

THE GROWTH OF THE VISION OF E. E. CUMMINGS:  
AN ANALYSIS OF  
SPECIFIC THEMES IN THE LOVE POETRY

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Since 1926, three years after E. E. Cummings (1894-1962) published his first volume of poetry, critics have decried a lack of growth, or a failing of maturity, in the technique and vision of the poet. In that year Mark Van Doren, reviewing is 5, proclaimed the freedom of the poet and urged him to "consider his pace."<sup>1</sup> A survey of the reviews of Cummings' poetic volumes reveals that such opinions persisted throughout each decade of his career. Horace Gregory observed in 1938 that "Mr. Cummings is not the only writer who has remained too young too long."<sup>2</sup> Louise Bogan dismissed the 1940 50 POEMS as "irrevocably stuck in the past," adding "nothing to what we know of Cummings;"<sup>3</sup> and Dudley Fitts selected the volume as a "splendid example of marking time: no advance, no retreat."<sup>4</sup> In 1954, with the appearance of the collected poetry, Poems 1923-1954, Randall Jarrell provided dialogue to comment on his conviction of Cummings' lack of growth:

<sup>1</sup>Mark Van Doren, rev. of E. E. Cummings, is 5 (New York, 1926), Nation, CXXIII (September 22, 1926), 274.

<sup>2</sup>Horace Gregory, rev. of E. E. Cummings, Collected Poems (New York, 1938), New Republic, XCIV (April 27, 1938), 370.

<sup>3</sup>Louise Bogan, rev. of E. E. Cummings, 50 POEMS (New York, 1940), New Yorker, XVII (March 1, 1941), 57.

<sup>4</sup>Dudley Fitts, rev. of E. E. Cummings, 50 POEMS (New York, 1940), Saturday Review, XXIII (April 12, 1941), 14.

He is, alas! a monotonous poet. Everything a poem does is, to old readers, expected. "Type Four," they murmur. "Well done!" Then they yawn.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, in the more recent 95 poems (1958) Winfield T. Scott and M. L. Rosenthal discern little growth in the poet's career, finding him saying "little or nothing that he has not said before,"<sup>6</sup> and his work unchanged "essentially since his early successes."<sup>7</sup> Such complaints of a lack of growth infiltrate the criticism surrounding the poetry of E. E. Cummings.

Significantly enough, two contemporary evaluations of Cummings' career project different areas of the growth of the poet. Rudolph Von Abele in a 1955 article presents a systematic treatment, though somewhat concise, of the thematic and technical growth of the poet through 1950. The critic describes his intentions thus:

The shifts which have occurred in Cummings's poetry are capable, I think, of being shown most clearly in terms of five of its aspects. Three--typographical rhetoric, syntactic dislocation, and word formation--are matters of technique, while the other two--the treatment of science and intellect, and of romantic love--are thematic. It is in this order that I propose to take them up . . . .<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Randall Jarrell, rev. of E. E. Cummings, Poems 1923-1954 (New York, 1954), New York Times Book Review, October 31, 1954, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Winfield T. Scott, rev. of E. E. Cummings, 95 poems (New York, 1958), Saturday Review, XLII (January 3, 1959), 13.

<sup>7</sup>M. L. Rosenthal, rev. of E. E. Cummings, 95 poems (New York, 1958), Nation, CLXXXVIII (January 10, 1959), 34.

<sup>8</sup>Rudolph Von Abele, "Only to Grow: Change in the Poetry of E. E. Cummings," PMLA, LXX (December, 1955), 914. I am indebted to a small section of this article for the basic idea of my thesis and for certain ideas which assisted me in formulating my own theories.

Through charts, listings, and selected quotations from Cummings' canon the writer seeks to dispel the opinion that Cummings "stopped growing in the 1920's, and had turned into that most depressing of all literary freaks, the artist who parodies himself."<sup>9</sup>

Another study by Norman Friedman, e. e. cummings: The Growth of a Writer,<sup>10</sup> proposes the development of the poet through highly methodized chapters devoted to the prose, poetry, and drama of the writer. Mr. Friedman outlines his purpose as follows:

to trace the development of Cummings as a writer. But "development" implies purposefulness, a goal toward which growth aims, and so I must begin at the end by trying to explain the meaning and significance of his mature work. Once this is done, we may proceed chronologically work by work, looking in each for signs of things to come--and correspondingly, noting their absence.<sup>11</sup>

As one reviewer of the book implies, the inadequacy of the study stems from its method:

Mr. Friedman examines his work by decades beginning chronologically with The Enormous Room and concluding with i six nonlectures . . . . His method is to classify by subject, to count whatever is countable and to summarize . . . . Mr. Friedman convinces us of Cummings' development, but not through his method of counting and summarizing.

The commentator further maintains that, the realization of any growth emerges, indirectly, from comparisons of thematic

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 913.

<sup>10</sup> Norman Friedman, e. e. cummings: The Growth of a Writer (Carbondale, Illinois, 1964). Hereafter cited as Friedman, Growth of a Writer.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

interpretations of specific works with the introductory statements of Cummings' mature vision.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, this 1964 work and the 1955 article bespeak the possibility of more specific appraisals of the growth of the poet--a growth disavowed by critics at every stage of Cummings' career.

Any charge of monotony, of a staid vision, of redundancy may be countered by an analysis of the development of specific themes in the love poems of Cummings--that is to say poems expressing physical, psychological, or emotional reactions arising from love between man and woman. This thesis proposes to investigate two major themes in Cummings' early love poetry (the volumes of 1923 - c. 1938) and two from the later love poetry (the volumes of c. 1940 - 1963) and to demonstrate two aspects of growth in the love poetry of Cummings--a movement of the themes toward affirmation and a movement from the concrete to the abstract. Succinctly stated, the two dominating themes from the early love poetry evolve as:

1. the celebration of a specific lover or love experience;
2. the unachievable and temporal nature of love.

The two later themes proceed as:

3. the affirmation that love is possible and enduring;
4. the celebration of love as a force within itself.

After the selection of those poems which adhere to the above definition of a love poem--approximately one-third of Cummings'

<sup>12</sup>Robert E. Wegner, rev. of Norman Friedman, e. e. cummings: The Growth of a Writer (Carbondale, Illinois, 1964), American Literature, XXXVI (November, 1964), 383.

poetry--an examination of each theme, with its various subdivisions, provides logical organization for the discussion. Consequently, the early themes will be traced from their embryonic stages to maturation to their decline or transformation, and the final two themes will be charted from their earliest appearances to their most forceful presentation in Cummings' later career.

The purpose of indicating a progression of themes, and, thus, this basically chronological investigation necessitates careful attention to publication history and the dating of poems. Generally the year of a poem's first appearance in a Cummings volume serves as a date for the poem. Therefore, a primary bibliography of the poetic volumes containing new poems dates the majority of the love poems used in this discussion.

<u>Tulips and Chimneys</u>	1923	New York: Thomas Seltzer
& <u>[AND]</u>	1925	New York: Privately Printed
<u>XLI POEMS</u>	1925	New York: The Dial Press
<u>is 5</u>	1926	New York: Boni & Liveright
<u>W [ViVa]</u>	1931	New York: Horace Liveright, Inc.
<u>no thanks</u>	1935	New York: The Golden Eagle Press
<u>Collected Poems</u> (Contains 22 new poems)	1938	New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company
<u>50 POEMS</u>	1940	New York: Henry Holt and Company

<u>1 X 1</u> [ <u>One Times One</u> ]	1944	New York: Henry Holt and Company
<u>XALPE</u> : <u>seventy-one poems</u>	1950	New York: Oxford University Press
<u>95 poems</u>	1958	New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company
<u>73 poems</u>	1963	New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.

Wherever biographical information or other publication dates, such as those of appearances in periodicals, are available and pertinent, the more exact dates stand.<sup>13</sup> This system of dating pertains most importantly to the first three volumes, where the publication history becomes jumbled. Cummings submitted in 1922 a manuscript containing one-hundred-and-fifty poems to be published as Tulips and Chimneys; however, the publisher abridged the copy, omitting eighty-four of the poems. These eighty-four were to appear two years later--forty-three in AND and forty-one in XLI POEMS, which, of course, contains only the poems of the 1922 manuscript.<sup>14</sup> Not until 1937 did Tulips and Chimneys: Archtype Edition of the Original Manuscript restore the arrangement and complete contents of the early manuscript. Such considerations, then, amend the dating of certain love poems in four

<sup>13</sup> Charles Norman, The Magic Maker: E. E. Cummings (New York, 1958) and George J. Firmage, E. E. Cummings: A Bibliography (Middletown, Connecticut, 1960) provide the more specific dates.

<sup>14</sup> Friedman, Growth of a Writer, pp. 36-37.

ways:

1. All poems from the 1923 Tulips and Chimneys are dated 1922.
2. All poems appearing in volumes other than Tulips and Chimneys, but a part of the original manuscript, are dated 1922.
3. All poems considered from XLI POEMS are dated 1922.
4. As with all the poems, the above dates stand only when more accurate ones are unavailable.

Any study of the love poetry of Cummings approaches the essence of much of his career. "Love always was . . . Cummings' chief subject of interest." And to trace the development of his delvings into the topic is to witness, first, a concern for his love and love experience and, second, a concern for "love itself-- its quality, its values, its feel, its meaning."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Norman Friedman, e. e. cummings: the art of his poetry (Baltimore, 1960), p. 28. Hereafter cited as Friedman, the art of his poetry.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CELEBRATION OF A SPECIFIC LOVER OR LOVE EXPERIENCE

That Cummings is in love with love must be the conclusion of any reader of the complete poetry. "He is a love lyricist of timeless appeal."<sup>1</sup> In the early career of the poet his talent "to range lustily and long among the major passions"<sup>2</sup> finds manifestation in those sonnets and typographical testimonies which frame the passion, lust, or admiration of one man for one woman. Few philosophical incantations to love as a force, to the transcendental power of loving, or affirmations of enduring love--the themes underscored in the later love poetry--gloss the physiological, concrete emphasis of many of the early love poems. For in the 1922-1938 volumes Cummings' vision in many instances narrows to a magnification of the qualities or effects of one lover--a definition of the speaker's emotional response to his lady's presence and actions, a literal or metaphorical delight in the features of her body, and the joy of sexual union with her. The comments of the persona in the early

<sup>1</sup>David Burns, rev. of E. E. Cummings, Poems 1923-1954 (New York, 1954), Saturday Review, XXXVII (December 18, 1954), 11.

<sup>2</sup>Mark Van Doren, rev. of E. E. Cummings, XLI POEMS (New York, 1925), Nation, CXXI (July 8, 1925), 72.

poems evolve, then, as a celebration of a specific lover or love experience.

Cummings' use of syntactical dislocation, lower case letters, irregular line arrangement, free punctuation, and word dismemberment is justified by his desire to emulate the "closeness and immediacy of emotional experience."<sup>3</sup> This effort to transcribe an experience in total accuracy provides thematic material for the love poetry in which the speaker solemnizes or struggles to define the effect of his love or lover upon him. This depiction of the moment originates in the sections "Sonnets--Actualities" and "Amores" of the 1922 manuscript. Here the speaker searches for similes or mere description to solidify a response yielded by the lover's visits or to clarify his emotion.

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

<sup>3</sup>Theodore Spencer, "Technique as Joy: Observations on the Poetry of E. E. Cummings," Harvard Wake, I (Spring, 1946), E. E. Cummings Number, 28-29.

<sup>4</sup>The ellipsis here is Cummings'. Since Cummings' poetry frequently includes ellipses and since I have endeavored to reproduce as accurately as is possible on the typewriter the punctuation and spacing of the words, I will not use the ellipsis at the beginning of a quoted passage. The ellipsis at the end of the final line of a quoted section indicates, only, that part of that line has been omitted. Internal omissions are indicated by one line of spaced periods.

the coming of my love emits  
a wonderful smell in my mind,

(AND, I; 116)<sup>5</sup>

.....

i have loved, let us see if that's all.  
Bit into you as teeth, in the stone  
of a musical fruit. My lips pleasantly groan  
on your taste . . . .

(AND, III; 117-118)

.....

you asked me to come: it was raining a little,  
and the spring; a clumsy brightness of air  
wonderfully stumbled above the square,  
little amorous-tadpole people wiggled

battered by stuttering pearl,  
leaves jibbled  
to the jiggling fragrance of newness

(AND, XXII; 128-129)

.....

when you went away it was morning  
.....  
But I have wondered since  
isn't it odd of you really to lie  
a sharp agreeable flower between my

amused legs

(AND, XXI; 128)

Other poems of the 1922 manuscript present the speaker as  
intoxicated by the aura of the very presence--indeed the very

<sup>5</sup>E. E. Cummings, Poems 1923-1954 (New York, 1954), p. 116.  
All further quotations from the poetry, unless otherwise indicated,  
come from this source. In each instance the first Roman or Arabic  
numeral indicates the number of the poem as it appears on the  
page; the following number cites the page number of the poem as  
found in Poems 1923-1954.

existence--of his lady. Seemingly, the poet senses the power of a moment, of a glimpse, of a touch upon him when his lover appears. His "naked lady framed" surpasses the "intent/ of genius" (AND, XI; 122); because of the "silver fish of her nakedness" and "because she is beautiful" the speaker travels "through the forest of wonderful" (XLI POEMS, XII; 158); he lies "at length, "breathing/ with shut eyes/ the sweet earth" where his lover lies (XLI POEMS, VI; 136); and his lady's eyes "present" the "terror of shrines" (is 5, II; 205-206), while the "puerile moving" of her arm "will do/ more than heroes" in a poem (is 5, I; 217). Rarely does the sublimity of the moment leave the speaker mute for exact expression, but a 1926 poem dramatizes the ineptness of language in preserving a particularly intimate scene.

should where say over the damned table and we  
hold lips Eyes everything  
hands you know what  
happens)but if i should,  
Say,

(is 5, IV; 207)

While the celebration of a specific moment finds fullest treatment in the poems of the 1920's, the grasping of a particular instant for intense praise extends through the 1944 volume. One poem in ViVa climaxes each stanza with the refrain, "I have never loved you dear as now i love" (ViVa, LI; 259). And another from no thanks illustrates Cummings' indulgences in his typographical gymnastics to stage the vitality, the vividness of a moment.

it's Spring  
immortal Always & lewd shy New  
and upon the beyond imagining spasm rise  
we  
you-with-me  
around(me)you  
IYou

(no thanks, 57; 317-318)

The same experimentation with technique captures the sacredness and spontaneity of a few seconds. The very meaning of a poem depends upon variations of the refrain: "you will (kiss me) go . . . (kiss me) you will go . . . you will go (kiss me . . . i)kiss me(will go)" (50 POEMS, 41; 380). The poems says little, unless immediacy be assigned the theme. The motif wanes in the 1930's, but the 1944 1 X 1 contains a poem of the same celebration of a specific lover and love experience--although the tone is less taut with emotion and the simile less contrived:

"that's all there is to say"

(and she looked)"especially in winter"(like a leaf opening)

as we stood,one(truthed  
by wisping tinily the silverest

alive silentness god ever breathed

(1 X 1, XXXII; 407-408)

As if apologizing for any inaccuracy in the commemoration of the emotion of a single moment or of a lover, a 1923 poem serves as confession. The speaker laments the fact that he may have made "songs less firm that your body's whitest song," "failed to snare/ the glance too shy," imperfectly represented "the very skillful

strangeness of your smile" or the "primeval silence of your hair."  
But if the lady be offended by such inadequacies, the closing lines,  
in which the speaker lauds her as the "lady through whose profound  
and fragile lips/ the sweet small clumsy feet of April came/ into  
the ragged meadow of my soul," could leave no scars (is 5, V; 319).

Closely aligned with the drafting of the intense emotion  
generated by the lover's presence is the speaker's celebration of  
the physical charms of his lady, her erotic qualities, or the very  
desirability of her body.<sup>6</sup> The poet himself summarizes this role  
in relation to his lover:

myself is sculptor of  
your body's idiom:  
the musician of your wrists;  
the poet who is afraid  
only to mistranslate

a rhythm in your hair,  
(your fingertips  
the way you move)  
the

painter of your voice--

(is 5, VIII; 209-210)

This assignment differs from the portrayal of emotion found elsewhere  
in the early career, for the poems delineating the attributes of the  
lover's body shy from interpreting an emotion and focus upon

<sup>6</sup>Friedman, the art of his poetry, pp. 43-44.

sensationalizing the object and its activity.<sup>7</sup>

The exposing of the virtues of the lady's body assumes two basic forms in the 1922-1938 career of the poet. Some of the poetry shadows carnal description with metaphors or similes, comparing the kiss, hands, legs, bosom, wrist, or waist of the lover to features of nature. Other poems in their stark tone bare the mistress's body; no ivy, rain, or twilight separates the speaker from the object of his admiration. In both techniques, however, the import is obvious: the persona praises one specific lover--though unnamed and even, one senses, the object of momentary infatuation.

The very early love poems demonstrate the tendency to hide physical features behind similes and metaphors. "Puella Mea" (Tulips and Chimneys; 14) proceeds as little more than elaboration of the lover's smile, voice, throat, eyes, hips, breasts, waist, thighs, and leg. The method of this poem extends into several others of the 1922 manuscript, none more elaborate than the exaggerated "my love/ thy hair is one kingdom." The consideration of but three stanzas of the poem is ample explanation of the technique:

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

<sup>7</sup>Edwin Honig, rev. of E. E. Cummings, Poems 1923-1954 (New York, 1954), Kenyon Review, XVII (Summer, 1955), 487.



Running parallel to this restrained method are songs to the lady characterized by more sharp, realistic description. The amorous emperor lying on his "couch of couches" watches the "queen of queens" dancing, "her/ stealing body ex-/pending gathering pouring upon itself stiffens/ to a/ white thorn/ of desire" (Tulips and Chimneys, 2; 29-31). In another poem the persona glories in the "languorous mouth the/ thrilling flower" (Tulips and Chimneys, II; 32). He ponders her "kiss, the little pushings of flesh" (Tulips and Chimneys, I; 64), and compares the expression of his lady to "thatofa fly.pre cisel Yhalf/ (squake)d" (AND, VI; 76-77). And an interesting reversal of the usual image-making process comes in a three-stanza 1931 poem. The speaker asks:

is there a flower(whom  
 i meet anywhere  
 able to be and seem  
 so quite softly as your hair

(ViVa, LVIII; 263-264)

Most representative of this type of celebration of a specific lover are excerpts from two poems first published in AND:

Cleopatra had a  
 body  
 it was  
  
 thick slim warm moist  
 built like an organ  
 and it  
 loved

(AND, VI; 88-92)

.....

The exciting simplicity of her hipless body, pausing to invent imperceptible bulgings of the pretended breasts, forked in surprisable unliving eyes chopped by a swollen inanity of picture hat.

(AND, XIII; 83-84)

Entire poems, at their climaxes, emerge as salutes to one particular feature or movement of the lady:

The  
minute waist continually  
with an African gesture  
utters a frivolous intense half of  
Girl . . .

(AND, VII; 77-78)

. . . . .

Waiting

(always) upon a fragile instant when  
herself me (slowly, wholly me) will press  
in the young lips unearthly slenderness

(AND, V; 118-119)

The descriptive element in the love poetry, of course, continues throughout the career of the poet, and, interestingly enough, the object-metaphor-simile approach and the more straightforward viewing mingle in the same poem. But during the 1940-1963 years, the poet injects physical praise as subordinate to the more abstract themes. The celebration of the lady's body for its own sake distinguishes the works of the 1920's and 1930's.

Yvor Winters in 1939 described Cummings' theory of love as

"conceived primarily as copulation."<sup>8</sup> The opinion in that year stands justified, since a number of the early love poems are devoted primarily to the enacting of the "animal pleasure of the sex act."<sup>9</sup> This motif, considered in context with the emphases of the themes of the early love poetry, qualifies as another variation of the poet's celebration of the specific lover and love experience. In the poems presenting the union of lovers, the view of Cummings as an impressionist finds sufficient validity, for these poems endeavor to recreate in the reader the sensations the poet feels.<sup>10</sup> And whether or not the writer intends to incite sexual emotions, he does at times act as an aphrodisiac.<sup>11</sup> Though Cummings in his "healthy masculine vulgarity"<sup>12</sup> often raptures in buffoonery, relies on idiosyncracies of punctuation, capitalization, and word placement for pictorial representation of passion, veils the sex act under elaborate metaphors, or lapses into sensual dialogue, the implied, if not the conspicuous, drama reproduces the emotional and physiological essence of coitus.

<sup>8</sup>Yvor Winters, rev. of E. E. Cummings, Collected Poems (New York, 1938), American Literature, X (January, 1939), 521.

<sup>9</sup>Fred E. Shroeder, "Obscenity and Its Function in the Poetry of E. E. Cummings," Sewanee Review, LXXIII (Summer, 1965), 474.

<sup>10</sup>Eda Lou Walton, rev. of E. E. Cummings, ViVa (New York, 1931), Nation, CXXXIII (December 30, 1931), 729.

<sup>11</sup>Shroeder, p. 468.

<sup>12</sup>Walton, p. 729.

The bulk of the poems which center upon this action appear in the 1925 AND. Carefully placed capitals in some of these early works are graphic enough. The V of a 1922 poem, which compares the sex act with the pouring of cement, could represent either the chute or the female organ:<sup>13</sup>

her  
flesh  
Came  
at

meassandca V  
                  ingint  
                  oA

chute

    i had cement for her,

(AND, XI; 96-97)

The Y of a 1925 poem is self-explanatory:

Boost my huge passion like a business  
and the Y her legs panting as they press  
proffers its omelet of fluffy lust)

(AND, III; 105)

And the famous "SpRin,k,LiNg" of "I will be/ M o ving in the Street of her" (AND, I; 99), coupled with the other spontaneous capitalization of the same poem, "render the poet's shivery response to the lover's expected caressess."<sup>14</sup> In other poems which demonstrate this sexual union,

<sup>13</sup>Shroeder, p. 475.

<sup>14</sup>Barry A. Marks, E. E. Cummings (New York, 1964), p. 76.

suggestive bursts of speech outline the action:

there's just room for me in You  
my stomach goes into your Little Stomach My legs  
are in you legs Your arms  
under me around . . .

(AND, II; 100)

But It's Nicer To Lie In Bed

--eh? I'm

not. Again. Hush. God. Please hold. Tight

(AND, I; 104)

At other times the diagram of action depends upon an elaborate metaphor or other indirect approach. A poem from Tulips and Chimneys begins, "i am going to utter a tree,Nobody/ shall stop me." The stanzas then range through other vegetation symbols--roses, spring, leaves, roses. The extended metaphor performed, the poem concludes:

large  
minute  
hips, 0

.press

worms rushing slowly through loam

(Tulips and Chimneys, IV; 55)

And for the presentations of the immediate sensations of the sex act, the poet uses an understood simile in another poem:

--. One day i felt a mountain touch me where  
i stood(maybe nine miles off). It was spring  
sun-stirring, sweetly to the mangling air

(AND, VI; 107)

Finally, in contrast to the shading techniques, the speaker, in the height of emotion, records frankly the experience:

my strength becoming wistful in a glib  
. . . . .  
(my loveFist in her knuckling  
thighs,  
with a sharp indecent stir  
unclenches

into fingers. . . .she too is tired.

(AND, II; 104-105)

Or the poet with almost childish breathlessness expresses the joy of copulation:

i like my body when it is with your  
body. It is so quite new a thing.  
. . . . .  
i like your body. i like what it does,  
i like it hows. i like to feel the spine  
of your body and its bones  
. . . . .  
and possibly i like the thrill  
of under me you so quite new

(AND, XXIV, 129)

With such poems as proof, no wonder one critic in 1954 could testify that to Cummings "sexual union becomes the joy and the sum and the meaning of life."<sup>15</sup>

In conclusion, then, much of the early love poetry portrays the specific lover or love experience. Cummings, first, molds the emotions excited by his lover's presence; second, he sketches the physical excellence of her body; and, third, he designs re-enactments

<sup>15</sup>E. M. Sickels, "The Unworld of E. E. Cummings," American Literature, XXVI (May, 1954), 225.

of sexual intercourse with her. Regardless of the mode of expression, the intimate realism of the picture, or the intensity of the emotional expression, the poet's concern in his early career centers in many instances upon the exact transmission of one woman's spiritual and physical dominance as seen through the eyes of her lover. To Cummings at this point in his development, the word love is synonymous with the lady in his poems,<sup>16</sup> and the concrete staging of his love's values inspires the early tributes.

<sup>16</sup>Von Abele, p. 929.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE UNACHIEVABLE AND TEMPORAL NATURE OF LOVE

If considerations of the first theme imply that the speaker in the love poems revels in a tranquil, established relationship with a beautiful lady, delvings into the second major theme of the early love poetry blight such a conception. Conversely, many love poems of the 1922-1938 career mirror an apprehensive, tense speaker whose lyrics expose the unachievable and temporal nature of love. Death as thief, the fleeting nature of love itself, the physical distance of the lady, the agitated persuasion directed toward the lover, the sordid love affairs, the obscene sexual jokes, the frequent satirical tone--all these insecurities enter as variations of this second theme of the young poet's career. Clearly enough, though the subdivisions are widely separated, the poet's concentration remains upon physical, concrete matters, for the speaker's perturbations smother the more abstract musings which emerge in the mature vision of the poet.

The suggestions of the unachievable nature of love tinges several of the very earliest love poems in their presentation of a distant or aloof lady whom the poet has leave to describe only from afar, to dream of, or wait upon in an atmosphere hung with anticipation. A 1914 poem, written during Cummings' years at Harvard, stands as prelude to other lyrics upon the same topic. The speaker

here waits in spellbound impatience for his lover:

Night with sunset hauntings;  
A red cloud under the moon.  
Here will I meet my love  
Beneath hushed trees.

Over the silver meadows  
Of flower-folded grass,  
Shall come unto me  
Her feet like arrows of moonlight.<sup>1</sup>

The same future tense and the real or implied illusiveness of the lady haunts the tenor of other love poems. The persona yearns for the time "when god lets my body be" and "My strong fingers beneath the snow/ Into strenuous birds shall go" and "my love walking in the grass/ their wings will touch with her face" (Tulips and Chimneys, VI; 13-14). In another moment the "stiffened exquisite/ i" awaits "the sweet/annihilation of swift/ flesh" (XLI POEMS, IV; 134-135) or he foresees the hour when "Across the important gardens her body/ will come toward me with its hurting sexual smell" (XLI POEMS, X; 157). In such instances a hopelessness penetrates the verses. Other examples of the unachievable or unattainable lover come in those poems where the poet dreams of his lady. The two concluding lines of one sonnet, coming as they do after ecstatic imaginings, underscore the separation of the speaker and his lady:

it is at moments after i have dreamed  
of the rare entertainment of your eyes  
.....  
the genuine apparition of your smile  
.....

<sup>1</sup>Norman, p. 41.

moments when my once more illustrious arms  
are filled with fascination, when my breast  
wears the intolerant brightness of your charms:

.....  
--turning from the tremendous lie of sleep  
i watch the roses of the day grow deep.

(Tulips and Chimneys, III; 62)

Another dream-vision sets the lover as a house and the speaker as a  
wind. The wind complains to the house:

your walls will not reckon how  
strangely my life is curved  
since the best he can do  
is to peer through windows, unobserved

(is 5, IX, 210)

An even more elaborate dream ellipsis is a phantom lover from a 1931  
selection:

because i love you)last night  
  
clothes in sealace  
appeared to me  
your mind drifting  
.....  
again carefully through deepness to rise  
these your wrists  
thighs feet hands

poising  
to again utterly disappear;

(ViVa, LX; 265)

Then too, the unobtainable mistress motif pervades those poems in  
which the speaker views the lover through an almost objective stance:

All in green went my love riding  
on a great horse of gold  
into the silver dawn.

four lean hounds crouched low and smiling  
the merry deer ran before.

.....

Horn at hip went my love riding  
riding the echo down  
into the silver dawn.

(Tulips and Chimneys, IV; 11-12)

In this and other poems hinting at the impossibility of achieving the lady's graces, the speaker degrades himself before his lover's charms. This seemingly self-imposed chasm, then, stunts mutual loving:

Always before your voice my soul  
half-beautiful and wholly droll  
is as some smooth and awkward foal,  
whereof young moons begin  
the newness of his skin

(Tulips and Chimneys, II; 9-11)

.....

i see the new moon  
thinner than a hair)

making me feel  
how myself has been coarse and dull  
compared with you, silently who are  
and cling  
to my mind always

(is 5, XVIII; 216-217)

Real or imaginary, this gap provides material for the prohibitive atmosphere of many early love poems.

Poems judging time and death as filchers of love further extend Cummings' early concern with the transitory nature of loving. The speaker verifies the power of death over love, suggests the dimming of a relationship with age and marriage, or mourns the actual loss

of his lady. Few assertions that loving supersedes the complications of the world mellow such poetry to reconcile the speaker's doubts; he remains, for the most part, the prophet of the annihilation of love.

The realization of death lurks behind even the most enchanting praises to the lady:

To be thy lips is a sweet thing  
and small.  
Death, Thee i call rich beyond wishing  
if this thou catch,  
else missing.  
(though love be a day  
and life be nothing, it shall not stop kissing).

(Tulips and Chimneys, III; 11)

No pronouncement could be more final than the despair injected in a 1926 song of supreme compliments to the lover:

nothing lingers  
beyond a little instant,  
along with rhyme and with laughter  
.....  
since i and you are on our ways to dust

(is 5, X; 210-211)

The very emotion of loving prods the realization that death eventually presides. The speaker projects that "if i believe/ in death be sure/ of this; it is/ because you have loved me" (Tulips and Chimneys, IV; 33-34). The "passing of all shining things" (Tulips and Chimneys, V; 35-36) is inevitable because "beauty makes terms/ with time and his worms" (XLI POEMS, V; 135) and because "love thou art frail" (XLI POEMS, XII; 139-140). Even somewhat anemic attempts to approach objectively the coming of death and

passing of time through a too cute inventiveness belie the speaker's distraction. The sense of tragedy merely increases:

In this at least we have got a bulge on death,  
silence, and the keenly musical light

of sudden nothing . . .

(Tulips and Chimneys, III; 65-66)

Also the reader may be jolted--certainly not amused--by the poem which begins:

it is funny, you will be dead some day.  
By you the mouth hair eyes, and i mean  
the unique and nervously obscene

need; it's funny . . . .

(AND, II; 117)

And the crass imagery of a 1925 poem only enhances the morbid theme of the selection:

if i should sleep with a lady called death  
get another man with firmer lips  
to take your new mouth in his teeth  
(hips pumping pleasure into hips).

(AND, X; 121)

Although the poet experiments with masking techniques in his disgust and fear of death, his typical method is to announce the passing of love with death and time and to demonstrate his honest desire to adjust his emotions to the knowledge. Poems displaying this struggle stand among the most sincere and tender of the early works:

--i shall not smile beloved; i shall not weep:

when from the less-than-whiteness of thy face  
(whose eyes inherit vacancy) will time  
extract his inconsiderable doom,

(XLI POEMS, VI; 155)

.....

and truly i would be  
near when his scythe takes crisply the whim  
of thy smoothness . . . .

(XLI POEMS, XI; 157)

.....

--before leaving my room  
i turn, and(stooping  
through the morning)kiss  
the pillow, dear  
where our heads lived and were.

(is 5, V; 207)

Indeed, the submerged plea of all similar poems is "O stay with me slightly" (AND, XIV; 124). Nonetheless, the speaker in these early poems remains convinced of the mutability of love and finds little to reverse his opinion that love, along with other temporal things, vanishes.

Such a fatalistic conception of love forespeaks the 1922-1938 poems in which the speaker, as if compensating for the denial of a truly lasting love, angles his vision toward sordid subject matter. He ranges in the world of the demimonde and burlesque theater inhabited by prostitutes, madams, chorus girls, and belly dancers.<sup>2</sup> The method, of course, is negative, for the speaker minimizes the woman's personality. Any woman will do for loving as long as she

<sup>2</sup>Friedman, the art of his poetry, p. 31.

has beauty and/or sex appeal,<sup>3</sup> while in some instances the absence even of these prerequisites hardly precludes a love affair. In further defiance of death and time the poet inserts a satirical tone, often resorting to nothing more than obscenity or sexual jokes. And whether the poet is physically loving or lustily observing, he extracts from the action the gamut of emotions inherent in the experience. Originating in the new poems of AND, the majority of this group of poems continues through the works first published in Collected Poems. Certainly, Cummings' achievement of a raucous tone is no more evident than in these satirical, bawdy love poems.

In the rebellious love poems--those which seek to project further the unachievable lover or temporal nature of love--no topic remains too sacred, no imagery too harsh, no vulgarism too glaring for the sardonic tone. Slang interrupts one poem of passionate musings in which the throwing of money to a beggar becomes symbolic of a lady's discarding her lover:

after all, kid  
you might as well  
toss him a few thoughts  
  
a little love preferably,  
anything which you can't  
pass off on other people . . .

(is 5, XV; 214)

And the poet invades sensitive subject matter in the conclusion of

<sup>3</sup>Sickels, p. 226.

another poem:

But he turned into a fair  
y!a fair  
y!!a  
fair  
y!!!  
but she turned into a fair-y (and  
it seems to be doing nicely

(no thanks, 18; 290)

The view of the wedding ceremony as superficial climaxes a 1938

poem:

everything is protected by  
cellophane against anything (because  
nothing really exists

(Collected Poems, 8; 337)

Other poems rely on witticisms for their brash denouncement of respect for love. A 1922 poem follows the familiar prostitute-lust theme, but the reader senses the struggle of the poet to make a joke:

twentyseven bums give a prostitute the once  
-over. fiftythree (and one would see if it could)

eyes say the breasts look very good:

(AND, XXI; 115)

Another contrived joke begins innocently enough with a play on the word etcetera; however, by the end of the poem the word comes to mean the sexuality, if not the very sex organs, of the lover (is 5, X; 197-198). Typographical ingenuity assists in the transmission of the playful mood in a 1926 work:



thoroughly oiled the universal  
joint tested my gas felt of  
her radiator made sure her springs were 0.

K.) . . .

(is 5, XIX; 178-179)

may i feel said he  
(i'll squeal said she  
just once said he)  
its fun said she

(no thanks, 16; 288-289)

If the method bespeaks too much the naughty boy, delighting in his obscenity, one may conclude, however, that the very boldness emphasizes the speaker's disillusionment with the fleeting and unachievable nature of love.

The depiction or suggestion of brief, shallow love affairs further illustrates the theme of transitory love. Prostitutes constitute much of the dramatis personae of the early love poems, while two-dollar sex with the Marjories, Effies, and Frans or the strip teasers provides the action. The firm relationship between man and woman being impossible, the poet implies that the immediate associations and experiences render the most, if not the only, joy. AND and is 5 include the majority of the poems which concentrate on these subjects.

The 1922 manuscript with the line "'kitty'. sixteen, 5' 1", white prostitute" (Tulips and Chimneys, V; 59-60) begins the progression of whores and love-houses in the early poetry. The same volume characterizes the madam at Dick Mid's Place through simulation

of her accent:

--If they knew you at Dick Mid's  
the three trickling chins began to traipse  
into the cheeks "eet smeestaire steevensun  
kum een, dare ease Bet, an Leele, an dee beeg wun"

(Tulips and Chimneys, IV; 59)

Many poems, like the one above, are mere discussions of a prostitute and her environment, a style much akin to the celebration of a specific lover of the first theme. Yet the reader discerns in these poems the insincerity of the speaker who amends his doubts about inconstant love by plunging into the squalid. The accent falls upon the shock and the sensational values. In 1922 poems of this type Marj and Lil are praised:

between the breasts  
of bestial  
Marj lie large  
men who praise

Marj's cleancornered strokable  
body  
.....  
hoorah for the large  
men  
.....  
who

sleep between the legs of Lil

(AND, VII; 92-93)

A pseudo-praise for a whole group of prostitutes emerges in another poem:

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

Fran Mag Glad Dorothy

(AND, IX; 109)

Graphic evaluations of ugly cocottes appear in 1922 and 1925:

life boosts herself rapidly at me  
through sagging debris of exploded day  
the hulking perpendicular mammal  
grim epitome of chuckling flesh.

(AND, XXII; 116)

.....

in making Marjorie god hurried  
a boy's body on unsuspecting  
legs of girl. his left hand quarried  
the quartzlike face . . . .

(AND, XIX; 114)

The forced cheerfulness of another prostitute illustrates  
another approach to the portrayal of illicit loving:

raise the shade  
will youse dearie?  
rain  
wouldn't that

get yer goat but  
we don't care do  
we dearie we should  
worry about the rain

(AND, V; 88)

And bogus passion for a stripper-harlot climaxes another poem on the  
same subject. The carefully constructed word dislocation and  
rhythm scheme leave little doubt about the emotional consequences  
of the performance on the speaker:

unununun?  
butbutbut??  
tonton???  
ing????

.....

seethe firm swirl hips whirling climb to  
GIVE  
(yoursmine mineyours yoursmine  
!  
i()t)

(no thanks, 60; 320)

But perhaps the most famous of Cummings' whores are those represented as the "Five Americans," first published in 1923. Although each poem describes the appearance of the lady, the method for each presentation varies. Liz complains, "Business is rotten" (is 5, I; 165); Negro Mame pulls back her cheek and describes the extraction of her tooth, "Aint much on looks but how dat baby ached" (is 5, II; 165-166); Gert gives an "uncouth habitual dull/ jerk at garters" (is 5, III; 166); Marj speaks with a "voice squatting on a mountain of gum" (is 5, IV; 166); and Fran's distinguishing characteristics are her "unfirm drooping bloated/ calves" (is 5, V; 167). Indeed, the very number of poems revolving around the prostitute and her world stresses Cummings' early idea of transitory love.

A final classification of poems buttressing the theme of the unachievable lover and the temporal nature of love includes those works in which the speaker addresses himself to his lady in the form of a plea. Poised in a "spitefully threatening"<sup>4</sup> manner the persona indulges in propaganda to induce the lady to accept him, to free her inhibitions in order to love him more deeply, to advance more swiftly toward a deep relationship, or merely to kiss and

<sup>4</sup>Friedman, the art of his poetry, p. 56.

and react physically to his loving. This apprehensive strain suggests the very insecurities of the two lovers' courtship, even after it has progressed to the degree of intimacy where the aggressive speaker feels free to chide or scold. Perhaps the petitioning would indicate at least a hope for a firmer association, yet the implication remains that the stark reality of fleeting love partly cancels any rise of hope. Numerous are the poems related to the persuasive tone; thus, superfluous repetition may be avoided by extracting representative statements for discussion.

The very earliest dealings with this subject matter demonstrate yearnings for approbation. The atmosphere, then, becomes strained with the uncertain, cautious entreaties of the speaker. Four refrains from a 1914 work testify to this instability:

Come hither

O thou, is live not a smile?  
.....

Come hither

O thou, is life not a song?  
.....

Come hither

O thou, is life not love?  
.....

Come hither

O thou, is love not death?

(Tulips and Chimneys, I; 23-24)

In a 1920 poem the same longing appears:

approve these  
firm unsated  
eyes

(Tulips and Chimneys, I; 31-32)

In another instance the speaker states:

Distinct Lady  
swiftly take  
my fragile certain song

(Tulips and Chimneys, VII; 37-38)

More specific requests enter similar poems of the 1922-1938 career. In such situations the persona admits a somewhat self-confident tone, seemingly assuming that his lady needs only encouragement to accept him physically. The necessity of the pleasings, however, revokes any opinions that the bond is secure:

Don't be afraid

and we will pass the simple ugliness  
of exact tombs, where a large road crosses  
and all people are minutely dead.

Then you will slowly kiss me

(Tulips and Chimneys, V; 67)

.....

nearer:breath of my breath:take not they tingling  
limbs from me:make my pain their crazy meal

(AND, X; 110)

.....

come a little further--why be afraid--  
here's the earliest star(have you a wish?)  
touch me,  
before we perish

(ViVa, XLVIII; 257)

Other verses throughout the early career present more subtle propositions. The speaker urges the quiet approval of his emotions provoked by his love for his lady:

O do not wonder that

(just at the edge of day)i surely  
make a millionth poem which will not wholly  
miss you; or if i certainly create, lady,  
one of the thousand selves who are your smile.

(AND, IV; 75)

He gently presses his love toward a closer, more lasting, relationship:

But carry  
also, with that indolent and with  
this flower wholly whom you do  
not ever fear,  
me in your heart

(is 5, XI; 211-212)

.....

lady will you come with me into  
the extremely little house of  
my mind. . . .

(ViVa, LVI; 262-263)

In other instances the speaker reassures his mistress of her natural  
superiority and power over him:

--the best gesture of my brain is less than  
your eyelids' flutter which says  
we are for each other . . . .

(is 5, VII; 208-209)

.....

be unto love as rain is unto colour;create  
me gradually(or as these emerging now  
hills invent the air)  
breathe simply my each how  
my trembling where my still invisible when. . . .

(ViVa, LXIII; 267-268)

Indeed, where there is a need for such persuasion--no matter what  
the nature of the appeal--there is also the insinuation of the weak

alliance. The lover, if not the love itself, remains inaccessible. This motif, then, juxtaposed with the considerations of the distant lover, the fear of death and time as thieves of love, and the infatuation with counterfeit romance, underwrites the second major theme of the early love poetry, the unachievable and temporal nature of love.

In retrospect, the poems which demonstrate the two major themes of the early love poetry render diversified emotions, expose motley personages, experiment with impressionistic and realistic techniques, orchestrate tones ranging from the sincere to the sardonic, and stage varying settings. But in each instance the stress levels both upon the concrete situation and upon fretful doubtings. Young Cummings relies upon the specific figure or situation; he carves detailed memorials to a particular person, whore or lady, transmits a sole lady's activities, and evokes unique sensations through graphic enactments of coitus. The poet leans upon the concrete for the catalyst of inspiration, and often the whole poem's reason for being hardly lies beyond the representation, nothing more, nothing less, of an object or experience. The second segment of the early love poetry encloses those musings which uncover the speaker tattered with the uncertainties surrounding the very nature of love. He languishes in fears of death and time as captors of loving; he questions his ability to attract permanently, or even briefly, his desired lady; he sneers at the sanctity of love by concentrating on mere vendors

of cheap love and by manufacturing lewd jokes; and he stretches toward a viable relationship through persuasion. Even here the stimuli and stagings of the doubtings stem from concrete situations and imagery.

Interestingly enough, nearly every subdivision appears in the 1923 Tulips and Chimneys, and nearly every theme variation, advances through the 1938 Collected Poems. If the reader seeks volumes which include strongest illustrations of the two major theme of the early love poetry, he may be directed to XLI POEMS, is 5, and ViVa. Although few deviations from the major themes enter the early love poetry, the material never stagnates, for the young poet devises numerous modulations--all intriguing dimensions of Cummings' achievement in the celebration of a specific lover or love experience and the expression of the unachievable and temporal nature of love.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### THE AFFIRMATION THAT LOVE IS POSSIBLE AND ENDURING

Investigations into the emergence of the mature vision (c. 1940-1963) of E. E. Cummings provide contrasts with aspects of his earlier career. Affirmations that love is possible and enduring and the celebration of love as a force within itself replace the skepticism and narrow scope of the earlier period. More specifically, in the late career Cummings "writes poems which talk about love . . . philosophical poems, many of which are unanchored in any particular situation . . . [and are] disembodied cries from a void."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the 1940-1963 themes dissolve pure physiological interest in the lover, the vacillations, and the lauding of a particular character and incident. Assurances that love transcends the ills of society and temporal limits and that love is durable and realizable, definitions of love, discussions of love as a concept, and celebrations of love in its highest form--all these more abstract problems replace the early themes. Such a movement from disquieted grappling to resignation can be termed nothing but growth from the coarse and concrete toward the mellow, the affirmative, and the abstract.

Completing the first major theme of the later love poetry--the

<sup>1</sup>Von Abele, p. 929.

affirmation that love is possible and enduring--are two groups of love poems, those which announce that love transcends worldly standards and those which forcefully state the very possibility of love. An understanding of Cummings' theory of the transcendental force of love complements the study of the second division of the theme.

Norman Friedman believes that the essence of Cummings' mature vision hinges on a "transcendental vision," which the critic describes as a "spiritual world, a world where facts are saturated in values, a world of magic, miracle, and mystery. Nothing which is merely measurable is for him of the slightest significance."<sup>2</sup>

Cummings' rejection of overt authority, the negative approach to system, the anti-cultural spirit and attacks on society's worst indulgences in materialism, hypocrisy, scientific unwisdom, false heroes, and tawdry ideas<sup>3</sup> have, of course, long been selected as the poet's chief subject matter. But for all the criticism Cummings hurls at society, he is not a reformer or a Utopian, "and he has no institutions to suggest in place of those he criticizes . . . . He takes his stand from a point outside our world . . . . He warns us continually not to take means as ends, and all his emphasis is on the side of ends."<sup>4</sup> And these "ends" concern love,

<sup>2</sup>Friedman, The Growth of a Writer, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>David Ray, "The Irony of E. E. Cummings," College English, XXIII (January, 1962), 287.

<sup>4</sup>Friedman, The Growth of a Writer, p. 10.

for both romantic and Platonic love affect this visionary world, an ideal immersed in the later love poetry.

What Cummings means by love, or what he comes to mean in the development of his theory, "is simply perfect givingness, giving without thought of return, illimitably and openly and freely."<sup>5</sup> Pure loving, consequently, necessitates self-autonomy. Cummings in his "Forward to Krazy" (1946) explains:

Let's make no mistake about Krazy. A lot of people "love" because, and a lot of people "love" although, and a few individuals love. Love is something illimitable; and a lot of people spend their lives trying to prevent anything illimitable from happening to them. Krazy, however, is not a lot of people. Krazy is herself. Krazy is illimitable--she loves.<sup>6</sup>

This call for individualism, or the shrugging off of the conventional, Cummings discusses in a 1955 letter to a high school newspaper editor:

To be nobody-but-yourself in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else--means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight; and never stop fighting.<sup>7</sup>

Nonetheless, no matter what the deterrents imposed by society, the arriving at individualism and, consequently the achieving of pure love, pertains to the first theme of the late love poetry: Cummings sets love as the answer to the struggle toward his dream world and as the power which surmounts not only the world's hollow standards, but as the energy which ultimately averts fears that love vanishes.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>E. E. Cummings, E. E. Cummings: A Miscellany Revised, ed. George J. Firmage (New York, 1967), p. 324.

<sup>7</sup>Norman, pp. 383-384.

Although hints of the motif appear in Tulips and Chimneys, the trend displaying love as a force which blots worldly falsehoods emerges primarily in the 1930's, finds staunch clarification in the 1940's, the first decade of the poet's late career, and, most significantly, saturates the very fiber of the love poems of the 1950's and 1960's. The few early poems introducing the problem pose as mere negotiations; the speaker searches for a compromise between love and the world. However, the later poems project a more staid image; the contract declaring love the ultimate conqueror has been verified. Cummings' growth in this area may not be denied, and perhaps a study of no other subject matter reveals as steady a progression toward surer, more encompassing explication. Indeed, the affirmations and celebration of the late career gain their solidity from the speaker's determined view of the transitory capability of love.

A 1922 sonnet establishes the basic inquiry:

if learned darkness from our searched world  
should wrest the rare unwisdom of thy eyes,  
.....  
if god should send the morning; and before  
my doubting window leaves softly to stir,  
of thoughtful trees whom night hath pondered o'er  
.....  
(heart, could we bear the marvel of this thing?)

(XLI POEMS, I; 152-153)

"Should nature become systemized and unspontaneous, could my heart, my love, bear the burden?" stands the question. And several poems,





but all these hundreds upon thousands of  
people socalled if multiplied by twice  
infinity could never equal one)

which may your million selves and my suffice  
to through the only mystery of love  
become while every sun goes round its moon

(50 POEMS, 24; 366)

The 1944 volume introduces similar assertions of love's timelessness,  
immutability, and transcendental nature:

(all doubts,all certainties,as villains strive  
and heroes through the mere mind's poor pretend  
--grim comics of duration:only love  
immortally occurs beyond the mind)

(1 X 1, XXXVI; 410-411)

.....

love is a deeper season  
than reason;  
my sweet one  
(and april's where we're)

(1 X 1, XXXVIII; 412)

.....

i'd still insist that all  
history is too small for even me;  
for me and you,exceedingly too small.  
.....  
--tomorrow is our permanent address

and there they'll scarcely find us(if they do,  
we'll move away still further:into now

(1 X 1, XXXIX; 412)

Love poems of the 1950's and 1960's season the theme unleashed  
in the earlier decades. The speaker, in many instances, appears to  
have achieved his world of dream through love or at least bears  
witness to the possible attainment of the visionary realms. The

affirmations proceed, then, as natural evocations of the already authenticated reign of love. The 1950 XAIPE contains two poems, published in 1946 and 1947, both transmissions of the transcendental experiences and its connection with love. By this time the need for direct statements about the visionary thrusts of love has disappeared; the speaker needs only to relate, in the impressionistic method common to the early period, the sensations of the moment:

what above did was  
always fall  
(yes but behind yes)  
without or until

no atom couldn't die  
(how and am quick i  
they'll all not conceive  
less who than love)

(XAIPE, 36; 449)

.....

eternity floated a blossoming  
  
(while anyone might slowly count to soon)  
rose--did you see her?darling,did you (kiss  
me)quickly count to never?you were wrong  
  
--then all the way from perfect nowhere came  
  
(as easily as we forget something)  
livingest the imaginable

(XAIPE, 1, 429)

And the "touch me! love" in a 1950 poem, coming as it does amid transcendental equations, reveals the bond between Cummings' dream world and love:

love, stand with me while silence sings  
not into nothing and nothing into never  
and never into (touch me! love) forever  
--until is and shall be and was are night's

total exploding millionminded Who

(XAIPE, 35; 448-449)

95 poems with its other abstract considerations of love furthers the topic of all-giving love as a means toward the exclusion of the world's peripheral characteristics. Two 1952 poems emit the uniqueness of this type of love:

darling)but should some im  
probably  
unworld crash  
to 1

nonillion(& so)nothings  
each(let's  
kiss)means  
home

(95 poems; 56)<sup>8</sup>

.....

(for what were less than dead)dance, i and you;  
high(are become more than alive)above  
anybody and fate and even Our  
whisper it Selves but don't look down and to

-morrow and yesterday and everything except love

(95 poems; 89)

A couplet from a 1957 sonnet displays the wondrous effect of love upon the recipient of the lady's affections:

<sup>8</sup>E. E. Cummings, 95 poems (New York, 1958), no. 56. All further quotations of poems appearing in this volume are from this source. Since the publication contains no page numbers, the number after the title indicates the number assigned to the poem in the volume.

--human one mortally immortal i  
can turn immense all time's because to why

(95 poems; 7)

The rank of love over the world could be no more explicit than in  
this stanza:

darling of darlings!by that miracle  
which is the coming of pure joyful your  
fearless and complete love,all safely small  
big wickedly worlds of world disappear

(95 poems; 88)

Finally, the closing work of 73 poems declaims the world's myopia  
while elevating the hypersensual qualities of one who loves:

all worlds have halfsight,seeing either with  
  
life's eye(which is if things seem spirits)or  
(if spirits in the guise of things appear)  
death's  
.....  
Each believing world denies,whereas  
your lover(looking through both life and death)  
timelessly celebrates the merciful

wonder no world deny may or believe

(73 poems; 73)<sup>9</sup>

Having established, then, the ability of love to transcend  
sham and to engender individuality necessary for loving, the poet  
along with these revelations enters poems which, using as a base  
the ability of love to surpass worldly considerations, concentrate

<sup>9</sup>E. E. Cummings, 73 poems (New York, 1963), no. 73. All future  
quotations of poems appearing in this volume are from this source.  
Since the publication contains no page numbers, the number after the  
title indicates the number assigned the poem in the volume. For the  
sake of clarity, all poems first published in this posthumous volume  
for which I have found no more specific dates will be cited as 1963  
works, and the end of the poet's career will be considered as 1963 also.

primarily upon the possibility of love and its endurance. Such statements mingle with the transcendental utterances of the 1930's and 1940's, but extend throughout the late 1950's and 1960's to more adamant, more categorical announcements of love's eventuality and permanence. How different seem these works from those of the earlier period which brandished the speaker's despair by calling forth the specific, the ugly, or the distant relationship or lover. For in the poems devoted to assurances the persona reclines in his self-confidence, pausing to verify his attitude by sincere enunciations of his faith in the mastery of love.

One critic noted in 1955 that an "anthology could be culled of apothegms about love"<sup>10</sup> from the poetry of Cummings. Clarification of no other theme proceeds more appropriately through considerations of pithy affirmations than that exposing the durability of love.

Love only has ever been, is, and will ever be, So

(XAIPE, 33; 447)

.....

but more than all (as all your more than eyes  
tell me) there is a time for timelessness

(95 poems; 11)

.....

time time time time time

--how fortunate are you and i, whose home  
is timelessness . . .

(95 poems; 71)

.....

<sup>10</sup>Von Abele, p. 929.



relationship advances from a 1943 poem, most famous for its adroit rhythm:

we're anything brighter than even the sun  
(we're everything greater  
than books  
might mean)  
we're everything more than believe  
(with a spin  
leap  
alive we're alive)  
we're wonderful one times one

(1 X 1, LIV; 422-423)

The omnipresence, the omnipotence of love expressed in another poem with its typographical acrobatics can hardly escape the reader of these lines:

this irre-  
VocA  
-ble flame  
  
is  
lives  
breath  
es(over-  
  
ing  
un  
-derfully & a-  
rounding  
death)  
L  
  
o  
v  
  
e

(95 poems; 47)

A 1950 poem with its definitions of love exposes perpetual love:

love is the voice under all silences,  
the hope which has no opposite in fear;  
the strength so strong mere force is feebleness:  
the truth more first than sun more last than star

--do lovers love?why then to heaven with hell.  
Whatever sages say and fools,all's well

(95 poems; 94)

And what lines could speak more positively of love than these from  
the 1963 volume:

what does  
do,  
has always done  
;&

will do alw

-ays something  
is(guess)yes  
you're  
right:my enemy

. Love

(73 poems; 21)

Cummings' message in many of the love poems, relating to the  
first major theme of the late career, resounds through a passage  
from the final nonlecture delivered at Harvard:

I am someone who proudly and humbly affirms that love  
is the mystery-of-mysteries, and that nothing measurable  
matters "a very good God damn": that "an artist, a man,  
a failure" is no mere whenfully accreting mechanism, but  
a givingly eternal complexity . . . whose only happiness  
is to transcend himself . . . .<sup>11</sup>

This self-transcendence, the poems say, is "love's reward" for the

<sup>11</sup>E. E. Cummings, i: six nonlectures (New York, 1967), pp.  
110-111.

person who gives "rein to the 'illimitable' in himself."<sup>12</sup> Love through its transitory nature creates the speaker's world of reality or his world of dream "where time is timeless and all questions answered; the world that we can reach, paradoxically enough, by consenting to live in time without question . . . ." <sup>13</sup>

The affirmation that love is possible and enduring proceeds inevitably from Cummings' resolution that love enforces the world of vision, mystery, and magic. The poems endorsing the supremacy of love either by avowing the rule of love over intellectualism, scientific rationalization, and worldly circumstances or by subscribing to the prowess of love by direct statements embody one aspect of the maturing thought of Cummings. Absent are the ominous insinuations and the leaning upon the concrete and the specific in the 1922-1938 poetry, and the idea, the ideal, the philosophical replace the staged situations or incantations of the early poetic period.

<sup>12</sup>Ralph J. Mills, Jr., "The Poetry of Innocence: Notes on E. E. Cummings," English Journal, XLVIII (November, 1959), 440.

<sup>13</sup>Friedman, the art of his poetry, p. 22.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CELEBRATION OF LOVE AS A FORCE WITHIN ITSELF

The love poetry appearing as the celebration of love as a force within itself, the second major theme of the later poetic career, with its exquisite emotion and inventiveness, provides perhaps the most pleasant reading of all the love poems. A delight in defining love, the dismissing of love as a cosmic mystery, pure discussions of love, hyperbolisms calculated to praise the lady, glorifications of the possibility of the perfect spiritual union of two lovers--all register as means whereby the persona in the 1940-1963 career commemorates love itself. If some of these variations reveal earlier subtopics, those common to the early love poetry, one may attest only to the similarity of language, for the objective method of the 1922-1938 poems fades into the more sophisticated, gentle technique and imagery of the late poetic period. Both the method and the underlying purpose of the poems in the two periods differ, while the complexion of the late love poetry bespeaks emphatically Cummings' maturity. With their intimate tone, the vibrating sensitivity, and the effervescent joy of self-confident loving, the love poems published between 1940 and 1963 invade those areas, those emotions, and those understandings basic to supreme loving.

One critic aptly observed in 1959:

With age, Cummings has not decreased his composition of amatory verse, but he has located love between the sexes in a more comprehensive vision. Now it is no longer just the matter of a relation between lover and beloved; it is, instead, the positive relation of lovers to the ripeness of earth and to love itself.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly enough, the scope of the late love poetry billows from the specific lover, her actions, and her body to that of the lady's elevated association, not only with the speaker himself, but also with the universe. Noticeably absent, therefore, from the verse are the often insipid, hackneyed recountings of fleshly experiences, the aloof lady, the lascivious jokes, and the suspicions. Such issues falter when set alongside the guarantees of a transcending, achievable, and enduring love incorporated into the 1940-1963 volumes. The speaker in these poems has leave to ponder the luxury of his knowledge of pure love and the self-satisfaction accrued from such a realization.

The conception of the very inexpressible feature of love emerges as a system for Cummings' celebration of love as a force within itself. Two 1931 poems forecast the imprecision of rhetoric in solving the mystery of love:

speaking of love (of  
which Who knows the  
meaning; or how dreaming  
becomes

(ViVa, LV; 262)

The second stanza testifies that even indecision is enchanting:

<sup>1</sup>Mills, pp. 440-441.

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

(ViVa, LVII; 263)

Later poems as if in complete recognition of the inadequacy of language to portray love settle into breathless acclamations of the sheer wonder of loving. Beautifully expressed is the mystery-miracle of love in a 1949 poem:

and now you are and i am now and we're  
a mystery which will never happen again,  
a miracle which has never happened before--  
and shining this our now must come to then

(XAIPE, 69; 466)

In 1952 Cummings sings of this same secret. Here the poet relies on one abstraction after another to support the original abstraction, the marvel of loving.

here is the deepest secret nobody knows  
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud  
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows  
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)  
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

(95 poems; 92)

The reticence to envelope love in insufficient definitions follows even in the 1963 volume. Appropriately, the "trillion secrets" of a "summer night" rank second in difficulty in the poem when compared with the secret of a kiss. Need the poet say more to prove his awe of love:

now that, more nearest even than your fate

and mine(or any truth beyond perceive)  
quivers this miracle of summer night

her trillion secrets touchably alive  
.....  
that hugest whole creation may be less  
incalculable than a single kiss

(73 poems; 37)

In this period, then, the puzzle of love is too precious for mundane rationalization, and the mere pointing up of the complexity suffices to praise love.

To further highlight love as a mystery and, thus, love as a force within itself, Cummings in his later career develops paradoxical statements about love. The complications of the seeming contradictions dramatize the intricate subject matter. As with one subdivision of the first theme in the 1940-1963 publications, such remarks occur as terse witticisms, extracted often from poems which contain material relevant to other themes:

love is the every only god

(50 POEMS, 38; 378)

.....

love is less always than to win  
less never than alive  
less bigger than the least begin  
less littler than forgive

(50 POEMS, 42; 381)

.....

and we who are we?surely not i not you  
behold nor any breathing creature this?  
nothing except the impossible shall occur

(1 X 1, XLII; 414-415)

.....

and losing's less than winning (but  
love is more than love)

(95 poems; 12)

.....

what's wholly  
marvellous my

Darling

is that you &  
i are more than you  
& i (be

ca  
us

e It's we)

(73 poems; 10)

The cleverness of the earlier poetic period reveals itself in such verses, but the impact promotes musings rather than mockery. The poet folds the enigma of loving between absurdities, both gentle and valid. A poem motivated by the particular situation and founded upon the objective would degrade the spiritualization of love in the late career and would deny the mystery of love, a loving divorced from prostitutes and higher than sexual sensationalism.

Norman Friedman observed in his e. e. cummings: the art of his poetry that in the 1940's Cummings' "praise of his lady enters a new state wherein her relationship to nature changes from one that compares her favorably with desirable natural phenomena" to one in which desirable natural phenomena are favorably compared to her.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Friedman, the art of his poetry, p. 44.

Such hyperbolic enthusiasm, which extends from the 1940's throughout the remaining poetry, renders another manifestation of E. E. Cummings' celebration of love as a force within itself. Perhaps the praise of the lady is not as important as is the revelation of the viewpoint of the speaker, whose amorous vision reverses, in a very real sense, the normal order of the universe. For incantations to the majesty of love, how fitting is the technique. High praise for the lady appears in 1944 poems:

Living no single things dares partly seem  
one atomy once, and every cannot stir  
imagining; while you are motionless--

(1 X 1, XIX; 400)

.....

except in your  
honour,  
my loveliest,  
nothing  
may move

.....

the worlds move  
in your  
(and rest, my love)  
honour

(1 X 1, XXXV; 409-410)

In yet another poem of the same volume the lady's eyes and breasts steal from summer and spring their glory:

open green those  
(dear)  
worlds of than great  
more eyes, and what  
were summer's beside their  
glories

.....

and than this (mere  
most)breast

spring's million(who  
are  
and do not wait)  
buds imitate  
upward each first flower  
of two

(1 X 1, XXXIII; 408)

In a 1950 poem only the beauty of the lovers' spiritual union  
furbishes the physical universe:

nothing may, quite  
your my(my your  
and)self without,  
completely dare  
be beautiful

(XAIPE, 68; 465-466)

The presence of the lady in 1958 verses throws all time and seasons  
askew, while the sun exists solely as harbinger of the lover's  
arrival:

--sunlight and singing welcome your coming  
  
although winter may be everywhere  
with such silence and such darkness  
noone can quite begin to guess

(95 poems; 45)

The speaker in 1963 substitutes the beloved's qualities for elements  
in nature:

yours is the light by which my spirit's born:  
yours is the darkness of my soul's return  
--you are my sun, my moon, and all my stars

(73 poems; 38)

The memorials of a lover, the nature imagery, the intense passion  
are hardly unique to Cummings or to love poetry of any age. The

significance of the poet's 1940-1963 use of them falls upon the sublime unwisdom of the persona, an emotional uncoordination stemming from the celebration of love as a force within itself. The method here seems secondary, almost incidental, to the overall praise of love. Cummings makes significant departure from the portrait of a definite lover for its carnal value typical of the earlier period, for the concept of love and loving of the later career stands too intangible, too abstract for such specific imagery.

Just as often as Cummings proclaims the indefinable mystery of love does he relish in inventing verses contemplating the intriguing nature of love. Such 1940-1963 probings, bordering at times upon the intellectually elfish, appear as discussions of love, the illimitable love which permeates the mature thought of the poet. In their purpose the poems serve as quiet celebrations of love.

At times the defining of love takes the form of tender assertions of the effect of love or the lover upon the speaker. Imbedded in this indirect method lie assurances of the oneness of lovers. Two 1940 works conclude with a realization of this goal of unity:

nor a first rose explodes but shall increase  
whole truthful infinite immediate us

(50 POEMS, 50; 386)

.....

we are so both and oneful  
night cannot be so sky  
sky cannot be so sunful  
i am through you so i

(50 POEMS, 49; 385-386)

Poems from the 1944 1 X 1 pronounce the joy of this perfect union.  
These poems sharply contract with the persuasion and distant lover  
motifs of the 1922-1938 career. The emotional status of this unity  
comprises the matter of a 1943 poem:

love(by yes  
every new  
bird no bigger than to sing)  
leaf is wing  
and tree is voice  
more leastfully than i am you  
,we are spring

(1 X 1; XLIII; 415)

In another instance the familiar imagery of nature complements the  
thrill of emotional fusion:

birds are  
                  in(trees are in)  
song  
when to me you  
leap and i'm born we  
're sunlight of  
oneness

(1 X 1; XLIX; 419)

The varying syntactical dislocation of these refrains in a 1950  
poem projects the mutual loving:

that love are in we,that love are in we  
.....  
(for love are in we am in i are in you)  
.....  
For love are in you am in i are in we

(XAIPE 66; 464-465)

Another poem in the same year utilizes a pun upon who's to clarify this merging of two souls in highest love:

with a you and a me  
and an every(who's any who's some)one who's we

(95 poems; 95)

The message can be no plainer in a 1963 publication with its use of the contraction, we're, to picture the "wholeness."

--when all fears hopes beliefs doubts disappear.  
Everywhere and joy's perfect wholeness we're

(73 poems; 40)

The taut apprehensions of the early period relax into lines freely expressing the achievement of the perfect relationship, and the celebration of the very linking process yields celebration of love as a force within itself.

Other means of defining love come as more direct remarks in the 1940-1963 volumes. But no conventional lexicographer is Cummings, nor could he be. For the very abstraction of love negates the authenticity of objective, substitutable synonyms. One abstraction may equal only another. The first most obvious attempt to define love comes in 1935, and its method varies little from that of the later poems:

love is a place  
& through this place of  
love move  
(with brightness of peace)  
all places

(no thanks, 58; 318)

50 POEMS continues this phase of the celebration of love as a force within itself:

love is the every only god  
who spoke this earth so glad and big  
even a thing all small and sad  
man, may his mighty briefness dig

(50 POEMS, 38; 378)

The expression of love as the ultimate value opens yet another dimension of Cummings' scheme of more straightforward definitions:

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

(50 POEMS, 43; 381)

A 1944 poem attempts an explanation of love and lovers:

love is a spring at which  
crazy they drink who've climbed  
steeper than hopes are fears  
.....  
lovers are mindless they  
higher than fears are hopes  
lovers are those who kneel  
lovers are these whose lips  
smash unimagined sky  
deeper than heaven is hell

(1 X 1, XXIII; 402)

A reversal of the usual definition pattern comes in a poem of the same year:

nothing false and possible is love  
.....  
love's to giving as to keeping's give;  
as yes is to if, love is to yes

(1 X 1, XXXIV; 409)

The explanation of "unlove" in a 1952 poem implies the meaning of love:

unlove's the heavenless hell and homeless home  
of knowledgeable shadows . . .

(95 poems; 91)

Other poems may not be as compactly grouped, for in varying forms they radiate the jubilation of loving through transmission of the speaker's reactions to the oneness and very solidity of love as set forth in the late poetic period. If definition of love is the concern, these poems make clear enough the concept. Two 1944 stanzas display exuberance in love:

"sweet spring is your  
time is my time is our  
time for springtime is lovetime  
and viva sweet love"

.....  
lovers go and lovers come  
awandering awondering  
but any two are perfectly  
alone there's nobody else alive

(1 X 1, LI; 420-421)

1948, 1952, 1958 and 1963 poems parallel the vitality of spring and nature with the renewing of supreme love. The refrains provide the key to the first poem's joy:

--its april(yes,april;my darling)it's spring!  
.....  
--alive;we're alive,dear:it's(kiss me now)spring!  
.....  
--its spring(all our night becomes day)o,it's spring!

(XAIPE, 67; 465)

The ecstasy of the second poem equals that of the first:

spring!may--  
everywhere's here  
.....  
how?why  
--we never we know  
(so kiss me)shy sweet eagerly my  
most dear

(95 poems; 93)

The very perfection of love and the love experience produces the  
theme of the 1958 work:

and if what calls itself a world should have  
the luck to hear such singing(or glimpse such  
sunlight as will leap higher than high  
through gayer than gayest someone's heart at your each  
nearerness)everyone certainly would(my  
most beautiful darling)believe in nothing but love

(95 poems; 45)

The entire love-spring imagery climaxes in the closing lines of a  
1963 publication:

she quickly dreamed a dream of spring  
--how you and i are blossoming

(73 poems; 5)

And if there be any doubt the poet's total commitment to "shining  
love," another 1963 poem settles the issue:

without the mercy of  
your eyes your  
voice your  
ways(o very most my shining love)

how more than dark i am  
no song(no  
thing)no  
silence ever told;it has no name--

(73 poems; 47)

How "shining," indeed, are the poems of the late career which hail love. The emotional radiance of the speaker as he smiles upon his happy plight of sincere loving, spiritualizes his lover, declares the utter mystery of love, or voices somewhat metaphysical definitions of love enclose the love poetry in the aura appropriate for the celebration of love as a force within itself.

In summary, then, the love poetry appearing between 1940 and 1963 impounds two major themes, both secured by the adamant pronouncements of a speaker whose affirmative and joyous convictions about love defy the indecision of the early love poems. The reporting of the assurances that love is possible and enduring signals prominent contrasts with themes of the 1922-1938 poetry: a belief in the transcending power of love supersedes fears that love vanishes with death and time, and discussions confirming perpetual, obtainable love replace the carnal dramas, the nervous entreaties, the distance of the lady, and the sexual jokes. Denied in the late career is the unachievable or temporal nature of love. The celebration of love as a force within itself pales the early interests: a thrill of defining purest love or the realization of the mystery of love excludes the mere explanation of the speaker's personal response to the lady; the jubilation of two lovers' spiritual union overpowers the excitement of sexual intercourse; the amorous exaggerations of the lady's ethereal beauty weaken the simple delight in the physical features of the beloved. Erased in the 1940-1963 volumes is the celebration of a specific lover or love experience.

To maintain that a sharp boundary could be erected between the disappearance of the two early themes and the emergence of the two later themes is to be naïve. As has been indicated, the various aspects of the two mature themes often have their origin in the volumes associated with the 1922-1938 career. Of course, the surest proof of the late motifs lies within 95 poems and 73 poems; however, to limit the consideration to these two volumes would be to lose many of the diverse, unique means through which E. E. Cummings sings of a possible, undying love and celebrates love as a force within itself.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has proven through investigation into the two major themes from the early and late careers that any charges of an immobility or lack of growth in the vision of E. E. Cummings fail. Description of the change, transformation, or substitution of the two early themes in relation to the two later ones may suggest the positioning of one adjective against another, but of all the qualifying terms no summary serves more adequately than proposing a movement toward affirmation and a movement from the concrete to the abstract.

The speaker of the poems related to the first theme of the 1922-1938 career depends upon the concrete situation for both his inspiration and his subjects--the joy and observation of one lady and her body. Not only does the framework imply the concrete, but also the persona seldom goes beyond the explanation--though it is often skillful--of his personal reactions. Significantly, then, the young poet seeks no broad conclusions, no philosophies from his experience; for him love means the degree of pleasure inherent in the moment. Both the speaker's viewing of the lady and his introspection cease with the nudity of the beloved. Similarly, the treatment of love in the poems which support the second early theme tend toward the concrete; they too emphasize the dramatic,

superficial scene and offer little inner musing. But, most important, these love poems disaffirm the possibility of a lasting love with their perfunctory examinations of love through suggestions of the distant lover, the obscene jokes, the persuasive tone, and the licentious affairs. Thus, the reader leaves the 1922-1938 poems disillusioned about the nature of love. He has ranged among the crass, the candid, the clever, and the passionate, but he has been handed only the negative and the concrete.

The two themes of the 1940-1963 love poems placate the dubious reader, however. The first theme from the period includes those poems which present a transcending love and stout affirmations that love emerges the victor over time and death and is achievable. And the second theme with its poems which radiate the intangible amorous aspects--the mystery of love, the otherworldly beauty of the beloved, and the merging of the lovers' souls--thwart claims that Cummings' subject matter remains attached to the concrete. Here the reader finds staunch conclusions and abstractions revealing love as a force within itself. The sedate replaces the sordid, corporeal loveliness yields to spiritual elegance, shadows of detached relationships dissolve into a "sunlight of/ oneness," the negative bows under the assurances, and sharp, rigid dramas fall to gentle, subjective discussions. The movement toward affirmation and from the concrete to the abstract is complete.

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THE GROWTH OF THE VISION OF E. E. CUMMINGS:  
AN ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC THEMES IN THE LOVE POETRY

Betty Mar Allen Little

Abstract

Throughout the career of E. E. Cummings critics maintained that the poet displayed a lack of growth in his vision. Such a criticism fails in an analysis of the development of specific themes in the love poetry of Cummings. This thesis investigates two major themes from the early love poetry (the volumes of 1923 - c. 1938) and two from the later love poetry (the volumes of c. 1940 - 1963) and proposes a movement of the themes toward affirmation and movement from the concrete to the abstract.

Chapter II clarifies the first early theme, the celebration of a specific lover or love experience and presents those poems which define the speaker's response to the lady's presence, delight in her body, and express the joy of intercourse with her. Chapter III considers the second early theme, the unachievable and temporal nature of love. Death as thief, the fleeting nature of love, the distance of the lady, the persuasion, the sordid love affairs, the sexual jokes, and the satirical tone emerge as variations of this theme.

Chapter IV deals with the first later theme, the affirmation that love is possible and enduring. Emphasized are discussions of love as a concept, celebrations of highest love, and the transcending

power of love. Chapter V in explaining the second later theme, the celebration of love as a force within itself, displays poems which define love, dismiss it as a mystery, theorize about love, arrange hyperbolisms to praise the lady, and glorify the lovers' spiritual union.