A Stylistic Investigation of the Manifestations of Spring in E. E. Cummings: A graphological and morphological analysis

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Abstract

This project undertakes an in-depth graphological and morphological analysis of spring-themed poems taken from revolutionary poet E. E. Cummings’ repertoire. This investigation equates the constant renewal and innovation of language in the poet’s verses with the cyclical arrival of spring with its promise of freshness and rebirth. It will be shown how the joys and wonders of spring are expressed and mirrored in the ludic experimentation of graphological and morphological devices. Furthermore, it will be illustrated how the concept of movement, so characteristic of this season, is being reflected in the distinct images of immediacy and spontaneity that the systematic deviations bring about. It will additionally be evidenced how these stylistic foregrounding techniques not only affect meaning but also affect the readers in that they are challenged to examine the texts more closely and to come up with new interpretations. Finally, the development and changes in the poet’s attitude to his beloved spring will be traced, as will the resulting manifestations thereof in the linguistic and stylistic techniques employed by Cummings.
For the eldest and youngest men in my life

Michael & Ben

∞ my spring ∞
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I. Introduction

Much has been written and said over the years regarding Edward Estlin Cummings (1894 – 1962),* the revolutionary full-time poet and artist. Ranging from the petty details of his upbringing to the more serious forming influences of his adult life, information on this delightfully unpredictable poet has always been forthcoming. Variously lauded and denigrated for his unique individual expression, given short shrift by contemporary critics and hailed a genius by more recent ones, this avant-garde poet has never ceased to court controversy. His inventive writings and artistic interests have been endlessly discussed and dissected.

What can be added today, however, is a note on the legacy he left behind. What survives of Cummings is an enhancement of poetic language, one created by the poet when traditional devices were not enough. Cummings pushed the boundaries of language and wrote in an astonishing range of poetic tones, testimony to his faith in the power of language. Creation was the main objective of his poetry, as was the visual enhancement of the key words on the page. This

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* The poet has been variously referred to, and written about, in the upper and the lower case (e e Cummings vs. E.E. Cummings). It was, at one time, wrongly believed that Cummings himself had had the lower case spelling of his name legalized. Research points to the fact that it was, actually, some publishers who had moved forward this lower case version. Presumably, the poet himself was partial to both varieties although he himself capitalized his name in his signature. In any case, the conventional upper case spelling of the poet’s name is being used here for consistency’s case. (I had previously, in an assignment, referred to the poet as e e cummings, but I am now more comfortable with the capitalised version of his name).
accent on these expressive possibilities of language, uniquely identified as his, was precisely what egged me on to work on this project.

The focus of this research falls upon a sample of E. E. Cummings’ poetry consisting of spring-themed poems taken from different periods in the poet’s career. The chosen poems are regarded as representative of Cummings’ style in general and as reflecting the poet’s feelings about and attitude to spring in particular. The techniques and structures that best support the poet’s attitude and emotional involvement in the topic will be dissected and examined closely.

Various sources have been mined in order to check the number of poems actually written by Cummings throughout his career but there seems to be no unanimity regarding the exact number. Nevertheless, the 2016 publication named *E. E. Cummings Complete Poems 1904 – 1962* edited by George Firmage lists just under a thousand. This is the source used here throughout, the same source in which one hundred and five poems (Appendix 1) treating the subject of spring or April, or both, have been identified. This is nearly eleven per cent of the whole opus, a hefty percentage; one strengthening my thesis that spring was indeed one of Cummings’ topmost inspirations.

A stylistic analysis related solely to graphological and morphological techniques will be carried out with reference to these poems in order to examine the choice of the employment of such linguistic forms and their effect on meaning. Additionally, it will be seen how the creative use of these foregrounding devices, besides throwing light upon the poet’s sentiments, affect the reader both
mentally and psychologically and, additionally, help transmit the poet's emotions directly onto the reader.

Chapter One presents a critical analysis of sources and an evaluative report of information that has been used in this project. This review incorporates an assessment and summary of the literature written over the years by critics and linguists who perceived Cummings through their particular lens and who sought to evaluate their findings. Such a classification has given me a theoretical base for my research and has helped me arrive to my conclusions. This critical synthesis of previous research proved to be indispensable for the nature of my project.

Chapter Two delineates the reasons behind my pairing of Cummings with spring. The relevance of spring for the poet will be highlighted, as will the manifestations of such an association. The links between the joys of spring and the creative use of graphological and morphological devices will be illustrated. It will be shown how movement, an important concept and ever-present in the poet's works, is also reflected through the distinct images that the systematic deviations bring about.

Chapters Three and Four tackle respectively the issues of graphological and morphological deviation as used in the selected verses. In the former, the graphological aspects and deviations in the different poems will be identified, analysed and evaluated. It will be evidenced how these stylistic foregrounding techniques are used for their intensifying effect and how they affect meaning in
Cummings’ spring-themed works. In the latter, the morphological structures and the resulting new word formations will be singled out and assessed. Again, it will be demonstrated how the workings of Cummings’ constructive capabilities empower his spring-scented verses.

Chapter Five discusses the question of Cummings’ development and growth. It tackles the nature and variety of his techniques over the years and outlines the growth achieved by Cummings as a result of his particular vision of language, the world and of nature.

Finally, in the closure, a review of all the considerations embarked upon in this project will be undertaken. A synthesis of all conclusions reached will be presented. In order to strengthen my arguments and in confirmation of all that has been deduced, an experiment carried out on one of Cummings’ better-known poems will be included. This will illustrate the import and bearing of Cummings’ graphological and morphological idiosyncrasies, and will serve, in my opinion, as a fitting conclusion to my in-depth stylistic analysis.

It should result from all the above that, through the defamiliarisation techniques used by Cummings, a shift is created in the anticipated form of perception and a new dimension is revealed, one that challenges the sensibilities of the reader and results in the text being viewed from a different perspective. In our case, the reader, through the movement and dynamism in the use of graphological and morphological devices, should come to view spring/with all beautiful/things (p. 627, l. 10-12) in the same way that the poet rejoices in them.
More importantly, it will be seen how the vibrancy of spring is mirrored in the playful language used by Cummings both graphologically and morphologically. The renewing of the seasons is reflected in the continuous renewal of language; the cyclical reawakening of the world that spring brings its wake is epitomised in the continuous renewal of the tone and mood of the verses as creatively designed by Cummings.

Finally, it will be illustrated how, in the same way that defamiliarisation goes against routine and challenges us to examine the verses more closely and come up with new interpretations, so does Cummings’ attitude to spring reveal a new dimension, grab our attention and change our reaction to the way we have perceived this miraculous season so far.
II. Literature Review

This chapter will discuss the various views over time of critics and linguists relative to Cummings and his works. Special focus has been given to literature that tackles graphological and morphological deviation in general, and that which concentrates on the poet's recourse to such deviation for effect and meaning, in particular.

I am listing the books and papers I have consulted in chronological order, bar the multiple ones written by the same author; in that case, I have listed them together, again chronologically. The primary and secondary sources cited above all help in gaining insight into Cummings, as a person, a poet, an artist, an innovator. Additionally, they help trace his development across the years and indicate how his poetry evolved. The influences that shaped the style of his writing also emerge from these documents. Whether historically or linguistically leaning, they provide a framework for this dissertation.

In his 1931 critical evaluation of Cummings, literary critic and poet Blackmur commented negatively on the poet's 'typographical peculiarities' and posited that they were mostly unimportant and obscured rather than clarified meaning (pp. 52–53). In an essay first appearing in 1930 and later reprinted in The Double Agent, 1935, Blackmur (cited in Arthos, 1943 p. 381) reiterated that Cummings belonged to the cult of unintelligibility. Such was his perception of Cummings' use of language. Earlier on, Wilson (1924) had written at length...
about Cummings’ eccentric punctuation and attributed it to his immaturity as an artist. He described the effect of such punctuation and typography as ‘hideous … ugly [and] very limited’ (pp. 102-103). 1924 had also found Monroe puzzling over the poet’s eccentric typography which, she claimed, irritatingly intruded upon the reader’s mind. She admitted to having taken the liberty of printing him ‘almost like anybody else … with the … generally accepted conventions of the printer’s art’ (pp. 211-215). In 1932, Tate had asserted that Cummings lacked uniformity of style. He opined that the poet hid this defect underneath his ‘famous mechanism of distorted word and line’ (pp. 332-335). He also maintained that typography was external to poetry and something superimposed. Sitwell (1934, pp. 251-257) had labelled such ‘mutilations [as] fraudulent’ and submitted that they were not only superfluous but absurd. In his *Modern Poets: A Critical Introduction* (1960), Rosenthal (p. 150) contended that the poet’s great talent was overshadowed by his ‘narrow range of thought and sympathy, much of it adolescent and poseur-ish’. Matthiessen (1952, p. 118), as Winters before him (ibid., p. 117) who had opined that Cummings showed ‘little comprehension of poetry’, restated that the poet’s techniques ultimately resulted in ‘monotony’ and were the consequence of the poet being overly concerned with his own needs. Kazin (1954, pp. 168 - 169) also rebuked Cummings for his ‘stale rhetoric’ and lamented the poet’s aloofness and ‘mistrust of any audience’.

These dated views contrast singularly with recent favourable interpretations of Cummings’ skills especially with regard to typography. In his latest offering, Crystal (2015) attests to the disproportionate amount of passion generated by a small amount of marks (pp. xii-xiii). He goes on to explain how ‘the poet of
parentheses’ breaks the rules of everyday usage by manipulating brackets, spacing and other punctuation marks to achieve an effect that is ‘semantic as well as pictorially symbolic’ (ibid., p. 305-306). He talks about Cummings’ particular penchant for parentheses and how they are used to great effect and gives an example whereby inverted parentheses frame the poem and bring ‘its end into graphological contact with its beginning’ (ibid.).

Over the years, Cummings’ unorthodox and idiosyncratic use of language has caught the attention of many a linguist and the highly deviant character of his graphological devices has had its fair share of criticism and praise. ‘Defenders and Detractors’ (Maurer, 1959, p. 282) have sought to dissect and appraise Cummings’ achievements. Cummings’ refusal to stick to conventions and his departures from the norm have earned him a somewhat chequered critical reputation: some claiming that his poems fail to satisfy the required canons and established norms, others exalting the creation of a new poetic language - one which motivates the reader and encourages him to take action.

Arthos, a partial supporter of the poet, admitted to the elegance of his punctuation (1943, p. 385) but had reservations about Cummings’ distortion of language (ibid., p. 379). He claimed that the poet’s failures resulted from exaggerations that left the language feeling ‘clumsy [and] insecure’ (ibid., p.377). Arthos attested to some gentleness in the poet's treatment of words but blamed the peculiar punctuation Cummings ‘persistently indulge[d] in’ for the resulting complexities that led to the reader being distracted and antagonised and eventually losing interest in the poem (ibid., p. 387). He opined that the poems
with the most complicated and absurd punctuation were those that mostly fell apart (ibid., p. 388). He submitted that, despite being an intelligent poet, Cummings sometimes suffered from ‘affectation and excess of ambition’ (ibid., p. 386).

Not so, contends von Abele (1955, p. 193). He admits that the wealth of eccentric technical devices used by Cummings can prove to be daunting for the reader and that the poet’s attitudes to language were neither ‘rational [n]or decorous’. He demonstrates, however, that it is precisely these visual displacements in spacing and typography that display the poet’s strengths (ibid pp. 913-919). He clashes with critics (including Matthiessen cited above) who claim that Cummings' poetry ‘lacks a history [and] shows no growth’ (ibid.). And growth is what von Abele talks about, aiming to dispel the inaccuracy of those who claim as much. Von Abele calls graphological deviation, *typographical rhetoric* and describes it as a technique demanding ‘participation of the eye’ (ibid, p. 914). He classifies this technique into eleven sub-divisions giving clear examples of such deviations from Cummings' poetry as he goes along. Regarding the development in general of the poet’s work, he describes his earliest works as having been ‘of perfect propriety’ (ibid., p. 922). He asserts that the seventeenth-century (Cavalier) and the nineteenth-century (Romantic) influenced greatly the poet, whilst the late twenties/early thirties brought about increased invention (ibid., pp. 922-923). Later years saw the thoughts behind the verses becoming acute and defined (ibid., p. 927). Cummings’ final period (1935-1950) was characterised by a movement towards the abstract as against the previous concrete pronouncements (ibid., p. 932). Regarding typography specifically and word
formation particularly, the early 1930's witnessed a sharp rise in the experimental use of these techniques. Fifty poems in that period (as against twenty in his first years) relied heavily on visual displacements in spacing and typography (ibid., p. 924). The late thirties, however, witnessed a decline in such experimenting and Cummings’ work, according to von Abele, started resembling typographically that of other poets (ibid.,). The author opines that towards the end of Cummings’ career, the poet’s typographical impulses were ‘sinking into desuetude’ (ibid., p. 933).

Friedman (1957) examines the artistic qualities of Cummings’ poetic language and does not find them wanting. He deems Blackmur’s critical views (shown above) inadequate and maintains he was reluctant to acknowledge the development and maturation in Cummings’ poetry (p. 1036). He questions Blackmur’s definition of appropriateness and demonstrates how the poet adapts the meaning of words to suit the needs of each and every poem, a feat resulting from a cooperation between the language and the poet as a ‘lover’ of language (ibid., p. 1038). He inspects the disregarded or, worse still, penalised elements in Cummings’ style and establishes their effectiveness and relevance (pp. 1038-1041). Through various examples of different poems, Friedman demonstrates how this special quality of language, which allows itself to be moulded according to the different needs of the poet and his poems, contributes to a work that is ‘public and intelligible’ and a style that is ‘unique and individual’ (pp. 1041-1059).
Another important publication by Friedman (1960) carries a full-scale no-holds-barred critical evaluation of the poet’s poetic career. In this ambitious undertaking, Friedman first undertakes to dispel the indifference of several influential critics, then tries to counter some literary mockery aimed at Cummings (pp. 1-6). He asserts that Cummings’ poetic language is anything but unintelligible and rebuts claims that his experiments do not serve ‘legitimate artistic ends’. He tackles the condemnations that the poet lacks maturity of vision, artistic purpose and variety of forms in an orderly, systematic way ‘focus[ing] the entire study in terms of Cummings’ own values’ (pp. 61-85). What results is a ‘steady development toward maturity’ (p. 4), towards growth and development (pp. 159-184). It is, he insists, by remaining faithful to himself that and by not changing his vision of life that Cummings kept growing (p.160). He highlights the poet’s constant conscious control in his experimentation and innovations (pp. 109, 114) and focuses on the mastery of his medium and material ‘for the needs of the individual poem’ (p. 99). He postulates that the slight arrogance evident in Cummings’ early works was transformed into humility in his later ones and warns that integrity should never be mistaken for immaturity (p. 167). The poets asserts that, despite some flaws, Cummings emerges from this study as a conscious artist, one who commanded his material with intensity, skill and wit.

Yet another outstanding contribution by Friedman (1996) evaluates in depth Cummings’ enterprise ‘in the light of the wisdom of hindsight’ (preface). He explains how Cummings’ poetry contains both modernist and romantic elements (though he was criticised by both elements), with an added emphasis on the
'value of the irrational and intuitive' (p. 4). Above all, the poet explored, more thoroughly than the modernists, different possibilities of language and how typography and punctuation could be handled unconventionally for effect (p. 10). These devices help freshen up otherwise ordinary ideas and stir in the reader an urge to participate in the poem (p. 43). The misconception that his typographical experiments were ‘free, casual and slapdash’ (p. 36) is set right and Friedman points to the amount of effort involved in spontaneity and in getting away from one’s ‘shaping influences’ (p. 37). Classic literature, nineteenth century aestheticism, symbolism and cubism all influenced his work, the latter explaining his concern for fragmentation, juxtaposition and montage (p. 42). Additionally, his life influences, the three months spent in a French detention facility, his failed marriages and his stay in Russia all helped make him an innovator, with typography ranking as his main structural invention (pp. 74-75). Although Friedman talks at length about influences that helped Cummings develop and mature (p. 76), he does not seem to dwell too much, in this particular publication, on how the poet’s particular typographical eccentricities evolved through the years, bar one specific ‘His typography exploded – and then imploded’ (ibid.).

‘Unique and colorful’ is how American poet and critic Mills (1959, p. 433) describes Cummings’ poetry. He adds that since the poet’s goal is to capture and recreate the immediacy of an experience or sensation, we should not be startled by his use of deviant and novel language through which he tries to get as close as possible to what he is actually seeing and feeling (ibid., p. 436). This dependence on feeling and the poet’s individuality (ibid., p. 441), together with his mix of
traditional and innovative (p. 435), opines the author, has won him the title of a
great modern poet (p. 442). For Mills, reading Cummings hardly requires any
preparation since the poet ‘merely asks to be heard on his own terms’ (ibid., p. 
442). We must, therefore, according to Mills, overlook our expectations in order
to enjoy the ‘dazzling performance’ of Cummings’ poetry.

Baum (1962, p. vii) claims that Cummings was indifferent to the poetic
inclination of his time and affirms that the fact that Cummings’ poetry can still
arouse disagreement ‘is a sincere tribute to his essential vitality’. He asserts that
Cummings can neither be reprimanded nor commended for having introduced
visual poetry since its origins date back to the Elizabethan age when
typographical disarrangement was ‘in special favour’ (ibid.). Van Peer (1993, 
p.54) records and illustrates yet earlier evidence of typographical experiments
found ‘in the literature of the Romans, early Christianity and early mediaeval
literature’. Considering these precedents, Baum questions the dissatisfaction of
some critics and raises doubts regarding their condemnation of such bold
creativity as ‘meaningless’ (Baum, 1962, p. ix). The author is convinced that
Cummings’ typographical design ‘reinforces his literary content’ (ibid., p. x). To
this effect, he mentions an experiment carried out by Riding and Graves (ibid.,)
whereby one of Cummings’ poems was restored to conventional shape with
normal spacing and punctuation. This resulted not only in the dissipation of its
impact but in the transformation of its character (ibid.,). This is confirmed by
Riding and Graves themselves (1927, pp. 35-41) in their ‘rewritten version’ (ibid.
p. 37). This finding corroborates Simpson’s claims (shown further on) that, shorn
of graphological deviation, a text loses much of its vibrancy. Cohen (1987, p. 34)
also confirms that without the visual element of poetry, meanings would be missed – after all a poem has to strike the eye, not only the ear.

Marks (1964) claims that although much is known about Cummings’ work as a whole, not enough is forthcoming regarding his individual works (preface) and attempts to rectify that through this publication. He acknowledges the ‘dualism’ in Cummings’ set-up whereby one side of him wrote bright poems celebrating sunrise, springtime and childhood, while another side tackled twilight, darkness and death (p. 123). He recalls how Cummings’ first works shocked and frustrated (p. 21) and how some appeared ‘to have been in a serious accident’ (p. 22). He appeals to reader to ask what the poem is made up of and how it is arranged rather than asking what it says (p. 23). He demonstrates how some of the poems combine the abstract with the concrete (ibid) and in so doing induce us to participate in a meaningful experience. Cummings definitely calculated first impressions and his arrangement of parenthetical material and attention to visual effects is often challenging (p. 27). Much like Mills, (above) Marks urges us to put preconceptions aside and let Cummings direct us as if we were ‘actors in a play (p. 28). He talks of strangeness of lines and anomalies of punctuation that regulate the timing and ‘are highly expressive’ (p. 35) while question marks could suggest ambivalence or indecision (p. 55). The author contends that the way Cummings energetically plays around with sounds, letters and words, often going beyond their dictionary limitations, does not always serve a purpose, but surely adds immensely to a striking display (pp. 59-61). His early poems, opines Marks, indicate that he was never fully comfortable in the traditional mode; he tirelessly experimented to find his own unique combination of the traditional
and the modern (p. 68). Some poems represent ambitious undertakings (p. 77), others deserve to be better known (p. 38); some do not impose difficulties, others are highly abstract (pp. 33-34). Whatever the case, Cummings always insisted that ‘art be intensely alive’ and that poetry resulted from the ‘impingement of a particular time and place upon a creative mind’ (p. 94). Much like the impressionists, he continuously searched for significant techniques of fragmentation and recombination, thus pushing the reader to a prompter grasp of reality (pp. 100-101) while creating a motion that was both ‘an aesthetic principle and a central theme’ in his art (p. 103). As an artist he was, additionally, wary of traditional classifications that ‘organise thought but inhibit perception’ (ibid.) and rebelled against such conventions and expectations through his deviant use of language.

Levin’s influential (1965) paper deals with internal and external deviation in poetry - language that is used in an atypical way, one that ‘constrains us to pause over the expression and reflect upon its form’ (p. 225). He distinguishes between the two aspects of this phenomenon: the ‘reader-response ... and the linguistic structure’, the former being intuitional, the latter resulting through linguistic analysis (ibid.). He further classifies cases of deviation into internal (taking place against the background of the poem) and external deviation (lying outside the limits of the poem) (pp. 226 – 228). He then specifically puts these two aspects to the test against typographic practice in Cummings and then proceeds to phonological, lexical and syntactical deviation. He holds that typography might not be such a significant aspect of poetic language, yet it does offer manifest demonstrations of both principles at work (p. 227). By ‘frustrating’ our
expectations, such devices, being attributes of form (p. 226), call attention to themselves thus producing a stylistic effect.

Stanley (1966, p. 130) describes Cummings as a startling poetic innovator. She explains how, in addition to the three dimensions of language: the aural, the accentual and the temporal, Cummings has added another one: language’s visual appearance on the page (ibid.). Stanley’s paper deals not so much with typographical innovations as with the poet’s ‘imaginative exploitation’ of the fundamental properties of language (ibid.). She notes how Cummings is so acutely aware of language ‘in all its dimensions’ that he gives attention to the tiniest detail ranging from sentences to parts of syllables, resulting to what is felt by the reader to be ‘dramatic immediacy’ (ibid.). She demonstrates how Cummings makes use of language violation for exceptional effective images. Much on the same lines, Marks, mentioned above, has written about the poet’s attention to detail, and his drive for effectiveness and dramatic immediacy (1964, pp. 100-101).

Springer (1967, p. 8).) contends that Cummings’ ideas are mostly unexceptional and not that exciting. It is his medium that literally shouts from the page; consequently, the audience’s attention is drawn by that same shout (ibid.). He submits that the seemingly haphazard use language and page format is, in fact, not an attack on ‘the historical basis of English-language poetry’, but rather, an extension of it (ibid.). He opines that Cummings’ deliberate typographical eccentricities have a purpose, in that they force the reader to participate in the poetic process, eliciting different responses (ibid.). Cummings appears to have
given deep consideration to visual aesthetics where the visual acted in support of the various issues treated in the poem (p. 9). He mentions a stumbling block if the works are approached ‘on a plane of high seriousness’ – since this seriousness is often undercut abruptly in a poem, resulting in the reader losing trust in the poet (p. 10). Springer concludes that the poet’s singular sensitivity to the nuances of language and his experimentation of it makes him an exacting poet – ‘one for a limited audience’ (ibid.).

Kidder (1976) also commented on Cummings’ poetry when reviewing his line drawings appearing in *The Dial*, a then influential American magazine. He compares the shaping and spatial arrangements of his poetry to the visual significance of his line painting and observes that his paintings provide insights into the ‘humor, economy, precision and movement’ of his poetry (p. 471). He draws on Cummings’ choice of subjects and shows how he attains analogous effects in his drawings to those in his poems - ‘condemning what is commonly praised and embracing what is everywhere shunned’ - thereby overturning ‘received notions’ (p. 478). The relationship between drawings and poetry is made stronger in that both often present ‘several disparate images’ leaving the reader/viewer to find the connection (p. 483). The same ‘economy of expression ... and suppression of inessentials’ belong to both categories, showing that Cummings is a professional in both arts (p. 488). As in the careful arrangements of his published volumes, so emerges a similar sense of sequence in his *Dial* publications, denoting a wish to merge contrasting pieces into ‘unified statements’ (p. 498). He views Cummings’ line paintings and poetry as having
one common denominator: both being ‘arrangements ... that [are] less reasoned than felt’.

A second insightful paper by Kidder (1979) tackles the influence of visual arts on Cummings’ eclectic work. According to Kidder, Cummings did not fashion his poetry solely in the context of literary tradition but was aided by the paintings of the first decades of the century when the visual arts were way ahead of the poets (p. 256). Kidder states that while Cummings’ contemporaries never dreamt of violating the ‘sanctity of lines and words and the conventions of printers’, Cummings himself wreaked havoc with words and punctuation and scattered them all over the page (p. 257). The poet-painter, influenced by Cubism, experimented with fragmentation and fusion, chose analysis over synthesis and generally followed the Cubists’ mechanism of ‘reducing objects to theirs planes’, resulting in a combination of ‘simultaneity ... and double meanings’ (pp. 281-283, 287). He demonstrates how the poet's punctuation, by a similar process of such fragmentation and fusion, is also used for visual effects (p. 284). He concludes by emphasising that Cummings’ applied experimentation had a great impact though it might not always have been salubrious. Cummings poetry showed that there existed ‘an aesthetic common to poetry and painting’ (p. 291).

Fairley (1979) contends that Cummings carries to an extreme the novelty and irregularity of verse (p. 205). She argues that a reader requires ‘special knowledge’ to understand the innovative complexities of Cummings' poetry and to discern the balance that lies playfully hidden but is, nevertheless, there (ibid.). This would be in agreement with Springer (1967 p. 10) who opines that
Cummings’ poetry is geared towards a ‘limited audience’. Regarding the ‘apparent chaos’ in some of the works, Fairley reminds us of Levin’s observation that poetry is ‘more unified ... more compressed [and] more novel’ than ordinary language (ibid.). She adds that even when the irregularities function traditionally, ‘the violations themselves are often quite untraditional ones’ (ibid.). She deems the language in Cummings’ poetry to be aesthetically pleasing, bar the verses that generalise rather than actualise (ibid., p. 213). Whatever the case, it is the deviant properties, she asserts, that add to the poetic quality of a poem and contribute to the enjoyment of it (p. 206).

Literary scholars, while having contributed considerably to the understanding of Cummings’ works, have regrettably not devoted enough time to some aspects of his language that show deviancy (p. 214). So argues linguist Cureton in his 1979 study on Cummings’ poetic use of deviant morphology. He reckons that few poets have committed such ‘violence to language with such unerring poetic success’ and considers it a pity that some of Cummings’ deviant language remains unexplained (p. 213). He laments how particularly true this is especially in the realm of morphology and chastises literary critics (including Friedman) who have shied away from providing in-depth analysis of such morphological violations (p. 214). He insists that the few attempts at such analysis have been vague and lacked depth (ibid.). In his in-depth survey of a broad range of deviant morphological uses (pp. 215-243), he demonstrates how Cummings uses and manipulates morphology to produce aesthetic effects and to increase the poetic message (p. 215).
One of the most creative periods of Cummings’ poetic life, according to Kennedy (1979), was June 1916 to January 1917 – a time frame in which he consolidated the style that would become the linchpin of his future work (p. 175). Kennedy goes on to recount how Ezra Pound’s poetic example induced the poet to experiment with visual arrangements (pp. 176-177). Beyond this, Cummings started noting the immense possibilities of playing around with punctuation for the creation of expressive ‘ambiguities and complexities’ (p. 178). Kennedy meticulously chronicles the poet’s stylistic idiosyncrasies that would later become his trademark: the lower-case ‘i’, the effects of capitalising, the arrangement on the page, the absence of a period, and traces their whys and wherefores (pp. 179-186). He explains how the poet practised and tried out ways with language that would ‘push further the visually directive ways of handling verse’ (pp. 182-183). Cummings was forever on the lookout for novel complexities and numerous meanings emerging from different spatial arrangements (p. 183). He drew up charts, compiled lists and carefully noted combinations for becoming proficient in new ways of expression (p. 192). Eventually, again following Pound’s directives against superfluous words, he started being economical with words, ‘even elliptical’ (p. 195). In a short six-month period, Cummings had devised a novel way of writing poetry, poetry that gave a breath of fresh air to the literature of his time (p. 204). The only criticism directed at the poet by the author of this paper is that at times, the linguistic distortions become ‘habitual and fail to offer surprise’ (p. 201). Notwithstanding, opines Kennedy, Cummings remains one of the early twentieth-century innovators (p. 204).
According to Welch (1984, p. 80), Cummings first reduced language to morphemes and graphemes and subsequently reorganised these linguistic units such as to visually represent an experience. He accomplished this, continues, Welch, in the belief that such separation and rearrangement would provide exceptional emphasis to these linguistic fragments and force attention to the spatial elements surrounding them (ibid.). (This is in alignment with the formalist concept of defamiliarisation whereby the artist creates a shift in the anticipated form of perception, and by so doing reveals a new dimension). In fact, claims Welch, Cummings, in the same way that the Cubist painters did with their non-representational work, was attempting to illustrate a fourth dimension within a work of graphic art, one in which ‘the external elements of language [are] juxtaposed in new ways within the jumbled typography’ (pp. 82-87). This claim links perfectly with Stanley’s affirmation (1966, p. 130) that Cummings added another dimension to language, that is, the visual appearance on the page.

Van Peer (1987) postulates that the interpretative act of unfolding Cummings’ poetry should be the result of two ‘complementary operations’, the reader’s knowledge that helps him grasp meaning plus the textual features that help construct meaning (p. 598). These two models for interpretation of texts are the top down schemata-based process where the reader constructs meanings (top) through inference and particular elements in the text (down) – this through his already existing knowledge; and the bottom up text-based one where the reader works his way up a text and where ‘all attention in the reading act goes to the confrontation with the textual structures themselves’ (pp. 598-600). The interpretation of a large chunk of Cummings’ poetry has been made using the
*bottom up* approach This is not totally surprising, considering that any infringement is normally discussed with reference to the text itself (p. 600). Interpretation through the *top down* process is quite scarce and when it is included, it is ‘silently presupposed or smuggled in obliquely’ (p. 601). This is, according to van Peer, a mistaken approach, since ‘neither of these two theories can be accepted at the expense of the other’ (ibid.). Van Peer admits that some defined deviations and lack of clear hints might impede the reading process (p. 604). Another hurdle is the notorious lack of titles in Cummings’ poems.* This is the more reason why it makes sense to apply the second strategy in addition to the first, the *bottom up* approach (ibid.). Van Peer demonstrates how the interpretation of Cummings’ poetry is facilitated through a balance between the two approaches – a balance that cannot be constructed capriciously (pp. 608-609). A good interpretation is one which fits into schemata that are ‘compatible with text itself [but] must also rest on acceptable integration of textual elements’.

Leech (1989) uses the interplay between linguistic form and literary function to demonstrate how a text becomes invested with artistic potential. For Leech, the concept of foregrounding/defamiliarisation is at the heart of such interaction and he shows this to be true through practical examples of well-known and less well-known texts, where the characteristics and meaning potential of the text itself are given due merit. Leech also tackles the different kinds of linguistic deviation, amongst them lexical, grammatical, phonological, semantic, dialectal and graphological (pp. 47-51). He describes the latter, which is the most

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* Most of the poems in the collection do not have titles. For ease of reference, the first line of each chosen poem is being used as the title.
pertinent in our case, as ‘expressive devices, not symbols to be used according to typographic custom’ (p. 47). He recalls how some of his drastic experiments with language resemble ‘coded messages’ (ibid.). Leech goes on to emphasise how the whole significance of a poem can centre on the ambiguity generated by these graphological devices, an interesting ambiguity which would not have arisen had the poet not resorted to unconventional capitalisation and punctuation (p. 48).

The main theme running throughout is that the literary writer’s aim is to use language creatively. Above all, stresses Leech, the meaning in literature has to be studied with reference to the ‘observable patterns of language’ (p. 26).

Leech (2013) writes again about style and foregrounding in literature and provides a linguistic perspective on literary language. He examines the key concept of foregrounding: ‘the meeting point of formal and functional points of view’ (p. 3) and says it is only by ‘applying the methods and insights of stylistics to literary examples’ that we can get a step by step explanation of what they represent. Again, he harps that ‘textual warranty’ is indispensable to literary interpretation (p. 8); a reader is not free to gather from the text whatever subjective interpretations suit him. This ties in nicely with the top down/bottom up approach (van Peer, 1987; Webster, 2001) tackled previously. Linguistic deviation, or ‘the basis of surprising and creative manipulations of the language in literature’ (p. 56), is basic to the creative use of language; it is the creative writer’s object, after all, to exercise ‘poetic licence’ (p. 59). The reader will deem such deviation worth special consideration and will try to find cumulative answers for the foregrounded aspects of a text. Leech warns, however, that there is no prerequisite that such foregrounding be noticed by the reader (p. 61). In
this context, Mukařovský (1964, p. 45) posits that a meaningful pattern is created through the ‘consistent and systematic character of foregrounding’. This links neatly with Friedman’s (1996) claims dealt with above that Cummings consciously exercised a constant control on his seemingly random deviations. The stylistic method advocated by Leech (2013, p. 196) is one that endeavours to be ‘independent of ideologies and value judgements’ and one that builds on ‘how a text conveys what it conveys’ Leech (p. 198) concludes by claiming that an ideal reader would be one who is up to date on all ‘relevant background available in terms of current sources of knowledge and understanding’.

Simpson (1997) introduces the English language through the medium of literature. This publication goes beyond linguistic description in that it acts as a guide to linguistic concepts and techniques giving examples from the whole spectre of language. The form and meaning of words, and the structure and organisation of discourse are among the topics tackled therein. The second chapter explores graphology and morphology in general – and how they work in tandem – and in Cummings’ poetry in particular. In agreement with Leech, Simpson highlights the fact that this visual medium presents the perfect occasion for ‘controlled and motivated ambiguity’ (p. 28). He explains how graphology exerts ‘psycholinguistic influence’ on the process of reading resulting in ‘coherent readings’ (ibid.). Through short excerpts of Cummings’ poems, Simpson demonstrates how productive Cummings’ language is for graphological and morphological analysis and how relevant it is for such ‘linguistic framework’ (p. 44). Simpson maintains that the devices that manipulate the visual medium of language are characteristic of the Cummings ‘stylistic blueprint’ (p. 45). These
foregrounding devices are boosted by deviations from standard usage: morphological techniques that ‘exploit the principles of word formation’ in different ways (ibid.). For clarity, Simpson lists these morphological devices, four in all, in a matrix-like table that demonstrates ‘possible lexical permutations’ (p. 50). He concludes that, once ‘stripped of its key linguistic devices ... the message which it projects is rendered bland and unimaginative’ (p. 53).

Short (1999) examines the use of graphological deviation as an indicator of viewpoint in an excerpt from Irvine Welsh’s Marabou Stork Nightmares. He contends (p. 305) that the reason for such graphological deviation is twofold: to mark style shifts thus helping reader steer through different narrative levels and to symbolically represent up and down movements on the page. He notes the substantial ‘invention and control’ in the way such graphological devices are used (p. 306). This ties in nicely with Simpson (1997) and Friedman's (1996) views mentioned above. He explains how, although deviant graphological effects are more common to poetry, they can be equally effective in prose fiction (ibid.). In his stylistic commentary of the opening passage, Short shows how parts of the text are characterised by ‘syntactic and graphological oddity’ and how the stops and line spacing indicate difficulty and struggle (p. 315). He also highlights a series of ‘graphology-symbolic representations’ as foregrounding devices for the reader (p. 317). These involve an ‘upward movement embedded inside a downward one [or the] symbolic use of type size and related features’ (pp. 317-318). All these foregrounding devices are important factors in viewpoint shifts, simultaneity and ‘extraordinary movements’ in the passage (pp. 319, 321).
Short (1996) introduces us to the 'language of literary texts as the basis for our understanding and responses when we read' (p. xi). He explains how stylistics is concerned with 'relating linguistic facts (description) to meaning (interpretation)' as accurately as possible (p. 5). This publication is rich in textual analysis and exemplification besides being theoretically and methodologically eclectic. A constant interest in foregrounding and deviation runs throughout and Short considers the effects and meanings that are generated in poetry, drama and prose fiction by way of this 'linguistic phenomenon' (p. 11). The whole of chapter 2 (pp. 36-79) is dedicated to different kinds of deviation that can produce foregrounding: discoursal, semantic, lexical, grammatical, morphological, phonological and morphological. Short makes the distinction between internal and external deviation as proposed by Levin (1965): external being 'deviation from some norm external to the text' (p. 59) and internal being 'deviation against a norm set up by the text itself' (ibid.). He dedicates the last chapter (p. 345-373) to proposing ways and means of going about a stylistic analysis, stressing the importance of being systematic and inclusive (p. 356).

By delving deeper into critically accepted interpretations of two Cummings poems, Landles (2001, p. 31) attempts to dispel the 'minor status' granted to the poet by some. He notes the importance of spatial arrangements and syntactical oddities, the compound words, the lack of or extra punctuation (pp. 32-34), and the tendency of poetry in general to incorporate 'multiple, and equally important, readings within itself' (p. 37). While Cummings' experimental work is deemed by some to show rocky and unresolvable 'relations between meaning
and form’, it is in truth these ‘inventions and ambiguities’ (p. 37) that allow the poet to extend language, thereby ‘extend[ing] meaning’ (ibid.) In conclusion, the author claims that although Cummings’ poetry could be seen to play havoc with established norms, it is precisely this that ‘disrupts conventional thinking’ (p. 41) and that allows for the exploration of the limits of language.

Webster (2001, p. 97) says there are a multitude of reasons as to why writers defamiliarise form and content. Defamiliarisation and iconicity both fall under the same umbrella, that of ‘form enacting meaning’... through a variety of semiotic means’ (p. 98). The main difference between the two is that defamiliarisation devices work by ‘making the usual or natural seem unusual or unnatural’ while iconic ones work by ‘making the unnatural (language, for example) seem natural, or motivated’. The former has to do with difference, the latter, with similarities. In fact, Leech (2013, p. 150) labels iconicity as the imitation principle. Visual poetry, as in Cummings’ case, sets up a tension between the symbolic and iconic because both the language system and poetic techniques are being ‘fragmented and defamiliarized by various visual and iconic devices’ including breaks in words, white space and visual syntax (p. 99). It is readers, however, continues Webster, who can make things happen; it is only when activated by readers that the animation can begin (p. 100). In other words, the reader makes the ‘metonymic transposition’ (p. 103) of the words into images. The importance of inclusive top down/bottom up approaches mentioned previously is also hinted at when the author suggests that while texts ‘create boundaries for interpretation’, it is the ‘schematic nature of the images’ that leaves the reader a certain leeway for interpretation (ibid.).
Kirsch (2005) discusses the inescapable influences of Harvard and that of Cummings’ father on the ‘most notorious and beloved child in modern American poetry’ (p. 2, 3) and talks about the poet’s ‘artful reaction’ against both. He believes that such ambivalence affected deeply the poet’s work. He explains how the inspiration of Pound and Lowell could have also impacted Cummings’ ‘playful tinkering’ (p. 2, 5) with language. The poet’s rebellious enthusiasm in persistently urging us to be ‘original, independent, self-reliant’ (ibid.) is evident in all his poetry down to the least fetching one (p. 8). He reckons that even an inexperienced reader would recognize ‘the distinctive shape ... the blizzard of punctuation’ of Cummings’ poetry. Finally, the author emphasises how important ‘the physical dimension of being alive’ was for the poet and how it made itself felt in his deviation and experimentation with language (p. 6).

Leech and Short (2007), describe the means by which the techniques of linguistic analysis and literary criticism can be combined through the linguistic study of literary style. They illustrate this approach by giving examples from texts and extracts of prose fiction written over the last century and a half, thus leading to a better understanding of how effects are achieved through the use of language. In addition, they focus on the developments in the field over the past quarter decade regarding the latest linguistic techniques. The phenomenon of style is first viewed from the author’s point of view and subsequently from the point of view of the reader (p. 31). Variations, levels, aspects and features of style are, naturally, given prominence in a book that spells out the methodology of stylistic analysis. The authors enjoin us not look at choices in isolation but to check the
underlying pattern belonging to the text as a whole (p. 34). The technique of foregrounding is discussed in depth and the authors warn that there is no ‘infallible technique’ for choosing what is valid, since what is crucial in one text might be unimportant in another (p. 60). Internal deviation where ‘features of language within that text may depart from the norms of the text itself’ (p. 44) is also dealt with in a comprehensive and explanatory way. Extended consideration is given to the stylistic effects of such choices and what led the author to express himself in this particular way (p. 110, 111). Leech and Shorts’ definition of foregrounding and deviation and how these features ‘call themselves to our attention’ (p. 60) will assist me in my analysis of Cummings’ works.

‘Typography is precisely the most outstanding level of language’ exploited by Cummings, claims Gómez Jiménez (2011, p. 1) while discussing the importance of graphological devices. She laments the fact that few critics have tackled in depth the importance of typographical deviation. By means of a stylistic analysis focused on graphology, the author illustrates, in two poems by Cummings (pp. 4-7), how punctuation marks, blank spaces and shape help the poet ‘reinforce’ meaning and at the same time aid the reader to construct his ‘mental representation’ (p. 2) of the text. Such techniques bring about defamiliarisation thus ‘subverting our expectations’ and grabbing our attention (p. 7). Gómez Jiménez demonstrates how the use of marks and spaces in a deviant manner carries ‘a special dimension’ in linguistic studies, besides adding meaning (pp. 6-7) and repeats her appeal for further studies.
In yet another analysis (2015), Gómez Jiménez once more expresses her regret regarding the misconception that graphology is neither interesting nor significant and says the object of her paper is to elucidate the linguistic aspects of graphology thereby clarifying its meaning (p. 72). She reiterates that it is the visual appearance of a text that ‘first shapes the way we perceive what we are reading’ (p. 82). Subsequently, she revises some definitions that trace the evolution of graphology and then gives a comprehensive account of the relevant theoretical background – indicating the importance of graphology as a ‘medium for creative expression’ (p. 80). Finally, she discusses notions that help towards the understanding and clarifying of the concept of graphology (pp. 78-82).

Gómez Jiménez (2015) rues again the dearth of serious graphology investigations and calls for more research (pp. 307, 318). Moreover, she argues, one graphological aspect that has been largely ignored by linguists is misspelling and the foregrounding devices involved in Cummings’ unconventional use of spelling (p. 307). This is exactly what Gómez Jiménez sets out to remedy in her paper. By stylistically and methodically analysing some experimental poems by Cummings (pp. 309-317), she reveals that misspellings undoubtedly fortify the content of texts and produce singular effects. She classifies these ‘creative functions’ into four main devices for spelling foregrounding: letter insertion, substitution, omission and transposition (pp. 311, 312). Furthermore, she confirms that such spelling foregrounding devices do not ‘correspond to an arbitrary practice’ (p. 317) as previously claimed in the past. In addition, she comes up with five poetic effects that derive from these devices namely: to represent linguistic varieties, to create puns, to control the reading process, to
indicate interruptions and to represent iconically the visual and aural elements of a text (pp. 312-316). She contends that Cummings’ unconventional stylistic features with their corresponding difficulty could be better understood by readers were further ‘information and tools’ forthcoming. (p. 318).

Mcintyre (2012) discusses, through a stylistics analysis of a Cummings poem, how linguistic form and literary effect are linked and how the ‘striking irregularities in form’ are unquestionably not random (p. 1-2). Labelling Blackmur’s views as dated, he demonstrates how the most foregrounded features are ‘systematic deviations ... that contribute to meaning’ (p. 4), rather than peculiarities. He mentions features of internal deviation where the poem’s language follows convention and these conversely too become foregrounded since they ‘conform to our normal expectations of written language’ (p. 9). He concludes by showing how deviant punctuation identifies key concepts and results in distinct images and movement (p. 10).

It is pertinent to state, at this stage, that this review is far from being exhaustive – one finds a plethora of investigations and assessments on Cummings’ work. Nevertheless, what emerges is that Cummings’ contemporaries seem to have been largely unimpressed, at best, or shocked and repulsed, at worst, by Cummings’ wily ways with typography and punctuation. Such was this barrage of criticism that his long-time friend (and fellow prisoner in their stint in a French prison on espionage charges) Brown (1929, p. 26) was moved to proclaim that conservative critics made ‘no attempt to understand the underlying aesthetic upon which these crisp and brilliant poems are built’. Truth be said, Cummings
was ever the *enfant terrible* and he seemed to court controversy. He held ‘sacred the right of the individual to be individual, speaking and writing as he pleased’ (Gerber, 1988, p. 180). He always made it clear that he would write precisely as wished: ‘it is nobody else’s dambusiness’ (ibid., p. 184). His writings were fashioned, as he reminded his father in a letter dated June 1920 (ibid.), ‘to please myself ... no time for other considerations’ (ibid., p. 185).

Indeed, Cummings ‘preceded his time to such an extent’ that new approaches had to be developed before his creations could be further explored and understood by readers. (Moe, 2010, p. 149). Kirsch (2005) also suggests that Cummings was some years ‘ahead of his generation’ (p. 3), as does Kidder (1979, p. 256-257). Landles (2001, p. 31) acknowledges the need for new approaches that could expose novel facets of the poet’s work and a subsequent ‘re-evaluation’ of Cummings status (ibid.). Leech and Short (2007, Foreword) highlight the revolution in linguistic and literary studies that produced ‘a new stylistics’ [resulting in] critical analyses that contribute directly to literary interpretation and evaluation’. This linguistic scope promises shrewder investigation than was conceivable a generation ago. This last half-century has brought about a ‘revolution of thought’ (Leech, 2013, p. ix) in linguistic and literary studies that has impinged on the way literary texts are viewed. Corpus stylistics: ‘the angle provided by the objective eye of the computer’ (ibid.) has also aided immensely in providing new and exciting insights in the study of discourse.
Aided by this ‘more sophisticated interest’ in literature (Short & Leech 2007, Foreword), later commentators, linguists and critics have acknowledged and applauded the visual displacements in spacing and typography and other associated patterning. Initially, the graphological quirks of visual poetry impacted negatively – with Tate (1932, p. 333) boldly stating that Cummings deviant typography is ‘distinct from style, something superimposed and external to the poem’. It is now fully recognised, however, that the deviation and resulting foregrounding is essential for ‘what is involved in reading and understanding poetry’ (Short, 1996, p. 57). As had happened with painters in the early decades, when their innovative style raised eyebrows, so was the case with Cummings’ poetry. A partial justification for the negative comments would be the fact that historically, poetry was composed to be heard, creating a tradition that even today is hard to dispel. Most artistic devices, including graphological ones, would be nullified in a verbal rendering of poetry, since it is through the medium of print that the visual aspects are brought to light.

The subsequent proliferation of poetry in print led to a revaluation of these devices. More recently, as mentioned above, new techniques for interpretation helped to secure a more valid interpretation of Cummings’ poetry. Gradually, the ‘peculiarities’ (Blackmur, 1931) morphed into ‘unripe’, (Arthos, 1943, p. 380), graduated to ‘startling’ (Mills, 1959, p. 436), rose to ‘delightful’ (Kidder, 1976, p. 504) and soared to a ‘hard-won and complex regularity … in technique and style’ (Friedman, 1996, p. 28). As a result, one can say that Cummings is a poet of consequence.
The next chapter will illustrate why the choice fell upon spring-themed poems in Cummings’ repertoire to illustrate his effective use of graphological and morphological devices. Subsequent chapters will analyse the importance of spring in Cummings’ poetry with particular reference to the graphological and morphological variations in the elaboration of his concept of spring. The last chapter before the conclusion will trace the development of the use of such devices and the growth of Cummings himself as a poet.
III. The Recurrence of spring in Cummings’ poetry: its relevance for the poet.

Analysts of Cummings’ poetry have talked elaborately about the poet’s passion for nature and his love for the seasons. They have, however, generally seemed to disregard the fact that the theme of spring keeps recurring regularly in Cummings’ works. A preliminary reading of the material gathered, followed by further research, found little mention of the importance of spring for the poet. The only direct confirmation of such focus comes from Friedman (1960, p. 95) who alleges that although winter, autumn and summer do have significance for the poet, it is the season of spring that means the most to him. Friedman further comments Cummings is ‘unafraid of the coming of winter and death because of his confidence in the ultimate return of spring and life’ (ibid., p. 13).

It is on this connection between spring and life and the manifestation of this in the style of Cummings’ poetry that my work will be based upon. The belief that Cummings held a reverence for spring will also be strengthened; it will be shown how the poet viewed this season as the mysterious evidence for rebirth, growth, change, renewal and innovation. More importantly, the link between spring and the graphological and morphological tools wielded in Cummings’ works will be manifested. Cummings confronts spring with a childlike wonder (Rosenfeld, 1940, p. 79) and writes about it dynamically ‘by approximating visually the actual thought, object, sensation being rendered’ (Fergusson, 1950, p. 81). His techniques draw on the art of giving new life, of refreshing tried and tested ideas.
In the same way that his linguistic oddities continuously (with the reader's aid) make language look new, so is the process of being alive eternally renewed each and every spring. It is the celebration of spring with its joy, wonder, aliveness and freedom that perfectly mimics the poet's tireless use of typographical/morphological invention. Contrary to the perception of some critics, who attacked the poet for settling into his signature style and for not developing and evolving further (www.poets.org.), it is in truth this constant reverting to these techniques that parallels the cyclical return of spring. Via the literary effects emanating from the poet's idiosyncratic manipulation of the language the reader can vividly and visually picture the miraculous and magical return of every spring, the 'fertile and life-perpetuating cycle of living, dying, and being reborn' (Friedman, 1960, pp. 18, 23).

The same triumph in the heralding of spring results in the recreation of old concepts. Cummings, necessarily, tackles the again-and-again handled themes and topics other lyricists take on. But the difference, as Munson (1923, p. 9) asserts, lies in the freshness and novelty with which they are apprehended and presented. It is 'the old result stated in new terms' (ibid.), the New and Old things (Spring is like a perhaps hand, p. 210, l. 13-14), that bring about the constant regaining of glamour, of pleasure, of joy: the same concepts that Cummings equates with spring. The definite mark of Cummings' style, contends Fairley (1979, p. 206), is this attractive new layer of polish that the poet applies to language, thus bringing about the freshness and novelty; the same sparkle that applies to the inevitable arrival of springtime: 'a quickening revivifying season' (ibid.) that requires 'inevitable and indispensable' (Baum, 1962, p. x) poetic
violations to do it justice. The excitement of the coming of spring, where: all our night becomes day (l. 18) and when all the mountains are dancing (l. 21) (when faces called flowers float out of the ground, p. 706), is mirrored in the eager and unconstrained deviation from convention in Cummings’ use of language. As we are rightly told in one poem (O Sweet Spontaneous, p. 63): earth answers philosophers, ... science ... religion – only with spring.

In the poem previously mentioned (Spring is like a perhaps hand) Cummings compares spring to a hand in a window carefully to and fro moving New and Old things (l. 12-14). Movement is an important concept in all the poet’s work: Cummings’ visual poetry usually stresses the need for the reader to create movement and life (Webster, 2001 p. 108). This is more telling in those talking of spring, which is a season of development and change, therefore, movement. McIntyre (2012 p. 10) demonstrates, through the analysis of a poem, how systematic deviations are linked to foregrounding and result in distinct images and a lot of movement. The marked distortions where linguistic acrobatics emphasise particular words, phrases or situations, mimic the energy and tone of his subject matter: in our case, spring. His verbal inventions, both visual and aural and his constant manipulation of the appearance of language awaken in the reader sense of vividness, freshness and a sense of awe; the same movement experienced every year with the new arrival of spring.

This famed poem also stresses how this movement comes carefully out of Nowhere ... arranging and changing placing carefully there a strange thing and a known thing here (l. 6-8). This would equate with Cummings’ vigilant treatment
of his medium and material. As Friedman rightly stresses (1960, p. 109), the poet exercises a constant conscious control in his experimentation and innovation. Additionally, Cummings’ typographical experiments were never ‘free, casual and slapdash ... spontaneity requires a great deal of effort’ (Friedman, 1996, p. 36). Springer (1967, p. 9) talks of the profound attention given to visual aesthetics while Marks (1964, p. 27) remarks upon the poet’s calculated considerations to visual effects. Stanley (1966, p. 130) comments upon the poet’s intense awareness of the smallest detail of language and how such awareness permitted him to communicate to the reader a kind of dramatic immediacy. Kennedy (1979, p. 182) notes how Cummings carefully scrutinised language, compiled lists and revised and rewrote poems (ibid., p. 192); sometimes as many as one or two hundred versions of a single poem, as Friedman (1960, p. 99) attests. Simpson (1997, p. 28) highlights the controlled and motivated ambiguity practised by the poet, while Short (1999, p. 306) focuses on the invention and control in the use of such devices. These testimonials would put to rest some mistaken notions and misconceptions that Cummings wrote what came to mind whimsically and carelessly fooled around with words without regard to the linguistic and stylistic consequences.

The celebration of spring is in itself a time of change in nature, a time to embrace what is new and a time of growth and preparation for the next season: ‘The weather changes. The seasons revolve’ (Marks, 1964 p. 39). The promises this season holds are not dampened in the least by the knowledge that it will be repeated year in year out; in the same way that Cummings poetry never ceases to surprise through the constant ‘skewing of meanings and the consequent
recognition that things are just not as one thought they were’ (Ostrom, 1978 p. 65). Just as the expectations of spring bring about a sense of awe and delight, so do these linguistic expectations ‘even in the midst of images of ordinariness – perhaps, in fact, most especially there’ (ibid.).

It is, maybe, this perpetual movement (Moe, 2012, p. 53) that constantly surprises and that stops Cummings’ poetry from ever becoming flat and trite (Moe, 2012, pp. 52-53). It is, in addition, out of ‘that precision which creates movement ... the typographical movement’ (ibid., pp. 53-54) that the season of spring is conceived and shaped by the poet in such a way as to make us feel awake and alive and vibrant. Cummings’ innovation stems from this movement: his revisiting and recycling the same tropes while empowering them with a different twist, thus increasing their possibilities and in the same way keeping them from ossifying (Moe, 2012, p. 52). This is in direct contradiction to earlier critics including Wilson and Blackmur (both cited earlier) who had decreed that the poet’s linguistic means were arid and limited.

Marks (1965, p. 103) contends that motion is an aesthetic principle as well as a central theme in Cummings’ art – the poet himself was willing to admit to this aesthetic intention of the creation of movement (ibid., p. 102). As he famously wrote in the forewords of is 5 (cited in Marks 1964, p. 103): ‘I am abnormally fond of that precision which creates movement’. The visible motion characteristic of the twentieth century must surely have influenced the movement in his works as he strove to find ‘artistic embodiments of the world of motion’ (ibid.). As the poet himself declared, art is a question of being alive
Kidder (1976, p. 471) contends that precision and movement belong to both Cummings’ drawings and his poetry. Three years later (1979) Kidder again emphasised how the poet’s fragmentation and fusion contributed to movement resulting in simultaneity and double meanings. In the former paper, Kidder (1976, p. 483) demonstrates how Cummings’ works often present divergent images leaving the reader free to move along and find the connections.

Short (1999, p. 305) also indicates how graphological deviation helps the reader navigate through different narrative levels while also creating a feeling of simultaneity. In addition, he describes how such deviation symbolically represents upward and downward movements embedded inside each other; what he terms ‘graphology-symbolic movements’ (ibid., p. 317). Such outstanding movements bring about stylistic foregrounding features that, through substantial design and control, enhance ‘the possibilities of form enacting meaning’ (Leech in Webster, 2001 p. 98). One example of such graphology-symbolic effect: when a piece of text looks the concept it represents, is o-p-e-n-i-n-g in (listen), where the hyphenated letters foreground the verb, thus creating the homological effect of the word actually opening up.

It goes without saying that, in Cummings’ poetry, the visual medium of language is also manipulated by orthographical, lexical and semantic deviations: indispensable deviations which foreground aspects that affect meaning and produce the desired aesthetic effects. The idiosyncratic visual-verbal techniques of his poetry are of a highly individual nature. For Cummings, defamiliarisation – making strange – meant making himself and his audience different besides
making his writing different (ibid., p. 224). The present, however, chooses to dwell upon the graphological and morphological elements in the belief that there has been more written on the former and less on the latter in the case of Cummings' work.

Contextually, van Peer (1993 p. 51) opines that the most obvious aspect of Cummings' distinctive verse is typographical and says he finds it remarkable that so little attention has been given to typographical devices in stylistics. This analysis would be an attempt to fill this lacuna. It is also felt, in agreement with Simpson (1997, p. 44), that the linguistic experimentation displayed in some of Cummings' works is well suited to this type of linguistic framework. It is, after all, the eccentric typography and spatial arrangement intended to create special visual effects that are most representative of Cummings' works (www.enotes.com, n.d.). To this effect, Leech (1989, p. 47) maintains that Cummings is renowned for his use of orthographic deviation and visual patterning; 'he uses the compositor's case as an artist's palette'. Leech and Short (2007, p. 105), in agreement with Levin (1965, p. 227), contend that although graphological variation is a somewhat secondary aspect of style, the resulting foregrounding is of stylistic interest and offers good illustrations of internal and external deviation. This is testimony to the 'expressive power of the written symbol' (ibid.).

By conducting a stylistic analysis of the selected poems – with particular reference to graphological and morphological features that point to Cummings' particular style of deviation from the norm – it will be demonstrated how the
poet’s unique structural style and unconventional use of punctuation are in keeping with his treatment of spring and all that it encompasses for him. Such stylistic framework will be used to highlight the foregrounding features within the poems – the ones that stand out because they seem unusual – and what they contribute to the poet’s conception of spring. More importantly, this analysis should also illustrate how this foregrounding becomes the most important, dominant aspect in a literary work. It is pertinent to point out here that the poems are being analysed graphologically and morphologically rather than holistically. Therefore, the analysis and assessment of style will be related solely to this particular variation at graphological/morphological level. This notwithstanding, an effort is made to ensure that, through a systematic analytical technique, the present interpretation is as grounded as possible.

The poems chosen for such analysis and assessment have been lifted from the whole temporal creative arch of Cummings’ work spanning forty years – ranging from his first poetry collection to his last collection printed posthumously. They, thus, represent different phases of his career. This undertaking is carried out in such a manner as to illustrate any development throughout the poet’s productive years. Although the chosen poems treat separate and diverse subject matters, they all share the same overarching theme of spring. Some poems have gained fame and have been praised and criticised endlessly, others are quite obscure and have hardly been touched upon. Some deserve the reputation they have; others deserve to be better known (Marks, 1964 p. 38). Some are threateningly complicated and others overtly simple (Kidder, 1979, p. 94). Some are so riddled with deviances that they cause a linguistic shock (ibid., p. 91), others come
across as quite conventional. Whatever the case, as with all Cummings’ poetry, the reader has to put into play his own resourcefulness if he wants to keep exploring the possibilities of new meaning. As Riding and Graves (1927, p. 37) rightly postulate, the poet has to keep writing in novel ways in order to get fresh responses from his readers. Close examination of the graphological and morphological deviation involved in the chosen poems should reveal ‘an unexpected reserve of new riddles’ (ibid., p. 40) which imitates the freshness and newness brought about by the arrival of spring. In addition, a stylistic investigation of the language of the chosen poems should lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of meaning and value (Leech, 2013, p. 56).

It will be seen how Cummings’ eccentric style, already evident in his initial works, kept its momentum throughout his writing career. It will become obvious that Cummings’ most striking works are the ‘visual ones, extreme in their typographical movement’ (Moe, 2012, p. 54). This goes radically against Arthos’ views, who declared (1943, p. 388), that the poems with the most absurd and complicated typography and punctuation were the ones that fell apart. There exists today (van Peer, 1993, pp. 49-50) empirical evidence to the contrary which suggests that readers experience increased psychological focus in the face of that deviation which disrupts their linguistic expectations. The less foregrounded parts of the text recede into the background while the more foregrounded ones stand out (ibid.). Undoubtedly, the poet’s forte is the poem for the eye: the one that demands that the written words be ‘pried apart to reveal new words ... so as to coerce the eye and the mind into special rhythms of comprehension’ (Dougherty, 1984, p. 96).
The next chapter tackles the graphological deviation found in Cummings’ poems dealing with spring and the effect of such violation.
IV.  Graphological Deviation

The term graphology stems from the Greek words grapho meaning writing and logos translating to theory. So, literally, it means a study of writing. The linguistic meaning assigned to graphology in the Oxford English Dictionary is simply: ‘the study of systems of writing’. Although this is a good basic definition, the actual linguistic rendition of this term is more complex.

Van Peer, (1993, p. 50) refers to graphology as: ‘the graphical representation of language on paper ... and its concrete arrangement (type face, paragraph, arrangement, type size etc)’. Simpson (in Gómez Jiménez, 2011, p. 3) defines it as the ‘visual medium of language [that describes] the general resources of language written system, including punctuation, spelling, typography, alphabet and paragraph structure’. Additionally, he acknowledges that graphology can be extended to assimilate ‘any significant pictorial and iconic devices which supplement this system’ (ibid.). The graphological features of a text determine subtle aspects such as genre and ideology and can carry a pragmatic force that shapes the way we react to a text. They, therefore, play an important part in the folding out of an analysis.

Leech (1989, p.47) terms graphological deviation as the ‘discarding of capital letters and punctuation where conventions call for them, jumbling of words,

* For all intents and purposes, the terms typography and graphology are, in the present writing, being considered as synonymous.
eccentric use of parentheses, etc.’. Leech (2008, p. 55) contends that a feature of language ‘must deviate from some norm of comparison’ to be stylistically distinctive. Cummings fashions new tools out of the accepted ones of his tradition or invents new ones and, by making the usual techniques do new things, he is being deviant in a stylistically original way. He has a completely individual take upon rhyme, meter, grammar, syntax, but, above all, it is, arguably, his typographical dislocation that is his most distinctive characteristic. Friedman (1960, p. 111) actually describes this stylistic technique as Cummings’ ‘most radically experimental device’.

An analysis of the deviant graphological devices found in the chosen poems will now follow. It will be seen how Cummings uses layout and punctuation to help create his theme; the painter in him understands the importance of presentation and he, therefore, resorts to typographical oddities to paint a vivid and exciting picture of spring. Troy (1933, p. 72) outlines how typography performs a ‘dynamic function’, one that visually approximates the ‘actual thought [and] sensation being rendered’. Different kinds of graphological deviations will be listed below and it will be pointed out how such manipulation affects understanding and how it helps the reader construct a mental representation of the text thereby creating meaning.

1. Deviation from the norms of the common use of the parentheses

The case for parentheses is very significant in Cummings’ poetry since brackets appear in the majority of his poems and quite frequently in places where they
don’t have to be. This discrepancy foregrounds the contents and calls attention to the occasionally ‘ambiguous relationship between the material within and without the parenthesis’ (Marks, 1964, p. 87).

Treating parentheses as a poetic device, Tartakovsky (2009, pp. 220-225) divides their usage into seven categories, all of which demonstrate the capacity of brackets to perform crucial poetic tasks. Such use could create an effect of simultaneity or duality, could convey intimacy, protection or control or could be a sign of direct address to the subject. They could also be an effective means of jolting us into paying attention. I believe these are all exploited in our sample of poems, as will be shown.

Cummings’ experimentation with parentheses was already evident in his earlier collections. In a 1918 -19 collection of just ten poems, (Complete Poems, 2016, p. xxxii), two of them, the spring has been exquisite and the (p. 1017) and willing pitifully to bewitch (p. 1018) feature both spring and parentheses. Both display several sets of parentheses and in both, spring is foregrounded since the statement concerning spring is enclosed between brackets. Talking of the latter poem, the use of the parentheses (l. 9-10, 12-14) is meant to keep two ideas running simultaneously, one within and one without the brackets; a foregrounding technique frequently resorted to by Cummings (Friedman, 1960, p. 117). Here, the parenthetical sentence intensifies the normal effect of a sentence and creates in our minds a vivid scene, one that becomes of higher

*This text (edited by George J. Firmage and published by the Liverlight Publishing Corporation (2016) has been used throughout the thesis. Quotations from poems are followed by page number and always refer to this edition.
importance than the rest. Unlike in normal language where the content inside brackets is of secondary importance, in poetry, as Crystal (2015, p. 304) observes, what is inside the parentheses is often more important than the rest.

Four decades later, Cummings was still resorting to brackets for improved meaning. His last collection published posthumously, 73 Poems (pp. xxvii-xxix), particularly (listen) (p.881) is testimony to this. Firstly, the speaker calls our attention and that of his loved one: (listen) (l. 1). He then protects the key words: (leaves;flowers); key words because they mirror the blossoming of spring and confirm that everything is happening for it’s Spring ... when a miracle arrives (l. 19, 24). (laugh dance cry sing) foreground and reinforce the poem’s main theme of love and spring. After all, parentheses visually represent the image of containment and could be said to mirror the joy of spring contained within the poet. This strong belief in the powers of spring is further backed by the affirmative (yes) (l. 25). To be noted also is the lack of spacing before and after the brackets, the punctuation marks both inside and outside the
parenthetical statements and the capital S in spring. These will be discussed in the next two sections. I shall keep reverting to this particular poem (listen), copied above, since it brims with all kind of deviations that bring to the fore the essence of spring.

In between, at all stages of his writing career, parentheses have featured prominently. O Sweet Spontaneous (p. 63) merits a mention due to its important bracketed final statement (l. 19-27) which implies that spring is the answer to all our woes. Through the arrangement of these last lines, the spontaneous vitality of spring is brought to life by the stress on the final word ‘spring’, which in effect seems to spring at us (Marks, 1964, p. 71). The bracketed component following ‘spring’ (l. 8) in somewhere I have never travelled.glady beyond (p. 393), on the other hand, is quite conventional and just indicates a ‘lowering of the voice for an interpolated comment’ (Friedman, 1960, p. 116). Not so in what a proud dreamhorse pulling (smoothloomingly)through (p. 465) where brackets are used to split a word (l. 2). The ambiguous (stepp)this(ing) could be a way of emphasising the chaos of a city screamingly ... hungry for Love Spring (l. 3,8). An interesting use of brackets in reverse is found in sometimes in)Spring a someone will lie(glued (p. 456) where the poem opens with a closed bracket before ‘spring’ (l. 2) and ends with an open bracket before ‘night’ (l. 18). These inverted parentheses frame the poem and bring ‘its end into graphological contact with its beginning’ (Crystal, 2015, p. 306).
Leaving behind the extraordinary way in which Cummings creatively manipulates brackets, other uses of punctuation marks which also help produce pictorial poems which foreground spring, will now be examined.

2. Deviation in capitalisation

Friedman (1960, p. 113) says that Cummings disregards the traditional use of capitals, omitting them where they are normally expected and including them where they are not customary. This, he adds, maximises their effect, helps produce or delay pauses and could also proffer visual duplicates of ideas or of what is being spoken about (ibid.). Pimperl (2013, p. 2) acknowledges that where it involves capitalisation, Cummings simply does not follow the rules. As Cummings himself once told a critic (cited in Marks, 1964, p. 147), he resorted to capitalisation also to break up the way a poem “fell” on the page. Marks (ibid., p. 106) additionally submits that the poet’s use of capitalisation can be at times puzzling.

No less than thirty-eight poems concerning spring have the first letter of the season capitalised, making us deduce that Spring is a concept of utmost importance in the poems. These poems are marked with an asterisk in the appendix. In (listen) (p. 881), the only capitalisation besides Spring is found in the last line (l. 31) where all eight words feature initial capitalisation. This makes the concluding verse heavily foregrounded, giving currency to Crystal’s (2015, p. 328) view that sequences of initial capitals could express ‘Very Special Points’. Such capitalisation would emphasise the idea that nothing can stop the flow and
cycle of love and spring. Here, *Policemen* (l. 31) could be taken to stand for enforcement, meaning no kind of imposition can stop such natural processes. In a text “where lower case is the norm” (Simpson, 1997, p. 45), the use of upper case contributes to the terms becoming foregrounded and gaining importance. Contrastingly, the diminutive *i* (l. 26), one of the hallmarks of Cummings' writing, was considered by some critics to suggest a gesture of humility on poet's side. Cummings himself, however, in a letter to his father had commented: “using such minutiae as commas and small I’s ... my Firstness thrives. I would contend that is just one of Cummings’ idiosyncrasies and true to the spirit of his ideas.

In *look* (p. 1061), *Spring Herself* (l. 16-17) becomes the predominant image in a poem characterised by the use of the lower case; *a new person is alive* (l. 28) and nature is *newly made* (l. 16) all because of the arrival of spring. Spring, *omnipotent goddess* (p. 97, l.1) is given feminine attributes in most of Cummings' poems (e.g. *as for spring she’ll be the first to know* (p. 761, l.7-8), as Fairley (1979, p. 216) justly observes. *Spring*, contrastingly, emerges as a *profound clown in tonight the moon is round golden entire*. *It* (p. 1068, l.27). The *force who laughs behind the sky* (l.26) is a knowledgeable one, a penetrating one who knows all our secrets and desires; one that brings about change. Again, since the poem ends with the capitalised word *Spring*, there is this foregrounding one just cannot ignore.

In *Just*- (p. 29), on the other hand, belongs to the other group of spring-themed poems where ‘spring’ is not capitalised (vide image in concluding chapter). Its importance however emerges from other deviances. Noteworthy in this famous
poem from the 1922 collection *Tulips & Chimneys*, is the lack of capitalisation in the children’s names (l. 6, 14) which suggests a ‘child-like persona’ (Landles, 2001, p. 32) and points to an experience from the point of view of a child. Noticeable also are the only two capitalised words: *Just-* and *balloonMan*. The capitalised and hyphenated *Just-* is one of the ‘puzzling’ instances noted by Marks (1964, p.106) where an interpretation can only be hazarded. One tentative reading could be that is only (just) in spring that children can draw such enjoyment playing, *running* (l. 7) and *dancing* (l. 14). One other version could be that put forward by Kidder (1979, p. 24): the upper case would emphasise ‘a spring which brings about its own inevitable justice’. Whatever the interpretation, graphological deviation is evident and the interesting complexity and ensuing questioning would not have stemmed had the poet resorted to ‘conventional capitalization’ (Leech, 1989, p. 48).

One of Cummings’ later poems, *Life/shuts and &)opens the world* (p. 1107) is bursting with graphological deviations, amongst which the sparing way capitalisation is used. In a poem where the lower case once again dominates, the words *Spring* at the beginning of the poem and *Born* at the end, keep taking us back graphologically to the beginning: a cycle mimicking that of spring. Furthermore, the fully
capitalised *MOVE*, an alternative to other ways of showing emphasis (Crystal, 2015, p. 318) occurs exactly in the middle of the poem. This acts as a bridge between *Spring* and *Born*, attestation of Cummings’ tenet that we are born anew and given “life” (l. 13) every spring and that movement is part and parcel of this process. One could use Cummings’ words in calling this: *the framing ... of Spring (autumn is: that between there and here*, p. 176).

An earlier poem, *Spring(side* (p. 464), is set in pretty much the same devious vein in that it starts with the capitalised *Spring* but this time ends with the capitalised *Death* (another natural cycle following birth). In between lies the fully capitalised *LOVE*, another favourite subject with the poet and one that equates with spring, two themes frequently brought together in various poems. Examples of this marriage would be *springtime is lovetime* (*sweet spring is your*, p. 629) and *Spring)and everyone’s/in love* (*who knows if the moon’s* p. 215).

In yet an earlier poem from his 1926 collection, *weazened Irrefutable unastonished* (p. 269), where *the immortal Spring* (l. 6) is again protagonist and provides sunshine for two old ladies (note the juxtaposition of the immortality of spring with the mortality of humans), Cummings uses unconventional capitalising to convey a visual equivalent of the fingers on two old ladies’ hands. The alternation of
capitals and small letters (l. 3), plus other graphological deviations like the compressed commas and the expansion of the words *fingers*, ‘suggest the appearance and movement of knobbly, restless fingers’ (Friedman, 1960, p. 113). The capitalisation in this word contrasts with the total lack of line-initial capitals and is, thus, further highlighted.

Levin (1965, p. 227-228) explains how the occasional use of line-initial letters present in some of Cummings’ poetry (e.g. *into the strenuous briefness* p. 117, l. 2, *when my sensational moments are no more* p. 152, l. 15,) could produce both external and internal deviation. Since Cummings’ practice is to use lower-case initials even when the verse begins a new sentence, such deviation does not violate only poetic convention which decrees that each line begin with a capital letter (amounting to external deviation), but exploits this convention further by throwing in the occasional capital letter at the beginning of a line (internal deviation). Levin emphasises that such choice is never random; a good example of this would be *Spring* l. 9 (*spring omnipotent goddess thou dost* p. 97) where such deviated form throws the emphasis on the capitalised word.

This takes us to another typical and important deviation used effectively by Cummings, a device through which Cummings is ‘able to regulate the poem’s tempo’ (Lane, 1976, p. 29).
3. Deviation in spacing

Kennedy (1994, p. 6) states that spatial arrangements, besides contributing to meaning could also provide ‘the pleasure of pattern ... linked to the visual form of his work as a painter’. Friedman (1960, p.111) describes this disintegrative use of space as ‘free verse lines ... broken up irregularly, words [that] are joined and split ... the telescoping of a word or the interlacing of several’. He continues to explain how through the manipulation of spacing and lettering, the poet indicates where pauses and emphases should be, with the concluding effect being ‘surprise, climax, simultaneity and immediacy’ (ibid., p. 113). Starting again with the two poems from both ends of Cummings’ career, it will be seen if this is the case.

In *in Just* (p. 29), the compression of words into single units by the removal of spaces results in the children’s names being merged into one another: *eddieandbill* and *bettyandisbel*. The effect here is to render the alacrity and speed and their cheerful readiness as the children come running to the whistle of the balloonman on a spring day. They run so fast in their enthusiasm that they blur into one another and become literally fused together; in Isabel’s case, leaving behind a vowel/syllable in the rush, as Landles (2001, p. 32) notes. Proof of the poet’s joy in spring vividly comes out in the agility of these verses. Further confirmation of this gusto for spring results from the deviation in the spacing occurring three times, and each time differently, in the phrase *whistles far and wee* (l. 5, 12, 13, 21-24). The spacing of this phrase keeps getting wider and further apart as the poem progresses. This could represent the sound of the
ballonman’s whistle getting further away from the children. In a second dimension it could be taken to mean that childhood eventually fades and gives way to adulthood. This interpretation would coalesce with the similar devious spacing occurring with the phrase and it’s spring repeated twice (l. 8-9, 15-17) where again the spacing getting further apart and distributed differently. This would conform to the poet’s belief in the cyclical turn of the seasons and the firm conviction that although the glorious springtime will be soon gone, it will be back again, bringing new surprises in its wake.

In a conventional poem, all verses would start at the left side of the margin. In Just- follows this conventional pattern till the nineteenth line when all of a sudden there is a stop to this regularity. The rectangular line symmetry is broken for the next two verses and then it’s back to conventional shape. This could arguably denote an allowance of movement and space for the ballonman. The right hand side margin also witnesses more and more black spaces as the poem progresses. Landles (2001, p. 33) opines this gives the poem a breathless quality mimicking the children’s breathlessness as they witness the possibilities of spring. Lane (1976, p. 29) suggests that the spatial arrangement runs like a watercolour and theorises that the tabulation of space would prove too harsh a delineation for such a poem which personifies the liberation spring brings with it; after all Spring is not regulated (there are so many tictoc, p. 1094, l. 6). He compares such space to the musical ‘rest’ (ibid.) which allows a pause in the composition, in our case allowing for the music of spring (sonnet entitled how to run the world, p. 417, l. 4) to be heard and the musical white spring (O thou to
wom the musical white spring, p. 154, l. 1) to be felt and the spiritual cry of spring
(when my sensational moments are no more, p. 152, l. 6) to be understood.

This particular poem in Just- has earned the title of ‘poetic decalcomania’
(Frankenberg 1949, pp.155-156) due to the poet being able to place himself in a
personal relation with his material and managing to transfer directly the
emotion to the reader. Through the graphology and organisation of his material,
Cummings preserves the spontaneity of spring and hands it over intact to the
reader. The quality of such poems lies not so much in a poet’s idea but in the
‘significant form’ of a painting (ibid.). These types of typographical devices,
according to Friedman (1960, p.112) are visual in nature but nonvisual in
function, resulting in the figurative transference of qualities onto the reader.

In (listen) (p.881), all verses are placed at the left side of the page creating a
rectangular shape giving an impression of regularity which is also reinforced by
the normative use of blank spaces between stanzas. What is deviant is the lack of
spacing after all punctuation marks, which is typical Cummings. l. 11, 13, 17, 19
all display this dearth of spacing between word and punctuation mark. This
could be an allowance for the amplification of the thoughts therein, since lack of
spacing, as Friedman (1996, p. 10) notes, could prevent the reader from
following a verse rationally, eventually seeing the pattern and grasping the
foregrounded bits. This deviation could also be a ploy to add emphasis to the key
concept, spring. It could also be viewed as ambiguity for its own sake; this visual
medium, as Simpson (1997, p. 28) rightly comments, provides ‘an excellent
opportunity for controlled and motivated ambiguity’. Whatever the case, as
Fairley (1979, p. 205) illustrates, there is ‘almost always a discoverable method to Cummings’ *madness*. Rather than increasing ambiguity, Fairley (ibid., p. 208) views Cummings’ devices as ‘productive ambiguities’, in the sense that they tend to ‘multiply possible meanings’ thus expanding potential meanings.

Marks (1964, p. 70-71) singles out *O sweet spontaneous* (p. 63) for its spatial arrangement on the page, which he says, mirrors the ‘spontaneous vitality of spring’. The almost concrete nature of the layout and the multiple blank lines are used to good effect. Additionally, the density of the lines increases towards the end where it then levels off gently to the last three, where it forces us to a ‘dramatic sense of the poem’s meaning’ (ibid.). Marks remarks how the wide spaces dividing the last three verses function as ‘musical rests of varying length’ (ibid.) which prepare us quietly for the great gift of nature: spring. The typography of the poem where words are not placed in linear and ordered fashion, where lines vary in length do not start neatly below the previous ones and where spacing is odd and seemingly haphazard, indicates that, in the same way that the complications of earth do not hinder the change of the seasons and the
subsequent coming of spring, so is the spontaneity of the poem not restrained by borders and parameters. This echoes the ‘natural and miraculous phenomenon’ (Friedman, 1960, p. 18) of the liberation of spring. The reader is, through these verses, being offered a glimpse of nature ‘reawakened by the irrepressible burst of spring’, a season which ‘triumphs with every rhythmic turn of the year’ (Rosenblitt, 2016, p. 129, 130).

One can surely not resist ending this section with one last example of the ‘playful gaiety’ achieved with spacing in *nouns to nouns* (p. 540) from Cummings’ 1940 collection. Besides the comic puns on the words *noun, non* and *nun*, the poem rests heavily on the comparison between ‘sterile passivity … [and] the magically ecstatic vitality of *sss - - - pring!*’ (Marks, 1964, p. 62). The captivating exposure of the plastic possibilities of the word *wandering* which is divided and spread all over the page with spaces thrown in indiscriminately, could point to the appropriacy of spring activity. The visual symmetry of this construction where the ‘*sin/g*îng mystery of spring could be seen to amount to a sin and the enjoyment thereof an ’*er[f]l*îng’ in the eyes of the puritan *nuns* gives rise to a ‘deliciously naughty sensation’ (ibid., p. p.63) in the reader. The idiosyncratic spacing in *wan d* could be taken to describe the pale nuns (wan) or else could be a further proof of the magic of spring (wand). The outrageous invention where the fusion of words and the lack of spacing result in *untheknowndulous* will be discussed again in the chapter regarding morphology.
4. Deviation at punctuation mark level

The visual effect and meaning of Cummings’ poems is not merely enhanced by word choice, by word manipulation, by word coining and by typographic distortion. Unusual and unconventional punctuation is an integral part of the presentation of his verses. Crystal (2015, pp.87-95) illustrates the way creative authors, including Cummings who broke conventional punctuation rules periodically, manipulate punctuation for ‘semantic and pragmatic effect’ (ibid., p. 94). The semantic effect would be ambiguity or difficulty in understanding while the pragmatic one, unacceptability or unseemliness.

Starting again with the two poems symbolising the end and start of Cummings’ career respectively and then moving on to others talking of spring, it will be observed how Cummings consistently bends and breaks punctuation rules for artistic effect and enhancement of meaning. Crystal (2015, p. 347) explains how there is order to this linguistic art even though some effort might be required for the discovery thereof. ‘Taking liberties’ (ibid., p. 360) with punctuation results in stylistic differences which bring to the fore words and phrases the poet expressly wished to be distinctive.

The hierarchy of the system of punctuation, where some punctuation marks are more important than others and where the full stop is largely regarded as the most important (Crystal, 2015, pp. 107-110), is definitely not observed by Cummings. Not even one period features in (listen) (p. 881); colons, semicolons, commas, dashes and hyphens do the trick instead. Cummings uses them, mostly
unconventionally, to connect grammatical elements or to start a new thought, as Gómez Jiménez (2011, p. 6) rightly observes. –irrevocably (l. 20) comes preceded by a hyphen, standing in a verse on its own. This deviency foregrounds the irreversible cycle of the seasons and the inevitable arrival of spring, an irreversible happening that nobody will stop (l. 30). The directive verb –look- (l. 10) is foregrounded by dashes on both sides of it, while the imperative, come (l. 13) comes highlighted by the comma (without spacing) preceding it. As McIntyre (2012, p.6) comments, the poet could be urging the addressee to join in the celebration of spring and to share in his feelings of happiness. Such interpretation would be further confirmed by the lines run run/with me now’(l. 15,16) and ‘sing for it’s Spring’(l. 19). Furthermore, the words selves,stir:writhe (l. 11) come connected by a comma and a colon and are also foregrounded by lack of spacing between the punctuation marks. McIntyre (2012, p.8) contends that such punctuation foregrounds dynamic verbs in most cases, thus focusing our attention to the sense of dynamism, speed and excitement recurring throughout and perceiving the currents of ‘movement’ occurring in the poem.

The abundance of punctuation in the middle part of the poem is contrasted by the dearth of punctuation in the first stanza (l. 1-6) and the last one (l. 26-30). These stanzas stand out against the central part which is riddled with punctuation. Additionally, seven nouns in the first stanza that read like a list and would conventionally require a comma after each one, come totally devoid of punctuation. This would denote that there is no allowance for pauses and would thus foreground the fact that the poet desired us to read these parts at a fast tempo as against the central part of the poem which needs to be read at a slow
pace. This would confirm Dixit’s conclusion (cited in McIntyre, 2012, p. 8) that when Cummings talks about spring, ‘his poem displays a regular cyclic structure like that of the seasons themselves’. In this context (ibid.), she emphasises that Cummings’ poetry is systematically deviant and in no way arbitrary.

On the other end of the scale, and radically different as regards punctuation is in Just- (p. 29), the symbolic spring poem previously mentioned, loved equally by the audience as well as by Cummings who often read it at public performances with obvious gusto (Marks, 1964, p. 48). This vivacious poem is devoid of punctuation apart from the possessive apostrophes in l. 8, 16 and the hyphens which make up three new compound words: mud-luscious (l. 2-3), puddle-wonderful (l. 10) and goat-footed (l. 20). The first two unusual compounds invented by Cummings are suggestive of a child’s language and have been described by Kennedy (1994, p. 6) as ‘the natural condition that children enjoy’. The poem exalts in this childlike delightful experience with language that ‘bounces and skips like a child’ (ibid., p. 46). These neologisms point to the ‘baptismal quality’ of spring, with the world being newly made (p. 1061, l. 16) by the crude perfection (p. 456, l. 11-12) of this season. There is a sense of spontaneous and spiritual joy shared by the poet and the children alike. As evidenced by the invention of these compound words and as confirmed by Marks (ibid., p. 47), it is the children’s wild abandon to the delight of spring that has influenced the poet’s joyful response to spring. Additionally, the graphological deviation in these words contributes to the reader being able to see and feel vividly the freshness and immediacy of springtime.
In the first decade of his career, Cummings’ ludic experiments with punctuation in his spring-themed poems were mainly concerned with bracket manipulation. An occasional dash, some ellipsis dots and some sporadic commas were also present. It was only in the late 30’s – early 40’s that unconventional punctuation entered into his verses with a bang. Colons, semicolons, hyphens and dashes started fragmenting verses and words and began appearing where one expected them least. *when/from a sidewalk* (p. 471) is a valid specimen of this.

No less than eleven hyphens, three periods, six commas, three colons and four semicolons clutter its twenty-five verses. Line 6 boasts of a hyphen, a comma a semicolon, a colon and a period in quick succession. Possibly, the poet wishes to emulate the *New Spring* (l. 19, 20) with the novelty of his experimentation. Line 15 symbolically stretches out the beggars’ yawn through the fused *yaw:nstretcy:awn* and spring brings about *you-with-me/around(me)you* (l. 23-24). What looks at first glance like apparent chaos in lines 6 and 7, turns out to
‘harmony ... playfully concealed’ (Fairley, 1979, p. 205) that makes sense once the erratic spacing and hyphenating has been seen to. Worth noting is that once love and spring are mentioned (l. 17), the obscure arrangements end abruptly, the crowding of words and lines level off, the pace and density decrease and they are replaced by words uninterrupted by punctuation and by flowing verse and blank lines that seems to mimic the serenity of spring. The only obscurity that remains is the fusion of words in the last three verses, and this is easily explained as the poet’s wish to be one with his love in spring. Talk of obscure arrangements takes us to the last sub-division in this chapter on graphological deviation.

5. Deviation through misspelling

Gómez Jiménez (2015) identified a total of sixty-six poems in the whole collection of Cummings’ works where unconventional spelling is displayed. In the poems that deal with spring and that are being tackled herein, few such cases were identified and there is only one poem: goo-dmore-ning(en (p. 658), where deviation through misspelling reigns supreme and affects the theme of spring. This is one clear case (image below) where it really looks like the text has been involved in an accident, and one has a hard time trying to make out what the poet really meant. So much so that von Abele (1955, p. 918) claims that recognition is difficult when the ‘spelling of words is so distorted’. However, the misspelling therein is not random and is another foregrounding device that produces ‘well-calculated effects’ (Dendinger cited in Gómez Jiménez, 2015, p. 308).
Spelling foregrounding has been traditionally linked to dialect representation (Gómez Jiménez, 2015, p. 309) and in this particular poem the representation of a sociolect matching a lower-class accent has been represented through misspelling. The *wop* (l. 11) is the speaker in this poem. *Wop*, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is a contemptuous term dating from the days of Italian immigration to America. The [www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com) further claims that these immigrants had WOP stamped on their papers, meaning ‘Without Official Papers’. The character’s speech is, in the poem, indicated by spelling foregrounding that represents his particular accent. Examples of this representation are the substitution of fricative for occlusive consonants: *De (the)* (l. 10), the addition of final consonants and syllables: *against* (again) (l. 8), the omission of a consonant at the end of a word: *gointa* (going to) (l. 19), the addition of a vowel in between words: *more-ning* (morning) (l. 1) *nize-aday* (nice day) and the incorrect use of the negative form where the auxiliary is repeatedly left out: *we no strike* (l. 8-9), *he no care* (l. 14-16). But what concerns us most in the present, is the representations of the seasons through
misspellings: *wint-air* (l. 24), *ot-am 9* (l. 25), *sum-air*, (l. 26). It is only spring that is represented in conventional spelling.

What happens here is that the conventional representation produces a deviation against a norm ‘set up by the text itself’ (Short, 1996, p. 59). Unlike the external deviation we have mostly witnessed and which is related almost exclusively to deviation from the rule-system that governs the English language, we are witnessing here internal deviation as described by Levin (1965, pp. 226, 230). Here, the pattern of misspellings created by Cummings especially in the citing of the seasons is suddenly broken. Where one would expect spring to be misspelt in the next line, then suddenly one is jolted by the correctly spelt *spring*. As a result of this internal deviation, spring becomes foregrounded and consequently gains importance in the reading of the verses. The explanation that can be given for Cummings deviating from the pattern he has set up, is that he specifically wanted his favourite season, spring, to be highlighted.

This practice of unconventional use of the spelling of words, as Gómez Jiménez (2015, p. 307) remarks, allows Cummings to reproduce linguistic varieties and to create play on words, a good example being *sum-air*. We can, therefore, conclude that like other graphological tools, misspellings are an efficient tool Cummings used for the reinforcement of the content and meaning and for particular effects.

As has been amply demonstrated, the literary contents in Cummings’ poems are constantly reinforced by Cummings’ original typographic foregrounding. Through these marks, a special dimension is acquired, one that goes beyond the
lexical and grammatical. Such marks, used creatively, add extra meaning to a literary text and make it fresh and innovative all over again. As Munson (1923, p. 10) rightly postulates, Cummings has succeeded in making graphology ‘an active instrument for literary expression’.

What follows is an analysis concentrating on the morphological deviation found in Cummings’ spring-themed poetry.
V. Morphological Deviation

Operating in tandem with these graphological features is a ‘morphological technique which exploits the principles of word formation’ (Simpson, 1997 p. 47). The etymology of *morphology* is Greek: *morph* meaning *shape* or *form* and *ology* being *the study of*. In a purely linguistic context, it is ‘the study and description of how words are formed in language’ (http://merriam-webster.com/dictionary/morphology). The term *morphology* is generally attributed to the philosopher Goethe, who, early in the nineteenth century, coined it in a biological context (Aronoff and Fudeman, 2010, p. 1).

Short (1996, p.52) writes about the way poets can play around with word boundaries to ‘make us contemplate the otherwise unremarked morphological structure of words’. Words can either be broken over line boundaries or alternatively they can run together as if they were one (ibid.). In the first instance we are made to think harder because the foregrounded words are now not one but two (e.g. *in/stead* in *because it’s* p. 826, l. 11-12). In the second instance the combined words make us feel that they are enacting what they mean (e.g. *togethercoloured* in *sometimes i am alive because with* p. 1031, l. 6). In both cases, ‘the significance of his foregrounding would not go unnoticed’ (ibid.). The unexpected use of these parts of speech make ‘new words grow from the everyday words of the language … shed their usual functions and take up new ones … ’ (www.enotes.com, n.d.), and force the reader to a new level of
engagement and concentration and ‘oblige us to examine the entity more closely’ (Leech, 2013, p. 4).

Simpson (1997, p. 47) concentrates on line endings and illustrates how these produce morphological breaks which ‘subvert the reading process by forcing a series of perceptual double-takes’. He lists (ibid., pp. 47-50) four types of devices that produce diverse morphological breaks:

a) Segmentation of a word, with neither of the resulting parts resembling a free morpheme.

b) Segmentation that results in the first element forming a real word whilst the second part does not form part of the lexicon

c) Segmentation which results in the opposite of (b) in the sense that only the second part resembles a free morpheme

d) Segmentation where the manipulation results in each part resembling another morpheme.

In all cases, the manipulation stems from Cummings’ desire to highlight certain words or situation in his verses. This foregrounding, opines Simpson (ibid., p. 47) would be the least productive in the first case since this kind of breakage would not result in any ‘meaningful units’. In our chosen poems, one finds many such examples of this first situation. Starting again from (listen) (p. 881) and moving on to other poems, instances will be sought where neither of the two segments makes sense on its own.
The word *tumbl/ing* (l. 7-8) is divided by Cummings into two separate lines. This points to the foregrounding of the verb as a significant image where the arrival of spring makes things *eagerly* (l. 6) happen and inanimate objects gain human-like attributes. Besides the obvious foregrounding, this device creates what Short (in McIntyre, 2012, p. 7) calls a ‘graphology-symbolic effect’ or when a piece of text looks like the concept it represents. Thus, the verb appears to be *tumbl/ing* from one line to the next. Short (1999, p. 317) also describes such representations as foregrounding devices for the readers, devices that are essential factors in shifts and movements in the text (ibid., pp. 319, 321).

Another example of this homological effect results from the present progressive form of *o-p-e-n-i-n-g* (l. 12), contributing, in its ‘stretched’ presentation, to the ongoing nature of spring which is ‘arriving even as the poet speaks’ (McIntyre, 2012, p. 6.). Another inference could be that with the arrival of spring the poet is becoming more ‘open’ and receptive to the pleasures and demands of spring where a miracle arrives (l. 24). McIntyre (ibid., p. 7) posits yet another interpretation where the foregrounding could suggest that the poet’s *dreams* (l. 13) are metaphorically opening just as the *(leaves;flowers)*(l.13) are physically opening. The deviant punctuation (hyphenated letters), besides foregrounding the verb, creates the homological effect of the words actually opening up. McIntyre (ibid., p. 8) suggests that the hyphens could indicate a drawn-out process, comparable to the slow blooming of flowers.

Another instance of Simpson’s first case is the fragmentation of *spring* into *s/pring* in *nouns to nouns* (p. 540). This interesting poem features several diverse
morphological manipulations and is, in fact, being copied here for reference. Not only is the word *spring* fragmented as described above, but the distance which is placed between the fragments contributes to the illusion that the two words are independent units.

Furthermore, it follows a fused word *untheknowndulous* (made up of four words resulting in a neologism), which in turn follows two sets of fragmented words, which will be tackled in the next paragraph. This makes this last section of the poem heavily foregrounded, again generating a huge emphasis on the wonders of spring. By coining the word *untheknowndulous spring* (p. 540, l. 12), the poet creates a new concept by telescoping tightly together different images generating a portmanteau, a compression of the words *unknown* and *incredulous*. This confirms that although *it’s Spring/-irrevocably* (p. 881, l. 19-20) yet it’s an unknown entity until someone invents an instrument to measure *Spring* with (p. 278, l.28). *Who can imprint her?*- (p. 900, l. 25) and could anything prove the unprovable coming of such a spring/as nobody every imagined? (p. 1079, l. 5-6). After all, *Spring is not regulated* (p. 1094, l. 6) albeit *immortal Always* (p. 471, l. 20). In a nutshell, spring is *what is and what may be/unknown most secret* (p. 456, l. 9-10).
Sticking to the same poem (*nouns to nouns*), reference can be made to the **second** item in Simpson’s list where only the first element looks like a free morpheme. *Wand/ering* is what people tend to do in spring and *sing/g/ular* (besides producing the pun on *sin*, commented upon in the graphology chapter), highlights the fact that the poet considers the season to be singular and unique.

Creative morphological play on the word *singular* appears in several other spring-themed poems. In *Spring(side* (p. 464) *sing/-u/-lar* is divided over four lines (l. 12-16) with other words occurring in between. Preceding *sing*, Cummings places *-birds*) without any spacing in between. Since birdsong is always associated with spring, this is another felicitous reference to spring. The distinctiveness of spring is once again underscored in the same poem where *singular/-ly* (l. 18-19) is differently fragmented.

With regard to the separation of *sing/-u/-lar* (p. 464, l. 12-16) mentioned above, where other words and phrases occur in between morphemes, this is a linguistic phenomenon called ‘tmesis’ (stemming from Greek and meaning ‘a cutting’). This technique whereby elements of words or morphemes are separated by the interposition of other words or phrases, could bring about ‘an unusual stress, giving emphasis to the spatial elements surrounding them’ ([https://sites.google.com/site/peresrusky/e.e.cummings](https://sites.google.com/site/peresrusky/e.e.cummings)). Von Abele (1955, p. 916) terms this process whereby words are broken apart and redistributed in
the interstices of others ‘permutation’. This technique as used by Cummings could result in the heightening of the reader’s ‘aesthetic visual experience’ and could also illustrate ‘overlapping and interrelatedness of events’ (ibid.).

The **third** type in Simpson’s list, which is the exact reverse of the second, occurs in *in* (p. 701) where *re/-new-* (l. 10-11) again points to the renewal of nature and of mankind resulting from the cyclical arrival of spring. This renewal and novelty is referred to in other poems such as *fragrance of newness* (p. 185, l. 7), *New* (p. 471, l. 20), *new* (p. 1089, l. 11), *new magic* (p. 1139, l. 6).

The **fourth** and final item on Simpson’s list is exemplified in various instances in *in* (p. 701) where *no/-one* l. 2-3, *other/-wise* (l. 13-14) and *a/-way* (l. 16-17) are fragmented for effect. Here, both parts of the word are foregrounded, signifying that both segments have ‘special significance’ (Short, 1996, p.52), pointing to the potency of spring, *a mender of things* (l. 5-6). Interesting to note is the fact that Cummings is so convinced about the recuperative powers of spring that in another poem *taxis toot whirl people moving perhaps laugh into the slowly* (p. 1055) he again sees spring as *mending smashed minds* (l. 6).

One particular multi-fragmentation not mentioned by Simpson, but which is captivating and brings in its wake substantial foregrounding is the breaking up of the word *be/ca/us/e* in four segments over four lines (in *because it’s* p. 826, l. 19-22). The poet here argues
that because it’s April and spring (the season of love), the lovers do not remain you & I (l. 17-18) but become we (l. 22). The way because is fragmented brings about the morpheme us (l. 21) which is the synonym of we (l. 22). This doubly emphasises the ‘springtime is lovetime’ (p. 629, l. 3, 27), Spring) and everyone’s/in love’ (p. 215, l. 15-16) motif of many of Cummings’ poems. As light-heartedly expressed by Cummings himself (cited in Sickels, 1954, p. 225), ‘[you do not] add man and woman to make two ... but multiply them to make wonderful one times one’.

Worth noting here is the use of the ampersand & used twice in the same poem and appearing in many of Cummings’ works. This sign is again characteristic of Cummings’ wish to deviate from the norm where one would normally expect ‘the dignity of words’ (von Abele, 1955, p. 917). While the commonest uses of this sign are disambiguation and saving space (Gómez Jiménez, 2011, p. 5), Cummings uses this symbol instead of the conjunction and for making the connection of two elements foregrounded, in our case, you&I and for ‘adding effects that would otherwise be lost’ (Kostelanetz, 1999, p. xx). Cummings mostly resorts to the use of this symbol to connect two elements which seem to have no connection (e.g. Tulips & Chimneys), thus making the two components even more foregrounded, although in this poem this is not the case. As with the employment of the diminutive i, Cummings rejoiced in the original use of the ampersand and derived a ‘supreme pleasure to have done something FIRST’ (cited in Gómez Jiménez, 2011, p. 6)
Following fragmentation, **fusion of words** is encountered. This is the diametric opposite process of fragmentation and is a poetic device yielding foregrounding, used to great effect by Cummings. Short (1996, p. 52) explains how we normally write as if there are gaps between words, a convention which makes it easier to read written words. Words written without gaps could mimic words spoken at a fast pace without pauses. Running words together enables the poet to emphasise certain aspects in the poem. Somewherealloverme (in *on the Madam’s best april the* p. 265, l. 17) and togethercoloured (in *sometimes I am alive because the* p. 1031, l. 7) attest to this appropriate use of such a deviation. Springsmelling (ibid., l. 3) and smelloftheworld (in *and this day it was Spring…..us* (p. 189, l. 3) are even more pertinent examples of this deviation. The poet can literally smell spring and it is like he is inhaling the sweetness in one breath. He savours this aroma repeatedly in other poems, examples of which are the fragrance of newness (p. 185, l. 7) and the world’s smell (p. 189, l. 11).

This takes us to another kind of morphological deviation, one discussed by Cureton (1979, pp. 217 – 242) where **affixes** and **word conversions** violate normal morphological processes and cause the reader to use his ‘grammatical competence to arrive at an acceptable reading’ (ibid., p. 215) of the deviant words. Cureton stresses that deviant morphology is definitely not a minor element in Cummings’ poetry and insists that virtually every poem ‘bears the marks of this technique’ (ibid., p. 214). He rightly notes (ibid., p. 222) how the poet blends morphemes when he is in need of a word with a specific meaning, thus ‘increase[ing] the number of nominal distinctions available to the grammar of English’. He further reiterates that the words resulting from this deviant
morphology are ‘central vehicles of his poetic message [rather than] peripheral rhetorical flourishes’ (ibid.).

Contrastingly, Friedman (1960, p. 105) views such coinages and conversion ‘an important but limited segment’ of the poet’s style. He does, however, acknowledge, that such creative affixing ‘extend[s] and reinforce[s] the range of meaning’ (ibid., p. 107) and that ‘vitality, inventiveness … flexibility’ result. Friedman (ibid., p. 109), interestingly considers this special segment of Cummings’ style to be a treatment of words as if in an inflected language, where the words have case endings. In any event, he alerts us once again to the ‘calculated dislocations’ (ibid.,) which, as is customary with Cummings, are never random or arbitrary. Short (1996, p. 51) further explains how morphemes are the ‘building blocks for words’ and illustrates how deviation is produced at the morphological level by ending an ending or a beginning to a word – prefixes and suffixes that would not conventionally be added. Ample examples of these affixes, together with their effect on the theme developed by the poet, will be shown hereunder.

Starting with Cureton’s study of deviant morphology, and in particular the famous (or infamous) words Cummings chooses to coin, those formed by the prefix un- and a nominal, verbal or adjectival base will be identified. The prefix –un- and a nominal base produce such words as unanimal (p. 661, l. 14) and unlove (p. 808, l. 1) in our choice of poems. While in standard usage, the un-prefix is used as a negative prefix before adjectives meaning the opposite of or not, Cummings uses it unconventionally as a negative prefix before nominal
bases to convert the noun into a verb. Cureton (1979, p. 221) explains how these words become deviant and therefore foregrounded because Cummings has exploited the gap in the English language where no nouns start with –un. Cureton (ibid., pp. 221-222) continues to explain how Cummings uses English morphology to ‘fragment normal reference, [to] increase the number of nominal distinctions [and to] redefine his concept of what a true world should be’. The poet in Cummings sees ‘two distinct realms’ (ibid., p. 222) where the true world is made up of spring, love, birds and the spiritual and timeless, while the unworld is materialistic and mundane and is made up of unlove and unanimal. In this unworld, the perfection (p. 456, l. 11) of spring cannot be appreciated and true love is not possible.

The verbal bases with the prefix –un also accomplishes vital poetic functions. Cummings coins words such as unclose (somewhere I have never travelled.gladly beyond p. 393, l. 5) which are deviant because they bear the ‘adjectival-base meaning of un- with a verbal base’ (Cureton, 1979, p. 221). In the second stanza of our poem which talks about love and the mystery of spring, the poet feels he should not use the strong word shut in verses where: Spring opens/touching skillfully.mysteriously)her first rose (l. 7,8). So he chooses the milder version unclose, preferring to use the non-deviant shut (l. 10) in the following stanza.

Unlike the previous two sets, the prefix –un with adjectival bases are well-formed both grammatically and semantically. Examples from our poems include unswift (will suddenly trees leap from winter and will p. 164, l. 14), unbig (precisely as unbig a why as I’m p. 778, l. 1, 9) and unstrange (conceive a
man, should he have anything p. 447, l. 7). Cureton (ibid., pp. 221-222) explains how Cummings chooses to use such coinage even though their antonyms exist: small and familiar, where the stem is ‘morphologically dissimilar’ (Cureton, 1979, p. 222). Such words are not deviant because they are ungrammatical but rather because they are redundant. Cureton (ibid., p. 224) illustrates how whereas normal usage creates dual distinction: big – small, Cummings’ unconventional usage creates a ‘continuum between the two extremes’: big – unbig- unsmall – small. Once again, the poet has manipulated the language morphologically to trounce ‘normal, referential distinctions’ (ibid.,). In the former poem, the verses following the two instances of unbig provide the antonym of unbig as almost too small (l. 2, 10). Cummings says he feels almost too small for dying (l. 10); he wants to wait for the mercy of perfect sunlight that will blossom: will sing/like april’s own april (l. 12 – 14).

In the context of the prefix un-, one instance of unconventional coinage left out by Cureton seems to be the exchange of the in-(which denotes the opposite form) by the prefix –un. In our choice of poems, this occurs twice, with undigestibly (when/from a sidewalk p. 471, l. 6) and invisible (the people who p. 513, l. 8). As on other occasions, it is clear that Cummings was forever on the look out for new ways of remaking (p. 701, l. 12) the language just as spring remakes what/other/-wise we should/have/thrown a/-way (ibid., l. 12-17).

This section focusing on the deviant use of the prefix un- can be concluded with Friedman’s (1960, pp. 106-107) observation that this device’s outcome is dual. On the one hand, the use of the positive root together with the negative prefix
allows for a more vivid impression (unbig instead of small); on the other hand, as evidenced above and confirmed by Cureton (1979, p. 236), increased conceptual emphasis is produced. Friedman (1960, p. 107) underscores once more the emphatic value of Cummings’ prefixes in his poetry.

Moving to suffixes, which, Friedman (1960, p. 107) argues, form the largest group of coinages, another selection of words that Cummings chooses to coin are –ingly adverbs that are almost all derived from ‘non-gradable participial adjectives’ (Quirk cited in Cureton, 1979, p. 227). Examples in our texts are: sayingly (into the strenuous briefness p. 117, l. 12), kissingly (if I should sleep with a lady called death p. 228, l. 7), findingly and flyingly (the people who p. 513, l. 8, 12) and beginningly (life/shuts&opens the world p. 1107, l. 4). Cureton argues that each time such an adverb is coined, the reader is in turn forced to ‘create a world’ (Cureton, 1979, p. 228) in which phrases such as Spring every/where beginningly/breathes (p. 1107 l. 3–5) are possible. Here the reader is pushed to imagine all the numerous qualities that the combination of Spring and beginningly entails, thus ‘extend[ing], fragment[ing] and differentiate[ing] the base concept’ until it can be graded (ibid.). Cummings is once again exploiting a ‘morphological selectional restriction’ (ibid.) for poetic effect that would otherwise not be obtainable. Friedman (1960, p. 107) concurs and remarks that the use of these participial adverbs helps ‘preserve the presentness and happeningness of his modifiers’.

Besides the –ingly adverbs, Cummings chooses to transform adjectives with the –ly suffix. Such examples from our texts are: goldenly (open green those p. 609, l.
9), *greenly* (*iffamong* p. 621, l. 13) and *crylessly* (*honour corruption villainy holiness* p. 702, l. 13). As Cureton (1979, p. 234) perceives, such conversions are being used as ‘vehicles of poetic metaphor’. Words like *goldenly* and *greenly* are not conventional English words but within the body of Cummings’ poetry, they acquire a certain capacity to become ‘perfectly understandable … [and] no longer so unacceptable’ (ibid.).

An interesting type of word coinage that Cureton fails to mention is the construction of words like *smoothloomingly* (*what a proud dreamhorse pulling(smoothloomingly)through* p. 465, l. 1), which arises from the fusion of two words and the addition of the suffix –*ingly*. The bracketed newly-coined word is, thus, thrice foregrounded. Surely, this is confirmation that Cummings was forever seeking ways of freshening the language and waking it up for us (Friedman, 1996, p. 10) by using techniques that varied according to the demand of his verses. This is one of the many ways in which Cummings investigated ‘the full plastic possibilities’ of language itself (Marks, 1964, p. 117).

Another group of words coined by Cummings are **personal** or **relative pronouns**. Cureton (1979, p. 234) illustrates how the poet nominalises these terms, sometimes capitalises them, and inflects them for the plural, thus resulting in the use of these pronouns as true nouns. Examples from our texts are the conversion of the personal
pronoun me: *Mes (when my sensational moments are no more* p. 152, l. 14) and the transformation of the relative pronoun which: *whichs (what a proud dreamhorse pulling(smoothloomingly)through* p. 465, l. 7). Once again, as Cureton (ibid., p. 235) remarks, the flexing of morphological rules by Cummings results in the overruling of 'normal referential distinctions', in the redefining of the concept of ‘pronoun’ which sheds its constraints, and in the original foregrounding of these converted pronouns which take on an added punch.

Penultimate in the list of such morphological deviation are the **quantifiers** which Cummings converts to nouns by the addition of the suffix –*ness*. Samples of these words from our texts are: *bothness (will suddenly trees leap from winter and will* p. 164, l. 3), *muchness (the poem her belly marched through me as* p. 222 l. 14) and *allness (love is a spring at which* p. 599, l. 6). Cummings foregrounds these converted nouns because he uses the quantifiers as ‘pure nouns with no perceptible restrictions’ (Cureton, 1979, p. 240). In the former poem the *muchness of buds mattered* (l. 14) since they signified that *It was spring* (l. 12). What powers these conversions is the nominalization of the grammatical notion of opposition and distinction (ibid. p. 241). Once again Cummings has manipulated morphology to perform a poetic task.

Lastly, the **verb and adjective conversions into nouns** will be discussed. These are parts of speech which the poet converts to nouns and, in the case of the verb, inflects for the plural with –*s*. One poem features both of these cases: *what a proud dreamhorse pulling(smoothloomingly)through* (p. 465). Lines 12 and 13 feature the conversion of the adjective *beautiful*, the adjective/adverb *only* and
the verb *happens* into nouns, resulting in the verses: *to have tasted Beautiful to
have known/Only to have smelled Happens* (l. 12-13). In this case two factors are
at play. The first is the linguistic one where the poet manipulates parts of speech
morphologically where the conceptual content of the words is nominalised. Cureton (1979, p. 236) argues how through these nominal conversions, there
results a noun which is 'far more dynamic than those acceptable in normal
usage'. Because it's spring, beauty can be tasted, and the happening of the season
can be smelt. This ludic ploy of conversion brings about the foregrounding the
poet desires.

The second factor concerns synaesthetic concepts that could be at play. Gross
(cited in Kostelanetz, 1999, p. xix) terms this technique as used by Cummings ‘a
complex visual and aural derangement to signify emotional meaning’. In this
particular poem, the visual is being transformed into taste: *to have tasted
Beautiful* (l. 12) while feeling is being translated to smell: *to have smelled
Happens* (l. 13). This crossing over of the senses could be attributed to
synaesthetic qualities the poet was endowed with. It is indisputable that the
interaction of language and senses is indispensable in Cummings' message. The
visual preoccupation that stems from his background as a painter could also
have been supplemented by synaesthetic associations. Burrows (2012, pp. 198-
199) contends that the poet’s constant focus on visuality points to idiosyncratic
synaesthetic perceptions. By delving into some of Cummings' poems, Burrows
(ibid., pp. 176-194) illustrates how his poetry undoubtedly incorporated
synaesthetic ideas, although the poet was not necessarily a synaesthete himself
(ibid., v). She, in fact, confirms that Cummings' poetry contains ‘an incredible
trove of synaesthesia’ (ibid., p. 176). Burrows further reiterates that poetic indications of synaesthesia lie in ‘the nexus between sensory experience and its metaphorical representation through language’ (ibid., p. v). In addition to morphological deviation, the ‘author of pictures … draughtsman of words’ (Cohen, 1987, p. 33) resorted to synaesthetic expression to enhance the linguistic and visual aspect of his art. Friedman (1960, p. 88-89) mentions a particular poem by Cummings, one also included in our choice, (the sky a silver, p. 65) where the phrase silver dissonance (l. 1-2), with its combining effects of colour and sound, amounts to synaesthesia.

One particularly endearing and singular conversion fitting for the winding up of this chapter, is the invented verb emerging from the noun April: -but if a look should april me (repeated four times) in Cummings' darling!because my blood can sing (p. 617, l. 6, 11,19, 22). The poem is being copied here for its relevance to the subject matter. The speaker is repeatedly voicing his invocation: if only he could be blessed with the sweet new magic (p. 1139, l. 6) of April, then he would be newly made (p. 1061, l. 16) in the
brim/of Heaven (p. 978, l. 9-10). The miraculous (p. 702, l. 6) dynamism of springtime is, for the speaker and the poet, unparalleled. In this context, Kostelanetz (1999, p. xxii) decrees that the first person voice, in the majority of cases, ‘represents Cummings himself’.

The above has indicated how Cummings manipulated the morphological processes of the English language in a decidedly structured way to create ‘metaphor ... poetic reference [and] aesthetic perception (Cureton, 1979, p. 244). Cureton (ibid., p. 223) has a valid point indeed when he maintains that by not giving enough importance to the morphological manipulation in Cummings’ poetry, critics and linguists have ignored a key aspect of the poet’s creative use of language.

The morphological deviation (as well as the other linguistic deviations) encountered has illustrated how the resulting foregrounded situations stand out as the most remarkable. By using language in a nonconformist way, a linguistic feature becomes ‘highly deviant’ thus eliciting a degree of surprise and calling the attention of the reader (Leech, 2013, p. 14). In this way, the reader is jolted out of a mind-set that expects words to carry familiar meanings and will start to make sense of the newly created words.

It has been evidenced in this chapter how the different contextual morphological factors in our choice of spring-themed poems lead us to ‘different, textually appropriate, interpretations of the same linguistic phenomenon’ (Short, 1996, p. 53). It has also been seen how, together with the graphological features, these
morphological oddities contribute in so small way to the quality of the poems in general and to our spring-themed poems in particular.

The last chapter will deal with the development of Cummings as a poet and the evolvement of the poems themselves.
Cummings’ vision and perception of spring remains largely uniform throughout his whole creative career. No noticeable changes of heart have been evidenced in his feelings towards *exquisite* (p. 101, l. 1) spring and what it signifies for him. His joyous attitude towards spring and the feelings it evokes in him run the gamut from his very first works to his valedictory ones. Time and again his poems laud the season of rebirth, spring. It is as if the poet took upon himself the lifelong solemn function not only of exalting the joy of life that spring brings about but also of transmitting this *fragrance of newness* (p. 185, l. 7) to his readers, sticking assiduously to his stylistic techniques of ‘freshness, originality ... and immediacy’ (Friedman, 1996, p. 73).

Such positive affirmation is evident through key words that are associated with the coming of *spring* and that keep echoing and re-echoing through collection after collection like a mantra: *love, alive, new, birds, flowers, heaven*. Cummings' attitude towards *the small spiritual cry of spring* (p. 152, l. 6) was akin to reverence, which in turn brought about ‘a joyful acceptance and a true natural harmony’ (Friedman, 1960, p. 93). Each single collection has been combed thoroughly and not a single one has been found to be devoid of this type of pairing. Additionally, not one single poem has emerged where the treatment of *spring* was anything but positive.
Further proof of this continued affirmation of spring appears through the personification of this season, again to be found in all stages of Cummings' career. In his earlier collection we come across *the fingers of April* (p. 65, l. 3), *the sharp lips of spring* (p. 164, l. 5), *Spring is like aperhaps hand* (p. 210, l. 1). Mid-career we chance upon *the clumsy feet of April* (p. 325, l. 14) and *Spring … shy* (p. 471, l. 19-20). His later period witnesses phrases such as *Spring touched it* p. 1018, p. 10), *the profound clown, Spring* (p. 1068, l. 27) and *its hands* (p. 1094, l. 8). This reaffirms the poet’s unchanging and unchanged perspective of *heaven upon earth* (p. 961, l. 19).

What might have changed over the years is the poet’s treatment of the precious pleasures of spring, that is, the projection of the season stylistically, visually and technically to his readers. Once again, only the typographical and morphological changes will be considered and assessed, although it is obvious that other grammatical, semantic, lexical and syntactic elements were, at least, of the same importance and could also have undergone adaptations and transformations over the years. In this context, Friedman (1996, p. 75) contends that Cummings’ ‘chief structural invention … [was] linguistic rather than semantic’.

Talking in general about Cummings’ growth, Friedman argues that the perpetual adolescence Cummings was frequently labelled with (1996, p. 3) was, rather than immaturity, ‘a life-long imperative to grow’ (ibid., p. 131). He contends that although the same Cummings of the earlier poems is found in his later ones, it is a wiser and more proficient one, one who has consolidated the discoveries made through experimentation (Friedman, 1960, p. 125). Fairley (1979, p. 211)
acknowledges this and adds that Cummings' later poems carry evidences of his earlier attitudes. Kennedy (1979, p. 175) also notes how in the early years of his writing, Cummings reinforced the 'basic styles that were to be characteristic of his future work'. As Marks (1964, p. 141), succinctly puts it, Cummings 'remained always and irrevocably himself'.

Friedman (1960, p. 89), chronicles how Cummings’ earlier poetry was characterised by a frequency of vivid figurative effects including personification, metaphor and simile which were taken over in his later poetry by allegory, paradox, word-coinage and typographical spacing. This resulted in 'vividness of dramatic imagery ... and clarity and consistency of idea' (ibid.) in his mature practice. Friedman asserts the lucidity, movement and profoundness, a distinct feature of his later work and somewhat missing in the earlier period, resulted from this 'shift from simile to symbol' (ibid.).

Von Abele (1955, pp. 932-933) contends that while Cummings' earlier poetry predominantly aimed 'simply to present', his later works aspired to 'assert, remonstrate and define'; as Friedman (1996, p. 29) explains, we are led into the process involved rather than just its results. Von Abele (1955, p. 930) also glimpses a weakening in the poets' passion for typographical experimentation and a spareness in his later years as against the elaborate imagery of his earlier works but notes a strengthening of the morphological development (ibid. p. 922) in the poet's later works. This impulse towards economy mentioned above, resulted, as Kidder (1976, p. 504) notes, in long poems disappearing from his later volumes. Von Abele (1955, pp. 926, 929) talks of a mid-period featuring
poems tempered with a philosophical bent (which, according to Friedman, 1960, p. 96, evolved in his later years to a mature philosophical style) and evidence of tenderness linked with wonder. Much like Friedman, he stresses, however, that the unique Cummings’ voice never changed (ibid., p.933).

Moving away from the general, the focus will shift now to the particular, namely whether any developments and changes in the graphological and morphological techniques occurred throughout Cummings’ poems talking of spring or April. For the purposes of this chapter, Cummings’ poetic output will be divided into three phases (as designed by von Abele, 1955, p. 914). The three periods of his career will be split as follows:

Early years: 1913 – 1926
Mid-period: 1926 – 1935
Later years: 1935 onwards

Starting again with the subsections listed in the chapter on graphology and progressing to the deviant morphological elements mentioned in the morphology division, it will be seen whether Cummings adjusted or modified his ‘daring linguistic experiments’ (Friedman, 1996, p. 145) to accommodate the greatest of living magicians (p. 781, l. 2-5). There is not much to go by with, since, as von Abele (1955, p. 923) observes, the poet had ‘had done almost everything he was ever to do’ by the time of his first manuscript of Tulips & Chimneys. Kostelanetz (1999, p. xxiv), in agreement, states that much of Cummings’ mature poetic style, including his ‘radical renovations ... and the more experimental
directions’ was already existent in his very first works. Notwithstanding, Cummings always found ‘new ways to grow’ (Friedman, 1996, p.177), in the same way that the active reader experiences ‘growth’ in the process of understanding and analysing Cummings’ works.

1. Deviation from the norms of the common use of the parentheses

The very first poem appearing in Complete Poems: Epithalamion, written in 1916 for the marriage of Scofield Thayer and Elaine Orr, and embracing ‘an implicit analogy’ (Rosenblitt, 2016, p. 136) between marriage and the coming of spring, sets the trend for the parenthetical statements typical of Cummings throughout. This long poem, which presents marriage and sex ‘in terms of the triumph of spring’ (ibid., p. 115), features countless sets of bracketing and is, thus, indicative of the poet’s tireless experimenting with parentheses in all stages of his career. Friedman (1960, p.116-118p), in fact, remarks that almost every poem resorts to parenthetical deviation for intensifying effect. An interesting use of brackets in reverse (see image) characterises Cummings’ mid-period. In poems like in)Spring a someone will lie(glued (p.456) it is the closed bracket that opens the poem and the open bracket that closes it.

```
1 sometimes
   in)Spring a someone will lie(glued
   among familiar things newly which are
   transferred with dusk)wondering why this star
   does not fall into his mind
5 feeling
   throughout ignorant disappearing me
   hurling vastness of love(sometimes in Spring
somewhere between what is and what may be
unknown most secret i will breathe such crude
perfection as divides by timelessness
that heartbeat)
10 mightily forgetting all
   which will forget him(emptying our soul
of emptiness)priming at every pore
a deathless life with magic until peace
outthunders silence.
15 And(night climbs the air
```
This phenomenon is followed for some years and then dropped again in his later poetry. Friedman (1960, p.116-118) talks of the ‘maze of parentheses’ the reader must wade through to make sense, in all the phases of Cumming’s poetry. No wonder then that his constant manipulation of round brackets has earned him the nickname of ‘the poet of parentheses’ (Crystal, 2015, p. 305).

2. Deviation in capitalisation

Cummings’ handling of capital and lower-case letters is another constant, spanning the career of a poet notorious for omitting capitals where convention demands and including them when least expected. Friedman (1960, p. 113) likens this to the wiping of a slate clean and starting afresh, resulting in the appearance of capitals having a ‘maximized’ effect. The only evolution that can be noted involving capitalisation, one not present in the first years of his writing, is the way Cummings started using capitalisation to convert other parts of speech into nouns. One of the first examples occurs in the 1931 volume *W[ViV]* where the adjective beautiful, the adverb only and the verb happens (p. 465) are transformed into highly foregrounded qualities of spring due to this conversion.

---

Only to have smelled Happens – skip dance kids hop point at red blue yellow violet white orange green-ness

_Von Abele (1955, p. 924)_ confirms that Cummings’ mid-period was characterised by his tendency to make nouns out of words; he made them ‘out of all kinds of other words’ (ibid., p. 920). Otherwise, it can be submitted that the prominence
to words made explicit by this particular graphological quirk persisted throughout the poet's career.

3. Deviation in spacing

Typographical spacing is more a feature of Cummings' later poetry than of his earlier ones, as Friedman (1960, p. 89) attests. Although even Cummings' early poems embrace the creative use of spacing, as evidenced in the graphology chapter, it is the later years that bring about 'a sharp rise in the experimental temperature' (von Abele, 1955, p. 924) especially by way of spatial distortion which became 'quite powerful' (ibid.,) in the mid-thirties volumes ViVa and No Thanks. Spring(side (p. 464), what a proud dreamhorse pulling(smoothloomingly)through (p. 465) and when/from a sidewalk (p. 471), an image of which appeared in the graphology section, are three consecutive poems in No Thanks that feature, among other deviations, radical play with spacing. Friedman (1960, p.164), in agreement with von Abele, describes the poet's middle period as one where 'an obsession with spacing' prevailed.

4. Deviation at punctuation mark level

One deviation that paves the way for more substantial ones is unquestionably Cummings' manipulation of the few dozen marks he so effectively uses. His early poems already come littered with oddities of punctuation, as shown in the graphology chapter. Over the years, however, he continued adapting and expanding his use of deviant punctuation to meet the need of every occasion and context. One could say this was one device that literally exploded in his mid-
years and kept up the momentum or became even more pronounced in his last works. From *No thanks*, 1935 through to *XAIPE*, 1950 there is an increasing propensity to include punctuation marks in the most unconventional way possible: between syllables, vowels, at the beginning of verses, without spacing in between. At times they cause disruption of phrase elements that should not be separated by any sign and there all also extreme cases similar to the poem cited above (*when/from a sidewalk*, p. 471) where one single word *sp.arrow,s* (l. 8) is fragmented by a full stop and a comma.

This poem copied in the graphology section (*when/from a sidewalk*, p. 471) taken from *No Thanks (1935 Manuscript)* seems to indicate the very start of such extreme play with punctuation and is indicative of its later radical use by the poet. In all cases, as Gómez Jiménez, 2011, p. 4) notes, Cummings is creating a foregrounded effect ‘by breaking grammatical structures’ that should not be separated. In a similar vein, follow other poems such as *(listen)*, featured in the graphology chapter, *tonight the moon is round golden entire. It*, (p. 1068). It is in poems such as these that Cummings’ resorting to dense deviation could result in hindering instead of aiding an interpretation. It is this sort of deviation that, as Friedman remarks (1960, p. 122-123), could cause reader irritation or distress.

5. Deviation through misspelling

As alluded to in the graphology chapter, the use of unconventional spelling is only displayed in a couple of Cummings’ spring-themed poems, so any progression in spelling foregrounding patterns and the frequency of appearance
cannot really be traced. What is sure, however, is that the ‘chaotic fragmentation [that hardly] allows communication to run smoothly’ (Gómez Jiménez, 2015, p. 309) evident in *goo-dmore-ning(en* (p. 658) is characteristic of the 'up-welling of the hardboiled Cummings’ (von Abele, 1955, p. 927) of the *XIAPE* (1950) period. This later phase is symptomatic of the poet resorting to a drastic digression from abiding to conventional rules including the orthographical ones and one where deviation connives at rather than clarifies perplexity (ibid., 919). In fact, von Abele (ibid., p. 918) reiterates that this device is characteristic of Cummings’ 'later rather than earlier verse'.

This takes us to the progress of the morphological arrangements found in our poems. Starting from the segmentation of words, it will be seen whether foregrounding through this technique developed with time.

**A. Word segmentation**

The first flavour of word segmentation can already be savoured in *Tulips & Chimneys* (1922) in *One April dusk the* (p. 91). Cummings recognised that in the taking apart of individual words, there would result not only a visual enhancement but also an enrichment of ‘the connotations of the key word’ (Kostelanetz, 1999, p. xix). There is, however, quite a gap till we stumble upon other such fragmentations. *Spring(side* (p.464) features in the 1935 manuscript of *No Thanks*, as does *when/from a sidewalk* (p. 471). *nouns to nouns* (p. 540) and *goo-dmore-ning(en* (p. 658) emerge respectively from the 1940 and 1950 collections, as does *in* (p. 701). “*but why should*” (p. 781) appears in the 1958
collection, while *because it’s* (p. 826) makes its presence in the 1963 one as does *(listen)* (p. 881). This points clearly to an escalation in the treatment of the splitting of words from the mid-period onwards. So much so that Friedman (1960, p. 171) comments upon the increasing use of this ‘familiar device’ in Cummings’ later years, where, more consistently than before, the poet split up words and made them perform ‘double duty’. This resulted in an ‘aura ... of ambiguity’ around the verses (ibid.).

**B. Fusion of words**

The running of words together for effect is another trait characteristic of Cummings; he envisioned what could be accomplished by ‘reducing or even eliminating the horizontal spacing between consecutive words’, including the varying of the reader’s perception (Kostelanetz, 1999, p. xviii). Although, Friedman (1996, p. 124) claims that the poet regularly used this device, it results from our texts that Cummings resorted to this technique more in his early and mid- years than in his later years. It actually transpires from this choice that, unlike word segmentation, which gained strength along the years, word joining peters out with time. Our sample shows Cummings resorting less to this kind of deviation in his later years. In fact, the last evidence that shows up in our spring-themed section is the powerful *untheknownndulous spring* (*nouns to nouns* p. 540) found in the *50 Poems* (1940) volume. Otherwise, it was the twenties and the thirties that witnessed this phenomenon in full bloom. Testimony to this are the twice occurring fusion of words in *sometimes I am alive because with* (p. 1031) from *The Dial Papers, 1919-20*, the twice occurring fusion of names in *in Just-"
29) and an instance in *and this day it was Spring ... us* from the *Tulips & Chimneys* (1922) volume. Other instances crop up in the *is 5* (1926) volume: *workingman with hand so hairy-sturdy* (p. 245), *on the Madam’s best april the* (p. 265) and *what a proud dreamhorse pulling(smootloomingly)through* in the *No Thanks* (1935) manuscript. End forties definitely witnessed a decline in the use of this technique.

**C. Affixes and word conversions**

Von Abele, 1955 (p. 922) remarks that the poet’s interest in affixes and word forming grew ‘more powerful’ over the years. He observes (ibid.) that while graphological deviation is present even in the poet’s third period, albeit less than before, it is the morphological aspect that seems to have wholly present at the ‘full maturity of his powers’.

Referring to the choice of poems used in this project, a list has been drawn up whereby the use of prefixes and suffixes will be classified over the years. Then they will be compared to a similar list drawn up by von Abele, (1955, p. 922) and it will be seen whether they point to the same conclusion.

Starting with the *–un* prefix, the list points to one use in the first period, three in the second period and four in the third period. Moving to the adverbs coined by the suffix *–ingly*, two uses result in the first period, one use in the second and one in the third. Worth noting is the *–ly* suffixes, on the other hand, all belong to the third period, four in all. The *–ish* suffix is present twice in the second period. The quantifiers converted into nouns by the *–ness* suffixes are divided equally
between the first and the third period, two each. The verb conversion into noun with the addition of the inflected –s happens twice in the second period. The grand total would be 5 uses in the first period, 7 uses in the second period and 11 uses in the period. This would tally with what resulted from von Abele’s (1955, p. 922) sample, that is, 131 in the first period, 164 in the second, 251 in the third period. Therefore, our limited sample is indicative of studies carried out with much bigger numbers.

Before concluding, it is worth noting that all that has been said above can be consolidated by the fact that a total of fifty poems in the mid-period (twenty-one poems in Viva, 1931 and twenty-nine in No thanks, 1935) as against twenty from the previous combined volumes (Tulips & Chimneys, 1922, &[AND], 1925, is 5, 1926), rely heavily on typographical deviation for their effect (von Abele, 1955, p. 924). This period features a congruence of deviation at play; it is not a matter of a couple of devices being used unconventionally but a matter of them being frequently ‘put all to work at once’ (ibid., p. 924). Friedman (1960, p.124) confirms this and views the mid-thirties as a ‘high point’ for Cummings graphologically speaking, with No Thanks containing twice as many typographical distortions as any other volume. The late thirties to mid-forties witness a gradual decline in some of the devices like ‘interlacing and telescoping’ of words while the use of brackets, deviant punctuation and word- splitting ‘steadily persist’ (ibid., pp. 124-125). Morphological deviation, as endorsed by von Abele (1955, pp. 922 – 926) reaches its peak in the latter period of Cummings’ career.
What results from all this is that, from his very first poem to his last, Cummings was an incomparably inventive poet; he is, in fact, recognized today as one of the most inventive American poets of his time. His artistic way with language helped bring about a revolution in literary expression and expanded the boundaries of what language is and what it can do. He created new devices where traditional ones did not suffice and enhanced language poetically in no small way. This phenomenon is evident even from our narrow selective choice of spring-themed poems. If Cummings is best remembered for his way with words in his love poems, then the resonant expressive possibilities of his spring-themed ones must surely rank a close second.
VII. Conclusion

Although this analysis has been necessarily selective, it has, nevertheless, illustrated how an interpretation can be supported by a systematic investigation of language. Such a stylistic analysis reveals the intimate connection between form and interpretation; it is thus that the full potential of literary texts can be brought to light. Such evaluation transcends judgemental values based on the parameters of for and against; it is, rather, conducive to clarification and acknowledgment.

It has been seen how the mechanisms of deviation are basic to the creative use of language and it has been exemplified how the language of Cummings is productive for graphological and morphological analysis. It has been illustrated how the technique of foregrounding, being an attribute of form and calling attention to itself as an object, is a special and effective attribute of poetic language and an important consideration in stylistic analysis.

Rather than an expanded idea, every single poem tackled here has shown itself to be a carefully shaped experience that in turn shapes the way a reader can perceive that experience, in our case, spring. In the few instances where a legitimate interpretation for a particular deviation has proved elusive, then it has been attributed to the poet’s commitment to originality and creativeness. Most of the poems have witnessed, however, a meticulously calculated language and style, never random or arbitrary, one that conveys and imparts the joys of spring.
as experienced by the poet himself. There is definitely a structure, but obviously, it is a structure in which a lot of creativity and experimenting is allowed. It is precisely this experimentation and creativity and the resulting systematic deviations that bring about the movement in Cummings’ poetry, noted by many linguists and commented upon in the first chapter. This movement is particularly pertinent in our spring themed works since a parallel has been drawn between the movement in the graphological dislocation, spatial arrangements and morphological exercises and the movement associated with the coming of spring when faces called flowers float out of the ground ... pretty birds frolic ... little fish gambol and the mountains are dancing (p. 706, l. 1, 5, 6, 7).

The combination of visual effects and morphological structure present in most of our texts, points to the efficacy of the intermingling of the graphological with the morphological and the resulting foregrounding effects. The spring themed poems analysed through the graphological and morphological lens have yielded a particularly interesting vista of language arrangement that the poet has specifically laid out in such a way that the reader may come to perceive the same joys of spring that the poet himself feels. Not only, then, is deviation a distinguishing mark of poetry but it is also a distinguishing mark of a reader who is willing to look at such deviation with a curious eye and interpret it accordingly. In the present, the significant stylistic features (in our case graphological and morphological) have been pointed out and a linguistic description has been used to interpret and evaluate the verses. What has emerged is that the poet, through his creative use of language, has constructed a
sensation that the reader has never witnessed before, something that fascinates and makes the reader want to delve deeper.

Deployed throughout the verses, countless instances of devices that force the reader to examine the texts with fresh eyes have been witnessed. The formal properties of the graphological and morphological devices have been put to the test against the function of such devices and it has emerged that the meaning projected by the texts is highly dependent upon such elements. This attests to the fact that style and meaning cannot be divorced and that the meanings communicated are highly dependent upon the choices of the author, in our case Cummings.

Were the verses to be stripped of key linguistic devices, amongst which graphological and morphological elements, bland and unimaginative texts would emerge, as various influential linguists and critics, including Leech and Simpson have attested to (vide literature review). As proof and confirmation of this, an experiment was carried out (in the style of the 1927 one by Riding and Graves, shown in the literature review) on the spring themed poem in *Just* – whereby all typographical and morphological oddities were done away with, as shown below. Playfully compounded words were separated and spaces regularised. Conventional punctuation was added and capitalisation was adjusted. Lines that had been broken apart spatially were traditionally aligned.
What emerged was an insipid and boring version that lacked speed and verve. The sparkle and vigour the poet associated with the coming of spring seemed to evaporate once the language reverted to ‘normal’. The spontaneity and youthful innocence of the children who come running and dancing for the joys of spring, one which had been reflected in the frolicking language, was obfuscated. To sing the praises of spring is one thing, but to freshen it up for the reader, in order that he may participate in the experience, is another. Language needs to be imbued
with energy if the reader is to experience that immediacy and suggestiveness the poet wants to project. It is through the controversial and unconventional creative elements that the upcoming joy of spring can be celebrated and re-lived, year in, year out.

The exuberance and energy of spring, as experienced by the poet, has been therefore linked, in this particular project, to the endless vitality in Cummings' verses. Unlike other poets of his generation who tended to dwell in the sorrows of spring, Cummings truly rejoiced in the coming of spring and was bent on discussing its merits and joys. The poet's affirmative vision of spring, for example, went directly against that of Eliot who declared that April was 'the cruellest month' and opposed that of Williams who described the approach of spring as lifeless, sluggish and dazed (Dunn in Firmage (ed.), 2016, p. xxxviii). Cummings depicts mud-luscious and puddle-wonderful spring as full of promises of growth and renewal and it is through his creative use of language that we, as readers, come to perceive it as such. Cummings has succeeded in making us feel and listen to his language.

In his strong belief in the power of language, Cummings went against the grain and jumbled up traditional linguistic norms to evoke the desired feelings of exhilaration in his readers. We have glimpsed how the poet, through his structural and linguistic inventions and through the shunning of prevailing conventions, targeted the constant renewing of meaning, thus transmitting, in his diversity, a pleasurable experience. It has been observed how this innovative reawakening of meanings evidenced in this analysis parallels the yearly cyclical
reawakening of nature each spring. As a consequence of this experience, the reader is renewed and revitalised and ends up giving himself over to forces bigger than himself. After all, as Cummings himself famously declared, poetry is ‘what's different’.

When one considers that the literary writer’s scope is to rise above the limitations of ordinary language then Cummings has surely exercised effective poetic licence. It is, in truth, these uninhibited but consistent deviations, including the graphological and morphological ones, that have contributed to the heady power and the exuberance of the spring-themed poems examined here. It is through these so-called linguistic oddities that spring comes to acquire the magical properties we might never have attributed it before. And finally, it is through the medium of a language partially invented and styled by the poet himself that we have come to regard Cummings, as well as the season of spring itself, as a force to be reckoned with.
**Appendix I**

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Tulips and Chimneys (1922 Manuscript)

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<td>you asked me to come: it was raining a little,</td>
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and this day it was Spring...us*

& [AND] (1925)

POST IMRESSIONS
Paris;this April sunset completely utters;

&:SEVEN POEMS
Spring is like a perhaps hand*
who knows if the moon’s*

SONNETS – REALITIES
the poem her belly marched through me as

SONNETS – ACTUALITIES
before the fragile gradual throne of night*
if I should sleep with a lady called death

is 5 (1926)

ONE
workingman with hand so hairy-sturdy
on the Madam’s best april the
weazened Irrefutable unastonished*
voices to voices,lip to lip

FOUR
since feeling is first*
you are like the snow only*

FIVE
Touching you I say(it being Spring*
if I have made,my lady,intricate

W [ViVa] (1931)
in a middle of a room*
somewhere I have never travelled,gladly beyond*

No Thanks (1935 Manuscript)
sonnet entitled to run the world)
conceive a man,should be have anything
in)Spring a someone will lie(glued*
Spring(side*
what a proud dreamhorse pulling(smoothloomingly) through*
when

from a sidewalk
out of(blown never quite to*

106
if night’s mosteness[and whom did merely day                                  480

New Poems [from Collected Poems] (1938)
the people who*                                                513

50 Poems (1940)
nouns to nouns                                                  540
as freedom is a breakfastfood                                  543
anyone lived in a pretty how town                               548
my father moved through dooms of love                           554
hate blows a bubble of despair into                             566

1 x 1 [One Times One] (1944)
what if a much of a which of a wind                               596
love is a spring at which                                         599
open green those                                                  609
except in your                                                   611
yes is a pleasant country:                                       615
all ignorance toboggans into know                                616
darling! because my blood can sing                                617
if[among
trees
were inf/give
*sweet spring is your                                              627
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XAIPE (1950)
goo-dmore-ning[en                                               658
when serpents bargain for the right to squirm                    661
"summer is over"                                                  666
In*                                                            701
honour corruption villainy holiness                              702
when faces called flowers float out of the ground                706

95 Poems (1958)
So shy shy shy(and with a                                         726
never could anyone                                               761
precisely as unbig a why as i’m                                   778
first robin the                                                  780
"but why should"                                                 781
i am a little church(no great cathedral)                        792
unlove’s the heavenly hell and homeless home                    808
spring!may-                                                      810

73 Poems (1963)
SONG                                                            818
the first of all my dreams was of                                  820
because it’s*                                                     826
Now i lay(with everywhere around)*                                862
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<td>&quot;23,</td>
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<td>skies may be blue;yes</td>
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</table>
there are so many tic toc
life shuts & open the world

Translations from Horace, 1913
The fetters of winter are shattered, shattered,*
0, blessed of the gods,*
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