a valley spilled
> its tickling river in my eyes,
> the killed
>
> world wriggled like a twitched string (11.9-14).

Although the octave and sestet portray contrasting stimuli, it is the same "smell of silence" which moves him in both cases. He is equally touched by the placid rural scene and the torrid *demimonde* one.

Two of the most unusual and interesting "Realities" sonnets are those in which the violent deaths of *demimonde* characters are narrated. They make use of slang and a tough, laconic tone to emulate the *demimonde's* nonchalant attitude toward violence and death. The victims are treated harshly, and, despite the tough tone of these poems, Cummings betrays sympathy for them. The first is the story of a pregnant prostitute who is raped and murdered by her lover, who in turn is sentenced to death by electrocution in "The

Chair" (*CP* 127). Despite its nonchalance in talking about murder and rape, this is an affirmation of love's power. Throughout the tale, the unnamed woman shows blind love for her gangster, Bill, but her mistake is to have revealed to the police that he once murdered a man: "it started when Bill's chip let on to / the bulls he'd bumped a bloke back in fifteen" (11.1-2). She begs his forgiveness but he flees: "then she came toward him on her knees across the locked / Room. he knocked her cold and beat it for Chicago" (11.3-4). Bill enters into a life of crime with Eddie, and his abused lover, who is pregnant, follows him. With horrific callousness, Bill offers her to Eddie:

> Bill was put wise
> that she was coming with his kid inside her.
> He laughed. She came. he gave her a shove
> and asked Eddie did he care to ride her?
> ....she exactly lay,looking hunks of love (11.9-13).

Her passiveness and the love she shows him even at the depths of her degradation haunt Eddie as he goes to his death in the electric chair: "in The Chair he kept talking about eyes" (1.14). The epigrammatic revelation in the final line is like the *denouement* at the end of a short story.

In the second of these *demimonde* narrative sonnets, Cummings has Dick Mid recount the fate of Jimmy, another lover who becomes a victim (*CP* 134). The first three lines of the poem describe Dick Mid in his home environment:

> Dick Mid's large bluish face without eyebrows
>
> sits in the kitchen nights and chews a two-bit
> cigar
> waiting for the bulls to pull his joint (11.1-3).

A pimp, Dick Mid is portrayed as being both grotesque and cruel. While waiting for the police to raid his brothel, he reminisces about the lawless, violent events he has witnessed. Typographically-arranged groupings and short sentences imitate the disjointed workings of his memory. He recalls Jimmie's story, starting with a description of the protagonist: "Jimmie was a dude. Dark hair and nice hands. / with a little eye that rolled and made its point" (11.4-5). The details of the story are confused, but it is clear that Jimmie's sister is one of the prostitutes who work at Dick Mid's Place: "Jimmie's

sister worked for Dick. And had some rows / over percent. The gang got shot up twice,it / operated in the hundred ands" (11.6-8). In this terse style, we learn that Jimmie was popular with the prostitutes, but that he "lived regular", bathing three times a week and enjoying a stable relationship with a woman who was not a prostitute. Perhaps because his regular ways and physical attractiveness make him Dick Mid's opposite, Jimmie's betrayal and murder give Dick Mid some pleasure to recollect:

Dick Mid's green large three teeth leak

smoke:remembering,two pink lips curl....

how Jimmie was framed and got his (11.12-14).

The common factors in the "Realities" sonnets are their *demimonde* subject matter (which includes the omnipresence of death) and their modulation with *sal*, *fel*, and *foetid* epigram associated with that subject matter. This modulation brings with it such unconventional features as Cummings's tone of anger, disgust, or detachment; his use of colloquial direct speech; and his determination to praise what had seldom, if ever, been praised before in the sonnet genre. By praising the ugly or unpleasant, he mocks the conventional purpose of the love sonnet, thus drawing attention to the genre and to his misuse of it. He announces a new set of values, in which honesty and individuality are more important than physical and moral perfection. Poems in this mode make up a distinctive and obvious group for Cummings to separate from the mass of those available for inclusion in *Tulips & Chimneys*, and, having separated it, to give it a collective label as he does with the "Tulips" groups.

II

The title of "Unrealities" implies that the poems are the opposite of the "Realities". Whereas in the "Realities" Cummings takes as his subject-matter the sordid events and characters of the *demimonde*, the "Unrealities" poems are written with the characteristic Aesthete's aim to evoke a particularly intense sensation of the moods and textures of archaic literature. Consequently, while there is some evidence of petrarchist thinking in these sonnets, there is little sense that they are all dedicated to praising a woman in

the way of a petrarchist sequence. The archaic language which appears in the majority of the "Unrealities" contributes to their artificiality and literariness. These qualities result in a sense that the "Unrealities" are the only sonnets in which the speaker is not obviously the poet himself. As in many Aesthetic poems, the aural effects of the language are often more important than the literal meaning. The predominantly conventional forms taken by these poems also suggest a more literary theme than that of the "Realities".

The philosophy which Cummings professes in these poems—that love is able to withstand the ravages of time and can therefore outlast death—is a literary commonplace with which he was familiar from his reading of amatory literature from the Classics, the medieval era, the Renaissance, and the Romantics. It is a belief which he retains throughout his life. This interaction of love and death is depicted through motifs which stand for relative states of mutability, such as the moon, stars, flowers (particularly roses and lilies), the sea, and the seasons. The stars are used to symbolise what is immutable: they are fixed, permanent, unchanging. Flowers occupy the opposite end of the spectrum. Being short-lived, they symbolise the mutability of beauty. The moon, the sea, and the seasons represent a paradoxical combination of the mutable and the immutable, in that they embody cycles, which are both constant and ever-changing. Many of the poems are set at dusk or during the night, which are times at which the evidence of time's passing is obvious, and which encourage meditation on that passing.

The "Unrealities" sonnets' concern with evoking the aesthetically-pleasing moods of past literatures, with their corresponding preponderance of standard forms and their archaic diction, may be due to the fact that they are earlier poems than those in the other "Chimneys" groups. Although it is impossible to establish composition dates without access to the manuscripts, the dates of first publication indicate that several of these poems were composed while Cummings was still at Harvard, and therefore that they represent an early stage of his development. For example, "Thou in whose swordgreat story shine the deeds" (*CP* 139) and "this is the garden: colours come and go"

(*CP* 144) were both published in *Eight Harvard Poets* (Kidder 42), which was compiled "by the early fall 1916" (Kennedy 105). If it is so that all or most of the "Unrealities" sonnets are earlier compositions than the other sonnets in the 1922 manuscript, then the archaisms and the use of conventional forms are features of an immature style which is in the process of disappearing when Cummings writes the "Realities" and "Actualities" sonnets.

The liminal poem to the "Unrealities" group provides an indication of the group's concerns, and, as in the "Realities" group, the use of the term "ladies" is significant in this regard. The sonnet "and what were roses. Perfume?for i do" (*CP* 136) introduces the idea of "unreal" ladies as opposed to the very real prostitutes in the "Realities" group. The poet's use of fragmented syntax and disjointed typography lends a stream-of-consciousness quality to his musing. In the first quatrain he struggles to recall the essence of a beautiful, dreamlike experience, first associating it with the scent of roses, and then with music. He cannot recall the memory completely, and concludes, "but here were something more maturely / childish,more beautiful almost than you" (ll.3-4). The poem continues with a rhetorical question, enquiring as to the subject of the dream, and concludes that it was about "ladies":

> are they not ladies,ladies of my dream
> justly touching roses their fingers whitely
> live by?
> or better,
> queens,queens laughing lightly
> crowned with far colours [?] (ll.9-12).

These ladies are very different from both the Cambridge ladies and those encountered in the *demimonde*. They are evanescent, associated with vague scents and faint strains of music, and they are like "queens". They exist in the poet's dreams or fantasies, which have the flavour of chivalric romance and love literature in general, and conventional love literature in particular. This sonnet evokes an Aesthete's world of pleasant sensation and literary fantasy. The "lady" addressed by Cummings in several of the "Unrealities" sonnets is one such as this: she is a lady out of literary romance, rather than a "real" woman.

The second sonnet in the sequence, "when unto nights of autumn do complain" (*CP* 137), is one of several on the passage of time in the seasonal cycle. It has an English rhyme scheme, but Cummings's typographically-grouped lines override the conventional English subdivisions. He addresses a woman, saying that the memory of his love for her is able to banish the thoughts of death and loneliness instilled in him by the passing of autumn into winter. Winter is seen as the bringer of death: it is the time when

> . . . the unlovely longness of the year
>
> droops with things dead athwart the narrowing hours
> and hope(by cold espoused unto fear)
> in dreadful corners hideously cowers (11.5-8).

Cummings inserts a blank line before "droops", so that the verse enacts the downward motion signified by the verb. He goes on to say that he is able to "excuse himself" from the despair instilled by winter through recalling past joy:

> from the impressed fingers of sublime
> Memory,of that loveliness receiving
> the image my proud heart cherished as fair (11.11-13).

Memory provides a brief recollection of the beloved: "(the child-head poised with the serious hair)" (1.14). Incomplete syntax and the placing of the line in brackets combine to render the memory's brevity and homogeneity, and a mood of pensiveness is emphasised by the unusual description of the hair as "serious". By being able to recall this moment so strongly associated with love, he triumphs over the death he associates with winter. Being a timeless mystery, love has the power to overcome the effects of time's passing.

In Cummings's poetry the passage of time is not mourned, for he is confident that immortality is achievable through love. In "a wind has blown the rain away and blown," (*CP* 153), freed from the fears associated with winter, he is able to adopt a jocular, joyful attitude and to show an Aesthete's appreciation of the beauty which winter brings. In a use of colloquialism rare in the "Unrealities" group, he addresses the wind which will bring winter as "O crazy daddy / Of death", as he expresses his acceptance of winter's inevitability: "let us as we have seen see / doom's integration"

(11.10-11). This "integration" is evoked as a silent visual impression of the winter trees:

> a wind has blown the rain
>
> away and the leaves and the sky and the
> trees stand:
> the trees stand. The trees,
> suddenly wait against the moon's face (11.11-14).

The bare trees silhouetted against the moon seem to epitomise the mood of winter. There is a departure from the traditional English rhyme pattern in the last line, so that no couplet imposes a sense of closure on this final impression of timelessness.

The inevitable passage of time symbolised by the seasons is powerless in the face of love, and in some of the "Unrealities" Cummings employs a petrarchist conceit in which the presence of the beloved has the power to change the seasons. In "will suddenly trees leap from winter and will" (*CP* 152), he compares his lover's absence to winter (like Shakespeare in sonnet 97, "How like a winter has my absence been") and her arrival as the coming of spring. Although the poem has a loose rhyme scheme and its parts are arranged typographically, a vestige of the Italian octave-sestet pattern is retained, in that none of the lines in the first eight lines (a b c a d c b d) is repeated in the remaining six lines (e f f g e g). Cummings fits the syntax to this division of the poem. In the octave he wonders if his lover will come to visit him. If she does, the trees will "suddenly leap from winter" and the dull cityscape will be transformed:

> (say a twilight lifting the fragile skill
> of new leaves' voices,and the sharp lips of spring
> simply joining with the wonderless
> city's sublime cheap distinct mouth) (11.4-7).

In the sestet he imagines that if she does not come, his world will remain dreary and cold:

> or will the fleshless moments go and go
>
> across this dirtied pane where softly preys
> the grey and perpendicular Always—
> or possibly there drift a pulseless blur
> of paleness;
> the unswift mouths of snow
> insignificantly whisper.... (11.9-14).

The poet establishes a powerful contrast between the vivid, joyful rebirth occasioned by his lover's arrival and the dull lifelessness of the world when she is absent.

From the above poem it is clear that Cummings associates the season of spring with love. Love, being the first principle in the universe, is the power which animates spring. "O Thou to whom the musical white spring" (*CP* 142) is an effusion in praise of a personified figure of Love,

> . . . to whom the musical white spring
> offers her lily inextinguishable,
> taught by [spring's] tremulous grace bravely to fling
>
> Implacable death's mysteriously sable
> robe from her redolent shoulders (11.1-5).

In this metaphor the germinating lily is seen as the harbinger of spring, dramatically casting aside the earth's black dust or clay (symbolic of death) as a woman casts aside her cape or coat. Through the use of frequent enjambment which causes the syntax to override the subdivisions of the English form, Cummings emphasises the energy of this passionate outburst. The poem comes to a climax in the sestet, as he identifies love as the power which achieves the triumph of spring over winter, and then announces his fealty to that power:

> . . . O Love! upon thy dim
> shrine of intangible commemoration,
> . . . . . .
> i spill my bright incalculable soul (11.9-14).

The elevated tone and worshipful attitude recall a petrarchist conceit in which Love is deified, stressing the idea of its omnipotence and omnipresence.

This idea reappears in "when the proficient poison of sure sleep" (*CP* 143). Cummings's stoicism in the face of death and his belief in love's immortality is affirmed as he tells his beloved that when they die, "i shall not smile beloved;i shall not weep" (1.8). He imagines their love as surviving as a god among the stars after their death. At the moment of death,

> . . . He without Whose favour nothing is
> (being of men called Love) upward doth leap
> from the mute hugeness of the depriving deep,
>
> with thunder of those hungering wings of His,
>
> into the lucent and large signories (11.3-7).

Love is apotheosised, gaining permanence and fixity among the stars. Cummings adapts the elegiac convention of stellification, in which the soul of the departed gains immortality by assuming a position among the fixed and immutable stars (as happens to Keats's spirit in Shelley's *Adonais*). Here it is the love which has been shared by the poet and his lady which ascends at their death "into the lucent and large signories."

In "who's most afraid of death? thou / art of him" (*CP* 149), such is Cummings's confidence in the face of death that he tells his beloved it is her fear of death which he loves most about her. He wishes to be present when she dies, an event he likens to the reaping of a flower:

> and truly i would be
> near when his [death's] scythe takes crisply the whim
> of thy smoothness. and mark the fainting
> murdered petals. with the caving stem (11.3-6).

This is not as bizarre a wish as it might seem, for the poet says that he wants to be "one of them / round the hurt heart which do so frailly cling" (11.7-8): he sees himself as one of the flower's petals, and wishes to die with it. He depicts this mutual death as a kind of sexual union: "and drawing thy mouth toward / my mouth, [we shall] steer our lost bodies carefully downward" (11.13-14). Again, despite death, the lovers remain united.

Another way in which Cummings defies death is through art. Several of the "Unrealities" sonnets treat death as a beautiful sensory experience, rather than as an event to be feared. In "come nothing to my comparable soul" (*CP* 150), he sees the process of dying as a series of aesthetically-exciting sensations, and addresses death as a lover, calling on it to claim him:

> O scrupulously take thy trivial toll,
> for whose cool feet this frantic heart is fain;
> try me with thy perfumes which have seduced
> the mightier nostrils of the fervent dead,
> feed with felicities me wormperused
> by whom the hungering mouth of time is fed . . . (11.3-8).

The treatment of death as an aesthetic experience is expressed through the layering of rich, repetitive language. This layering effect is enhanced by the poem's appearance as a single, tightly-packed block on the page, unrelieved by typographical spacing. He goes on to say that, if he does not

like what death has to offer, he will complain to God "whose seat is where / revolving planets struggle to be free / with the astounding everlasting air" (11.10-12)), but that if he does, he will accept his fate: "i'll take between thy hands / what no man feels, no woman understands" (11.13-14).

The English sonnet "when my sensational moments are no more" (*CP* 140) treats death as a kind of swoon into senselessness. As in many Aesthetes' poems, the texture of the language is more important than the "meaning" of the poem as its creator works at portraying the cessation of all feeling he anticipates experiencing at death:

> when my sensational moments are no more
> unjoyously bullied of vilest mind
>
> and sweet uncaring earth by thoughtful war
> heaped wholly with high wilt of human rind . . . (11.1-4).

The second quatrain affirms that this state is not undesirable, for it is a part of such natural processes as the coming of spring, which is love's victory over hate:

> when over hate has triumphed darkly love
>
> and the small spiritual cry of spring
> utters a striving flower,
> just where strove
> the droll god-beasts (11.5-8).

Cummings goes on to say that when he is in this state, his beloved's presence will have the power to revive him:

> do thou distinctly bring
> thy footstep,and the rushing of thy deep
> hair and the smiting smile didst love to use
> in other days (drawing my Mes from sleep
> whose stranger dreams thy strangeness must abuse....) (11.8-12).

He concludes by asserting that, to lovers, time is unimportant, for they are immortal, and therefore are able to appreciate life's beauty more vividly:

> Time being not for us,purple roses were
> sweeter to thee
> perchance to me deeper (11.12-13).

Cummings's concern with the passing of time and with death infuses his two sonnets on the sea, which, with its permanent presence and tidal rhythms, is a symbol of time's paradox: it is both permanent and ever-changing. The first sea sonnet, "a connotation of infinity" (*CP* 138), is a

night meditation in which he watches the stars and imagines "souls" like his wondering what their place will be in the infinity of time represented by the stars. They "consider for how much themselves shall gleam, / in the poised radiance of perpetualness" (11.3-8). To his meditative frame of mind, the dark sea seems to be an inscrutable mystery:

> When what's in velvet beyond doomed thought
>
> is like a woman amorous to be known;
> and man,whose here is always worse than naught,
> feels the tremendous yonder for his own—
>
> on such a night the sea through her blind miles
>
> of crumbling silence seriously smiles (11.9-14).

It is as if the sea knows the answer the "souls" seek but is deliberately withholding it. Cummings disguises the English rhyme pattern by fracturing the poem's typography and by dividing the argument into an octave and a sestet. The final couplet's closural quality establishes a sense of tension with the openness of the typography, which adds to the poem's mysterious air.

By comparison, the second meditation on the sea, "god gloats upon Her stunning flesh" (*CP* 141), is less tranquil in mood. The poem follows a modified Italian pattern (a b b a b c c b e f e g f g), against which is set a contrasting typographical arrangement. This arrangement enhances the portrayal of the sea's wilful energy. In the octave the sea is imagined as God's lover, sensuous and tireless, while in the sestet it is seen as being a god itself:

> god Is The Sea. All terrors of his being
> quake before this its hideous Work most old
> Whose battening gesture prophecies a freeing
>
> of ghostly chaos
> in this dangerous night
> through moaned space god worships God . . . (11.9-13).

The sea is continually in motion, "reaching", "lunging", "shoving", and "battening." This motion hints at a hidden apocalyptic power, a "freeing of ghostly chaos", that is reminiscent of Tennyson's vision in "The Kraken" of a mysterious presence on the sea's bed, which will "in roaring rise" on Judgment day. The use of the unusual verb "battening" also suggests that this poem is

inspired by Tennyson's. To Cummings, the sea's power is such that it can, by reflecting them, hold the "chaste stars . . . captured in brightening fright" (l.14).

The flower is a motif in the "Realities" group which has appeared in a number of the above poems. It is a symbol of the power and transience of life's beauty. In "when my sensational moments are no more" the symbol for spring is "a striving flower" (l.7) very like the "lily inextinguishable" (l.2) in "O thou to whom the musical white spring". Cummings sees love as heightening the lovers' perception of purple roses in "when my sensational moments are no more". In "who's most afraid of death?" he imagines the death of his beloved as being like the reaping of a flower by a scythe, a similar idea to that in "this is the garden: colours come and go" (*CP* 144), an example of the *et in arcadia ego* motif, where even in an Edenic garden, "Time shall surely reap / and on Death's blade lie many a flower curled" (ll.9-10).

The poet uses the flower as the vehicle for metaphors in two of the "Unrealities". In the twelfth sonnet in the group the flower is the metaphor for a woman: she is "a stealthily frail / flower" (*CP* 147 ll.1-2). Like several of the "Realities" sonnets treated above, this poem is concerned with the effect wrought on Cummings by a woman, and in its lack of archaism it is close to the "Realities" style of address. He relates an almost dreamlike sensory experience in a moonlit garden, in which the use of synaesthesia evokes the derangement of his senses:

> I have seen her a stealthily frail
> flower walking with its fellows in the death
> of light,against whose enormous curve of flesh
> exactly cubes of tiny fragrance try (ll.1-4).

Her scent intoxicates him: "across the important gardens her body / will come toward me with its hurting sexual smell / of lilies" (ll.10-12). The moon is an important presence in the poem, casting its moon-madness on his senses: "beyond night's silken immense swoon / the moon is like a floating silver hell / a song of adolescent ivory" (ll.12-14). This is one of the few "Unrealities" poems with Cummings's loose rhyme schemes (a b c d c d b a e f g e g f), and this looseness combines with the elliptical syntax to render the

piling-up of sensory impressions as if his senses are overwhelmed by the experience. These impressions are packed into a solid typographical mass on the page, resulting in an impression of restriction which heightens the chaotic state of his senses.

In "when citied day with the sonorous homes" (*CP* 151), the moon is described as a "tremendous flower / on whose huge heart prospecting darkness roams" (ll.3-4). Although the poem has a modified Italian rhyme scheme (a b b a c d d c), Cummings divides it into two parts dictated by the typography. In the first (ll.1-6a), the moon, like the presence of the woman, affects his spirit as it does the tides of the sea: its mystery "torture[s] my spirit with the exquisite froms / and whithers of existence" (ll.5-6). The moon's beauty lies in its inscrutability. The poet cannot comprehend its purpose, and it is unaware of his existence, but this serves only to heighten his appreciation of its mysterious beauty. In the second, longer part of the poem (ll.6b-14), he uses a metaphor in which he likens himself to a watcher on the shore who speculates on the destination of a ship whose sails he observes at sea:

> as by shores
> soundless,the unspeaking watcher who adores
>
> perceived sails whose mighty brightness dumbs
>
> the utterance of his soul—so even i
> wholly chained to a grave astonishment
> feel in my being the delirious smart
>
> of thrilled ecstasy,where sea and sky
> marry—
>
> to know the white ship of thy heart
>
> on frailer ports of costlier commerce bent (ll.6-14).

A sonnet subgenre which Cummings included in the "Unrealities" section is the literary tribute. He wrote several sonnets of this type, dedicated to Chaucer, Keats, and Dante, as well as one to Helen of Troy and one to a group of literary and mythical heroes (*Etcetera*, 7-11). Only one was selected for inclusion in the 1922 manuscript of *Tulips & Chimneys*, "Thou in whose swordgreat story shine the deeds" (*CP* 139). It is an assertion of art's power to defy time. Cummings argues that Froissart, the fourteenth-century

French writer whose *Chroniques* paid tribute to a chivalrous era, has gained immortality through his art. The sonnet has a two-part Italian structure, which is typographically emphasised in a traditional way with a gap between octave and sestet. The octave is devoted to an invocation of Froissart in a formal, elevated tone: "Thou in whose swordgreat story shine the deeds / of history her heroes" (ll.1-2). His "story" is the memorial of a legion of dead heroes, evoked in the spectacle of an army on the march. The noises of the marching feet and whinnying horses of this army "soun[d] through" the story's pages that are likened to an altar at which the poet experiences a communion with the past. Similarly, in keeping with this idea of reading as a sacrament, the reader of the story is said to be "wed / to valor" at this altar, so that in reading the story he participates in the action as a member of the "heroic breeds" it commemorates.

In the sestet the poet delivers his message of praise. He says that Froissart deserves the admiration of more recent times because of his devotion to his writing at a time when other men found glory with their swords. His glory is the longer-lasting, for his writings still "move" for those who experience them in the "hungering days" when chivalry no longer survives. He is seen as being a great hero, "who gavest as one of those immortal men / his life that his fair city might not die" (ll. 13-14). Like one of the heroes he glorifies, Froissart is seen as having sacrificed himself for a noble cause. His "fair city" is that of his literature, which Cummings sees as being as worthwhile and lasting a monument as a city rescued from destruction. Thus, in bringing to life the deeds of legendary heroes, Froissart is as great a hero as they, and gains ascendancy over death through his art.

It is likely that the "Unrealities" group comprises earlier poems than those in "Realities" and "Actualities". First, the poems are obviously dedicated to sentiments which are based on Cummings's reading rather than on his experience. Second, they show less evidence of his experimental bent than the other two groups, both in form and diction. Some were written while he was still at Harvard, and he stopped writing poems in this mode before the

publication of & [*And*], which included only "Realities" and "Unrealities" that had either been edited out of *Tulips and Chimneys* and *XLI Poems*, or composed after the publication of these volumes. From & [*And*] until the end of *is 5* he wrote sonnets in the "Realities" and "Actualities" modes. This demonstrates Fowler's contention that writers work by both emulation and a wish to break with the past. The "Realities" show Cummings trying very hard to shatter the conventions of previous literature, or to extend them as far as they will go. In the "Unrealities" he is trying to emulate and honour his predecessors (a wish made particularly clear in his tribute to Froissart). His experimental techniques do make an appearance, but these are juxtaposed with the archaic language and conventional forms which characterise this group. The third sonnet group in "Chimneys" is the final stage in this progression from literary imitator to literary innovator.

III

There are twenty-four "Actualities" sonnets in the 1922 manuscript of *Tulips & Chimneys* and seven in & [*And*] which were either rejected from the original manuscript or written between its compilation and that of & [*And*]. The five sonnets comprising the "Five" subsection which closes *is 5* are also in the "Actualities" mode, in that they share all the features of the "Actualities" in the previous volumes.

In *Tulips & Chimneys* the "Actualities" section is the third subdivision of "Chimneys", representing the final phase in the three-part dialectical arrangement of "Chimneys" which begins with the pungent statement made by "Realities" and continues with the archaic and literary counterstatement of the "Unrealities". The "Actualities" group represents a combining and refining of elements from the two contrasting groups which precede it. Like many of the "Unrealities", the "Actualities" are love sonnets, often dedicated to evoking the passing sensory impressions of love. Cummings employs the same motifs of the seasons, the moon, stars, and flowers which appear in the "Unrealities", and in several of the sonnets he uses petrarchist conventions. He does not resort to the archaisms characteristic of the "Unrealities", and

fewer conventional forms are used. Like the "Realities", the "Actualities" contain a powerful erotic element and often have an urban setting. Their direct language, including the use of colloquialism and direct speech, is also reminiscent of the "Realities" mode.

The new feature of this section, which differentiates it from the love sonnets of the "Unrealities" section, is the greater unity of tones and attitudes in the poems, suggesting the actual experience of love, rather than the fictional loves Cummings has encountered in his reading. These sonnets were written for Elaine Thayer, with whom he had entered into a love affair at about the time they were written (Kennedy 237). This results in a more mature understanding of love and a corresponding relinquishment of the artificial and mannered modes of expression, characterised by the use of archaisms, which he had used in the "Unrealities" (and acknowledged in the title of that group). Furthermore, the "Actualities" are erotic in a way which infuses the sexual directness of the "Realities" with a new tenderness. There is none of the *foetid* scatology which is characteristic of the "Realities" mode. The "Actualities" are love sonnets which depict a real love relationship. This mode is the one with which Cummings goes on in his later sonnets, having relinquished those elements of the previous two groups which no longer interest him or serve his purpose.

By far the most common subgenre among poems in the "Actualities" mode is that in which Cummings uses the narrow ambit of the sonnet form to portray a moment of intense sensation or emotion. In the "Realities" mode this concern arises out of the situation in which he describes the feelings inspired in him by observing a woman, or when he is engaging in sex with her. In the "Unrealities" mode he describes his aesthetic reaction to a woman or to a particular time of day or season. Here the sensations described are usually those of intense emotion when in the presence of his lover, including feelings of love and of erotic arousal. The hyperbole used in describing the intensity of these emotions is a strategy by which he praises the lady; by claiming that her beauty sends him into ecstasy, Cummings is implying that his lover is

extremely beautiful.

A subgenre which is related to that above and which makes its appearance in this group is the sonnet on a painting. Both Wordsworth and Rossetti wrote sonnets describing paintings, perhaps because they found the "intense unity" of the sonnet form allowed them to recreate the painting's impression of a moment of time preserved forever. This concept underlies Rossetti's oxymoronic definition of the sonnet as "a moment's monument". Cummings adapts this subgenre, making it a conceit in praise of his lover in which he claims that her beauty is too "alive" to be captured in a painting. Often in this conceit the painting is used as a motif in conjunction with the arts of music and poetry, both of which are also unable to capture her uniqueness. As we have seen, some of the *contreblasons* of *is 5* are built on this conceit.

The first of the "Actualities" sonnets in *Tulips & Chimneys*, "when my love comes to see me it's" (*CP* 154), is one of those devoted to the depiction of intense emotion. Although the rhyme scheme and the typography follow the poet's own experimental arrangement, the syntax is divisible into an octave with two quatrains, and a sestet. He muses on the feelings he experiences when his lover visits him:

> when my love comes to see me it's
> a little like music,a
> little more like curving colour(say
> orange)
> against silence,or darkness.... (11.1-4).

He uses synaesthesia, mixing the visual and the aural senses, to show how his consciousness is thrown into confusion by his lover's presence. In the second quatrain he describes the experience in olfactory terms—"the coming of my love emits / a wonderful smell in my mind" (11.5-6)—and in terms of his heartbeat: "you should see when i turn to find / her how my least heart-beat becomes less" (11.7-8). His heart seems to stop beating when he sees her, so that the experience is near-deathlike. The idea of this deathlike rout of his senses continues in the sestet:

> And then all her beauty is a vise

whose stilling lips murder suddenly me,

but of my corpse the tool her smile makes something
suddenly luminous and precise (11.9-12).

In these lines, he likens this feeling to being squeezed in a vise. When he feels closest to death, her smile becomes the erotic "tool" with which she creates something new of him. She joins him to herself, forming a "luminous and precise" whole: "—and then we are I and She" (1.13). The frequent typographic interruptions have the effect of arresting the pace of the poem, so that Cummings's impressions are communicated in increments, culminating in the last line, in which he hears music when united with his lover, symbolic of the harmony between them: "what is that the hurdy-gurdy's playing [?]" (1.14). It is not the music of the spheres, but the carnival music of the hurdy-gurdy. He draws on his love for the popular arts to lighten the hyperbole and domesticate it in his own urban environment.

Cummings hears the hurdy-gurdy again in "and this day it was Spring....us" (*CP* 177), the sonnet which ends the "Actualities" sequence in the *Tulips & Chimneys* manuscript. He recalls a day spent with his beloved as spring comes to the city. Although the loose rhyme scheme seems to suggest a division into an octave and a sestet, the volta occurs at line 13, so that the final two lines make up the second part of the poem. The poem begins in mid-sentence, as if it were part of a larger narrative: "and this day it was Spring....us / drew lewdly the murmurous minute clumsy / smelloftheworld" (11.1-3). The lovers respond to spring's fecundity with an erotic awakening of their own:

We intricately
alive,cleaving the luminous stammer of bodies
(eagerly just not each other touch)seeking,some
street which easily tickles a brittle fuss
of fragile huge humanity....
Numb
thoughts,kicking in the rivers of our blood,miss
by how terrible inches speech—it
made you a little dizzy did the world's smell (11.3-10).

They are searching together for some way of stimulating their senses. The smells of spring have the power virtually to drug them, so that they cannot verbalise their feelings. Instead, Cummings introduces his halting,

incomplete speech in parentheses: "(but i was thinking why the girl-and-bird / of you move....moves....and also,i'll admit—)" (ll.11-12). This thought is interrupted in the final two lines by the sound of music: "till,at the corner of Nothing and Something,we heard / a handorgan in twilight playing like hell" (ll.13-14). The music is described as coming from the corner of two streets: the experience is on the verge of what is possible ("Something") and what is not ("Nothing"). It is a mystical moment which, like many such moments evoked by the poet in his sonnets, occurs at twilight.

In Cummings's sonnets about paintings, he employs two contradictory conceits. The first and most frequently-used is the hyperbolic claim that his lover's beauty is so singular that neither painting nor verse can do it justice. For example, the fifth "Actualities" sonnet in *Tulips & Chimneys*, "even a pencil has fear to" (*CP* 158), mentions both painting and poetry:

> even a pencil has fear to
> do the posed body luckily made
> a pen is dreadfully afraid
> of her of this of the smile's two
> eyes.... (ll.1-5).

The second painting conceit is the more conventional idea that, by praising his lover's beauty in everlasting ink, the poet immortalises her. In his tribute to Froissart, "Thou in whose swordgreat story shine the deeds" (*CP* 139), he adapts this conceit, saying that Froissart has immortalised himself in his writing.

In the sonnet "my naked lady framed" (*CP* 168), Cummings makes use of the painting motif to stress the uniqueness of the beloved's beauty. "Framed in twilight", perhaps standing by a window, she reminds him of a painting. But the art of painting is inadequate to capture her uniqueness, which Cummings likens to music: painting is too limited a medium to depict music. His lady is

> an accident
>
> whose niceness betters easily the intent
> of genius—
> painting wholly feels ashamed
> before this music,and poetry cannot
> go near because perfectly fearful (ll.1-6).

Although his poetry is "fearful" of the woman's perfection, he revels in the fact that, as her lover, he has direct access to her through his senses. This relish suffuses the second part of the poem, in which he describes his lovemaking with the lady:

> But i(having in my arms caught
>
> the picture)hurry it slowly
>
> to my mouth,taste the accurate demure
> ferocious
> rhythm of
> precise
> laziness. Eat the price
>
> of an imaginable gesture
>
> exact warm unholy (11.8-14).

The attenuated typography heightens the sense of timelessness as the lovers savour their erotic moments together, an impression which is emphasised by the shortened lines and the list of unconnected adjectives in the final line.

The idea that the lady's perfection cannot be captured by the arts underlies the poem which concludes the sequence of five sonnets at the end of *is 5*. In "if i have made,my lady,intricate" (*CP* 307) Cummings begins by admitting that his efforts in verse have fallen short of immortalising her:

> if i have made,my lady,intricate
> imperfect things chiefly which wrong
> your eyes(frailer than most deep dreams are frail)
> songs less firm than your body's whitest song
> upon my mind—if i have failed to snare
> the glance too shy—if through my singing slips
> the very skilful strangeness of your smile
> the keen primeval silence of your hair
>
> —let the world say 'his most wise music stole
> nothing from death' (11.1-10).

He accepts that the world may claim that his best poetry has failed to immortalise her. This does not deprecate his skill, but stresses her "alive-ness" or beauty. Only *her* perfection cannot be captured in verse: "you only will create / (who are so perfectly alive)my shame" (11.10-11). He ends the poem with a tender metaphor describing the transformation of his life effected by the lady's presence as being like the coming of spring to a fallow field: "lady through whose profound and fragile lips / the sweet small clumsy feet of

April came / / into the ragged meadow of my soul" (11.12-14). By ending the poem with this lyrical touch, the poet challenges the notion that his poetry can fail, while simultaneously praising the woman whose beauty he has hyperbolically claimed is too great to be praised.

A variation of this conceit is evident in "yours is the music for no instrument" (*CP* 160), a sonnet in which the elevated sentiments are undermined by an epigrammatic interjection in the last line of the poem. Cummings ignores the quatrain divisions suggested by the English rhyme pattern, preferring to separate the units of sense typographically. He begins by asserting that, just as his lover's beauty cannot be expressed in music or paint, it is also too much for his poetic skills:

> yours is the music for no instrument
> yours the preposterous colour unbeheld
>
> —mine the unbought contemptuous intent
> till this our flesh merely shall be excelled
> by speaking flower (11.1-5).

His intent is to "excel" the mortality of the flesh by making poetry (or what he calls "speaking flower"). He goes on to argue that the eternal universe, symbolised by the sun and the rain, will not be disturbed if the poet merely tries in his poetry to prolong his life and that of his lover:

> (if i have made songs
>
> it does not greatly matter to the sun,
> nor will rain care
> cautiously who prolongs
> unserious twilight) (11.5-8).

The poet accepts that he is doomed to fail—"yours are the poems i do not write" (1.10)—but goes on to say that in attempting to create art out of his love, he is defying death: "in this at least we have the bulge on death, / silence,and the keenly musical light / of sudden nothing" (11.11-13). He illustrates his attitude by quoting from Dante's *Inferno*: "la bocca mea 'he / kissed wholly trembling'" (11.13-14). The words are spoken by Francesca, who, with Paolo, is sentenced to eternal damnation for their brief adulterous love affair (V 88-138). The poem ends with a surprising, cynical interjection: "or so thought the lady" (1.14). This epigrammatic twist is given additional

point by the typographic isolation of the final phrase on the page, which causes a delay before the final couplet is completed. The last line undercuts the romance in the allusion to Dante by suggesting that Paolo does not share Francesca's impression that their first kiss is spontaneous, but that it is planned. Cummings implies that his intention in writing this poem is not to immortalise himself and his lover, but to seduce her with hyperbolic praise. By establishing the conceit, supported by a literary allusion, and then upending it at the end of the poem, Cummings has constructed a complex and witty expression of the mixture of romance and frank eroticism which is characteristic of the "Actualities".

There are two sonnets in which Cummings claims that his art is capable of immortalising his lover, and in both it is her smile which is singled out for attention. In "my love is building a building" (*CP* 165) he likens the process of painting her portrait to that of building a kind of temple in which she will remain invulnerable to time and death. Although the poem progresses in a series of typographically-separate line-groups, the sense is divisible into an octave and a sestet. In the octave, the building is described by means of oxymoron, such as "a strong fragile house" (1.3) and "a precise clumsy / prison" (11.6-7), stressing the uniqueness of her beauty and the subtlety of the structure needed to immortalise it. The process of painting is described in parenthetical phrases: "(beginning at the singular beginning of your smile)" (11.4-5) and "(building thisandthis into Thus, / Around the reckless magic of your mouth)" (11.7-8). Cummings states in the sestet that, because this portrait is painted with love, it has the power to defy death:

> when Farmer Death(whom fairies hate)shall
>
> crumble the mouth-flower fleet
> He'll not my tower,
> laborious,casual
>
> where the surrounded smile
> hangs
>
> breathless (11.11-14).

The metaphor of the lady's smile hanging like a picture within the protective

walls of the tower has an atmosphere of quiet and timelessness. This impression is emphasised by Cummings's manipulation of the typography, which is designed to make the word "hangs" actually hang in its own space on the page. "Breathless", also being isolated on the page, gives the impression of the suspension of time.

The sonnet "by little accurate saints thickly which tread" (*CP* 162) belongs to the subgenre in which a painting is described in the sonnet. The poet adapts the subgenre to his own purpose, that of praising his lover. He begins in the octave of this Italian sonnet with a list of the painting's features, in unresolved phrases which begin with "by":

> by little accurate saints thickly which tread
> the serene nervous light of paradise—
> by angelfaces clustered like bright lice
>
> about god's capable dull important head—
> by on whom glories whisperingly impinge
> (god's pretty mother)but may not confuse
>
> the clever hair nor rout the young mouth whose
> lips begin a smile exactly strange— (11.1-8).

The painting seems to be an annunciation, with God appearing to the Virgin Mary, attended by saints and angels. Her imperturbable and mysterious half-smile amidst the "glories" which surround her lead Cummings to conclude in the sestet that "this painter should have loved my lady" (1.9). He then goes back to the "by" phrases: "And by this throat a little suddenly lifted / in singing —hands fragile whom almost tire the sleepshaped lilies . . ." (11.10-12). By all of the things mentioned in octave and sestet, he concludes, "should my lady's body / with these frail ladies dangerously respire" (11.12-13): she should be with the women in the painting, who are so "alive" that they seem to be breathing. The final line of the poem stresses the qualities his lady shares with the women in the painting: they are "impeccable girls in raiment laughter-gifted" (1.14).

An engraving of Goethe is the art motif in "autumn is:that between there and here" (*CP* 164). Although Cummings uses an English octave (a b a b c d c d) and an Italian sestet (e f f e f e), he does not use these units to contain the syntax, preferring to organise the poem typographically. This is

because his thoughts follow an organic, circular pattern reminiscent of that in a greater Romantic lyric, rather than the orderly progression encouraged by the traditional form. He moves from describing the autumnal hills to a memory of the year that is ending, then returns to the autumn scene. The process begins with an announcement that it is autumn: "autumn is:that between there and here / gladness flays hideously hills" (ll.1-2). His memory returns to spring, when he first encountered Goethe's face in an engraving by an anonymous German artist:

> It was in the spring of this very year
> . . . . . .
> i met that hideous gladness,per the face
> —pinxit,who knows? Who knows? some 'allemand'....?
> of Goethe,since exempt from heaven's grace,
>
> in an engraving belonging to my friend (ll.3-8).

Cummings salutes the friend and the memories he has of him, before he "fall[s] back,quietly amorous / of,through the autumn indisputably roaming // death's big rotten particular kiss" (ll.12-14). The poet's love for death is based on his acceptance of the year's passing from summer to autumn. Thus the associated memories of spring and the engraving help him to come to terms with the passing of time suggested by the arrival of autumn.

Unlike the "Realities", the "Actualities" do not dwell on the squalid facet of city life, but many of them do have urban settings. A sequence of three poems, XVII, XVIII, and XIX, describes the atmosphere and sights of nocturnal urban scenes in an Aesthetic manner. All are regularly-rhymed—the first is an Italian sonnet, and the second and third combine an English octave with an Italian sestet—which suggests that Cummings took more than usual care in fitting the language to the form. Some details, like the music of a mandolin, appear in more than one of the poems, helping to unify the sequence. The result is a series of compact impressions of city life.

The first is another poem which follows the circular pattern form external scene to the poet's mind and then back to the scene. "-GON splashes-sink" (*CP* 170) begins with a series of sensory impressions of a nocturnal urban scene. The typographical breaks at lines 4-5, 7-8, and 11-12 isolate

these impressions, emphasising their random nature. Cummings observes the flashing of a partial neon sign: the letters GON make a "splash" of light, then "sink" as the sign blinks off. He can see one of a group of three stars, and can hear "the stink of perfumed noise" (l.4) which "fiercely mounts from the fireman's ball" (l.4). His impressions of the evening become combined with potent impressions of his lover: he is "getting mandolin-clink / mixed with your hair;feeling your knees / among the supercilious chimneys" (ll.5-7). He ponders on the stars, calling them the "toys" of "little-dusk" and asks, "(will BigMorning get away with / them? j'm'en doute . . .)" (ll.10-11). Morning is personified as the thief of the dusk's toys, and Cummings is answered in French, suggesting that his lover is one of the Frenchwomen he met in Paris. The poem ends with a pair of unconnected thoughts:

> the accurate key to a palace
>
> —You,—in this window sits a Face
> (it is twilight)a Face playing on a flute (ll.12-14).

Briefly, Cummings states that his lover is the "key to a palace": her presence enriches his surroundings. The final impression is the sight of a flautist's disembodied face in a window, as if Cummings's attention is drawn away from his lover back to the dusk outside. The circular strategy follows his thoughts as they move from what he observes around him to his realisation of his lover's significance in his world, then back to what he can see outside.

"My sonnet is A light goes on in" (*CP* 171) is not only a sonnet depicting a nocturnal urban scene, but also a member of the self-referential sonnet subgenre, the sonnet on a sonnet, which includes Wordsworth's "Scorn not the sonnet; Critic, you have frowned" and "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room" (Colie 104). Cummings refers to the sonnet itself when he announces its existence at the outset: "my sonnet is" (l.1). Immediately he begins to record the details he perceives around him: "A light goes on in / the toiletwindow,that's staightacross from / my window" (ll.1-3). The impressions he records follow a loose, associative course which takes in the slight sounds of the night: "night air bothered with a rustling din / sort of sublimated tom-tom / which quite outdoes the mandolin- / man's tiny racket"

(11.3-6). He thinks inconsequentially about some horses which are stabled nearby:

> 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?)
> They pull the morning out of the night (11.6-12).

The parenthetical comments establish a dialogue, as if the speaker is addressing his half-asleep lover, while typographical dislocations are placed in mid-sentence or even mid-word, such as in "mandolin- / man" (11. 5-6) and "win- / k" (11.7-8), causing the verse to proceed in fits and starts which represent the movement of his half-awake consciousness. The poem ends with an unconnected observation which heightens the associative impression of the meditation: "I am living with a mouse who shares / my meals with him,which is fair as i judge" (11.13-14).

In the third of these urban scenes, "(the phonograph's voice like a keen spider skipping" (*CP* 172), Cummings uses similar techniques to those in "my sonnet is". Although the syntax is contained within the octave and sestet suggested by the rhyme scheme, frequent typographical breaks in mid-sentence and mid-word result in a series of delays which imparts an irregular, jerky pace to his thoughts. He lists the outdoor impressions of an evening in the city, including the sound of a record-player and views of a negress in a rocking chair and a fat man reading his newspaper. The sight of a cat causes the poet to wonder if he is as "alive" as it is:

> A cat waiting for god knows makes me
>
> wonder if i'm alive(eye pries,
>
> not open. Tail stirs.) And the. fire-escapes—
> the night. makes me wonder if,if i am
> the face of a baby smeared with beautiful jam . . . (11.8-12).

This oscillation between the scene and the poet's whimsical thoughts is a relaxed, less intense version of the greater Romantic lyric's circular movement. It has none of that genre's seriousness: the poet's thoughts are hap-

hazard and idle. His pondering is interrupted by his realisation that his lover is laughing at him: "my invincible Nearness rapes / laughter from your preferable,eyes" (11.13-14). It is not so much a Romantic Moment as a flight of fancy.

The erotic element of Cummings's relationship with his lover pervades several of the "Actualities" poems. It differs from the blunt and unromantic treatment of sex in the "Realities" in that Cummings sees this eroticism as an integral part of the whole relationship. Thus, in several of the sonnets examined above, the erotic is one element within a poem about love, rather than the subject of the poem. For example, in "my naked lady framed", the woman's superiority to a work of art is demonstrated by the way in which the beloved can touch and kiss her. In "the mind is its own beautiful prisoner" (*CP* 157) he relates the total surrender of his mind (symbolic of reason) to the joyful sensations of an afternoon's lovemaking:

> The last thing he [Cummings's mind] saw was you
> naked amid unnaked things,
>
> your flesh,a succinct wandlike animal,
> a little strolling with the futile purr
> of blood;your sex squeaked like a billiard-cue
> chalking itself,as not to make an error,
> with twists spontaneously methodical (11.5-11).

The poem ends with the poet's climax, the moment his mind "decently hang[s] itself" (1.4):

> He suddenly tasted worms windows and roses
>
> he laughed,and closed his eyes as a girl closes
> her left hand upon a mirror (11.12-14).

Cummings alludes to the traditional association of sex with death, as he does in the "Realities" sonnets. His orgasm is described using symbols of both life and death. The worms have an indelible association with the grave, while roses are symbolic of beautiful, fragile life.

Several of the "Actualities" from & [*And*] have a powerful erotic element. The first, "before the fragile gradual throne of night" (*CP* 212), depicts a moment of "intense unity" similar to the Moments in Wordsworth's sonnets, as the poet watches the first stars of evening appear, followed by

the moon: "slenderly wholly / rising, herself uprearing wholly slowly, / lean in the hips and her sails filled with dream" (11.4-6). It is a moment when briefly he forgets his mind and lives for the beauty of what he sees. The appearance of the spring moon is associated with his lover's kisses: it is like

> Waiting
> (always)upon a fragile instant when
>
> herself me(slowly,wholly me)will press
> in the young lips unearthly slenderness (11.11-14).

The qualities of slenderness, slowness and wholeness are shared by both moon and lover, so that the instant of the moon's rising seems just like the kiss with which it shares these qualities. The moon's ascent becomes a sensuous event, and the sensuousness of his remembered lovemaking takes on the immensity of the moonrise. Cummings uses a rhyming couplet, with its strong sense of closure, to emphasise the similarity of these two events.

In the fourth "Actualities" sonnet in *& [And]*, "upon the room's / silence,i will sew" (*CP* 215), the sensual unity of his lovemaking with his lady is so absorbing that the poet forgets the passing of time. This timelessness is suggested in the poem by the delaying effect of frequent dislocations of the typography, some in mid-line, and by two parentheses which suspend the progress of the utterance. The poem begins with the lighting of a candle: "upon the room's silence,i will sew / a nagging button of candlelight". Cummings then describes how he will "exactly kiss the trite / worm of her nakedness / until it go / rapidly to bed" (11.3-5), after which they will "leave the bed agrin with / memories" (11.8-9). By this time the candle will have become "a little curse / of wax. Something distinct and. Amusing, brittle" (11.13-14). The candle is a reminder of the time which passes while they are together: it is lit as the poem begins, and has burned away by the time it ends. As in several of his erotic poems, sex is an experience in which time becomes meaningless, and the references to the candle which frame this poem provide an indication of the real time which has passed.

Cummings's tenderest and most memorable erotic sonnet is "i like my

body when it is with your" (*CP* 218). A poem in praise of his erotic moments with his lover, it comes at the end of the "Actualities" section of & [*And*], and therefore contrasts with the blunt, unromantic description of sex in the last "Realities" poem in that volume, "in making Marjorie god hurried". The sonnet comprises a list of the things he likes about their lovemaking. Each declaration forms a short sentence, but the syntax becomes looser as the poem progresses, giving the impression of mounting excitement:

> i like my body when it is with your
> body. It is so quite new a thing.
> Muscles better and nerves more.
> i like your body. i like what it does,
> i like its hows. i like to feel the spine
> of your body and its bones,and the trembling
> -firm-smooth ness and which i will
> again and again and again
> kiss, i like kissing this and that of you,
> i like,slowly stroking the,shocking fuzz
> of your electric fur,and what-it-is comes
> over parting flesh....And eyes big love-crumbs (11.1-12).

The climax of the poem is the coming-together of the lovers, after which there is a typographical break as Cummings crowns the list of what he likes about his sexual relationship with his lover:

> and possibly i like the thrill
>
> of under me you so quite new (11.13-14).

To Cummings each erotic experience is "new". This implies that through their lovemaking they have found a way of escaping time.

IV

The themes of love, time and death which appear so frequently in the "Actualities" are ones which have already been explored in the previous two sonnet groups in "Chimneys". They are important to Cummings and remain his major concerns to the end of his career. Most of his sonnets deal with aspects of how love is able to defy time and this major concern emerges at the end of the dialectical relationship of the three groups in "Chimneys". The "Unrealities", some of which are virtually apprentice pieces, with their mannered, artificial, archaic modes of address, fall away after the publication of *Tulips & Chimneys*; the "Realities", with their self-conscious exploration of the world of the *poeté maudit*, survive until the publication of *is 5*,

although occasional poems reminiscent of this mode reappear periodically in later volumes. Most of the sonnets which appear five years later in *W [Viva]* resemble the "Actualities" more than those of any other group. Poems of this kind survive the publication of *is 5*. They contain the motifs of the stars, seasons, the moon, the sea, flowers and music, and are concerned with the ability of the mystery of love to stand up to time's passing and the threat of death.

CHAPTER 4

After the appearance of *is 5* there was a hiatus of five years before Cummings published another volume of poetry. *W [Viva]*(1931) had no labelled subdivisions; instead, the sonnets were dispersed among the rest of the poems according to a complex schema. Cummings's reason for abandoning the principle of separating and labelling poetic kinds lies in the looseness of the groups themselves. The poems do not present a unified impression like that of a sonnet sequence, and it is obvious that many do not belong under the titles where they were placed. Also, as time passed, he began to write new kinds of sonnet which did not belong to the subgenres he had identified when beginning to assemble the *Tulips & Chimneys* manuscript in 1919. The poet realised that, like many of his poems, his sonnets were occasional poems and therefore were better off singly, where they could contribute to the "seasonal metaphor" running through the volume, rather than being placed in large labelled groups, into which they fitted with only partial success and in which they were isolated from thematically-related poems in other forms.

In this chapter, I look at three subgenres in Cummings's sonnets. The first, the social and political satire, makes its first appearance in *is 5* and remains part of Cummings's *oeuvre* in most of the subsequent volumes. The second and third, the epigrammatic love sonnet and the Romantic sonnet, both evolve out of the "Actualities" mode. The poems examined below are taken to be representative of trends in all volumes published after *is 5*, although a disproportionately large number are taken from the later volumes, *Xaipe* and *95 Poems*. This is because these poems embody the most mature developments of the subgenres they are chosen to represent. As in chapter 3, the issues of form and typography are mentioned as they appear in each poem so as to preserve an idea of how the poem functions as a whole.

I

The satiric mode is an exception to the norms of modal extension, for it does not consist of repertoire features imported from a specific antecedent kind in the way that an epigram modulation does (Fowler 110). This

is because it is an ancient mode whose origins are unclear, and because it is extremely versatile. Any genre or subgenre may be used as the vehicle for satire. Alternately, or simultaneously, any genre or subgenre may be satirised itself, by means of parody. Thus, "the Cambridge ladies" satirises the people of Cummings's home town, while simultaneously parodying the traditional sonnet concern, the praise of beautiful women.

Both kinds of satire are evident in Cummings's sonnets. The parody of literary kinds by inverting their characteristic features, which Cummings achieves so successfully in his *contreblasons*, has been discussed in Chapter 3. Social and political satire makes its earliest appearance in the sonnet form in *is 5*. Although there is only one satiric sonnet—"'next to of course god america i"—in the volume, it sets the tone for the many satiric sonnets Cummings wrote in later years. This kind of satire has a social focus rather than parody's literary focus. In essence, such satire is devoted to the exposure of vice or folly, with a view to demonstrating and correcting its wrongness. It is therefore public poetry (Pollard 7). Such conviction presupposes a set of ideals which needs protecting (Pollard 3), with the result that, as passionately as Cummings cleaves to the ideals of love and beauty, so he lashes out against their enemies. The ambivalent relationship with his fellow human beings into which this attitude forces him is depicted in as early a poem as the poem in "La Guerre" (*Tulips & Chimneys*) in which he begins by stating, "humanity i love you" and, for the same reasons, concludes, "humanity, i hate you". The Aesthetes' conviction that the artist is a social outsider bolsters Cummings's impression in his satire that he is a lone defender of beauty against an overwhelming onslaught of mediocrity and banality. The deep rift between himself and "mostpeople" which is conspicuous in his literary theoretical writing is reproduced in his satires. His favorite satiric enterprise is to single out and ridicule the follies of "mostpeople". As the champion of individuality, he frequently targets "groups, gangs and collectivities" (*nonlectures* 31) as the enemies of the individual. Patriotism is one of his prime targets because it demands that people put

their country before themselves. The politicians who require that people be patriotic are denounced as liars and hypocrites.

Satires of this kind do not fit into the three groups first identified in "Tulips", because they are occasional poems in the tradition of Milton's sonnets. They are written at moments of strong feeling, rather than with a view for inclusion in a sequence. However, where Milton's anger is high-minded and restrained, Cummings's can be hysterical and cruel. Instead of the reverent praise or commemoration in his love poetry, he resorts to vituperation.

The styles Cummings employs in his satires come to the sonnet by way of a modulation with epigram. Many of his satiric pieces are epigrammatic. For example, a poem on his favourite target, politicians, is written in the classic distich pattern:

> a politician is an arse upon
> which everyone has sat except a man (*CP* 550).

In Cummings's poetry the *acetum* usually associated with satire is sometimes replaced by the scatological *foetidas* which he uses in the "Realities" sonnets depicting sex with prostitutes. Although his wit is often amusing and impressive, this scatological tendency fails to win his readers over to his way of thinking, which Pollard says is one of the ways in which satire functions (4). He is more successful in the sonnets in which he avoids *foetidas*, such as "next to of course god america i".

Is 5's only satiric sonnet, "'next to of course god america i" (*CP* 267) is the third poem of "Two", the second subsection of the volume. The theme of "Two" is war, and Cummings's register throughout is scathingly satirical. The poem is both a parody of dishonest politicians' illogical rhetoric, and a satire of such men's cynicism. Its form combines an English octave with an Italian sestet, but the syntax is divisible into three parts. In lines 1 to 13, an orator delivers an incoherent speech, which comprises eight lines of fragments from patriotic American songs, poems and speeches, followed by five lines on America's war dead. The third part is the final line, in which the poem comes to an anticlimactic close.

Due to their lack of punctuation the first thirteen lines have a jumbled, breathless quality:

> 'next to of course god america i
> love you land of the pilgrims' and so forth oh
> say can you see by the dawn's early my
> country 'tis of centuries come and go
> and are no more what of it we should worry
> in every language even deafanddumb
> thy sons acclaim thy glorious name by gorry
> by jingo by gee by gosh by gum
> why talk of beauty what could be more beaut-
> iful than these heroic happy dead
> who rushed like lions to the roaring slaughter
> they did not stop to think they died instead
> then shall the voice of liberty be mute?' (11.1-13).

In lines 1 to 8 fragments of such works as Francis Scott Key's "The Star-Spangled Banner" (11.2-3), Samuel Francis Smith's "My Country 'Tis of Thee" (11.2, 3-4), and Katherine Lee Bates's "America The Beautiful" (1.7) appear. There is no logical relationship between these phrases: they are run together in a random sequence. Interjections like "and so forth" deflate the high sentiment of the original phrases, while "by jingo" in line 8 is a pun commenting on the jingoistic tone of the whole speech.

Lines 9 to 13 are devoted to praising the country's war dead for thoughtlessly rushing into battle in accordance with their orders and dying there. To Cummings such men are fools. The orator sees them as "beautiful", in the poet's view a gross misapplication of the word and one which betrays the orator's perverse sensibilities. The rhetorical question which crowns the oration—"then shall the voice of liberty be mute?"—is posed as if it is a reasonable conclusion to the tirade. It is as if the confused patriotism and the praise of the dead somehow prove the value of American liberty. That this is a patent *non-sequitur* not only stresses the illogical basis of patriotism, but invites an answer in the affirmative. Cummings implies that if this is the voice of liberty, then it ought to be mute.

The final line further deflates the jingoistic rhetoric of the poem: "he spoke. And drank rapidly a glass of water" (1.14). Its typographical isolation from the group comprising the first thirteen lines suggests a pause after the speech. Following his bombastic oration, the trivial act of pausing

for a drink deflates the orator's rhetoric and seems to add an element of calculatedness to his passion. Cummings makes skilful use of the sonnet's brief scope to produce a biting parody of political dishonesty, with an effectively-controlled epigrammatic turn at the last moment.

Cummings addresses the issues of patriotism and political rhetoric again in "why must itself up every of a park" (*CP* 636), a satiric sonnet from *Xaipe*. The tone is one of withering scorn. All terms for which he feels contempt are placed between the words "quote" and "unquote" to show that he sees them as the jargon of the politician. In the octave he questions the purpose of erecting statues commemorating the war dead:

> why must itself up every of a park
>
> anus stick some quote statue unquote to
> prove that a hero equals any jerk
> who was afraid to dare to answer 'no'? (11.1-4).

To register his disapproval he uses the *foetid* metaphor of the park sexually violating itself with the statue. Although the poem has an English rhyme scheme, the syntax falls into an octave (with two quatrains) and a sestet. The typography is arranged both to emphasise these divisions and to create pauses at significant points of the argument. The typographical gap after line 1 focuses attention on "anus" (1.2). As in "next to of course god america i", Cummings takes the view that a man who dies in war is unheroic because he is not brave enough to refuse an order. In the second quatrain he answers the question posed in the first:

> quote citizens unquote might otherwise
> forget(to err is human;to forgive
> divine)that if the quote state unquote says
> 'kill'killing is an act of human love (11.5-8).

The reason for erecting statues is that the country's leaders wish to keep its citizens convinced that killing for their country in wartime is proof of their love for that country. The poet's dedication to the beauty of life leads him to abhor any kind of killing. He quotes Pope in parenthesis to point out that the power the state takes on itself to forgive those who kill for their country is "divine": only God can wield such forgiveness. In the sestet Cummings juxtaposes a quotation from Eisenhower with one from Freud to stress the

inadequacy of the reasoning behind this philosophy:

> 'Nothing' in 1944 A D
>
> 'can stand against the argument of mil
> itary necessity'(generalissimo e)
> and echo answers'there is no appeal
>
> from reason'(freud) (11.9-13).

Eisenhower states that war is logical and necessary; Freud is quoted ironically to comment on the unequivocal nature of this statement. Cummings emphasises his disapproval of Eisenhower's bellicosity by refusing to use his name and by lampooning his rank. The final sarcastic comments round off his questioning of the lack of opportunity to argue in this matter: "you pays your money and / you doesn't take your choice. Ain't freedom grand" (11.13-14). The requirement that one give and take human life for one's country is seen as being imposed by unscrupulous leaders on a populace duped by such sentimental symbols as statues.

Another satiric sonnet from *Xaipe*, "when serpents bargain for the right to squirm" (*CP* 620), while not to do with politics or war, dispraises the collective concept, mankind. A classical scheme, the catalogue of improbabilities, is used in the sonnet. A kind of hyperbole, this scheme lists a series of occurrences in which elements of nature behave like "most-people". Cummings asserts that only when such improbabilities take place will it be possible to have faith in man as a kind, rather than in individuals. The syntax is contained within the three quatrains and couplet of the English sonnet form, lending the argument a measured, rational tone.

The catalogue of improbabilities begins in the first quatrain:

> when serpents bargain for the right to squirm
> and the sun strikes to gain a living wage—
> when thorns regard their roses with alarm
> and rainbows are insured against old age . . . (11.1-4).

Squirming is natural to snakes, so they do not need to negotiate in order to do so, and the sun gives of its light and warmth freely, never withholding these gifts to extort money. Thorns and roses are part of the same plant, and do not distinguish between their different forms, and the ephemerality of rainbows is accepted as being essential to their beauty. They do not attempt

to gain compensation for it, as "mostpeople" do through such schemes as insurance.

The second quatrain contains two examples of nature conforming to bureaucratic requirements:

> when every thrush may sing no new moon in
> if all screech-owls have not okayed his voice
> —and any wave signs on the dotted line
> or else an ocean is compelled to close . . . (11.5-8).

The thrush is prevented from spontaneously and beautifully heralding the new moon by the demand that the screech-owl (whose song is ugly) first approve its voice, and the continued existence of the great and immutable ocean is denied pending completion of the correct formalities by every wave.

In the third quatrain the strictness of the syntax is relaxed, breaking free of the line-endings and continuing into each following line by enjambment, so that the effect is of a rapid escalation of ideas as the poem approaches its climax:

> when the oak begs permission of the birch
> to make an acorn—valleys accuse their
> mountains of having altitude—and march
> denounces april as a saboteur . . . (11.9-12).

Trees do not need to ask leave of other kinds of tree before beginning to make seeds, in the same way as birds do not need permission to sing. Like the rose harmoniously co-existing with the thorn, secure in their differences, valleys do not hold the mountains' height to be unfair: height is of the essence to mountains, which gain their significance by their difference to valleys. A month does not complain that its successor's arrival is unjust: the seasons accept time's passing without complaint.

The final couplet provides the resolution of all the "when" and "if" clauses which have come to a climax at the end of the fourth quatrain: " . . . *then* we'll believe in that incredible / unanimal mankind (and not until)" (11.13-14, emphasis added). Only when the natural world conforms to the ways of "mostpeople" will man as a kind gain the advantage over individuality, and, since it is obvious this will never happen, mankind will never be a believable proposition. "Mostpeoples'" systems—business in the form of bargaining and

insurance, bureaucracy in the asking of permission and signing on the dotted line, and litigation in the form of frightened accusation and jealous denunciation—have lost him his place in the natural world, making him an "unanimal". Cummings sees the rainbow's acceptance of its mutability, the valley's and thorn's acceptance of their distinctness from other things, and the trees' and birds' spontaneity in fulfilling their essential roles, as epitomising the realisation of individuality, a realisation alien to "mostpeople" and of the essence to poets and lovers.

While it is not possible to gain a thorough understanding of the satiric sonnets from these three poems, they illustrate the way in which the poet employs the satiric mode in sonnets which are conceived in order to denounce his particular dislikes. The second way in which he makes use of the satiric mode in his sonnets is to combine it with the amatory. This utilisation of the resources of the satiric mode gives rise to the epigrammatic love sonnet subgenre.

II

Purely satiric poems like those discussed above are in the minority of Cummings's sonnets; more commonly, aspects of the satiric mode are included in his sonnets about love. The beliefs which enable him to write stinging satires alongside tender love poems also allow him to blend these elements within a single poem. Importing the satiric mode into the love sonnet produces a hybrid genre, which Colie says develops as a way of portraying heretofore unexplored states of mind (75). Cummings's purpose in these sonnets is to praise the woman to whom they are addressed, or to praise the love he shares with her. He can include the voice of satire in such poems because he sees love of the good and hatred of the bad as amounting to the same thing: dispraising "mostpeople" is the same as praising lovers and poets.

In praising love by denouncing its opposite, Cummings adapts a genre which has its origins in the literary critical practices of poets in classical times. Race describes the *recusatio* as a genre which "Graeco-Roman poets developed to express and defend their poetic aims" (1). Poems in this genre

make use of hyperbole to belittle the views and the work of rival poets and simultaneously to champion their own: "the literary polemic in *recusationes* tends to create exaggerated dichotomies which allow the poet to deflate the views of unnamed 'others' and assert his own preference" (3). The genre became popular in the Renaissance as a way of distancing the poet from the clichés of petrarchism, particularly in the case of the sonnet, with which these conventions had become closely associated (22). The convention of the sonnet sequence in which the poet defends his poetic beliefs, sometimes due to the threat of a rival poet, encouraged the writing of *recusationes* in the sonnet form. In "My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun", Shakespeare shows by means of a *contreblason* that other poets' methods of praise are inadequate to describe his lady's unique character, a skilful hint at the strategy of *recusatio*; and in "I never drank of Aganippe well", from *Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney proclaims the "sweetness" and sincerity of his verse at the expense of the empty ravings of other, unnamed poets. Cummings's introduction to his *Collected Poems* of 1938 (*CP* 461-2) modifies the *recusatio*, in that he defends his poetic methods not by attacking other poets' methods, but by denouncing the conformity and lack of imagination of "mostpeople".

Praising the good by denouncing the bad is also one of the strategies by means of which Cummings attempts to explain the nature of love. In the hyperbolic way in which he goes about praising his love, he makes love the first principle of the universe, the "one mystery of mysteries [which] creates them all" (*nonlectures* 11). Because a mystery is "something immeasurable", the force behind such mysteries must be too complex and massive to be comprehended by the limited faculties of man. Thus in poems in which he praises love, Cummings must try to describe the indescribable. One way of doing this is to define love by what it is not—by the negative things it lacks—rather than by what it is. Hence, by dispraising what is antithetical to love, he praises love.

Another way of suggesting what is incomprehensible to man is through the use of oxymoron. A form of paradox, oxymoron juxtaposes two antithetical

ideas so that an apparently illogical statement is made. Its use in the sonnet genre originates with Petrarch, who uses oxymoron extensively to evoke the nature of his love for Laura. This love arouses contradictory states of mind in him because Laura is both physically and spiritually perfect. Her physical perfection prompts him to desire her, but her spiritual perfection pre-empts any hope that this desire will be satisfied. Thus Petrarch's emotions are both pleasure and pain, which oppose each other in a precarious balance (Forster 13). He expresses this state through the use of oxymoron, such as the claim that he burns and freezes simultaneously, or that he is rendered a walking corpse by her theft of his heart. These antitheses were elaborated at length by Petrarch's imitators, thereby becoming strongly associated with the sonnet genre. Because oxymoron's two-part structure finds a felicitous setting in the epigram distich, and because it can be used for surprise effects, oxymoron is a particularly convenient resource for the epigrammatist.

Cummings uses oxymoron in a different way from that of Petrarch. The love Cummings describes is not unrequited, so his praise is unqualified. There is none of the melancholy which counteracts Petrarch's joy at being in love. Such unqualified praise lends itself to hyperbolic expression: love is an immeasurable mystery, which is not comprehensible by the limited system of reason. But Cummings, as a poet, must work within the system of language, so that the only way he can suggest the limitlessness of love is to employ the apparent illogicality of oxymoron. A second result of Cummings's love being reciprocated is that he can employ oxymoron to evoke the harmonious balance of the two lovers united as one. The antithetical elements of his oxymoron are held in a stable tension of opposites, rather than the precarious balance of Petrarch's.

In his love sonnets Cummings often returns to this theme of love's paradoxical two-in-one harmony. He asserts that by being in love, lovers become one with the first principle of the universe. Because this first principle is love, lovers transcend the limitations of time and space, and become immortal. He represents the harmony, unity, and eternity of love in several

ways. A device he uses frequently is to describe love's harmonious state as a place, sometimes called "here", which has none of the temporal and spatial limitations of the everyday world. Another technique is the use of circular tropes. He makes the syntax of the poem continuous by placing the beginning of a sentence at the end of the poem and the end of the sentence at the beginning, or by repeating the first line in the last, so that, like the Greater Romantic Lyric, the poem becomes a closed, unified whole. In the later examples of this subgenre he uses the schemes of balance, chiasmus and tmesis. Balance lends structure to oxymoron, and chiasmus illustrates the stable opposition of equals which the two lovers embody. Tmesis, which is Greek for "cutting", allows the poet to suggest simultaneity by inserting words or phrases into the middle of other words or phrases. The linear progression of the poem in time is subverted by one sentence contained in another. Most poems in this subgenre are in the English form, the measured quatrains of which allow the subtle controlling of contrast and oxymoron.

A sonnet from *50 Poems* (1940), "hate blows a bubble of despair into" (*CP* 531), illustrates many of these themes and techniques. It is an English sonnet, conventionally laid out on the page in four quatrains and a couplet, in which Cummings attempts to explain the mystery of love by looking at what it is not. It not only explores the theme of two in one, but is part of such a unit itself. The preceding poem, "love is more thicker than forget" (*CP* 530), while not a sonnet, is given to the praise of love by cataloguing its mysterious qualities:

> it is most sane and sunly
> and more it cannot die
> than all the sky which only
> is higher than the sky (ll.13-16).

The two obviously function in tandem: the first sets out the mystery of love, and the second describes it in terms of its opposites, beginning with hate and fear:

> hate blows a bubble of despair into
> hugeness world system universe and bang
> —fear buries a tomorrow under woe
> and up comes yesterday most green and young (ll.1-4).

Hate is seen as a destructive force which starts as a lack of hope and expands through ever-larger realms until it explodes. The sadness caused by fear blights hope for the future, making what has happened in the past the only safe and living thing.

In the second quatrain Cummings introduces the idea of two united in one to stress the parts played by pleasure and pain in life:

> pleasure and pain are merely surfaces
> (one itself showing,itself hiding one)
> life's only and true value neither is
> love makes the little thickness of the coin (11.5-8).

The metaphor is one of a coin, which represents love. (It is also a circle-motif.) One face represents pain and the other pleasure, and one or the other is always uppermost. The rhetorical device of chiasmus is used to demonstrate the affinity of these two emotions. The outer term is "one", representing each surface, and the inner terms are antithetical: "itself hiding" and "itself showing". The poet states that these two-dimensional feelings are unimportant, because love, which makes life worthwhile, is the material between these two surfaces. It is neither emotion and it is both, because it comprises both.

The third quatrain introduces the example of a man who has unreasonable expectations of life, hoping it will be all pleasant without the attendant pain: "comes here a man would have from madame death / neverless now and without winter spring?" (11.9-10). The man wants death to grant him immortality; he wishes to live in the present with no fear of the future, and wants the natural sequence of the seasons to stop so that he can experience perennial spring. The response of "madame death" to such a request is to "spin that spirit her own fingers with / and give him nothing (if he should not sing)" (11.11-12). She dismisses him by spinning him like a coin, and he gains nothing. The only way of getting death to grant everlasting spring is to sing. As in the poems which frame the "Actualities" group in which the lovers hear hurdy-gurdy music at the moment of unity, music and singing are associated with the harmony of love. The way to attain perpetual spring is in the harmony and spontaneity of love.

The syntax of the couplet carries on from where it ended before the brackets in line 12: "how much more than enough for both of us / darling" (11.13-14). The "nothing" which death offers the man is enough for the lovers because they have already gained their freedom from death. The poem ends with an unfinished sentence in which Cummings praises his lady: "And if i sing you are my voice," (1.14). Because he and his lady are already in love, which is like singing in its harmony and spontaneity, his singing is possible because her love has enabled him to do so.

The idea of love as the harmony of two in one is the main concern of "one's not half two" (*CP* 556). It is an English sonnet, with a typographical arrangement which emphasises its three quatrains and couplet. In the first quatrain, Cummings denies that one is a single part of the greater number two; rather, the number two is the product of the division of one: "one's not half two. It's two [that] are halves of one" (1.1). These two halves have been separated and are incomplete, "which halves reintegrating, shall occur / no death and any quantity" (11.2-3). When two halves come together to form a complete, unified whole, the finite limitations of their incompleteness are removed, and immortality ("no death") and infinity ("any quantity") ensue. The unity which occurs upon the reintegration of halves is "than / all numerable mosts the actual more" (11.3-4). It is greater than any entity that can be measured in numerical terms.

In the second quatrain, Cummings issues a warning against "minds ignorant of stern miraculous / this every truth" (11.5-6). It is not whole people but "minds" that are unenlightened as to the unity of all things, which unity is at once a "stern" truth, because it is inescapable, and a "miraculous" truth, because it is wonderful and inexplicable. Cummings warns the reader,

> . . . beware of heartless them
> (given the scalpel,they dissect a kiss;
> or,sold the reason,they undream a dream (11.6-8).

As a result of reason's want of the balancing effect of feeling, "minds" use their reasoning faculty to destroy the immediacy of sensory or imaginative

experience. Scalpel-like, reason slices into and analyses a kiss, and removes the mystery of a dream by explaining it in rational terms.

The theme of unity and division introduced in the first quatrain develops in the third. The poet states that "one is the song which fiends and angels sing" (l.9). The eternal principles of good and evil are parts of the same whole. In contrast with this, "all murdering lies by mortals told make two" (l.10): the mind's explanations result from its tendency to "dissect" and therefore must be "lies", because they belong in the realm of division, or of "two".

He uses an organic metaphor in his dismissal of those who are misled by the mind:

> Let liars wilt,repaying life they're loaned;
> we(by a gift called dying born)must grow
>
> deep in dark least ourselves remembering
> love only rides his year (ll.11-14).

The lives of those who function through the mind's divisiveness are temporary. They will wither, whereas the lover and his lady, who accept that mortality is a part of life's whole, will flourish. By always accepting the ephemerality of life, they are part of the immortal realm of "one".

The final phrase is typographically removed from the body of the poem and consists of a cryptic summation of the main thrust of its argument: "All lose,whole find" (l.14). To relinquish "all" is to abandon "two", or division and incompleteness, and thereby to embrace "whole" or "one", or completeness, unity, and immortality. As Cummings bids his lady elsewhere:

> let all go—the
> big small middling
> tall bigger really
> the biggest and all
> things—let all go
> dear
> so comes love (*CP* 569).

His purpose in placing the final brief statement apart from the rest of the poem is to emphasise its simplicity and brevity. This phrase provides in a concentrated form the essence of the poem's argument, and is axiomatic in its simplicity and economy.

The aim of "who were so dark of heart they might not speak" (*CP* 649) is the praise of love, which Cummings identifies with the quality of innocence, by contrasting it with "mostpeoples'" knowledge and experience. As in many of his epigrammatic love sonnets, he uses the English form, and emphasises its four-part structure typographically. He begins by stating that even if "mostpeople" "were so dark of heart they might not speak, / a little innocence will make them sing" (ll.1-2). The least measure of innocence has the power to transform even the worst of "mostpeople". Because singing is an action arising spontaneously from the harmoniousness of love, Cummings likens the lack of love's innocence to being mute. As he states in an earlier sonnet, "all which isn't singing is mere talking / and all talking's talking to oneself" (*CP* 804, ll.1-2).

With as much certainty, Cummings asserts that innocence will "teach them to see who could not learn to look" (l.3). Those who cannot begin to perceive life's beauty will have their sight clarified by innocence, with the result that "—from the reality of all nothing / / will actually lift a luminous whole" (ll.4-5). To look with innocence transforms perceptions of the world, so that what seems to be "reality" (but which is actually "all nothing") will become a unified "whole". This new vision of the world is described as "lifting" from the nothing which precedes it, "luminous" in its newness and simplicity. It is similar to the rising moons or stars which he associates with moments of enlightenment in earlier sonnets. This rising motion is emphasised by the enjambment of the verse across the typographical gap between the first and second quatrains. The power of "a little innocence" to transform the negative into the positive is shown in its ability to "turn sheer despairing into most perfect gay, / nowhere to here, never to beautiful" (ll.6-7). It will replace a state of depression with one of euphoria, and provide a stable centre in the confusing "nowhere" of "mostpeoples'" worlds. Similarly, with the addition of innocence, the bleakness of "never" becomes the immediacy of "beautiful".

The second quatrain concludes with a line summarising its exposition

of the positive power of innocence: "a little innocence creates a day" (l.8). Its ability to transform darkness to light and to produce beauty from ugliness makes innocence a powerful creative force, the combined yield of which is likened to "a day"; it is a "whole", which is a combination of things positive, light, beautiful and simple.

The third quatrain turns to the actions of those who lack innocence:

> And something thought or done or wished without
> a little innocence, although it were
> as red as terror and as green as fate,
> greyly shall fail and dully disappear . . . (ll.9-12).

Thoughts, deeds and actions, however profound, which do not contain innocence as their essential element, will be ineffectual and are doomed. The use of colour-similes to describe these activities evokes an idea of their illusory strength in contrast with their ignominious failure to last and grow. What would seem to be "red as terror" or "green as fate" will actually fade away "greyly" and "dully" when confronted with the pure light of innocence.

The poem concludes with a final illustration of the power of innocence, showing it to be more than a match for the greatest of earthly powers, death: "but the proud power of himself death immense / is not so as a little innocence" (ll.13-14). Death is personified as being confident of its strength, but its power and stature are outweighed by the merest modicum of innocence. In asserting that it is more powerful than death, Cummings says that innocence is a prerequisite to escape the tyranny of time.

The technique of defining love by what it is not is effectively used in a sonnet from *95 Poems*, "unlove's the heavenless hell and homeless home" (*CP* 765), in which Cummings elaborates the idea that the ultimate truth inheres in love, and not in the mind's knowledge. The contrast between the heart and the mind is emphasised by a metaphor which depicts love as a place of light and timelessness, and knowledge as an insubstantial place populated by ghosts. The typographical arrangement of the poem disguises an English rhyme scheme, in which the syntax overruns the quatrain divisions. The poem opens with the statement, "unlove's the heavenless hell and homeless home // of knowledgeable shadows" (ll.1-2). Those who rely on knowledge to the exclu-

sion of love lack identity and have their home in the hellish state of "unlove". They doom themselves to "unlove" by desperately believing every promise of truth or happiness made by their fellow dependents on reason: they are "quick to seize / each nothing which all soulless wraiths proclaim / substance; all heartless spectres, happiness" (11.2-4). These "soulless wraiths" and "heartless spectres" are the same as the "knowledgeable shadows" because their reliance upon reason renders them spiritually and emotionally empty. The promises of truth and happiness that these people make are really false because they lack the "heart" and "soul"—the ability to feel—which Cummings believes is the key to apprehending the truth.

In contrast with the obscurity of the state of "unlove", "lovers alone wear sunlight" (1.5). Their home is a realm of brightness and warmth, which fits them like a garment. The complex sentence which follows is a definition of the truth known by lovers. The verb is delayed until line 9 by a typographically isolated three-line group in which the qualities of love's truth are enumerated:

> The whole truth
>
> not hid by matter;not by mind revealed
> (more than all dying life,all living death)
> and never which has been or will be told
>
> sings only—and all lovers are the song (11.5-9).

Cummings uses his recurrent metaphor for spontaneity and harmony, music, to sum up his definition of the whole truth and its exclusivity to lovers. It is likened to singing, of which "all lovers are the song". The three intervening lines state that this truth is not the partial and confused glimpses of truth afforded to seekers of knowledge; that it is greater than all mortal things which, although they have life, must ultimately die, and therefore it is also greater than death, the inseparable partner of life; and that language is inadequate to describe it. "Told" may also be used in the archaic sense of "counted", in that the absolute truth is unquantifiable, defying numerical as well as linguistic attempts to explain it.

Lines 10 to 12 are devoted to describing this harmonious state as

the "home" or "heaven" inhabited by lovers, in direct contrast with the shadowy realm of "unlove":

> Here (only here) is freedom:always here
> no then of winter equals now of spring;
> but april's day transcends november's year . . .

Love is seen as a place of liberty and immediacy where lovers live in the "now", which is like spring. It is free from any consideration of the past or future, which are "then", epochs whose distance from what is immediate lends them the dead coldness of winter. One day of spring ("april's day") is more alive than a year of winter, so that the least measure of spring is able to "transcend" much greater amounts of winter.

In the poem's concluding couplet the poet draws on his own experience to amplify the idea of love's ability to cheat time. The lines are placed in parenthesis as if they are an afterthought: "(eternity being so sans until / twice i have lived forever in a smile)" (11.13-14). As a lover, the brief beauty of a smile has the power to make him feel he is eternally alive in beholding it. Moreover, Cummings has experienced two "forevers" in this way, an occurrence not possible to the users of reason. Thus, time is meaningless to the lover: a moment is the same as eternity, and a lover can experience two eternities.

In the English sonnet "being to timelessness as it's to time" (*CP* 768), a series of paradoxical statements is contained in the first and third quatrains, while the second quatrain is devoted to a series of rhetorical questions and answers regarding lovers. These two threads of the argument combine in the concluding couplet, as Cummings pronounces his faith in love's natural ascendancy over all things.

The premise here is that love "[is] to timelessness as it's to time" (1.1). It has the same relationship to time as it has to the absence of time, because it exists both within time and beyond time's finite realm. Thus, it "did no more begin than love will end" (1.2). Beginnings and endings mark the duration of existence; if love has no beginning and no end, it must exist infinitely. Love's all-pervasiveness is such that it is "the air the ocean

and the land" (1.4), where "nothing is to breathe to stroll to swim" (1.3). It is like a place where nothingness, were it human, would be at home, where it has the space to breathe, walk about and swim. In the sonnet "in time's a noble mercy of proportion" (*CP* 683), time is described as being large enough to contain its own non-existence; here a similar idea is used, in that love is made ample enough to include all things, including nothing.

The second quatrain begins with the rhetorical question, "do lovers suffer?" (1.5), and answers in the affirmative, "all divinities / proudly descending put on deathful flesh" (11.5-6). Lovers are seen as being immortals who, Christlike, come to the realm of time and space and accept both the pleasure and the pain of being human. Another question, "are lovers glad?" is answered in the affirmative: "only their smallest joy's / a universe emerging from a wish" (11.7-8). The least of all delights experienced by lovers has the magnitude of a universe, even if it begins with something as insubstantial as a wish.

In the third quatrain Cummings returns to defining love, making a catalogue of statements describing the transcendent qualities of love:

> love is the voice under all silences,
> the hope which has no opposition in fear;
> the strength so strong mere strength is feebleness:
> the truth more first than sun more last than star (11.9-12).

Godlike, its voice underlies every silence; the hope it inspires is greater than any contrary anxiety; its power is so great that mere might is weak by comparison; and its truth predates the sun and will outlast the stars. Whichever way it is looked at, love is immeasurable.

The two distinct strands of the poem are correlated in the concluding couplet. Like the second quatrain, it begins with a question: "do lovers love?" (1.13). As this unquestionably is the case, "why then to heaven with hell. / Whatever sages say and fools, all's well" (11.13-14). By inverting the curse "to hell with . . .", Cummings dismisses both heaven and hell. He has made them interchangeable, and therefore of the same negligible value. Lovers need neither. So long as lovers love, no matter what the wisest or least wise of men may say to the contrary, "all's well": everything is as it

ought to be. The flippant tone of the final couplet undermines the seriousness of the preceding hyperbole. So long as lovers love, it is unnecessary to go to such lengths to explain it.

Cummings addresses the sonnet "joyful your complete fearless and pure love" (*CP* 761) to his lady, hyperbolically praising her love as a miracle. To him, a miracle, like a mystery, is something which is immeasurable in terms of time, space, and language. The intellect is incapable of accounting for it. The poem is a carefully-structured English sonnet, and each quatrain is set apart typographically, as is the couplet. The first quatrain is devoted to the strategy of dispraising knowing at the expense of feeling. He praises the lady's "ignorance" (l.2), which arises from the "joyful", "fearless" and "pure" qualities of her love (l.1). This ignorance is more insightful of the truth than a mind which pursues knowledge:

> . . . love
> with one least ignorance may comprehend
> more than shall ever provingly disprove
> eithering vastness of orish mind (ll.1-4).

The least modicum of love's ignorance is said to outweigh the total might of rational thought. This is because logic is bent upon the division and classification of experience into "either" and "or" (here transformed into a participle and an adjective respectively in order to evoke the mechanical workings of the mind). Paradoxically, the mind "provingly disproves" things. By seeking proof, it invalidates the living immediacy of experience. A similar result is achieved by one's fears and hopes, which "disprove by proving true" (*CP* 576, l.4). Once something has been proven to be "true" according to reason, it has been "disproved" as a living entity, for it is now known and no longer felt.

As in the preceding two sonnets, Cummings describes love as a place. In this poem it is one where logic holds no sway:

> —nothing believable inhabits here:
> overs of known descend through depths of guess,
> shadows are substances and wings are birds;
> unders of dream adventure truths of skies . . . (ll.5-8).

It is a realm in which facts *and* guesses are interchangeable, as are the

dimensions of up and down; where the insubstantial becomes concrete; and where the distinction between parts and the whole is removed. The overall impression of this realm of love is one of constant movement and change, owing to its freedom from the strictures of reason. This is emphasised by the idea that "unders of dream adventure truths of skies" (l.8), which is almost the obverse of line 5, "overs of known descend through depths of guess". In this realm, what is known is relegated to the depths, while dreams explore the heights of truth. Guessing and dreaming are the real truth to Cummings.

In the sestet, the poet returns to apostrophising the lady: "darling of darlings!" (l.9). He tells his lady that the miraculous effect of her "pure joyful . . . / fearless and complete love" (ll.10-11) is to make "all safely small / big wickedly worlds of world disappear" (ll.11-12). "Worlds" are small in comparison with the spacious freedom he enjoys in love and, because love is fearless and whole, he no longer needs a "safely small" world in which to exist.

In the final two lines, Cummings turns to the subject of language, including his poetry: because of the love of his lady, "all . . . (like any these my)words of words / turn to a silence who's the voice of voice" (ll.13-14). Even words which approach the truth most closely are mute when faced with the task of describing love, for all words (including those uttered by the poet in praise of his lady) belong to the system of language and are therefore incapable of imparting love's magnitude. However, this silence in turn is the "voice of voice" (l.14), in that it expresses what the human voice cannot: the timelessness and spacelessness of love's realm. Cummings states elsewhere that "love is the voice under all silences" (*CP* 768, l.9). The lack of all sound is the best expression of love, for spoken or written language is too limited to undertake the task. Thus silence becomes a positive force, like ignorance, guesses and dreams.

Cummings's ideas about love's power to escape time and space are compatible with traditional petrarchist conceits. The English sonnet, "i carry your heart with me" (*CP* 766), evokes the paradoxical two-in-one nature

of love by adapting a petrarchist conceit and by alluding to a well-known sonnet in which it is used. Traditionally in this conceit the lover claims that his beloved has stolen his heart, or that he has given it to her (Forster 13). The example to which Cummings is indebted is Sidney's sonnet "My true love hath my heart and I have his" (*Poems* 75-6), which, like his own, is a circular sonnet. Sidney's first line is repeated in the last, lending the concluding couplet additional pointedness. Cummings adapts this example, in that the final line of his sonnet is a compressed re-statement of the idea expressed in the first. At the beginning of the poem, he tells his beloved that he is never without her heart because he keeps it within his own. Her presence at the core of his being makes her ubiquitous in his universe. This omnipresence is represented by the outward expansion of his metaphors as the poem progresses. He begins with descriptions of the effects of her presence in his heart, then in the solar system, and then in the universe.

The first quatrain begins with a statement to the beloved: "i carry your heart with me(i carry it in / my heart)" (ll.1-2). Because the two hearts are unified, the lovers accompany each other constantly: "i am never without it(anywhere / i go you go . . ." (ll.2-3). Similarly, ". . . whatever is done / by only me is your doing,my darling" (ll.3-4): even when he is alone she participates in his actions, because their hearts are intertwined.

In the second quatrain Cummings details the significance to him of the fusion of their hearts:

> i fear
> no fate(for you are my fate,my sweet)i want
> no world(for you are my world,my true) (ll.4-6).

The parallel structure of these phrases establishes a sense of the balance and harmony resulting from the lovers' unity. Alliteration emphasises this parallelism: "f"-sounds link "fear" with "fate", and "w"-sounds link the parallel terms in the next phrase: "want" and "world". The poet has no fear of what fate awaits him because his beloved will share that fate, and he does not covet any "world" which he may lack, or feel that his world is incomplete, for his lady's omnipresence in his world makes it whole.

Not only does the beloved permeate Cummings's world, she also animates the solar system for him: "and it's you are whatever the moon has always meant / and whatever a sun will always sing is you" (11.7-8). This complex sentence employs both chiasmus and parallel constructions to give a balanced, harmonious effect. The outer chiastic terms are "you", and these enclose two phrases referring to the cosmic bodies, moon and sun. In this way the poet demonstrates that his love is greater than the sun and moon, and that they are contained in it. The two inner phrases are parallel constructions: she is "whatever the moon has always meant" and "whatever the sun will always sing", the alliteration of the "m"-sounds in the first and the "s"-sounds in the second emphasising this construction. He pays no attention to the "meaning" of the moon, for to him it speaks only of his beloved, and the same lack of attention is applied to the sun. Whatever it may be thought to "sing" (in this context an intense form of what it "means"), to the poet it will always "sing" of his beloved. The beloved is not only spatially ubiquitous, she is also temporally pervasive, an effect achieved by the parallel phrases "has always" and "will always". In Cummings's cosmos the beloved usurps the "meaning" of the sun and moon for all time, past and future.

In the third quatrain Cummings states that he is about to announce a "secret": "and here is the deepest secret nobody knows" (1.9). This revelation is delayed by three lines in brackets which contain a complex metaphor of the secret's intrinsicality to his existence. The vehicle of the metaphor is a tree:

> (here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
> and the sky of the sky of a tree called life;which grows
> higher than soul can hope or mind can hide) (11.10-12).

Because of her presence at its very root and at the very origin of its blooms, the tree of Cummings's life grows beyond the limits of what his soul can hope, and higher than his mind can ever perceive. Their unity makes him more secure and more fruitful.

Having delayed the announcement of his secret by inserting these three lines, he postpones it still further in the poem's penultimate line:

"and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart" (l.13). The secret goes beyond root, bud and sky, becoming a cosmic force which keeps the planets in their appointed orbits, ensuring harmony in the universe. This idea caps Cummings's hyperbolic description of his secret's power. He has delayed the revelation of the secret, heightening the reader's expectation until the final line of the poem, in which the tension of expectation is relieved by the revelation that the secret is none other than that with which the poem opened: "i carry your heart(i carry it in my heart)" (l.14). This is not a direct echo of the poem's first line, but a compressed version of the same idea. Having made successively greater claims for the power of their combined hearts, Cummings returns in this last line to the original narrow focus with which the poem begins: the heart. The repetition of the first line creates a circular effect similar to that in Sidney's poem. As with the circularity of the Greater Romantic Lyric, the reader is brought back to the initial thought of the poem to view it again with the insight gained from the intervening discourse. Moreover, like the balanced phrases in the poem, this circular frame stresses the idea of love's power to animate and order the universe, while the pairings established by parallel phrases and emphasised by alliteration encourage a sense of the harmony instilled by the presence of his beloved in the poet's world.

Cummings adapts a subgenre of pastoral, the pastoral invitation, in "let's,from some loud unworld's most rightful wrong" (*CP* 745), making it the vehicle for his own vision of unified love. Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love" is the best-known example of this genre:

> Come live with me and be my love
> And we will all the pleasures prove
> That valleys, groves, hills and fields,
> Woods, or steepy mountain yields (ll.1-4).

In Cummings's scheme of things, the place which is the lovers' destination is a metaphor for a spiritual and emotional state rather than the idealised pastoral landscape of Marlowe's poem. Like Marlowe, Cummings describes this place to his beloved as a way of tempting her to go with him.

The process by which lovers reach this state is likened to the

ascent of a mountain:

> let's, from some loud unworld's most rightful wrong
>
> climbing,my love(till mountains speak the truth)
> enter a cloverish silence of thrushsong . . . (11.1-3).

By placing the participle "climbing" after a break in the typography, Cummings emphasises its upward force, in this way suggesting the energy of the lovers' ascent. They will ascend beyond the noise and confusion of the "unworld", a place which is "wrong" because it is dominated by the mind's need to be right. They will then be able to hear the truth communicated by the mountains, the metaphor suggesting that the mountains have an oracular familiarity with the truth. At the end of their climb the lovers will "enter a cloverish silence of thrushsong" (1.3). In contrast with the noise left behind, this world is silent except for the melodious singing of thrushes and it is also "cloverish", or redolent of the clean freshness of clover. In this world, where "more than every miracle's to breathe" (1.4), miracles are so much of the essence of this place that they can be inhaled in the air.

In the second quatrain Cummings goes on to predict the benefits to be gained from the proposed ascent:

> wounded us will becauseless ultimate
> earth accept and primeval whyless sky;
> healing our by immeasurable night
>
> spirits and with illimitable day (11.5-8).

The realm in which the lovers will find themselves is characterised by its wholeness and harmoniousness. The earth is nothing but the quintessence of earth, and the sky is unquestionably the sky as it has always been. Both are seen as what they are without any of the extraneous qualifications or explanations which befuddle the "unworld". The day is "illimitable" and the night "immeasurable", so that both become infinite parts of the same timeless whole. By accepting or embracing the simple unity of earth, sky, night and day, the lovers' spirits will be rehabilitated, the attainment of this world "healing" or restoring the equilibrium lost in the tumult of the "unworld".

Cummings likens this experience, previously described in terms of healing, to absolution:

(shrived of that nonexistence millions call
life,you and i may reverently share
the blessed eachness of all beautiful
selves wholly which and innocently are) (11.8-12).

Once in this state, the lovers have left behind the "unworld" which is the life led by innumerable people, so that it is eradicated as a forgiven sin is forgotten; as if it never was. This return to pre-lapsarian innocence allows the lovers to merge into one, sharing their whole innocent "selves" with one another.

In the couplet, the definite qualities of lovers' world—harmony, indivisibility, and immutability—are contrasted with the illusory nature of the "unworld" in which "mostpeople" subsist: "seeming's enough for slaves of space and time / —ours is the now and here of freedom. Come" (11.13-14). Life in the "unworld" is an illusion compared to the real liberty the lovers know awaits them. As if eager to begin the ascent immediately, Cummings ends the poem by returning to his invitation: "Come". Occurring almost as an afterthought when the argument of the poem is over, this isolated, capitalised word seems to be the beginning of a new sentence, but no sentence follows. Instead, the word is the opening of the sentence with which the poem begins in line 1, so that it reads: "come, let's, from some loud unworld's most rightful wrong / climbing . . .". This echoes the opening line of Marlowe's invitation. In effect, the poem is circular, the syntax of the same sentence drawing the end and the beginning together. In his essay on the Greater Romantic Lyric, Abrams points out that James Joyce uses this device in *Finnegans Wake*: it is ". . . designed . . . so that the headless sentence which begins the book completes the tailless sentence with which it ends" (82). Like the "return-upon-itself" of the Greater Romantic Lyric, this has the effect of "transform[ing] a segment of experience broken out of time into a sufficient aesthetic whole" (81-2).

III

By the time Cummings wrote the poems in his last two volumes, *95 Poems* and *73 Poems*, he had relinquished much of the anger and obtuseness which is so evident in his earlier poetry. As a result, in these volumes he has

moved away from the radical stance he had adopted as heir to the Aesthetes, and has mellowed into a Romantic poet. This is evident in his writing more nature poetry, and in a more spiritual or mystical approach to what he observes of the world around him. Correspondingly, his sonnet-writing methods have become at once simpler and more traditional, with the disappearance of distracting typographical disjunctions and a new emphasis on rhetorical schemes such as chiasmus, balance, and tmesis. The paradoxical motif of two in one and the use of oxymoron emulate the ideas of harmony and unity which are essential to his concept of love. His use of these devices and the strategy of creating circular poems result in his most successful attempts to cheat time by making the poem a whole, closed unit, in much the same way that Wordsworth's sonnets emulate the experience of the Moment by holding in stasis the dynamic processes of nature.

Perhaps the most intricate use of these techniques occurs in a pair of sonnets from *95 Poems*, "someone i am wandering a town" (*CP* 720) and "noone and a star stand, am to am" (*CP* 721). Both are set in a city at dusk, which are common settings in the "Unrealities" sonnets in which Cummings describes his impressions. Together, the two sonnets follow the strategy of the Greater Romantic Lyric and embody the paradox of two in one. Cummings undergoes a circular journey from the objective contemplation of a city at dusk to a state of mind he identifies with a star, and then back to the city again with a transformed perception of the scene.

The journey begins in the first sonnet, "someone i am wandering a town" (*CP* 720). The poet describes an experience in which he relinquishes his individual identity. This process occurs in parallel with the transition from day to night as dusk gathers in the quiet streets in which he strolls. The poet follows a progression in which he is "someone", becomes "anyone", and finally achieves the state of being "no-one". An unconventional rhyme scheme (including an unrhymed line, l.10), combined with the delaying effect imparted by several typographical dislocations, creates an impression of movement as the process advances. The calm of the descending evening is described in a

series of parenthetical statements, so that the external phenomenon which reflects the poet's inward upliftment is depicted simultaneously until, at the climax of the sequence, they become indistinguishable, and Cummings is aware of no difference between his consciousness and the external scene.

The poem commences with the statement, "someone i am wandering a town" (l.1), which, placed in a conventional syntactical order, would read "i am someone wandering a town". The reason for the syntactical disarrangement that places the word "someone" at the beginning of the line will be discussed below. A parenthetical insertion follows this opening statement, describing the atmosphere of the quiet town:

> . . . (if its
> houses turning into themselves grow
>
> silent upon new perfectly blue) (ll.1-3).

This conditional phrase produces a feeling of expectation which remains unrealised, lending the scene an air of anticipation of the coming night. Evening's growing stillness infuses the houses as the day's activity ends, so that introspectively they seem to close themselves up and stand quietly silhouetted against the still-vivid blue of the sky.

These first three lines comprise the first subsection of the poem and are rhymed a b c, and the second subsection is another three-line group which rhymes a d c. This is the intermediate stage of Cummings's relinquishment of his identity:

> i am any(while around him streets
> taking moment off by moment day
> thankfully become each other)one . . . (ll.4-6).

The parenthetical lines are inserted tmetically into the declaration "i am anyone". As he begins to identify with the outward scene, Cummings has lost the definiteness of being "someone" and now feels that he may be "anyone". In keeping with this less subjective viewpoint, the bracketed description of the streets refers to his wandering figure as "him" rather than as "me", as if he now sees himself from the outside. "Moment by moment", the streets are "taking off day". By disrupting the syntax of these clauses—"taking moment off by moment day"—an impression of evening's incremental arrival is

achieved. The streets divest themselves of the daylight "thankfully", as if their anticipation of nightfall is about to be fulfilled, and they "become each other", in contrast with the houses which "turn into themselves", and, at the same time, the gathering dimness makes the streets indistinguishable from each other, so that, like the poet, they lose their individual identities.

The completion of the interrupted phrase "i am anyone" provides a resolution of the anticipation caused by its tmetic division, and the phrase continues. Cummings is anyone

> who
>
> feels a world crylaughingly float away
>
> leaving just this strolling ghostly doll
> of an almost vanished me . . . (11.6-9).

Dusk's descent triggers a release of both elegiac and joyful emotions in the poet. In departing, the daytime world takes with it part of his identity, rendering him a "strolling ghostly doll", the assonance of the 'o' sounds in "strolling" and "ghostly" unifying the idea of his body as a doll which his consciousness is in the process of shedding. His physical aspect is what makes him an individual, identified by the pronoun "me"; as he undergoes this shedding process, the "me" of Cummings has "almost vanished". This is because, for him, "the departure of everything real is the / arrival of everything true)" (11.9-11). The removal of corporeal forms by the gathering dusk allows the essences of things to emerge. These are the "truth", not the "real" world in the light of day, where houses and streets remain separate and different, and he remains within the confines of "me".

An impression of evening's inexorable approach is sustained by the continuous syntax, which proceeds unchecked after the bracketed insert in lines 9 to 11. This feeling of continuity ends in a climactic phrase as Cummings escapes the bounds of his identity and becomes one with his surroundings: "and i'm no . . . one". The climax is heightened by the tmetic interruption of "no-one" by another parenthetical phrase:

> (if deeply less conceivable than
> birth or death or even than breathing shall

blossom a first star) . . . (11.12-14).

Cummings and the scene become one as the "first star" of the evening "blossoms", an event which signifies the completion of the dual processes of nightfall and personal transcendence. The immediacy of the star's arrival is an event which is so beautiful that even such fundamental mysteries as birth, death and breathing suffer by comparison. The tmesis allows Cummings to make the star's appearance and his own relinquishment of identity seem to occur in one climactic moment. Neither event happens before the other in time, and Cummings enacts this in the poem by ensuring that neither is completed before the other in his verse. By placing the complex description of the star within the simple word "no-one", he delays the completion of the word while the star is described, creating a tension which is resolved when description and word are completed at the height of the poem's climax.

An additional result of this technique is that "one" becomes the final word of the poem, so that it ends at the moment man and place become one. Because the first word of the poem is "someone", it is framed by the terms "someone" and "no-one", and this frame contains the progression from someone to no-one by way of "anyone". This process is depicted in a single complex syntactic unit, ensuring continuity, while the series of parenthetical interjections provide an impression of events occurring simultaneously.

Although it is a complete poem on its own, "noone and a star stand, am to am" (*CP* 721) begins where "someone i am wandering a town" ends. The two sonnets form a pair or small sequence, reflecting the motif of two-in-one which Cummings sees as epitomising the unity, harmony, and infinity of love, both between lovers and between the individual and his world. He commences the second sonnet at the point in the process at which the first concludes, at the moment he becomes "no-one". Having relinquished his individual identity and become one with his physical surroundings, the outward growth of "no-one" continues as he unites with the star which appears at the climax of the first sonnet. Thus the first sonnet is concerned with the process whereby "someone" becomes "no-one", and the second begins with "no-one" and portrays the state

of harmony he has attained with the star. This sense of harmonious unity is achieved by means of balanced lines and phrases, and by the use of chiasmus. The balanced lines also re-emphasise the theme of two-in-one, and suggest infinity by the mirroring of identical phrases.

The poet's consciousness and the star are represented as having become so closely identified that they are depicted as two identical living entities facing each other:

> noone and a star stand,am to am
>
> (life to life;breathing to breathing
> flaming dream to dreaming flame)
> united by perfect nothing . . . (11.1-4).

The "am" or essential being of each is bared to the other. They have lost the subject-object relationship of perceiver and perceived, so that they are the same. The balanced phrases in brackets echo the structure of "am to am": Cummings and the star are "life to life" and "breathing to breathing". In line 3 the communing elements of man and star are portrayed chiastically, the outer term being "flame", and the inner being "dream": man and star stand "flaming dream to dreaming flame". The effect is to render the two as complementary opposites. One has a dream's lack of substance and paradoxically also burns with the vividness of a flame, while the other has the flame's vividness and the insubstantiality of a dream. In other words, although seeming to be opposites, the terms are synonymous, and the objects to which they refer become identical reflections of one another. The final line of the quatrain completes the sentence which begins in line 1: "noone" and the star stand "united by perfect nothing" (1.4). Their union is made possible through a paradox, in that what unites them is the absolute lack of limitations between them.

Cummings goes on to restate what has been said in the first four lines, as seen by someone who cannot recognise what unites star and man:

> millionary wherewhens distant,as
> reckoned by the unimmortal mind,
> these immeasurable mysteries
> (human one;and one celestial)stand (11.5-8).

The affinity between himself and the star is beyond comprehension by means of quantification; that is, they are "immeasurable", because they are

"mysteries". These mysteries are "human one, one celestial", the chiastic form of the phrase again emphasising their equivalence. In terms of time and space, they are impossibly far apart ("millionary wherewhens distant"), but this is to see them in measurable terms, or "as reckoned by the unimmortal mind". In terms that transcend space and time, these "mysteries" can be seen to "stand / soul to soul:freedom to freedom" (11.8-9). In this they share a freedom from earthly limitation.

The first nine lines of the poem portray their subject as static: the main verb in both of the sentences up to and including line 9 is "stand". These two sentences occupy what would seem to be standard English quatrains, rhymed a b a b c d c d, except that the syntax carries on into line 9. By this means the sense of the poem outstrips the guiding structure of the rhyme scheme, encroaching on the beginning of the sestet where the volta might be expected to appear. The volta occurs at the beginning of line 10, when the static man and star are unified. They "stand"

> till her utmost secrecies and his
> (dreaming flame by flaming dream)
> merge . . . (11.10-12).

Having altered the form of the sonnet by allowing the sense of the octave to intrude into the sestet, the portrayal of the union of star and man occurs in a compressed sestet. They are portrayed as male and female, sharing those aspects of themselves which are essential to their respective natures: their "utmost secrecies". This coming-together and blending of masculine and feminine elements, portrayed as a sexual union, is signified by the reversal of the chiastic phrase from line 3. It occurs "dreaming flame by flaming dream". The outer term is now "dream", while the inner has become "flame", so that a thorough interchange, a melding, of elements has taken place.

There is an offspring of this union of complementary elements:

> . . . at not imaginable which
>
> instant born,a(who is neither each
> both and)Self adventures deathlessness (11.12-14).

Immediately out of this event, so mysterious as to be unimaginable, is created a new self, which is neither Cummings nor star ("each"), nor is it a mere com-

bination of the two ("both"). It is an entirely new "Self". This new entity is signified by the capital "S" of "Self", the only uppercase letter in either of the sonnets. Cummings has come full circle, in "someone i am wandering a town" by shedding all vestiges of his everyday identity, and in "noone and a star stand, am to am", by becoming one with the star. On attaining this new Self, he reaches a mode of being beyond the earthly considerations of time and space, which is an immortal state: his Self "adventures deathlessness". When he returns to himself, he will bring his experience of unity with the star with him, so that he is not the same "someone" with which the sequence began. Because lines 12 and 13 make up the rhyming couplet which would normally end the sonnet, this final line (l.14) must find its rhyme in the preceding lines, chiming faintly with "his" in line 10, so that the rhyme scheme of the sestet is e f e g g f. Because the syntax of line 9 makes it part of the octave, the verse after the volta is compressed into five lines, an effect which is assisted by the premature couplet (lines 12 and 13). This adds a sense of rapidity and completeness to Cummings's moment of union with the star. The enjambment of the penultimate line into line 14 overflows the couplet, mimicking the movement of his new "Self" as he "adventures deathlessness".

These two sonnets illustrate how effective Cummings's experiments with the sonnet genre could be in achieving his artistic aims. The distortions of syntax and his structural and typographical modifications are all strictly functional in creating a form which, like the greater Romantic lyric, artistically reproduces the spiritual experience described. The two poems functioning as one reflect the theme of two in one which signifies the infinity of love, and which echoes the stability and balance of the poet's consciousness and the star as they stand poised in the instant before merging. The use of balance and chiasmus in the second poem repeatedly places this idea before the reader, while also functioning as delaying devices, like the tmetic parenthetical phrases in the first poem, so that the poem's linear movement through time is subverted. As a result the reader, like the poet, becomes engaged in a timeless experience whose circularity frames and isolates it from

the mutable world of time. The poem enacts the paradox of the Romantic Moment: it is a brief measure of eternity. Cummings has finally found a way of escaping the world of mutability and death which has been a feature of his poetry from the outset, and which has been a traditional concern of the sonneteer.

IV

The three sonnet subgenres examined in this chapter represent refinements of ideas and themes which have been present in Cummings's work from the beginning. The "Realities" mode, while failing to retain the poet's interest after *is 5*, bequeaths the idea of defiance or acceptance of death's inevitability which becomes the philosophy that death must be accepted as part of life. An echo of the "Realities" is heard whenever Cummings employs his scatological *foetidas* in the satiric sonnets. Even in the "Unrealities" group, which includes some of his earliest sonnets in *Complete Poems 1910-1962*, his concern with the passing of time and the inevitability of death is present. Such sonnets as "when unto nights of autumn do complain" (*CP* 137) and "will suddenly trees leap from winter and will" (*CP* 152), in which love or the memory of love is able to dispel winter's gloom, contain the germ of Cummings's later belief in the power of love to confer immortality on lovers.

The third sonnet kind, which bears a number of resemblances to the Romantic sonnets of Wordsworth, in that they are dedicated to emulating the brief experience of timeless unity with the natural world, is the purest manifestation of Cummings's concern with time and the power of love and art to defy it. In the unity and circularity of "someone i am wandering a town" and "noone and a star stand, am to am", Cummings achieves the quintessence of his own definition of a work of art in "the New Art" as something "before which we become alive" (*Misc* 26). In *Romantic Image*, Frank Kermode summarises this Romantic notion of the work of art:

> . . . the work of art itself is symbol, 'aesthetic monad' . . .; 'concrete', yet fluid and suggestive; a means to truth, a truth unrelated to, and more exalted than, that of positivist science, or any observation depending on the discursive reason; out of the flux of life, and therefore, under one aspect, dead; yet

> uniquely alive because of its participation in a higher order of existence, and because it is analogous not to a machine but to an organism; coextensive in matter and form; resistant to explication; largely independent of intention, and of any form of ethical utility; and itself emblematised in certain recurring images . . . (43-44).

CONCLUSION

In answering the question, "why does E. E. Cummings write sonnets?", the hermeneutic tool provided by the genre system enables us to come to the following conclusions. First, he writes sonnets as a way of structuring and controlling aesthetic experiences. This includes both his writing of individual sonnets and his use of the sonnet as a structural element in the arrangement of his volumes of poetry. In the early sonnets the experiences he records often seem fragmentary, associative, and unconnected, features of the peotry which are in keeping with the Aesthetes' ideal of expressing fleeting sensory experiences without including comment of a didactic nature. Thus, in the sonnets of the "Five Americans" sequence, the oscillation between his impressions of the outward object and his own subjective responses is carefully recorded. This alternation between the inner and the outer later evolves into more carefully-structured and intense depictions of unity and oneness with the objective world, as shown in the two sonnets of "someone i am wandering a town" and "noone and a star stand, am to am". In these mature sonnets, balance, chiasmus, and tmesis are employed to render the sense of wholeness, timelessness and unity of this experience. The techniques by which Cummings delays the conclusion of the poem and disrupts its linear progress, such as parenthetical insertions, tmesis and circular structure, are designed to subvert the passing of time. By immersing oneself in a Cummings sonnet, one experiences a brief moment out of time, the paradox which Wordsworth sees as being embodied in such works of art as sonnets and paintings.

The social and political satires seem to be more problematic. Those in which Cummings excoriates mostpeople, politicians, and the ways in which they think, are often discomforting to the reader, especially when he resorts to the scatological *foetidas* inherited from the "Realities" mode. Perhaps this is calculated to shock his audiences out of their complacent acceptance of the things he is attacking, although he runs the risk of alienating them at the same time. It could be that Cummings does not mind this; it reinforces his conviction that, as an artist, he is party to a vision from which "most-

people" are excluded, and that therefore the difference between them is insurmountable. Cummings's scatological satires have the opposite effect from the poems in which he creates a brief, delicate sense of harmony and unity with the timeless processes of the universe. It is as if, in the very poems in which he tries to demonstrate his difference from the members of the "unworld", he inadvertently becomes part of that world.

At this point it is clear that much of Cummings's poetry is based on the dichotomy between those who love and those who do not. The sonnet genre's tradition of praise, begun with the petrarchist love conventions and strengthened by the modulation with epideictic epigram, is particularly useful to the poet in exploring this dichotomy. He makes use of the hyperbolic *recusatio* strategy of exaggerating the limitations of whatever is antithetical to his beliefs in order to heighten their virtues. In the epigrammatic sonnets in which he defines love, he decries "mostpeoples'" adherence to reason and knowledge at the expense of feeling and innocence; in his satiric sonnets he excoriates the politicians whose lies and hypocrisy prevent people from attaining true individuality; and in his *contreblasons*, by praising the individuality of prostitutes (inverting the traditional praise of the mistress whose beauty is both physical and spiritual), he asserts his belief in the value of individuality and of an acceptance of fate.

A paradox is at work in these sonnets which goes to the heart of Cummings's use of the genre. The inversion of petrarchist conceits has long been assimilated into the system as one of its conventions (Forster 56), with the result that the *contreblason* is a legitimate sonnet subgenre, and the *recusatio*, while denouncing the traditions of past poets, does so according to the features of a traditional genre (Race 30). Therefore, revolting against the modes of thought and expression which make up the different genres is one of the ways in which that genre changes, a process which ensures its survival. By choosing to stress his own individuality in the conventions of the sonnet genre, either through its modulation with a variety of other genres, or by inverting it to parody it and thereby demonstrate his censure of its tradi-

tional values, Cummings brings new life to the sonnet genre, invigorating it and ensuring its survival as a viable means of expressing the individuality of future poets.

APPENDIX 1: A LIST OF CUMMINGS'S SONNETS IN PRINT.

CP = Complete Poems 1910-1962
UP = Etcetera: Unpublished Poems

a blue woman with sticking out breasts hanging	CP 216
a connotation of infinity	CP 138
a fragrant sag of fruit distinctly grouped.	CP 121
after all white horses are in bed	CP 303
After your poppied hair inaugurates	UP 18
a light Out) / & first of all foam	CP 359
all ignorance toboggans into know	CP 579
all nearness pauses,while a star can grow	CP 750
all which isn't singing is mere talking	CP 804
all worlds have halfsight,seeing either with	CP 845
along the brittle treacherous bright streets	CP 305
american critic ad 1935	CP 901
am was. are leaves few this. is these a or	CP 491
an amiable putrescence carpenters	CP 201
and this day it was Spring....us	CP 177
and what were roses. Perfume? for i do	CP 136
a peopleshaped toomany-ness far too	CP 528
April" / this letter's dated / "23,	UP 128
A rain-drop on the eyelids of the earth	CP 861
a salesman is an it that stinks Excuse,	CP 549
as any(men's hells having wrestled with)	CP 558
a thing most new complete fragile intense,	CP 163
Auf wiedersehen! We part a little while,	UP 23
autumn is: that between there and here	CP 164
a wind has blown the rain away and blown	CP 153
because you take life in your stride(instead	CP 679
before the fragile gradual throne of night	CP 212
Behold -- a mere like a madonna's head	CP 856
Behold, I have taken at thy hands immortal wine	UP 24
being to timelessness as it's to time,	CP 768
be unto love as rain is unto colour;create	CP 373
but being not amazing:without love	CP 375
but if a living dance upon dead minds	CP 378
by god i want above fourteenth	CP 119
by little accurate saints thickly which tread	CP 162
chérie / the very,picturesque,last Day	UP 63
ci-gît 1 Foetus(unborn not to die)	CP 394
come nothing to my comparable soul	CP 150
conceive a man,should he have anything	CP 420
Dick Mid's large bluish face without eyebrows	CP 134
does yesterday's perfection seem not quite	CP 414
Earth is become the seat of a new sea;	CP 855
ecco a letter starting 'dearest we'	CP 504
enter no(silence is the blood whose flesh	CP 839
even a pencil has fear to	CP 158
every one of the red roses opened	UP 146
fabulous against ,a,fathoming jelly	CP 161
faithfully tinying at twilight voice	CP 821
('fire stop thief help murder save the world'	CP 555
first she like a piece of ill-oiled	UP 48
For that I have forgot the world these days,	CP 866
from spiralling ecstatically this	CP 714
god gloats upon Her stunning flesh. Upon	CP 141
god pity me whom(god distinctly has)	CP 125
--G O N splashes-sink	CP 170
goodbye Betty, don't remember me	CP 117
granted the all / saving our young kiss only	CP 374
Great carnal mountains crouching in the cloud	CP 859

Great Dante stands in Florence, looking down	UP	10
harder perhaps than a newengland bed	CP	506
hate blows a bubble of despair into	CP	531
he does not have to feel because he thinks	CP	406
helves surling out of eakspeasies per(reel)hapsingly	CP	331
her careful distinct sex whose sharp lips comb	CP	210
here are five simple facts no sub	CP	803
here is the ocean,this is moonlight:say	CP	380
here's to opening and upward,to leaf and to sap	CP	424
honour corruption villainy holiness	CP	661
how dark and single,where he ends,the earth	CP	418
how generous is that himself the sun	CP	756
how many moments must(amazing each	CP	843
i carry your heart with me(i carry it in	CP	766
I dreamed I was among the conquerers,	CP	874
if a cheerfulest Elephantangelchild should sit	CP	631
if i have made,my lady,intricate	CP	307
if in beginning twilight of winter will stand	CP	808
if i should sleep with a lady called death	CP	214
if learned darkness from our searched world	CP	148
if night's mostness(and whom did merely day	CP	450
if(touched by love's own secret)we,like homing	CP	659
i have found what you are like	CP	169
i have loved, let us see if that's all.	CP	156
I have seen her a stealthily frail	CP	147
i like my body when it is with your	CP	218
i love you much (most beautiful darling)	CP	717
infinite jukethrob smoke & swallow to dis	CP	629
in making Marjorie god hurried	CP	211
in time's a noble mercy of proportion	CP	683
irreproachable ladies firmly lewd	CP	122
i thank You God for most this amazing	CP	663
it is at moments after i have dreamed	CP	145
it is funny, you will be dead some day.	CP	155
it is so long since my heart has been with yours	CP	298
it may not always be so; and i say	CP	146
it started when Bill's chip let on to	CP	127
i've come to ask you if there isn't a	CP	572
joggle i think will do it although the glad	CP	225
joyful your complete fearless and pure love	CP	761
Kind is his mouth and smiling are his eyes,	UP	7
'kitty'.sixteen, 5'1",white, prostitute	CP	126
ladies and gentlemen this little girl	CP	118
lady will you come with me into	CP	366
lady you have written me a letter	UP	83
Leader and teacher, we whom you have taught,	CP	849
let's,from some loud unworld's most rightful wrong	CP	745
let's live suddenly without thinking	CP	159
let us suspect,chérie,this not very big	UP	61
let us tremble)a personal radiance sits	CP	174
life boosts herself rapidly at me	CP	135
life is more true than reason will deceive	CP	592
"life?/Listen"the feline she with radishred	CP	226
light cursed falling in a singular block	CP	206
light's lives lurch / a once world quickly from rises	CP	633
like most godhouses this particular house	UP	74
little joe gould has lost his teeth and doesn't know where	CP	410
lively and loathesome moe's respectably dead	UP	122
long ago,between a dream and a dream	UP	105
Long since, the flicker brushed with shameless wing	CP	862
love's absence is illusion,alias time	UP	113
love's function is to fabricate unknownness	CP	446

love was--entire excellently steep	UP	57
luminous tendril of celestial wish	CP	669
might these be thrushes climbing through almost(do they	CP	582
morsel miraculous and meaningless	CP	456
my deathly body's deadly lady	UP	47
my girl's tall with hard long eyes	CP	133
my(his from daughter's mother's zero mind	CP	546
my little heart is so wonderfully sorry	UP	64
my love is building a building	CP	165
my naked lady framed	CP	168
my sonnet is A light goes on in	CP	171
my strength becoming wistful in a glib	CP	204
nearer:breath of my breath:take not thy tingling	CP	123
'next to of course god america i	CP	267
nobody could / in superhuman flights	CP	790
Nobody wears a yellow	CP	297
no man,if men are gods;but if gods must	CP	562
noone and a star stand,am to am	CP	721
noone" autumnal this great lady's gaze	CP	626
No sunset,but a grey,great,struggling sky	CP	868
nothing false and possible is love	CP	574
nothing is more exactly terrible than	CP	376
notice the convulsed orange inch of moon	CP	176
not time's how(anchored in what mountaining roots	CP	517
now air is air and thing is thing:no bliss	CP	675
now all the fingers of this tree(darling)have	CP	667
now comes the good rain farmers pray for(and	CP	754
Now i lay (with everywhere around)	CP	816
now that,more nearest even than your fate	CP	809
now what were motionless move(exists no	CP	762
now winging selves sing sweetly,while ghosts (there	UP	145
O friend, who hast attained thyself in her,	UP	26
of this wilting wall the colour drub	CP	131
O It's Nice To Get Up In,the slipshod mucous kiss	CP	203
o my wholly unwise and definite	UP	81
one nonsufficiently inunderstood	CP	398
one's not half two. It's two are halves of one:	CP	556
only as what(out of a flophouse)floats	CP	479
Only thou livest. Centuries wheel and pass,	UP	10
O Thou to whom the musical white spring	CP	142
our touching hearts slenderly comprehend	CP	306
out of midsummer's blazing most not night	CP	818
out of more find than seeks	CP	612
out of the mountain of his soul comes	CP	617
over us if(as what was dusk becomes	CP	741
perhaps it is to feel strike	CP	166
pity his how illimitable plight	CP	842
pity this busy monster,manunkind,	CP	554
poets yeggs and thirsties	CP	259
possibly thrice we glimpsed - /more likely twice	CP	607
precisely as unbig a why as i'm	CP	739
proud of his scientific attitude	CP	499
put off your faces,Death:for day is over	CP	377
reason let others give and realness bring--	CP	454
serene immediate silliest and whose	CP	338
"she had that softness which is falsity"	UP	130
she puts down the handmirror. 'Look at' arranging	CP	224
she sits dropping on a caret of clenched arms	CP	128
should i entirely ask of god why	CP	227
silently if,out of not knowable	CP	810
silent unday by silently not night	CP	432
Softly from its still lair in Plimpton Street	UP	25

so many selves(so many fiends and gods CP 609
someone i am wandering a town(if its CP 720
sometime,perhaps in Paris we will UP 62
sometimes i am alive because with UP 80
sometimes / in)Spring a someone will lie(glued CP 428
sonnet entitled how to run the world) CP 390
so standing,our eyes filled with wind,and the CP 379
Space being(don't forget to remember)Curved CP 317
Speak to me friend! Or is the world so wide CP 877
Stand forth John Keats! On Earth thou knew'st me not; UP 9
stand with your lover on the ending earth-- CP 743
structure,miraculous challenge,devout am CP 352
swim so now million many worlds in each CP 603
that which we who're alive in spite of mirrors CP 386
the bed is not very big CP 207
the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls CP 115
the dirty colours of her kiss have just CP 205
the ivory performing rose CP 167
the mind is its own beautiful prisoner. CP 157
(the phonograph's voice like a keen spider skipping CP 172
the poem her belly marched through me as CP 208
the silently little blue elephant shyly (he was terri CP 516
the spring has been exquisite and the UP 65
the trick of finding what you didn't lose CP 807
The world outside is dark; my fire burns low; UP 171
there are possibly 2 1/2 or impossibly 3 CP 514
these from my mother's greatgrandmother's rosebush white CP 748
these people socalled were not given hearts CP 510
this(a up green hugeness who and climbs) UP 119
this cigarette is extremely long, UP 56
this is the garden: colours come and go, CP 144
this(let's remember)day died again and CP 599
Thou in whose swordgreat story shine the deeds CP 139
through the tasteless minute efficient room UP 46
Thy face is a still white house of holy things, UP 15
touching you i say(it being Spring CP 304
true lovers in each happening of their hearts CP 576
twentyseven bums give a prostitute the once CP 130
unlove's the heavenless hell and homeless home CP 765
unnoticed woman from whose kind large flesh CP 129
upon the room's / silence, i will sew CP 215
utterly and amusingly i am pash CP 175
we being not each other:without love UP 136
we love each other very dearly / ,more CP 577
we miss you,jack--tactfully you(with one cocked CP 605
what a proud dreamhorse pulling(smoothloomingly) through CP 437
what freedom's not some under's mere above CP 538
what is strictly fiercely and wholly dies CP 345
what time is it?it is by every star CP 817
what time is it i wonder never mind CP 324
when citied day with the sonorous homes CP 151
when / (day's amazing murder with) / perhaps UP 141
when / from a sidewalk / out of(blown never quite to CP 442
when hair falls off and eyes blur And CP 360
when i am in Boston,i do not speak. CP 116
when i have thought of you somewhat too CP 213
when my love comes to see me it's CP 154
when my sensational moments are no more CP 140
when serpents bargain for the right to squirm CP 620
when the proficient poison of sure sleep CP 143
when thou hast taken thy last applause,and when CP 124
when unto nights of autumn do complain CP 137

)when what hugs stopping earth than silent is	CP 502
when you are silent,shining host by guest	CP 559
when you rang at Dick Mid's Place	CP 120
when you went away it was morning	CP 217
whereas by dark really released, the modern	CP 132
white guardians of the universe of sleep	CP 811
who before dying demands not rebirth	CP 402
whose are these(wraith a clinging with a wraith)	CP 639
who's most afraid of death ?thou / art of him	CP 149
who were so dark of heart they might not speak,	CP 649
why must itself up every of a park	CP 636
will suddenly trees leap from winter and will	CP 152
willing pitifully to bewitch	UP 66
with breathing as(faithfully)her lownecked	CP 223
you asked me to come: it was raining a little,	CP 173
your homecoming will be my homecoming-	CP 812
yours is the music for no instrument	CP 160
you shall above all things be glad and young.	CP 484
you which could grin three smiles into a dead	CP 522

APPENDIX 2

2.1: PLACEMENT OF "TULIPS" POEMS FROM THE 1922 TULIPS & CHIMNEYS MS IN SUBSEQUENT VOLUMES.

	1922 MS	*Tulips and Chimneys*	*XLI Poems*	*& [And]*
	EPITHALAMION	EPITHALAMION		
	OF NICOLETTE	OF NICOLETTE		
I	SONGS	SONGS	SONGS	
II	(thee will i praise	I		
III	when life is quite		III	
IV	Always before your voice	II		
V	Thy fingers make early	III		
VI	All in green went my	IV		
VII	Where's Madge then,		V	
VIII	Doll's boy's asleep	V		
IX	cruelly,love		XII	
	when god lets my body be	VI		
	PUELLA MEA	PUELLA MEA		
	CHANSONS INNOCENTES	CHANSONS INNOCENTES	CHANSONS INNOCENTES	
I	in Just-	I		
II	hist whist	II		
III	little tree		I	
IV	why did you go		II	
V	Tumbling-hair	III		
	ORIENTALE	ORIENTALE		
I	i spoke to thee			
II	my love			
III	listen			
IV	unto thee i			
V	lean candles hunger in			
VI	the emperor			
	AMORES	AMORES	SONGS	
I	your little voice	VII		
II	in the rain-		VIII	
III	there is a	II		
IV	consider O	I		
V	as is the sea marvelous	III		
VI	into the smiting		IV	
VII	if i believe	IV		
VIII	the glory is fallen out	V		
IX	i like	VI		
X	after five		VI	
XI	O Distinct	VII		
	LA GUERRE	LA GUERRE	LA GUERRE	
I	humanity i love you	I		
II	earth like a tipsy		I	
III	the bigness of cannon	II		
IV	little ladies more			Ports.XII
V	O sweet spontaneous		II	

APPENDIX 2.1 CONTINUED.

	1922 MS	*Tulips and Chimneys*	*XLI Poems*	*& [And]*
	PORTRAITS	PORTRAITS	PORTRAITS	PORTS.
I	of my		Songs II	
II	being			I
III	as usual i did not find		V	
IV	the skinny voice		IV	
V	Babylon slim			II
VI	the dress was a			
VII	of evident invisibles	II		
VIII	the	I		
IX	ta			III
X	it's just like a		VI	
XI	between nose-red gross	III		
XII	i walked the boulevard	IV		
XIII	5		VIII	
XIV	the young	V		
XV	one April dusk the		II	
XVI	between the breasts			VII
XVII	but the other	VI		
XVIII	inthe,exquisite;			
XIX	the rose	VII		
XX	spring omnipotent	IX		
XXI	Buffalo Bill's	VIII		
XXII	Cleopatra built			VI
XXIII	Picasso		III	
XXIV	conversation with my		I	
XXV	my mind is		VII	
XXVI	the waddling			IV
XXVII	her			XI
XXVIII	raise the shade			V
XXIX	somebody knew Lincoln	X		
	POST IMPRESSIONS			POST IMPS.
I	windows go orange in			I
II	beyond the	I		
III	the moon is	II		
IV	riverly is			II
V	any man is	V		
VI	into the strenuous	III		
VII	at the head	VI		
VIII	i was sitting in mc.			VIII
IX	at the ferocious		Portraits IX	
X	SNO			X
XI	i am going to utter	IV		
	IMPRESSIONS	IMPRESSIONS		
I	Lady of Silence		Songs IX	
II	the sky a silver	I		
III	writhe and	II		
IV	the hills		Songs X	
V	stinging	V		
VI	the/sky/was		Songs I	
VII	i was considering how	III		
VIII	between green/mountains		Songs VII	
IX	the hours rise up	IV		
X	i will wade out		Songs XI	

APPENDIX 2.2: DISTRIBUTION OF "CHIMNEYS" SONNETS FROM THE 1922 TULIPS & CHIMNEYS MS IN SUBSEQUENT VOLUMES

"SONNETS-REALITIES"

	1922 MS	*Tulips and Chimneys*	*XLI Poems* "Sonnets"	*& [And]*
I	the Cambridge ladies	I		
II	when i am in Boston		XIII	
III	goodby Betty	II		
IV	ladies and gentlemen	III		
V	by god i want		XVI	
VI	when you rang	IV		
VII	a fragrant sag		XV	
VIII	irreproachable			IX
IX	nearer:breath of my			X
X	when thou hast taken	VI		
XI	god pity me whom			XI
XII	"kitty"	V		
XIII	it started when			XVI
XIV	she sits dropping			XIV
XV	unnoticed woman			XIII
XVI	twentyseven bums			XXI
XVII	of this wilting wall			XV
XVIII	whereas by dark			XVII
XIX	my girl's tall			XVIII
XX	Dick Mid's large			XX
XXI	life boosts herself			XXII

"SONNETS-UNREALITIES"

	1922 MS	*Tulips and Chimneys*	*XLI Poems* "Sonnets"	*& [And]*
I	and what were roses		VII	
II	when unto nights		III	
III	a connotation	VI		
IV	Thou in whose		V	
V	when my sensational		IX	
VI	god gloats upon Her	II		
VII	O Thou to whom		II	
VIII	when the proficient		VI	
IX	this is the garden:		IV	
X	it is at moments	III		
XI	it may not always be	I		
XII	I have seen her a		X	
XIII	if learned darkness		I	
XIV	who's most afraid of		XI	
XV	come nothing to my		VIII	
XVI	when citied day	IV		
XVII	will suddenly		XIV	
XVIII	a wind has blown	V		

APPENDIX 2.2 CONTINUED:
"SONNETS-ACTUALITIES"

	1922 MS	*Tulips and Chimneys*	*XLI POEMS* "Sonnets"	& [*And*]
I	when my love comes			I
II	it is funny,			II
III	i have loved,			III
IV	the mind is its own			XIX
V	even a pencil has			Real.XII
VI	let's live suddenly			IX
VII	yours is the music	III		
VIII	fabulous against ,a,			VIII
IX	by little accurate	IV		
X	a thing most new	I		
XI	autumn is: that			VII
XII	my love is building	II		
XIII	perhaps it is to		XII	
XIV	the ivory			XIV
XV	my naked lady			XI
XVI	i have found			XII
XVII	-GON			XVIII
XVIII	my sonnet is			XX
XIX	(the phonograph's			XV
XX	you asked me to come			XXII
XXI	(let us tremble)			XVII
XXII	utterly and			IV
XXIII	notice the convulsed	V		
XXIV	and this day it was			XXIII

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