A Stylistic Study on the Linguistic Deviations in E. E. Cummings' Poetry

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Regarded as the pioneer of experimental poetry, E. E. Cummings' unconventional treatment of poetic language has reached an unprecedented acme, which has intrigued and baffled numerous scholars, researchers and readers alike. Nevertheless, the very existence of poetry, like other types of literary texts, demonstrates the significance and value of interpretation and exploration. The eccentric use of language by E. E. Cummings should be attributed to his double identity as both poet and painter. He was deeply influenced by the contemporary European visual art, especially the cubism. Most poems he composed are a perfect blend of the art of painting technique and poetry creation so that there are paintings in poetry and poetry in paintings. Among them, linguistic deviation is one of the means of realizing the foregrounding effect and achieving the aesthetic value. Based on the linguistic deviation theories of Geoffrey N. Leech and with reference to Yu Xueyong's three-dimensional model and framework, this thesis attempts to explore the achievement of foregrounding in E. E. Cummings' poetry by means of graphological, lexical and semantic deviations through analyzing eight selected poems ranging over four of Cummings' major themes, namely love, life, nature and death. The attempt to analyze the stylistic features of symbolic poetry demonstrates the complementation of linguistics and literature as well as the interaction between art and aesthetics, thus providing an insightful reference to the interpretation and appreciation of poetry.

Key Words: E. E. Cummings, poetry, stylistics, foregrounding, linguistic deviation

1 Introduction

E. E. Cummings(1894-1962) was the pioneer of the experimental poetry in the twentieth century American literature. Being a prolific poet, painter, essayist, author, and playwright, Cummings composed around 2,900 poems, two autobiographical novels, four plays and several essays, as well as

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numerous drawings and paintings throughout his lifetime. The avant-garde of American modern experimental poetry has pushed forward deviations to the acme by composing a large number of extraordinary poems, showing an eccentric reform and transformation of American literature in the 20th century.

The present study draws upon Geoffrey N. Leech's linguistic deviation theories(1969, p.62) and Yu Xueyong's three-dimensional model for achieving foregrounding(2007, p.27). According to this framework, the analysis of different varieties of language can be conducted on such a model: realization, form and semantics. Realization includes phonology and graphology; form grammar and lexicon; semantics denotative or cognitive meaning. Foregrounding in poetry can be achieved through linguistic deviation and parallelism. Linguistic deviation is further divided by Leech into eight categories: lexical deviation, grammatical deviation, phonological deviation, graphological deviation, semantic deviation, dialectal deviation, deviation of register and deviation of historical period. Thus, the linguistic deviation in E. E. Cummings' poetry can be analyzed in the following three levels: realization, form and semantic level.

This paper focuses on the aesthetic value of visual art achieved through linguistic deviations, particularly graphological and lexical deviation, in the hope of enriching the existing researches on similar topics. Therefore, the stylistic study of the linguistic deviation in E. E. Cummings' poetry is believed to be of academic, practical, aesthetic and artistic value.

2 Literature Review

2.1 A survey of stylistics

Stylistics can be traced back to western traditional rhetorics and poetics. In ancient Greece, style was a concept in the domain of rhetoric. It was considered as a technique and an art for producing persuasive texts. Ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle wrote works on rhetoric. The concept of 'style' stems from the use of rhetorical devices to achieve certain effects in discourses.

However, stylistics did not appear as a discipline until modern times. Generally speaking, much of the analyzing methodology of modern stylistics is drawn from those of linguistics. Modern literary stylistics in particular depends upon the area with an addition of the interpretive goals of literary criticism. Thus, the utilization and dependence on linguistic methodology has to some extent prompted the development and progress of stylistics to the height of thoroughly analyzing the language itself and the intentions behind the usage of the language.

The study of stylistics has been conducted in the West by scholars from different perspectives. There are five schools with various points of view that have contributed greatly to the progress of stylistic studies:

Psychological Stylistics, The Geneva School, The French Structuralism, The English School, The Russian Formalism and the Prague School. Psychological Stylistics represented by the German scholar Leospitzer focuses on revealing the personality or psyche of the writer. The Geneva School represented by Charles Belly focuses on the spoken style of people with different classes and occupations. The French Structuralism represented by Roland Barthes focuses on the inseparability of style and context. The English School represented by Firth and Halliday focuses on associating stylistics analyses with social factors. The Russian Formalism and The Prague School represented respectively by Viktor Shklovsky and Roman Jacobson focuses on the analyses of literary texts and poetic language in particular which coincides with the focus of this paper. They are notably well-known for putting forward the term 'foregrounding' which is against the backdrop of common language.

The onset of modern stylistics was marked by the work of Charles Bally and Leo Spitzer. The former emphasized the description and analysis of a language's general available stylistic properties while the latter insisted on following the more philologically- based tradition of textual analysis. It was in the first half of the twentieth century when literary stylistic analyses appeared in England that Michael Riffaterre's *Criteria for Style Analysis* (1959) and *Stylistic Context* (1960) moved from interpretive description towards general linguistic analysis. The hallmark of the arrival of stylistics as an academic discipline in Britain and the U.S. was the founding of the journal *Style* (1967) and *Language and Style* (1968). At the turn of the twentieth century, allegiance to linguistic procedures was a major factor that defined stylistics as a discipline. Stylistics, as an academic discipline had been influenced by three "revolutions": modernist movement in art and literature, literary criticism, and linguistic science.

Modern stylistic study in China began in the 1960s, spearheaded by Wang Zuoliang 's paper A Study on Style and Genre (1963) and the book An Introduction to English Stylistics (1985). Qin Xiubai published A Survey of Stylistics (1986) to expound on general stylistics. Theoretical Stylistics by Hu Zhuanglin (2000) and Essentials of English Stylistics by Wang Shouyuan (2000) promoted the stylistic approach to texts or discourses domestically. A Survey of Stylistics coauthored by Liu Shisheng and Zhu Ruiqing (2006) outlines the present study on stylistics both at home and abroad and discusses the relation of language and style from literary styles to non-literary styles, which further enlightens the development of stylistics in China.

2.2 A survey of the study on E. E. Cummings' poetry

Recognized as the avant-garde poet on the arena of modern experimental poetry with productive works of poetry, essays, drawings and paintings, E. E. Cummings has attracted literary critics and linguists worldwide and remained

a heated controversy. The center of controversy falls on his dramatic and eccentric use of language, the subversion of conventional grammar and syntax and above all, the ability of creating exceptional visual effects in his poetry. There have been a considerable body of researches on E. E. Cummings' poetry abroad both from literary criticism and linguistic perspective.

2.2.1 Literary criticism

In terms of literary criticism, scholars have conducted extensive researches on the themes, images, visual effects and biographical backdrop in E. E. Cummings' poems. For example, Richard S. Kennedy wrote the biography of E. E. Cummings entitled *Dreams in the Mirror* (1980) revealing that writing and self were never very far apart for E.E. Cummings, an indispensible biography of the poet without which many aspects of Cummings' self and writing would have remained obscure. Norman Friedman in his book *The Art of His Poetry* (1960) searched for the sources of Cummings' life and analyzed the varieties and methods in his masterpieces. In another book *The Poetry and Prose of E.E. Cummings* (1960) he provided possible interpretations of Cummings' sense of tragedy, the relation between love and satire and offered enlightening analyses of certain poems.

2.2.2 Linguistic study

The linguistic study of E. E. Cummings' poetry was mainly conducted in the domains of phonetics, morphology and syntax. Chronologically, Geoffrey N. Leech took examples of Cummings' poems to illustrate linguistic deviations in *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (1969). Paul Griffiths (1980) discussed the musical background of E. E. Cummings' poetry and posited that Cummings' perception of phonetic values served as a valuable starting point for constructing new patterns of context. Funkhouser Linder and Daniel C. O' Connell (1984) used the radio recorder and acoustic spectroscope testing the reading of Cummings' *"Buffalo Bill's", "Dying is fine but Death", "in Just_" and "O sweet spontaneous"* to obtain the acoustic materials and draw a charter depicting pitches and varied forms of pauses for the analysis of the effects of the features. Regisl Welch points out in the essay *The Linguistic Paintings of E. E. Cummings, Painter Poet* (1984) that Cummings rejected to accept the morphological patterns formed in the 20th century by blending in his poetry the modernist abstract painting techniques to achieve the dynamic combination of images and semantic meanings. Richard Cureton proposed in *Visual Form in E. E. Cummings': No Thanks* (1985) that the visual forms make the phonetic, syntactic and narrative structures of the conventional poems concrete and analyzed five aspects in which visual forms may surpass the conventional poems, namely visual images, visual sounds,

visual ambiguity, arbitrary forms and concrete forms. He makes an attempt in *Poetry, Grammar, and Epistemology: The Order of Prenominal Modifiers in the Poetry of E. E. Cummings* (1985) to explain the syntactic violations of Cummings' poetry stating that certain syntactic violations in Cummings' poetry are more of the real reflections of his life experiences than merely an artist's means of expressing anti-conventional mentality. In his works, these structures require the readers to readjust their concepts towards relationship between the modifiers and modified objects. Cureton also carried out an in-depth *Study of the Poetic Use of Deviant Morphology* in *E. E. Cummings* (1990). Docherty Brian (1990) analyzed the deviation of the transformative rule from the perspective of T. G. grammar.

The idiosyncratic creations in E. E. Cummings' poetry have evoked the interests of Chinese scholars as well, whose studies of Cummings' poetry are even more creative and versatile than those in the West. Chang Yaoxin (1987) in his *Selected Readings in American Literature* chose two of Cummings' poems to make an introduction of E. E. Cummings to Chinese students majoring in English. Wang Zuoliang and Ding Wangdao in *An Introduction to English Stylistics* (1987) and Qin Xiubai in *A Survey of Stylistics* (1986) both cited Cummings' poems as examples of deviation. Yu Xueyong (2007) in *A Stylistic Study on English Poetry* selected several representative pieces of E. E. Cummings' poems as examples in one of the chapters to analyze the cohesion effects in English poetry. Since most of the analyses focuses on a small number of poems such as *l (a*, *in Just* and *O sweet spontaneous* which appear repeatedly in the annotations of selected English poem collections, there is still room for exploration of both the classical poems and many other poems with equal significance but which are neglected and remain to be probed into.

3 The Uniqueness of Poetic Language

Poetry, with its highly concise and condensed form, the eccentric verbal patterns, the comprehensive and idiosyncratic deliberation of figurative language and the puzzling yet profound connotations, is undoubtedly the highest degree of literature. The uniqueness of poetic language lies in the poet's eschewing from mediocrity by rejection of complying with conventional norms of the ordinary and mechanical everyday language.

3.1 Eschewing from mediocrity

"Most poetry is on commonplace themes, and the freshness, what the poet supplies, is in the language." (Qian, 1985, p.20) What poetic language differs from the humdrum everyday language is in essence the creative treatment of language. The success of the poet in dealing with poetic language lies in the eschewing from mediocrity in two aspects: to escape from the conventional

language traditions of the past and on the other hand, to avoid the common everyday language of the present. Modernist poets have for a very long period of time returned to the colloquial style from the flagrant literary style in the past by discarding the archaic rhymes and forms like "thy, thee". Meanwhile, they maintained the distinctiveness of poetic language. According to Leech, the distinctiveness of poetic language can be approached in two dimensions in which the poet makes "the original use of the established possibilities of the language" and "creates new communicative possibilities which are already used in the language". (Leech, 1969, p.26) Take Dylan Thomas's poem *From Love's First Fever to Plague* (Thomas, 1938, p.91) as an example:

> And from the first **declension** of the flesh
> I learnt man's tongue, to twist the shapes of thoughts
> Into the **stony idiom** of the brain
> To shade and knit anew the patch of words
> Left by the dead who, in their **moonless** acre,
> Need no word's warmth.

Here, "moonless acre" is an original use of the established possibilities of language denoting the cruel and dark side of the human nature while the series of figurative languages that transfer the functions and processes of language to those of human organs such as the "declension of flesh" and "the stony idiom of the brain" explores new communicative possibilities of the existed languages. In doing so, Dylan Thomas discarded the mechanical collocations and vividly evoked in readers the plight, predicament and torture suffered by man themselves and the plagues they posed upon others resulting from the feverish love.

   Although the fundamental aim of literary writers, especially poets, is to convey emotions and ideologies in an unusual manner by vitalizing the inert and mechanical language through different degrees of linguistic deviations, the distinctiveness of the poetic language shall not exceed the communicative limits. Nevertheless, as the property of the poetic language renders numerous interpretations of one particular poem just as one thousand readers have in mind one thousand versions of Hamlet, there may not be even a single feasible interpretation for one poem.

3.2 Foregrounding in art and poetry

The concept of foregrounding originated from the field of art. As literature and art are known to share many similarities with each other, it is justifiable to study linguistic deviations against the artistic and aesthetic backdrop of foregrounding. The artistic and aesthetic uniqueness of a painter lies not in his exact reproduction of a certain landscape, still life, or a figure, but in the

deviations from the regulations or norms. Particularly, in terms of abstract paintings and what is represented by Cubism in modern European visual art, the escape from the mechanical visual patterns deserves to be valued as the most artistically striking and impressive by the viewers. By the same token, the creativity of a composer in a certain piece of music lies not in the repetition of regular rhythm and melody, but in the divergence from the musical norms accepted and anticipated by the general public. For instance, a single unexpected note in the middle of a song always turns out to be highly praised and enjoyed by the listeners. "Such deviations from linguistic or other socially accepted norms have been given the special name of 'foregrounding', which invokes the analogy of a figure seen against a background. The artistic deviation sticks out from its background, the automatic system, like a figure in the background of a visual field." (Leech, 1969, p.57) Similarly, the eyes, hearts, and minds of the readers will be captured, first and foremost, by the foregrounding part of the poetry against the common background of language accepted by conventions.

In consequence, the analysis and appreciation of the poetic language shall dwell very much on the significance and value of the foregrounding part which is the linguistic deviation instead of the regular verbal patterns and rhythm.

4 Linguistic Deviation

In this section, linguistic deviations are to be discussed in three levels, namely graphological deviation, lexical deviation and semantic deviation. By making use of various means of linguistic deviation such as unique design of verbal patterns, punctuation, nonce-formation, paradox and transference of meaning, Cummings successfully challenged and stimulated the imagination of the readers by getting them involved heart and soul in his world of poetry.

4.1 Graphological deviation

Being the most superficial level of linguistic deviation, graphological deviation is the easiest type to identify. It deals with the entire writing system. It is "the characteristic line-by-line arrangement of poetry on the printed page, with irregular right-hand margins". "The typographical line of poetry, like the typographical stanza, is a unit which is not paralleled in non-poetic varieties of English: it is independent of and capable of interacting with, the standard unit of punctuation. This interaction is a special communicative resource of poetry." (Leech, 1969, p.47) Cummings explored the design of visual patterns to the fullest extent. What graphological deviation as an expressive device to Cummings is brushing stroke with a palette with multiple colors to an artist.

4.1.1 Shape of text

The shape of a piece of literary work, especially a poem, can be designed in an unconventional way so that it may be suggestive of a certain literary theme (Wang, 2000, p.30). Literary authors, especially poets, frequently attempt numerous groundbreaking experiments in visual designs mostly for the sake of expressiveness and creativity in both languages and themes. E. E. Cummings was exceptionally skilled in this aspect. For instance, the most well-known poem *l(a* (Cummings, 1994, p.673) illustrates the falling of a single leaf , thus indicating the beautifulness and delicacy of loneliness and isolation of human world.

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4.1.2 Capitalization and decapitalization

The creative use of capitalization and decapitalization deserves special attention in Cummings' poems. What is truly special about this technique is to capitalize what is supposed to be decapitalized and to decapitalize what is supposed to be capitalized in conventional rules. Ample examples can be found in his poems. For instance, in E. E. Cummings'poem "writhe and" (Cummings, 1994, p.61):
…
collision
collapse   As
peacefully,
lifted
into the awful beauty
                    of sunset
                    the young city

"As" is capitalized at the end of line where it is supposed to be decapitalized so that the clause introduced by "as" emphasizing the peaceful scene of sunset in the young city is foregrounded.

4.1.3 Punctuation

Being one of the most important elements in writing, punctuation includes the use of all the necessary symbols and marks like a comma, colon, semicolon, period, hyphen, parenthesis, dash, ellipsis, blank, question mark and exclamation point.

The function of punctuation in poetry lies in the following aspects. Primarily from the conventional perspective, it is used to clarify meanings and avoid ambiguities by separating or joining together words, phrases, clauses, sentences or units of meaning. On the other hand, the unconventional way of using punctuation is capable of dragging the readers into and having the readers engrossed in the usually mysterious and imaginative literary world built by the poets.

In Cummings'poetry, the eccentric treatment of punctuation lies in the excessive uses of parenthesis. For instance, in his poem "when life is quite through with" (Cummings, 1994, p.11):

> when love's had his tears out,
> perhaps shall pass
> a million years
> (while a bee dozes
> on the poppies, the dears;
> when all's done and said, and
> under the grass
> lies her head
> by oaks and roses
> deliberated.)

By inserting the sentence into a parenthesis, Cummings intended to suggest the eternal pain of the unrequited love extending a million years regardless of the words he had said and efforts he had made in winning for her heart.

4.2 Lexical deviation

Lexical deviation shall be placed in the central position of linguistic deviation since morphemes are commonly regarded as the smallest meaningful units of language. In the lexical level, linguistic deviation is represented by neologism. According to Leech, "Neologism, or the invention of new 'words' is one of the most obvious ways in which a poet may exceed the normal resources of language." (Leech, 1969, p.42) The newly created words are called the "nonce-formations" since they are created solely for a particular and unique situation instead of the purpose of enlarging the English vocabulary. Besides poets, reporters are also known for the use of neologism for eye-catching effects.

Contrary to their motives, the nonce-formations by the poets are more colloquial than flaring since their masterpieces are supposed to be read, judged, memorized and put to use in oral and written texts by readers, contemporary writers and critics from a historical perspective. However, the nonce-formations are by no means the breaking of morphological rules since there is a customary lexicon system of the English language. What neologism contributes most is the concept or characteristics created alongside the process of nonce-formation.

Being the central form of linguistic deviations, lexical deviation is commonly composed of affixation, compounding and conversion, the degree of novelty differs from situation to situation.

4.2.1 Affixation

As the most effective and productive means of enriching the English vocabulary, the use of affixation for the nonce-formation includes prefixation and suffixation.

Prefixation is the attachment of a prefix to the beginning of a word or morpheme that is already existed in accordance with morphological rules. Take the prefix "un" as an example. Usually, it is added to a verb with the following rule: Un+Verb. However, in Cummings' poem "if learned darkness from our searched world"(Cummings, 1994, p.213), "un" is added to an abstract noun: should wrest the rare **unwisdom** of thy eyes. Here "wisdom" is used to describe the state of eyes and "unwisdom" is creatively coined by the poet as an abstract noun denoting the property of haziness.

Suffixation is the attachment of a suffix to the end of a word or morpheme that is already existed in the vocabulary. Take the suffix "ly" as an example. It is commonly added to the end of an adverb or adjective with the following rule: adv./adj.+ly. However, in Cummings'poem "if i should sleep with a lady called death" (Cummings, 1994, p.214), "ly" is attached to the end of a gerund:

> Seeing how the limp huddling string
> of your smile over his body squirms
> **kissingly**, i will bring you every spring
> handfuls of little normal worms.

By adding the suffix "ly" to the gerund "kissing", Cummings intended to imply a newly-formed concept of affectionate motion that is tender and soft like a gentle kiss, thus evoking the profound love in readers' mind.

4.2.2 Compounding

Compounding is the means of putting together two or more word items to form a compound word. Compounding can take place in various parts of speech and the items can be joined directly together such as "honeymoon", "handpicked", and "bandwagon". Or, items can be joined by a hyphen such as "forget-me-not" and "not-too-distant". Finally, they can also be separated from one another like "cash cow".

Take E. E. Cummings' poem "at dusk" (Cummings, 1994, p.434) as an example:

> i remark how through deep lifted
> fields Oxen distinctly move, a
> **yellowandbluish** cat

Here the poet invented the nonce-formation of "yellowandblusish" with a pattern of adj+and+adj+ish. By juxtaposing two shades of color in sharp contrast in the form of adjectives, the poet intends to create a visually stunning image amongst the dim backdrop with intense vividness.

4.2.3 Conversion

Conversion, another means of nonce-formation, involves endowing the word with a new morphological function without changing the original form. As a common phenomenon in modern English, conversion enables the shift of different parts of speech. It is fairly common to witness the alternation from verb to noun, adjective to adverb and vice versa. For instance, the word "back" can be a noun, verb, adjective and adverb respectively in the following sentences:

> I can't believe you stabbed him at the back.
> Whatever happens, I will back you against all the others.
> They all rushed forward but I kept back.
> I will be back as soon as I can.

In E. E. Cummings' poem "O Sweet spontaneous" (Cummings, 1994, p.58), the word "spontaneous", originally an adjective to modify a noun, functions as a noun to be modified by an adjective.

4.3 Semantic deviation

Semantic deviation is deemed as the most significant level of linguistic deviation since figurative language is the heart of poetry. Amongst the various subcategories of linguistic deviation in the semantic level are two key issues: transference and honest deception.

4.3.1 Transference

In literary texts especially in poetry, the transference of the meaning of a word to another is so commonly seen that it is often, if not always, taken for granted. The means of transference includes metaphor, synecdoche and metonymy.

Synecdoche is the rule of applying the term for the part to the whole and the general term to the particular. Metonymy is the use of the name of one thing for that of something else with which it is associated. (Leech, 1969, pp.150-152) In actual usage in poetry, however, metonymy is foreshadowed by the power of metaphor despite its condensed form. This section will be devoted to an explanation of metaphor, the primary means of transference.

Unlike similes, which explicitly showcase the tenor which is the thing under discussion, vehicle which is the image or analogue in terms of which the tenor is represented, and the ground of comparison which is the likeness between the tenor and the vehicle (Leech, 1969, p.165), metaphors are implicit in terms of the appearance of vehicle. Their figurative meaning is derived from literal meaning which is associated with or embodies the figurative meaning.

The analysis of metaphor, according to Leech, consists of three stages: a) Separate the literal meaning labeled "L" from the figurative meaning labeled "F" by setting them out different lines and living blanks to be refilled later. b) Replace the blanks by a rough identification of what elements of meaning might reasonably fill the gaps by tentative hypothesis. c) State the ground of the metaphor according to context and judgment. Take the following metaphor in the poem "Resolution and Independence" (Wordsworth, 1807, p.88) as an example:

> The sky rejoices in the morning's birth.
> [a] L: The sky ——— the morning ——
> F: —— rejoices in ————'s birth
> [b] Tenor: The sky [gazes radiantly at] the morning's commencing
> Vehicle: [animate] rejoices in [animate]'s birth

The interpretation of this metaphor can be approached in two dimensions. One is the comparison between the brightness of the sky and the happiness of a person, and the other is the comparison between morning and birth since both are endowed with hope and newness: morning is the beginning of a day and birth is the beginning of a life. By using this wonderful metaphor, the poet vividly conveyed his joyful attitude towards nature.

In "I carry your heart with me" (Cummings, 1994, p.58), E. E. Cummings uses metaphorical statements to compare a girl's beauty to the world, the moon, and the sun. Witness the following lines taken from the poem:

I fear no fate
for you are my fate, my sweet
I want no world
for beautiful you are my world, my true

here's the deepest secret no one knows
here's 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 the soul can hope or mind can hide
and here is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

As the heart cannot break literally only metaphorically, Cummings is portraying the true feelings of love which is never lost.

4.3.2 Honest deception

Another kind of semantic deviation is honest deception which includes hyperbole, litotes and irony. The term "honest deception" is paradoxical in its own right. It is not deception for real. Instead, it is manipulated at will by literary writers not for the sake of deception but emphasizing (Fowler, 1926, p.608). According to Leech, the three are connected since they all in a way misrepresent the truth: hyperbole distorts by saying too much, i.e. a figure of speech of over statement; litotes by saying too little, i.e. a figure of speech of understatement, and irony often implies the opposite of what one feels to be the case. (Leech, 1969, p.166) In this section, hyperbole and irony will be explained.

On the superficial level, the language of hyperbole expresses too much to be taken for real, whereas on the profound level, literary writers intend the readers to believe the words they mean. By means of exaggerating the statement, poets excessively make use of hyperbole in their writing to achieve an extraordinary effect. Apparently, what they express in the exaggerated forms is too dramatic and fantastic to be convincing. Therefore, the interpretation of a hyperbole shall not be considered at face value. Naturally, what readers and critics are concerned about is not the exact and absolute truth or falsity of the expressions themselves but what is implied underneath the surface of the language which is to be interpreted reasonably in accordance with the themes, context, the intuition and inspiration of readers. For instance, in "listen" (Cummings, 1994, p.34), E. E. Cummings explored this technique at the end of the poem:

i came riding
upon a thousand crimson years arched with agony

Clearly, no one with sound judgment would believe it really took the poet "a thousand crimson years" to get rid of the agony induced from sufferings and sacrifices of love but will definitely be impressed and feel sympathetic about the immense pain of the narrator which is exactly the effect of hyperbole.

Like hyperbole which is too fancy to believe in, irony is by no means an indication of genuine feelings since it is used to suggest the opposite side from what they actually sound in the surface. The process of interpretating an irony is like unveiling a mask. The reason why the expressions are to be named as "irony" is to be hypothesized in two dimensions: a) What is seemingly to be hided is intentionally to be discovered. b) What sounds like a compliment or a neutral point of view is actually derogative in nature. Take the poem "Humanity i love you" (Cummings, 1994, p.53) as an example：

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

Although the poet reasserts his "love' for humanity, what is reckoned from the shameless behaviors in full display only intensifies in readers' mind his hatred for the cruelty and selfishness of mankind rather than love, the effect of which has been achieved by irony as expected.

5 Analyses of Selected Poems

Kidder (1979, p.3) appraised Cummings' works as such: "The spatial arrangements of his poems are the work neither of a whimsical fancy nor a lust for novelty. Poetry and art grew, in Cummings' mind, from one root, and while their outermost branches are distinct enough, there are many places closer to the trunk where it is hard to know which impulse accounts for a piece of work. Throughout his life he labored to articulate the relationship between literature and visual arts. A number of his poems deal verbally with visual ideas--not only with transcriptions of visual patterns but attempts to articulate visual thinking and bring into poetry the aesthetic values of the painters." Upon reading the poems for the very first time, readers will inevitably be at a loss for what is implied and conveyed underneath the linguistic deviations. However, after reading between the lines time after time, the answer will unfold naturally like a decoded enigma where the charm of E. E. Cummings'poetry lies. In this section eight selected poems are to be analyzed from three levels of linguistic deviations: graphological, lexical and semantic deviations.

5.1 Poems on love

E. E. Cummings' love poetry has gone through three stages. At the beginning, the poems are full of sensual and physical feelings and attraction for the beloved with bald, explicit expressions and amusingly ironic images. Then, with the maturity of the poetic style, the love poems become more serious, featuring spiritual interaction between the poet and his lover. In the final stage, the poet brought the theme of love to a soulful and noble height, emphasizing the eternity and timelessness of love. Instead of a whimsical state of mind or moment in life, love is surreal, transcendental and metaphysical.

5.1.1 Analysis of "somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond"

somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond
any experience, your eyes have their silence:
in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,
or which i cannot touch because they are too near

your slightest look easily will unclose me
though i have closed myself as fingers,
you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens
(touching skillfully, mysteriously) her first rose

or if your wish be to close me, i and
my life will shut very beautifully, suddenly,
as when the heart of this flower imagines
the snow carefully everywhere descending;

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals
the power of your intense fragility: whose texture
compels me with the color of its countries,
rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes
and opens; only something in me understands
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands

This well-known poem (Cummings, 1994, p.367) in praise of love and lovers is from W[ViVa] (1931).

 The poem is artistically striking in the portrait of the beloved lady whose surreal beauty is emphasized by the foregrounded part produced by the ingenious utilization of linguistic deviations in the following aspects:

First, the punctuation is particularly noticeable in expressing the special feelings for the beloved, evoking the deepest affection and imagination within the readers. In the first line, by introducing "somewhere he had never travelled" yet leaving the sentence unfinished with no punctuation after "gladly beyond", the poet left the reader wondering to what extent the poet is impressed by the "journey". The second line, however, ends with a colon awaiting an explanation on everything a pair of silent eyes can tell. Similarly, the first line of the third stanza as well as the second line in the fourth stanza ends with conjunctions while the anticipated parts do not show up until the beginning of the next line. The readers are constantly pushed forward with intense curiosity about what the poet intends to convey next. Besides, what is within the parenthesis signifies the mysterious and skillful touch of the beloved lady.

Second, the capitalization and decapitalization technique is to underscore the significance of love and the position of his lover. "Spring" in the middle of a line is capitalized to emphasize that the excitement of being seized by love is like being in the best time of the year all the time. The letter "i" appears five times throughout the poem respectively in the first, second, third and the final stanzas. With the decapitalized letter "i" in the first line, the poet is embarked on a happy "journey" to a place where he has never visited before. Amongst the vast mystery he will be involved in, he feels all the more small. In the fourth line as the poet continues to explore the "journey", he is drawn by the extraordinary power of love from which he cannot escape although he fails to touch it in reality. Faced with his lover, the poet himself becomes extremely humble. In the sixth and ninth line, the poet's belittled power of having himself enclosed and opened is easily shattered by his lover's effortless motions of opening and closing. Finally in the seventeenth line, the power of the lover is so infinite that it is hard for the poet to comprehend the reason why he is so easily controlled. Thus, all the decapitalized letters constitute a stark contrast between the humble self and the larger-than-life love and lover and most importantly the supreme position of love and his lover in his life.

Lastly and semantically speaking, the hyperbole and metaphors indicate the power of love. In the second line, even the "silent" eyes of the lover in the presence of the poet are eloquent in that they predict everything that unfolds just as the third line in the final stanza indicates: the voice of your eyes are deeper than all roses. Moreover, it can be inferred from the last two lines of the first stanza that there are something magical in "your most frail gesture" by which the poet is so completely enthralled that there is no way of touching it solely because the distance is too "near". In the second stanza, "your slightest look" will enclose the poet. In the fourth stanza, nothing in the world has "the power of your intense fragility" whose texture renders the eternal beginning and the end of life as in "death and forever with each breathing". More importantly, the metaphors are all the more effective

in expressiveness. In the second stanza, the way spring open the first rose is compared to the way the fingers of the lover opens the heart of the poet. In the third stanza, the poet's completion and satisfaction by love is likened to the heart of the flower's anticipation of snow after a full blossom. The poem finishes with another metaphor likening the gentle rain to the touch of the lady to echo with the second stanza in demonstrating the insurmountable perfection of the lady in his heart.

5.1.2 Analysis of "in the rain-"

in the rain-
darkness,   the sunset
being sheathed i sit and
think of you

the holy
city which is your face
your little cheeks the streets
of smiles

your eyes half-
thrush
half-angel and your drowsy
lips where float flowers of kiss

and
there is the sweet shy pirouette
your hair
and then

your dancesong
soul.   rarely-beloved
a single star is
uttered, and i

think
     of you

This short poem (Cummings, 1994, p.42) is from the *Tulips and Chimneys*, the 1922 manuscripts in the sequence of "*Amores*" depicting all types of love.

In the first stanza, the hyphen connected "rain" and "darkness" shed a hazy hue on the setting as the two are mingled together as a whole. The space between the darkness and the sunset implies the distance of time in between, leaving the readers a pause before moving forward to the focus of the poem--

the poet's yearning for his beloved against the setting sun in the misty rain. The ending with the conjunction "and" aroused attention and curiosity. The three words "think of you" alone as a single line emphasize the theme of this poem.

In the following four stanzas, a series of extended metaphor indicate the poet's pure and innocent love and his wholehearted devotion as he is possessed with love since her images are everywhere and every piece of her extends far beyond the vision to every corner of the city. The face of the beloved is compared to the holy city and cheeks to the street filled with smiles. By separating holy and city while joining together the city and your face, the poet draws closer the tenor and the vehicle unexpectedly. Similarly, the cheeks and streets are pulled together with the same effect. In the third stanza, the poet describes affectionately her beautiful eyes with two metaphors: "half-thrush" and "half-angel". Thrush is a small singing bird. The deep and pure love is evident by endowing the vocal, merry, adorable and angelic property to her eyes via mixing the merits and loveliness of a thrush and an angel. Then, the lover's kiss is resembled to that of a floating flower, indicating the delicately beautiful and graceful lady. The fourth stanza continues to compare the movements of her hair to that of a sweet and shy pirouette. Just imagine how ethereal and elegant her flying and whirling hair can be like. In the fifth stanza, after depicting the vocal and moving trait in her eyes, the poet concludes that her soul is of singing and dancing character by a nonce-formation. In contrast, after a long pause, the poet utters that he himself is rarely-beloved, lonely as a single star in the sky. The resemblance between the poet and the star can be analyzed in two aspects: a) the distance between he and his lover is just like his distance from the stars in the sky. b) Both his conviction in love and the star are constant and steadfast.

The last stanza consists of only two lines and three words, echoing with the last line of the first stanza. However, the graphological pattern is totally different. "think of you" is together as one line in the first stanza while in the last stanza, "of you" is another line from "think". The distance from the last word "i" in the last but two stanza is all the more huge. The different patterns illustrate two attitudes. The former is the beautiful fantasy while the latter is the realization that it is after all a distant dream. Nevertheless, the repetition suggests the firm belief of winning her heart in the end despite the obstacles halfway.

5.2 Poems on life

Cummings'poems on life dwell on the childhood memories of the scenes on Joy Farm and sketches of the urban low-life since they are highly related to the real life experiences of the poet.

5.2.1 Analysis of "in Just-"

in Just-
spring   when the world is mud-
luscious the little
lame balloonman

whistles   far   and wee

and eddieandbill come
running from marbles and
piracies and it's
spring

when the world is puddle-wonderful

the queer
old balloonman whistles
far   and   wee
and bettyandisbel come dancing

from hop-scotch and jump-rope and

it's
spring
and
    the

        goat-footed
balloonMan   whistles
far
and
wee

This short poem (Cummings, 1994, p.27) is from the *Tulips and Chimneys*, the 1922 manuscripts under the sequence of "*Chansons Innocence*". Being the first poem of the sequence, it sets up a cheerful tone imbued with childhood innocence and carefree life just as the name suggests.

In the first stanza, "just" in the middle of a line is capitalized, emphasizing the earliness of spring and the poet's yearning and longing for the season. There is a hyphen between "just" and "spring" yet "spring" is placed in the beginning of the second line, again emphasizing the season of spring which is the theme of this poem. The space after spring invites the reader to get involved in the poet's happy and innocent childhood memories. The nonce-formation "mud-luscious" is obviously the imitation of a child's

language by which the scent of the mud projects right in front of us. Next, the "balloonman", another nonce-formation, can be the man making and selling balloons or the man holding balloons in his hands.

The second stanza is totally about what the balloonman is doing. Apparently, he is whistling alone on the large place of ground.

The third stanza, the balloonman is not alone any more since two children are drawn by his whistles and balloons. The decapitalized nonce-formation "eddieandbill" without space or hyphen in between indicates the two boys are little and holding hands closely together while running happily towards the balloonman. The end of the stanza is again a single word "spring", suggesting its significance.

The unfinished sentence is completed with an adverbial clause of time in the fourth stanza "when the world is puddle-wonderful". Again, the nonce-formation "puddle-wonderful" is children's language, indicating the children playing with each other in the water.

Like the third stanza, two little girls "bettyandisbel" holding hands together come dancing towards the balloonman. The single stanza "from hop-scotch and jump-rope and" seems to be echoing with the fourth stanza. The nonce-formations "hop-scotch" and "jump-rope" are the names for the games they play, all of which display excitement. The shape of text is entirely like the scattering merry crowd on the farm where little boys and girls are running, dancing and playing games. The next stanza places "spring" alone in a single line echoing with the third stanza of the poem for the sake of highlighting the theme.

What is worth special attention is that the "man" in "balloonman" is decapitalized whereas the "Man" in the final stanza is capitalized as "balloonMan". The contrast between the noise of children and the lonely whistle of the balloonman is obvious. "Goat-footed" is another nonce-formation manipulated randomly to indicate the queer, amusing and interesting manner of the balloonman.

The graphological patterns of "far and wee" in the second and final stanzas are different. By separating each word, the poet suggests that the balloonman is whistling louder and harder before his whistle is drowned by the noise of children. Therefore, the whistles extend in length line by line.

As has been discussed above, the poet succeeds in presenting a merry spring scene full of vitality, liveliness and childhood innocence that will be engraved in our hearts and minds.

5.2.2 Analysis of "Paris; this April sunset completely utters"

Paris; this April sunset completely utters;
utters serenely silently a cathedral

before whose upward lean magnificent face

the streets turn young with rain,

spiral acres of bloated rose
coiled within cobalt miles of sky
yield to and heed
the mauve
                of twilight (who slenderly descends,
daintily carrying in her eyes the dangerous first stars)
people move love hurry in a gently

arriving gloom and
see !(the new moon
fills abruptly with sudden silver
these torn pockets of lame and begging colour)while
there and here the lithe indolent prostitute
Night, argues

with certain houses

This poem (Cummings, 1994, p.183) is from & [AND] 1925 under the sequence of "*Post Impressions*". The scenes of sunset frequently appear in Cummings' paintings and poetry. Some of the poems are the direct verbal transcriptions of the oil paintings.

The first stanza creates a solemn and serene atmosphere with a metaphor whereby the way April sunset enshrouded the city of Paris is compared to the way the city is whispering quietly and mysteriously to a cathedral.

In the second stanza, personification is used. The cathedral is assigned the character of a person with a slender and towering figure and a magnificent face. By the same token, the streets are personified as they "turn young" after being washed and refreshed by raindrops.

In the third stanza, the spiraling cathedral flushed by the sunset is compared to a rose against the deep blue sky. Then, the cathedral is personified with a person's mentality and motions in respect of the descending twilight in a darker purple color than the red rose. By using a parenthesis, the twilight is personified with gracefulness and gradual degree when faced with the falling darkness predicted by the appearance of the first patch of stars. The sunset is darkened by the twilight just as the twilight will be darkened by the night. By using different shades of color like "cobalt" and "mauve" and the contrast between lights, the poet successfully creates a world of aesthetic and artistic beauty.

The arrival of night is similarly gentle just like the gradual alteration of colors. However, everything changes with an exclamation mark when the city is completely under the reign of the night, devouring the hustle and

bustle of the busy urban dwellers moving back and forth. Contrary to the previous gentleness and gracefulness, the moon suddenly turns on a touch of silver hue despite the reluctant acceptance of night. The spectacular, serene and solemn spectacle is shattered completely with the arguing noises of prostitutes likened by the cathedral's arguing with the houses. Ironically, the seemingly peaceful and solemn scene of cathedral under the sunset is distorted completely at the end of the poem. The surprising ending created by the irony is possibly a mock of the religion's indolence towards the general public. Or rather, it implies a philosophical and paradoxical doctrine of human world: Contingency is lurked in the world of inevitability while the two are in constant transformations toward each other. Nevertheless, the successful evocation of the emotional conflicts and distortions deserves to be valued.

5.3 Poems on nature

Cummings is a great lover of natural beauty. What Cummings expressed in his poems are on one hand, the harmonious relationship between man and nature, and on the other hand, the conflicts and contradictions.

5.3.1 Analysis of "stinging"

stinging
gold swarms
upon the spires
silver

      chants the litanies the
great bells are ringing with rose
the lewd fat bells
                   and a tall
wind
is dragging
the
sea

with

dream

-S

This poem (Cummings, 1994, p.63) is selected from the *Tulips and Chimneys*, from the *1922 manuscripts* under the sequence of "*Impressions*". Just as the

name of the sequence suggests, the poems can be read as virtually the verbal transcriptions of Impressionistic paintings.

The unique shape of text is designed to make a picture out of a poem of a seaside scene at sunset. The overall composition illustrates the sequence of painting and image making from top to bottom and from far to near. Particularly in the second stanza, the shape resembles to some extent the receding and submerging of sea waves.

In the first stanza, a towering cathedral is described from its top spires. A metaphor is used here comparing the ray of the setting sun alighting upon the cathedral as the buzzing bees flying to and fro, thus creating the unusual visual image of "stinging gold". "Silver" in the last line of the first stanza can be interpreted both from visual and auditory senses while connecting with the chanting litanies in the beginning of the second stanza. It can be the silver color of the bells from the cathedral or the crisp sound of the ringing great bells. The visual function of the "silver" is transferred to the auditory function, creating the extraordinary phenomenon of "silver chants the litanies".

In the second stanza, "great bells are ringing with rose" signifies the fluttering and swaying of flowers in the wind as the bells are ringing. "Lewd fat bells" is another unique collocation suggesting that the big bell's close linking with the fragrant and delicate rose in the wind. In just a few words, the landscape with stillness and dynamism is established. The poet turns his attention eventually to the sea. "A tall wind" is creative in that it renders the imagination of the sea waves splattering the shore in the blowing wind; the sound of the wind, the splattering and the waves are seemingly audible. It not only connects the sea with dreams, but also pulls the readers into the picturesque scene. To assist the expression of "tall wind", the last stanza is separated word by word in a vertical direction.

The last two words slow down the pace of the whole poem by breaking themselves into three parts in a dreamy manner. The capitalized S in the end resembles the ups and downs of the sea waves, splattering and stretching endlessly to the end of the horizon.

Unlike the previous poems, this piece succeeds in creating a pictorial word that impresses the senses by multiple artistic means such as putting together and dismantling fragments and the creative use of words as the expressions of color and light.

5.3.2 Analysis of "mOOn Over tOwns mOOn"

mOOn Over tOwns mOOn
whisper
less creature huge grO
pingness

whO perfectly whO
flOat
newly alOne is
dreamiest

oNLY THE MooN o
VER ToWNS
SLoWLY SPRoUTING SPIR
IT

This poem (Cummings, 1994, p.383) is selected from *No thanks*, the 1935 manuscript under the sequence of "*Initial Dedication*". It is the first poem under the sequence.

  Among the twenty-eight pieces of letters in this poem, the letter "o" appears eighteen times altogether. The switch from capitalization to decapitalization of the letter "o" constitutes the effect of foregrounding in the whole picture with the rest of the letters being the foregrounded part. Clearly, the capitalized "O" is a symbolization of the moon. In the first stanza, all the "O" letters are capitalized whereas all the other letters are decapitalized. In the first line of the first stanza, a full moon is hanging high above towns. Contrary to the people, buildings and everything in the towns which are dwarfed by the moon, the moon is all the more huge and round, shining brightly. The moon appears twice in the first line. The capitalized letter "O" not only imitates the shape of the moon, but wide-open eyes and even mouths of the people, reflecting the excitement, eagerness and anticipation at the sight of the moon and their love of nature. On the other hand, the people are awed by the force of nature. They just stood there, watching the moon with no thought of coming closer to it which remains at the faraway distance. Just when the readers are eager to know what unfolds next, the first line finishes, leaving endless imaginations. The second line contains only one word-- whisper. It is a personification of the moonlight. It seems that the moon is gazing at the people while the people are appreciating the moon both with eyes and the heart. Nevertheless, the connection and communication between the moon and man is virtually silent. The brightness, tenderness and stillness of the moonlight resemble a gentle whisper. People are so mesmerized and captured by the ethereal moonlight that they are touched and seemed to hear the divine whisper from the moon. Though no more words are spoken besides the careless whisper of the moon, the interaction is not affected since they seem to understand each other perfectly well. The poet goes on with the third line after leaving the readers wondering about the content of the whisper. It can be inferred from the third and fourth lines of "less creature huge gropingness" that the people in the towns, having led an isolated life, are lonely and therefore aspire to explore the amazement of the moon, namely the natural beauty. However, they are held back by a touch of hesitation out

of the awe towards nature. Compared with the curiosity and anxiety in the depth of the heart, the people are small from the exterior. The stark contrast between the size of the moon and the people, between what the people feel and what they look like and between what they aspire to do and what they can do are vividly displayed here. Thus, the first stanza concludes with the loneliness of people in towns who are mesmerized by the ethereal moonlight.

The common form of the second stanza might be "Who floats perfectly and newly alone is the dreamiest". The mystery of the moon enshrouded the people while the people are foreshadowed by the moonlight. Though the moonlight is dim and hazy, it is so powerful that the light it casts shines straightly upon the soul of the people and seems to reign over from high above. However, faced with the crowd, the perfection of the moon makes it lonely as people try to eschew from being controlled from time to time.

The normal version of the third stanza shall be "Only the moon over towns slowly sprouting spirit." All the "O" letters are decapitalized while all the remaining letters and the alliterated "S" letters are capitalized. The moon seems to be dwarfed in contrast to the people. People are so immersed in the routine everyday life that they tend to turn a blind eye to the natural beauty even within their reach. Sadly, they begin to lose the interest of appreciating the moon as their initial aspiration displayed in the first stanza gradually fades away. In the end, they drench themselves in the mundane world. Nevertheless, the moon still entails the precious spirit which is sprouting bit by bit in a constant manner.

The verbal pattern follows the pictorial pattern from depicting the moon high above the sky to the people and towns on the ground. Meanwhile, the complex emotional contradictions between the radiant moon and the lonesome people in the first stanza, the lonely moon and the numb people in the second and the ethereal moon and the mundane people in the third stanza are eternally impressive.

5.4 Poems on death

Cummings'attitude towards death was fearless, optimistic and even funny in the first poem volumes such as the eulogy "Buffalo Bill's" and "Dying is fine but Death". However, in the later phases of his literary creation, he became transcendentalist and detached with regard to death primarily with less demanding linguistic deviations.

5.4.1 Analysis of "if i believe"

if i believe
in death be sure
of this

Xin Li and Mengchen Shi

it is

because you have loved me,
moon and sunset
stars and flowers
gold crescendo and silver muting

of seatides
i trusted not,
            one night
when in my fingers

drooped your shining body
when my heart
sang between your perfect
breasts

darkness and beauty of stars
was on my mouth petals danced
against my eyes
and down

the singing reaches of
my soul
spoke
the green-

greeting pale-
departing irrevocable
sea
i knew thee death.

            and when
i have offered up each fragrant
night, when all my days
shall have before a certain

face become
white
perfume
only,
      from the ashes
then
thou wilt rise and thou

wilt come to her and brush

the mischief from her eyes and fold
her
mouth the new
flower with

thy unimaginable
wings, where dwells the breath
of all persisting stars

This poem (Cummings, 1994, p.47) is selected from the *Tulips and Chimneys*, the 1922 manuscripts under the sequence of "*Amores*".

The poem begins with a postulated condition and a confirmation that if he was to believe in the existence of death, there must be something that convinced him. What could that be? The first stanza ends with an unfinished line which is a common technique in Cummings' poem. The second stanza commences with the answer to the previous question: that is because you have loved me. Then it is followed by an inverted hyperbole. The moon, the sun, stars and flowers, tides however enchanting and mesmerizing they are, cannot be regarded as trustworthy nor can they rival the charm of his beloved. The hyperbole is used for a contrast between the previous conviction and the present incredibility. Then a space is left for readers to engross in the contradictory emotions. After the pause, the poem goes on with a sweet reverie like a memoir of a person in the remaining days. All happy memories with his lover flashed back as he reminisced one night when he cuddled with his love one as his heart "sang" with ecstasy. The stanza ends with another hyperbole that further intensifies the poet's contentment as the kisses were so sweet and delightful like stars falling on the lips and flowers dancing on his eyes petal by petal up and down.

The following stanza begins with a personification of the joyful soul with the capability of singing and speaking whose sound reaches far beyond to the "green-greeting", "pale-departing" and irrevocable sea. The nonce-formations, another common technique in Cummings' poetry, here vividly depicts the splattering sea waves. The waves greet the shore with emerald color and depart from the shore with a pale color, symbolizing the transient property. The waves, once gone, never come back. Nothing, even the tides, is eternal. By making "sea" a single line alone, homophony is employed since it can both refer to the sea being described above and the verb "see" meaning "to comprehend" something deep beneath the scenes. "i know thee death." is echoing with the first stanza to suggest once again the fleeting sea, and the period denotes a clear-cut attitude. The archaic form "thee" against the modern language is all the more glaring as if a remote whisper from the past was caught unwittingly.

The remaining stanzas combined sound very much like a testament, and the sea is the reference. When the poet had offered all the kisses and cuddles like those fragrant nights lingering in the memory, the poet was left with pale and meaningless days in front of the significant other. All of a sudden, nevertheless, the poet introduces a sharp turn as the sea ''wilt rise'' from the ashes and ''wilt come to her'' with a pair of divine and magical wings imbued with the breath of the stars in the sky to remove the naughtiness and randomness off her eyes and sealed her mouths with kisses of the poet. If the irrevocable sea waves in the previous stanzas were compared to the imaginable death of the poet, the sea in the last several stanzas was personified with the unimaginable power of rising from the ashes after death embodying the reincarnation of love. The persistence of stars at the end is likened to the everlasting conviction of love which John Keats conveyed in *The Bright Star*.

To conclude, this poem demonstrates the entwined feelings of love and death. The poet's attitude towards death is neither mournful nor pitiful, but rather optimistic. Death is not something to be feared but something to be accepted naturally and understood completely. So long as there is love and lover in the depth of heart to cherish and recall at any time, there will be no regrets and death is not horrible after all.

5.4.2 Analysis of "one"

one

t
hi
s

snowflake

(a
   li
    ght
   in
g)

is upon a gra

v
es
t

one

This poem (Cummings, 1994, p.833) is selected from *73 Poems*-the last volume of Cummings in which the style is less dramatic than previous ones.

Snow and winter scenes are among the frequently mentioned images in Cummings' poetry. "One" is excerpted from *73 Poems* which was the last volume published after his death. This poem can be regarded as a poem on death because "gravestone" can be read as a metaphor signifying death. However, the track of the falling snowflake from the beginning can be read as the path of a lifetime. The path of life consists of three stages. The most radiant part can be youth or middle-age. The symmetrical part on the two sides can be infancy and old age. The relatively huge space and distance between each of the stages indicates there will be years to be transcended between different stages of life. In a highly condensed form, the poem is the perfect outline of life cycle and evolution. The falling of a snowflake upon the gravestone symbolizes the death of a man.

There are two aspects of contrast throughout the poem: the contrast of colors, lights and feelings. The colors are in stark contrast of black and white, the snowflake being the white and the gravestone being black or grey, indicating the contrast between life and death. The contrast of light lies in the comparison between the bright and pure snowflake and the dark and gloomy gravestone, leaving a strong visual impression on the reader. The contrast of feeling, however, lies in the different falling styles of the snowflake.

The conventional form of the whole poem shall be "This one snowflake is alighting upon a gravestone." Evidently, the special design of the shape of text is conducive to the illustration of the theme. The unique spatial arrangement of the poem is that virtually all letters in this poem are in perfect symmetry which implies the equal and balanced forces of life and death. The first line of "one" echoes with the last line "one". It suggests loneliness. At birth, a man is a single entity. At death, a man is alone all the same. Man is brought into the mundane world empty-handed and parts with the mundane world empty-handed. Man comes to and leaves this world all alone and in exactly the same manner as he was initially. The final result remained the same regardless of his previous performances. As pure as the snowflake, man returned to his original being, leaving no trace at all. Nevertheless, one does not need to feel sad about it since it is the reality and the universal truth. Contrary to the immense universe, the individual is no more than a particle. The letter "t" in the second line corresponds with that in the last but two. The "hi" in the third line corresponds with "es" in the last but three. Likewise, the letter "s" in the fourth line and the "v", the "snowflake" and "is upon a gra" correspond respectively with one another. In the parenthesis, "a" and "g", "li" and "in" correspond with one another, "ght" being the axis. Among them, from "snowflake" downward till "is upon a gra" forms is a verbal description of the shape of the snowflake. Together as a whole entity, it is the largest part of the picture. The exceptionally detailed

depiction of the snow is like a close-up and slow-motion techniques. It is the foregrounded part of the whole picture with the rest of the images in the picture turning blurred. The word "alighting" is separated into five parts, scattering one or two letters at each line, indicating the slow motion of the falling snowflake by slowing down the pace of the rhythm. The slanting of the letters indicates the fluttering pieces of snowflake in the winter wind. The vertical movements before the final struggle in the middle part of the poem is like an ultimate dance, desperate and to the heart's content, before bidding a reluctant farewell to the world. Nevertheless, when it is reaching the end, the dance is straightly downward. Without previous struggles, it is beautiful, graceful and calm. Everything spectacular will inevitably return to the common state in the end. The whole picture is pure, serene and solemn. The slow motion of the falling snowflake on the gravestone set against the backdrop of the snow-capped ground is the peaceful and tranquil mood. It is a transcendental and metaphysical attitude towards death after a fulfilled and philosophical life. Just as Lane remarked in his comments: "Only at the close of his life did Cummings approach the lofty tone of the late Goethe or Yeats, facing… death with a dignified but idiomatic simplicity, a distanced but intensely personal vision, and a serene but passionate conviction in transcendence." (Lane, 1976, p.71) The poem altogether consists of eighteen pieces of letters. "It is a born not of senility but of wisdom, a capacity for concise statement coupled with lyric evocation. " (Kidder, 1979, p.220)

6 Conclusion

The language of poetry is the highest degree of literature. The distinctiveness of poetic language, especially modern English poetry, lies in the escape from mediocrity by manipulating at the poet's will linguistic deviations within the limit of communication between authors and readers spiritually, rendering numerous and somewhat controversial interpretations for a single poem.

Endorsed with a relatively large degree of freedom in comparison with other genres of literary creation and an "irrational" mentality, modern English poets on one hand discarded archaic forms and rhyming patterns by retuning to ordinary everyday language. On the other hand, they exhausted the inventions of linguistic deviations in an unprecedentedly unconventional manner to maintain the freshness of language and to prevent their works from being too close to mundane language.

The appreciation of E. E. Cummings' poetry is closely linked with the analysis of foregrounding and deviation, the latter being the most significant means of achievement of the former. In poetry, the foregrounding part is the linguistic deviation and the foregrounded part is the remaining ordinary texts. Amongst the eight types of linguistic deviations, graphological, lexical and semantic deviations are discussed as they prevail in Cummings' poetry.

Graphologically, Cummings explored the unique design of the shape of text, the technique of capitalization and decapitalization, and manipulating punctuation which is the most significant element in writing. Concerning the lexical level, the neologism or nonce-formation invented by the poet through affixation, compounding and conversion has granted the expressions with brand-new properties, concepts and feelings. Contrary to the orthodox words and phrases formed under morphological rules, the neologism is unforgettable with endless imaginations. From the semantic perspective, transference of meaning such as metaphor and honest deceptions like hyperbole and irony are frequently adopted by the poet through overstating or stating the opposite to what he intended to mean and expected to be excavated.

The linguistic deviations in expression and structure in his poems reflect intense affection, internal happiness, pain, struggle, sense of humor and penetrating satire. The process of interpretation is like a soulfully rewarding journey in which an enigma is discovered, approached and solved step by step, linguistic and literature, and art and aesthetics complement and support one another, leading to a bright and promising prospect in spite of the bewilderment and setbacks halfway.

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