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‘nearerandnearerandNEARER’: Foregrounding effects of the unconventional capitalization in the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings

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Abstract: Marked linguistic structures in E. E. Cummings’ poetry have long been an issue within literary criticism and stylistics. In this sense, critical approaches to Cummings’ style have dealt mainly with grammar, lexis and morphology, while only few works have examined his graphology extensively. Departing from these trends, in this paper I analyse the use of unorthodox capital letters in 96 of his experimental poems. My aim is twofold: to identify the processes present in Cummings’ unconventional use of capital letters and to determine the effects observable in such unusual patterns. The analysis reveals that the foregrounding of capitals is materialized by the insertion of initial caps, middle caps, final caps, all caps or mixed caps where these are not expected or required. It also suggests that these unconventional patterns mainly emphasize certain elements within the poems, produce iconic effects, generate wordplay and create chaotic scenes. To a lesser degree, they also schematize words, lines or a whole poem, and reproduce differences in the tone of some poetic voices or depict elements that are capitalized in real life.

Keywords: capital letter, typography, foregrounding, E. E. Cummings, corpus, stylistics, patterns, poetic discourse

1 Introduction

This paper examines foregrounding by capitalization in poetry. In particular, it suggests the possibility that unconventional patterns in the use of capitals in the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings produce meaningful effects. This idea rests on three complementary premises: (1) that sometimes the devices of a language are used to attract attention (Havranek 1932), (2) that such uses can be observed at different levels of linguistic analysis (Leech 1969: 36–55) and (3) that they modify the nature of the message in some way, thus affecting those texts where they are present (Douthwaite 2000: 39). These premises, together

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with the fact that the exploitation of typography is a central feature in Cummings' poetry, make this a worthwhile object of study for stylistics.

Distinctive typography has always been considered a hallmark of E. E. Cummings' work. From his first publications, critics tried to determine the functional relevance of his uses of typographical resources. As early as 1923, following the publication of Cummings' *The Enormous Room* (Cummings 1922), Munson claimed that capitals were used principally for *emphasis*. This initial interest in Cummings' style grew especially in the sixties, when literary linguists started focusing their attention on linguistic devices in Cummings' poetry. Since then, relevant figures in the field of stylistics have studied this poet to show the potential of unconventional patterns in his language: see, e. g., Leech (1969: 47–48, 2008: 188); Simpson (1997: 44–53), McIntyre (2004), Burke (2007), Jeffries and McIntyre (2010: 32, 47, 57) and Widdowson (1975: 14–15, 32, 1992: 180, 214), among others.

To date, most of the linguistic studies on E. E. Cummings have oriented towards the grammar (Lord 1966; Berutti 1970; Fairley 1971; Fairley 1975; Cureton 1979a; Cureton 1979b; Cureton 1980; Cureton 1981) and morphology (Fairley 1975; Cureton 1979b; Cureton 1985), with little or no attention paid to graphology. Comprehensive studies that consider Cummings' style from a more general perspective do not always take capital letters into account, and if they do, they are noted briefly alongside other typographical elements like spelling, punctuation or layout. Exceptions include Von Abele (1955: 916) and Baum (1954: 114), who restated the emphatic function of capital letters. Substantial advances in this area were achieved by Friedman (1960: 113), who proposed further functions in the use of unconventional capitals, namely *pause* and *iconicity*:

His [Cummings'] handling of capital and lower-case letters is the most obvious, and is aesthetic in helping to produce or delay pauses and emphases, and figurative in providing visual equivalents of the thing spoken of. [...] He can therefore omit capitals where we would normally expect them, and thereby increase the effect of the lower-case letter, or he can capitalize words or even parts of words where we would not normally expect them, and thereby increase their effect. (Friedman 1960: 113)

The contribution by these scholars to the understanding of capital letters in Cummings' poetry has not been developed further, except in passing mentions that have signalled a *schematic effect* (Triem 1969: 34) or have reinforced the connection between capital letters and emphasis (McIntyre 2004: 5–6). More recent approaches to the topic have suggested that unorthodox capitals “modify the meaning of the work” (Jovanovic 1991: 90) and contribute to a process of defamiliarisation (Mannani 1999–2002: 53; Tartakovsky 2009: 216) “by forcing the reader to interpret it, to look at it from a particular, literary angle” (Jovanovic

1991: 90). Despite recognizing the influence of capitalization in the poems, there has been no thorough, empirical approach to this feature of Cummings' style.

Accordingly, I aim to determine precisely what effects derive from E. E. Cummings' unconventional use of capital letters. As the foregrounding of capitals has been mostly linked to emphasis, I explore how this process works and consider other possible effects. I first explain the data I have analysed and the methodology I have applied. I then explain the different effects that result from the foregrounding of capitals in Cummings' experimental poetry. Finally, I offer some discussion of the results of my analysis. The paper hopes to provide a more systematic description than hitherto available of Cummings' use of capital letters and their meaning implications in his experimental poems.

2 Method and data

As conceived in this paper, Cummings' experimental poetry includes those poems in which he creates new words, deviates from grammatical constraints, modifies the visual appearance of the stanzas, alters the spelling of words or alternates the use of capital and lower case letters, among other features. As noted by Friedman (1960: 87), "Cummings is [...] an experimental poet. Although his subjects, ideas and situations are frequently ultra-traditional [...], his techniques and devices are frequently ultra-modern because he has taken a completely unique attitude toward rhyme, meter, stanza, grammar, syntax, and typography".

I have used three criteria to select experimental poems for analysis: they had to be written in free verse; contain avant-garde (especially graphological) linguistic devices to a high degree; and include at least one capital letter used unconventionally, relative to the principles of standard punctuation as described in Partridge (1983: 107–117). This selection policy was applied to the eleven poetry books originally published between 1922 and 1963 (Cummings 1994: 1–845). Based on these parameters, a total of 96 poems were selected for this study, thus approximately one eighth of the 766 poems in his *Complete Poems 1904–1962* (Cummings 1994).¹

Initially, I examined the 96 poems in full, following the principles explained in formative publications like Short (1996), Simpson (1997, 2004) and Leech (2008) on how to analyse a poem stylistically. At this stage, the seminal paper

¹ In this paper, *Complete Poems 1904–1962* (Cummings 1994) is abbreviated as CP. Due to the high number of poems analysed here, these have been referred to by the page number in which they are printed in this edition. For example, CP 27 denotes "in Just-", printed on page 27 of the anthology.

by Van Peer (1993) on typographic foregrounding was also very useful. Secondly, I checked every unconventional capitalization token, the convention it flouts and the capitalization device involved in each sample (see Section 3). I therefore focused on capitalization foregrounding in the main body of the poems, thus omitting titles. This quantitative analysis of unconventional capitalization led me to determine how capitals were used from a more technical perspective. This in turn led to a more qualitative approach in which I examined the meaning implications of unconventional capital letters in relation to the poems in which they appear (see Section 4).

3 Capitalization as foregrounding device

In the experimental poetry by E. E. Cummings, capital letters foregrounding is achieved solely through a process of substitution, which consists on the use of capital letters instead of lowercase ones. Depending on the position they occupy and the number of capitals within a word, these can be classified as follows:

- **Initial capitals:** the use of an uppercase letter in initial position of a word, such as *in Just* (CP 27) or *she being Brand* (CP 246).
- **Middle capitals:** the insertion of an uppercase letter in any position that is neither initial nor final within a word, like in *balloonMan* (CP 27) or *drunGk* (CP 76).
- **Final capitals:** the use of an uppercase letter in final position of a word, as in *stopS* (CP 82) or *wormS* (CP 362).
- **All capitals:** the writing of all letters in a word in caps, such as in *LOOPTHELOOP* (CP 78) or *PPEGORHRASS* (CP 396).
- **Combined capitals:** the combination of two or more of the above possibilities together within a word, like in *wheEEEE* (CP 28) or *UnBroken* (CP 319).

4 Creative functions

The process described in the previous section produces up to seven creative functions that arguably reinforce the meaning of the poems and bring about new effects. In this way, capitals foregrounding mostly (1) emphasizes certain elements in the poems, but may also (2) indicate plays on words, (3) embody iconic effects and (4) convey chaotic scenes. Further less frequent functions identified here include (5) the schematization of different units within a poem, (6) the reproduction of changes in the tone of some poetic voices and (7) the

reproduction of *realia*. All these functions and the poems in which they have been identified are summarized in Table 1.

4.1 Emphasis

Emphasis is a common, general term used in linguistics to refer to “stress given to a word or phrase when speaking to indicate particular importance or (sometimes) to indicate that it implies something more than, or different from, what it normally expresses” (*Oxford English Dictionary 2017*). In written language,

Table 1: Capitals foregrounding creative functions in the experimental poetry by E. E. Cummings.

Creative function		Poems
EMPHASIS		CP 27, CP 72, CP 78, CP 87, CP 103, CP 108, CP 113, CP 114, CP 195, CP 201, CP 228, CP 235, CP 246, CP 268, CP 273, CP 278, CP 287, CP 319, CP 322, CP 327, CP 335, CP 336, CP 346, CP 350, CP 351, CP 362, CP 372, CP 389, CP 400, CP 421, CP 423, CP 426, CP 431, CP 436, CP 445, CP 464, CP 469, CP 471, CP 495, CP 584, CP 604, CP 615, CP 632, CP 657, CP 693, CP 697, CP 701, CP 713, CP 719, CP 726, CP 727, CP 782, CP 795, CP 796, CP 826, CP 835, CP 838.
WORD	<i>Puns</i>	CP 273, CP 327, CP 449, CP 471, CP 713, CP 791, CP 827.
PLAYS	<i>Acrostics</i>	CP 87, CP 103, CP 346, CP 350, CP 362, CP 400, CP 423, CP 426, CP 429, CP 448, CP 474, CP 618, CP 628, CP 635, CP 722, CP 740, CP 779, CP 835.
	<i>Anagrams</i>	CP 464.
	<i>Spoonerisms</i>	CP 321.
ICONICITY	<i>Visual</i>	CP 27, CP 61, CP 65, CP 268, CP 287, CP 343, CP 348, CP 350, CP 351, CP 354, CP 383, CP 396, CP 471, CP 487, CP 697, CP 740, CP 838.
	<i>Aural</i>	CP 28, CP 82, CP 426, CP 430, CP 445, CP 791.
CHAOS	<i>Impressionistic scene</i>	CP 87, CP 320, CP 348, CP 396, CP 431, CP 445, CP 655, CP 838.
	<i>Sexual act</i>	CP 195.
	<i>Boxing match</i>	CP 387, CP 430.
	<i>Crime of passion</i>	CP 319.
SCHEME		CP 421, CP 713, CP 785, CP 814, CP 826, CP 838.
SPOKEN LANGUAGE FEATURES:		CP 76, CP 312, CP 547, CP 700, CP 705.
VOICE TONE		
REPRODUCTION OF REALIA		CP 228, CP 250, CP 319, CP 332, CP 335, CP 389, CP 680, CP 729, CP 791.

this is conveyed through different typographical devices such as small capitals, underlining, exclamation marks, capitals and italics, among others. In this sense, emphasis as a means for literary expression has attracted significant attention within Cummings' studies for being one of the most well-recognized effects in this writer's style. Thirty years after Munson (1923), noted above, Baum (1954: 114) reinforced the idea that a capital "is to Cummings another mark of emphasis which he may use even within the body of a word to point out parts of its action and to give it new force and vigor", and even Von Abele (1955: 916) referred to this kind of effect as "rhetorical capitalization". References to this function have been maintained in more recent approaches to Cummings' typographical style (see McIntyre 2004: 5–6). In line with this understanding, the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings includes 57 poems in which (normally initial) capitalization serves as a means for producing emphasis.

This effect includes mostly cases in which capitals are used to highlight poetic voices, characters and other important animated elements in general. In the texts examined here, voices and characters that are capitalized are usually referred to by their corresponding nouns – *mr Big*/[...]/*Busi/ness notman* (CP 389) –, but they may also be specified by pronouns – *I, You, her*/[...]/*self, Him/self* (CP 319), *He, She* (CP 469) – and determiners – *Its image* (CP 336) –. A good example of this is in 'in Just-' (CP 27), where Cummings portrays children playing in a street who are approached by a balloonman. The capital letter in *balloonMan* foregrounds the presence of this character, which becomes even more evident when compared to the children, whose proper names – *eddieandbill, bettyandisbel* – are written in lowercase²:

[...]
 when the world is puddle-wonderful
 the queer
 old balloonman whistles
 far and wee
 and bettyandisbel come dancing
 from hop-scotch and jump-rope and
 it's
 spring
 and
 the

² Some critics have claimed that the *balloonman* in 'in Just-' (CP 27) is a reference to the god Pan. See additional comments on this poem in Friedman (2006: 59), Kidder (1979: 24) and Labriola (1992: 40–42).

goat-footed
balloonMan whistles
far
and
wee

(Cummings 1994: 27)

On some occasions, an inanimate object or an abstract concept becomes foregrounded, as in *LOVE* (CP 436), *Love* (CP 719), *Life* (CP 108), *Lives* (CP 782), *Death* (CP 436, CP 604), *A newspaper* (CP 796), *A Christmas tree* (CP 632), *a Town* (CP 372), *a Star* (CP 350) and *twiLight* (CP 351).

Finally, there is a subgroup of poems whereby unconventional caps produce emphasis in two or more elements that become connected by the same process (CP 27, CP 72, CP 108, CP 273, CP 287, CP 319, CP 322, CP 372, CP 426, CP 431, CP 436, CP 469, CP 495, CP 727, CP 782, CP 795). This effect was firstly mentioned by Kennedy (1994 [1980]: 168) when discussing the poem 'wanta' (CP 942):

The capitalization draws out certain special connections. Capital 'Kid' is the customer, but the capital 'Fourteen' [denoting her age] emphasizes that the whore is almost a child. Capital 'Centuries' sharpens the contrast with capital 'Fourteen', and capital 'Dollar's' reminds us what the whole pathetic human encounter is all about.

In a similar way, some examples in this category include words such as *Spring*, *LOVE* and *Death* (CP 436), *April* and *Life* (CP 108), or *f loatl ngL//y*, *T/w/irl*, *Erec/[...]/t*, *d/[...]a[...].nCe*, *da:Nci;[...].n[...]/[...].G*, and *Dan/Sai/nt* (CP 431), to cite a few. While on some occasions this connection reflects a relationship between all capitalized words in a poem, on other occasions it coexists with additional capitalized words that are absent from this process, which makes this connection difficult to grasp.

4.2 Word plays

As Cummings' poetry includes many instances of wordplay through unconventional linguistic patterns, scholars have often noted this phenomenon, mainly in connection with satire and mocking aspects (see Friedman 1960: 52; Levenston 1992: 52; Tartakovsky 2009: 239). Within graphology, plays on words are mostly produced through spelling foregrounding (Gómez-Jiménez 2015), but some examples are observable in unconventional punctuation (Gómez-Jiménez 2017) and capitalization. For this reason, the degree of functionality of capital letters in these poems is somewhat heterogeneous, as they are capable of creating additional meanings (as in *sNow* in CP 713) but also

they simply help the reader to identify non-typographical wordplays (as in *WE-WE-WE* in CP 791); that is, wordplay produced through spelling or punctuation marks. Bearing this in mind, there are 26 poems in the corpus that present word plays through the insertion of unconventional capital letters. Four types of wordplay have been identified here: puns, acrostics, anagrams and spoonerisms.

Puns (multiple meanings in either a single word or several phonetically similar words) indicated through uppercase letters fall under two groups: those built around the phonetic similarities between *eyes* and *I* (CP 273, CP 827) and those based on the phonetic similarities of any other pair of words (CP 327, CP 791, CP 471, CP 449, CP 713).³ Within the first group, the personal pronoun *I* and the proper noun *eye* become interchangeable, both denoting concepts such as personality, singularity, and individuality. An illustrative example is ‘i’ (CP 827), a poem whose visual appearance emulates the head of a rubythroat (a type of hummingbird). In this poem, the first and last lines represent the eyes of the bird according to this pattern:

i
 never
 guessed any
 thing(even a
 universe)might be
 so not quite believab
 ly smallest as perfect this
 (almost invisible where of a there of a)here of a
 rubythroat’s home with its still
 ness which really’s herself
 (and to think that she’s
 warming three worlds)
 who’s ama
 zingly
 Eye

(Cummings 1994: 827)

Thus, as explained by Webster (2001: 107), the magic in these verses becomes apparent when the reader realises that the eye of the poet and his singularity (*i*) match the eye of the bird and its singularity (*eye*). Examples within the second group include the aforementioned *WE-WE-WE* [*OUI-OUI-OUI*] (CP 791)

³ Though these 2 sub-groups are small per se, containing very few poems, they have been distinguished here as a way to be systematic with functions found previously in cases of unconventional spelling (see Gómez-Jiménez 2015: 315–316).

and *GOD SAVE THE UNCOMMONWEALTH OF HUMANUSSETS* (CP 327). This latter expression was written by Cummings with a mocking effect (Kidder 1979: 99) to refer to “God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts”, the one that replaced the British “God Save the Queen” in the US after the American revolution (Baker 2009: 39).

Acrostics (where, typically the first letters of a series of lines form a distinct word, phrase or sentence) are signalled by capitals in some of these poems, although the capitals do not necessarily occupy line-initial position (CP 423, CP 635, CP 722, CP 740). A clear example of this is found in ‘!’ (CP 722), where the word *ROUND* is formed by joining together, in reverse order, the only letters to appear in capitals in the poem. In this particular case, the reader finds many clues in the poem to make such a word, as the term *round* is repeated five times throughout the lines:

!
o(rounD)moon,how
do
you(rouNd
er
than roUnd)float;
who
lly &(rOunder than)
go
:Idenly(Round
est)
?

(Cummings 1994: 722)

Less obvious examples include the term *WORLD*, hidden in the line *mmamakmakemakesWwOwoRworLworLD* (CP 423), the initials of the president F. D. Roosevelt (CP 635) and the personal statement *I AM* (CP 740), which are less clearly displayed.

Together with puns and acrostics, other minor forms of wordplay identified here include anagrams and spoonerisms. In the poems examined here, I have identified only one anagram, that is, *YW&WC* (CP 464), which can be read as *YMCA* (Young Men’s Christian Association), *YWCA* (Young Women’s Christian Association) and *WC*, a pejorative allusion to students attending a plenary session on the origin of the universe (Webster 2017). *Spoonerisms* using capitals involve exchange of single sounds or letters. Thus the expression *Rish and Foses* (CP 321), can be related to *Fish and Roses*, but is the only such case detected in the poems under analysis.

4.3 Iconicity

Within Semiotics, the term *iconicity* concerns the resemblance between a linguistic sign and the object or concept it refers to. It is worth considering how iconicity in literary works depends (among other factors) on typographical resources⁴; this linguistic phenomenon is a matter of degree, very much “depending on the accuracy of representation” (Wales 2011 [1994]: 206). For these reasons, and because of Cummings’ peculiar exploitation of linguistic resources, this issue has previously been addressed by scholars who have looked at what Von Abele (1955: 915) calls *mimetic typography*. Within typography, iconicity can be found in specific resources such as parentheses (see Tartakovsky 2009: 219–221), letterforms and capital letters, to cite a few. Regarding the latter, the analysis here has revealed 24 poems depicting iconicity through unconventional capitalization. On the basis of the link that exists between capital letters and the concepts they relate to, the possibility emerges of categorising examples in terms of either their visual or their aural iconicity.

Within visual iconicity, proximity is the most frequent notion represented iconically through unconventional capitalization in the poems under analysis. The samples analysed denote extreme spatial proximity (CP 27, CP 268, CP 287, CP 354, CP 396, CP 656, CP 697). These include the approach of a balloon man to a group of children playing in the street (CP 27), the nearness of shells exploding by soldiers in a battlefield (CP 268), the approach of a character to the main poetic voice after having sharpened a scythe (CP 656) and the approaching movements of several animals such as a bat (CP 354), a grasshopper (CP 396), a mouse (CP 287) and a cockatoo (CP 697). Of the aforementioned, one case that clearly illustrates the representation of proximity appears in ‘it’s jolly’ (CP 268), a poem that describes the death of a soldier after a shell explosion. The higher proximity of the blasts is visually illustrated in the following lines:

it’s jolly
 odd what pops into
 your jolly tête when the
 jolly shells begin dropping jolly fast you
 hear the rmp and
 then nearerandnearerandNEARER

⁴ For details on the relationship between typography and iconicity, see especially Nänny (1999) and Fischer and Nänny (1999, 2001), who offer a helpful introduction to the topic.

and before
 you can
 !
 [...]

(Cummings 1994: 268)

Together with proximity, the iconic representation of natural phenomena (CP 65, CP 343, CP 348, CP 350, CP 351, CP 383, CP 838) is also frequent in these experimental poems. Unconventional capitalization may represent elements in nature that somehow produce light. In line with this, expressions such as *star Bur s// (t* (CP 65) and *Star [...] brea// Thing* (CP 350) suggest the brightness of a star through a marked capital letter. Similarly, Cummings arguably depicts a bright moon in *mOOOn Over tOwns mOOOn* (CP 383), the brightness of the early morning in *twi-/[...]Light* (CP 351) and the intermittent lightning of *THuNdeRB/loSSo!M* in an electrical storm (CP 348). Additional cases match elements in nature that move one way or another, where I have considered the *l e A v e S* blossom in springtime (CP 343) and the *t/ReMbLiN/g* of leaves in autumn (CP 838).

Finally, I have grouped together all other cases in which capital letters represent more abstract concepts. More specifically, the unconventional use of capital letters in Cummings' experimental poetry may suggest adulthood (CP 27, CP 740), the nobility of a dancer (CP 471), height/elevation in a cityscape (CP 61), greatness (CP 383, CP 656, CP 740) and verticality (CP 487). The clearest examples in this category are those connected to the idea of adulthood and maturity, as suggested in the famous poem 'in Just-' (CP 27). Here, the uppercase <M> in *balloonMan* symbolizes adulthood by contrast to childhood, which is also indicated in the lowercase letters used to refer to children who play in the street, *eddie*, *bill*, *betty* and *disbel*. As explained by Kidder (1979: 24), "The "balloonMan" is, in one dimension, a sign of spring returning and a focus on childhood delights in fragile and evanescent toys. In another dimension, however, he represents a distorted version of adulthood, lame, strange, and like Pan or any satyr, "goatfooted"". Less obvious, though, is 'the(oo)is' (CP 740), a poem that describes the nostalgia of the poetic voice for childhood.⁵ In this, the eyes in *lOOk* suggest the vision of the adult poetic voice, which contrasts with the eyes of the child's vision in (*oo*).

⁵ Some previous approaches have been developed for this poem. For further reading on this, see Kennedy (1994 [1980]: 464), Webster (2001: 111, 2017) and Cummings (1969: 267–268), who provide some explanations on this text.

Within aural iconicity, capitals reproduce certain sounds (CP 28, CP 327, CP 426, CP 791) and noises (CP 82, CP 430, CP 445). For instance, the expression *GOD SAVE THE UNCOMMONWEALTH OF HUMANUSSETS* (CP 327), for instance, which is written by Cummings with a mocking effect (Kidder 1979: 99), refers to the famous British “God Save the Queen”. The last line of the Halloween song ‘hist whist’ (CP 28), *wheeEEE*, is a calling for children to end it at the top of their voices; similarly, *WE-WE-WE* in ‘everybody happy’ (CP 791) reproduces the voices from people in the crowd while simultaneously simulating the song ‘This Little Piggy’, according to Webster (2017). Unexpected capitals also serve to indicate the noise of people talking in a boxing match (CP 430), the striking sounds of a church bell in a village (CP 445) or the stopping of a phonograph (CP 82):

[...] b starts armenian record
pho
 nographisrunn
 ingd o w, n phonograph
stopS.
 [...]

(Cummings 1994: 82)

4.4 Chaos

As applied to literature and creative effects, chaos refers to the portrayal of a fragmented scene, which tends to suggest anarchy and makes the reading process harder. In this sense, unconventional capital letters often contribute to text fragmentation by appearing seemingly at random in the poems. The analysis revealed 12 poems depicting chaotic scenes using capital letters where unexpected (CP 87, CP 195, CP 319, CP 320, CP 348, CP 387, CP 396, CP 430, CP 431, CP 445, CP 655, CP 838). As with other creative effects, this function is not exclusive to capital letters, but is also produced through other graphological devices, such as punctuation marks and blank spaces. And these very often combine with capital letters to strengthen the sense of chaos.

With regard to their content, the poems falling under this category display impressionistic scenes (CP 87, CP 320, CP 348, CP 396, CP 431, CP 445, CP 655, CP 838), a sexual act (CP 195), boxing matches (CP 387, CP 430) and a suicide (CP 319). In impressionistic scenes, the analysis has shown how capital letters help draw on chaotic images like the intermittent light produced by rays during an electrical storm (CP 348), the sound of a church bell in a village (CP 445), the trembling of leaves in autumn (CP 838), the quick movements of

a grasshopper (CP 396) and a cat (CP 655) and the lively dance of Paul Draper (CP 431), one of Cummings' friends. The case of 'in the,exquisite;' (CP 87), a poem that describes a Parisian woman sitting in a terrace one sunny morning, is especially relevant. In this text, all lines are fragmented through the unexpected repetitions of certain lexical items – *Her eyes, surely, float, of* – but also through the omission and insertion of blank spaces where unexpected and the random placing of parentheses and capital letters. As a result, a chaotic picture is created:

in the,exquisite;
 morning sure lyHer eye s exactly sit,ata little roundtable
 among otherlittle roundtables Her,eyes count slow(ly
 obstre peroustimidi ties surElyfl)oa t iNg,the
 ofpieces ofof sunlight to fa l l in gof throughof treesOf.
 (Fields Elysian
 the like,a)sleeping neck a breathing a,lies
 (slo wlythe wom an pa)ris her
 flesh:wakes
 in little streets
 while exactlygir lisHlegs;play;ing;nake;D
 and
 chairs wait under the trees
 Fields slowly Elysian in
 a firmcool-Ness taxis, s.QuirM
 and, b et wee nch air st ott er s thesillyold
 WomanSellingBallonS
 In theex qui site
 morning,
 her sureLyeye s sit-ex actly her sitsat a surely!little,
 roundtable amongother;littleexactly round. Tables,
 Her
 .eyes

(Cummings 1994: 87)

While the majority of the poems within this category correspond to descriptions of impressionistic scenes, some texts also display further chaotic images more closely connected to demi-monde and obscene images. What all these texts have in common is the presence of capital letters as a way to increase an anarchical view of the scene described within. 'i will be' (CP 195), for instance, describes a sexual act metaphorically by playing on caps, blank spaces and punctuation marks. Similarly, 'i' (CP 387) and 'ondumonde'" (CP 430) portray two boxing matches dominated by noise and fragmentation. As indicated by Wickels (1980: 117) in connection to the latter, 'the

composition not only outlines the boxer in action but reports the whole scene through scraps of conversation and incidental details'. To finish, 'y is a WELL KNOWN ATHLETE'S BRIDE' (CP 319) describes the suicide of a couple at the *hoe tell days are/teased* [*hotel des Artistes*], in New York:

2 boston

Dolls;found
with
Holes in each other
's lullaby and
other lulla wise by UnBroken
lullalullabyBY

the She-in-him with

the He-in-her(&
both all hopped

up)prettily

then which did
lie
Down,honestly

(Cumings 1994: 319)

4.5 Other functions

Whereas chaos mostly disorganises the poem and displays an anarchical view of its content, *scheme* reflects the opposite function, i.e. that of systematizing the use of certain elements in the text. Scheme, as produced through unconventional graphology, is more frequently connected to punctuation marks, especially pause signs, but the analysis here reveals that capital letters play an important role in this function, as suggested by Triem (1969: 34). The present study finds 6 experimental poems in which capital letters foregrounding is used systematically (CP 421, CP 713, CP 785, CP 814, CP 826, CP 838). This particular use may affect the whole poem, a stanza or a single line. It is also worth noting that capital letters used schematically may occupy any position within the words they appear. Thus, Cummings, for instance, capitalizes the first letter in the first and last lines of 'Beautiful' (CP 713). A more complicated case has been observed in 'n' (CP 814), where word-medial caps are placed in intermediate lines in those stanzas formed by three lines:

n
OthI
n
g can

s
 urPas
 s
 the m
 y
 ySteR
 y
 of
 s
 tilLne
 s

(Cummings 1994: 814)

The position that the capital letter occupies changes from one line to another, but this change also follows schematic patterns on some occasions: ClIc (line 2), lIcI (line 6), ClIc (line 10) and lIcI (line 14).⁶ As explained by Kidder (1979: 224), the position that capital letters occupy has to do with the importance given to structure in this poem, a feature that is not quite as frequent in other experimental poems by Cummings. By contrast, caps are structurally placed within the words *D-re-A-mi-N-gl-Y* and *tReMbLiNg* in '*D-re-A-mi-N-gl-Y*' (CP 838), in a pattern that is much easier to recognize by the reader. To finish, the only all caps example has been detected in 'SNOW' (CP 421), where stanzas formed by single lines are fully capitalized.

With a slightly different nuance of meaning, I have used the term *voice tone* to refer to a spoken language feature in which unconventional caps seem to indicate the higher volume or pitch of certain depicted speakers. This function is included under a broader category called *spoken language features*. These features include interruptions, repetitions, intonation or speed variation, which are not normally displayed in writing, or, at least, occur less frequently. The graphological representation of spoken language features is observed in many experimental poems by E. E. Cummings, and this effect is achieved both through capital letters, as considered here, and through other graphological means, namely spelling (Gómez-Jiménez 2015) and punctuation marks (Gómez-Jiménez 2017). In the case of capitals, the analysis reveals 5 poems (CP 76, CP 312, CP 547, CP 700, CP 705) that display such an effect. The poems concern drunken characters who walk the street unsteadily (CP 705, CP 700), lie in the street as though they were dead (CP 76) or make a speech in a bar about war and its effects (CP 312, CP 547). An example that illustrates this kind of effect is the famous 'yugUDuh' (CP 547), where the main poetic voice narrates the atrocities of war. In

⁶ 'l' stands for lowercase and 'C' for uppercase.

the subsequent lines, as in previous examples, capital letters indicate the way this poetic voice raises his tone, giving his discourse more strength⁷:

ygUDuh
 ydoan
 yunnuhstan
 ydoan o
 yunnuhstan dem
 yguduh ged
 yunnuhstan dem doidee
 yguduh ged riduh
 ydoan o nudn
 LISN bud LISN
 dem
 gud
 am
 lidl yelluh bas
 tuds weer goin
 duhSIVILEYEzum

(Cummings 1994: 547)

The final minor function identified here is the reproduction of *realia*, a term used to denote elements belonging to real life. In this sense, and as stated by Levenston (1992: 104), capitals have been used in literature to represent documents that are written in capitals in real life, such as telegrams, parts of advertising or newspaper headlines. As Levenston (1992: 104) claims, this function has been widely perceived in novels, but the case of Cummings is a clear example of how poetry may also include it. Within the corpus analysed here, there are 9 poems (CP 250, CP 228, CP 319, CP 332, CP 335, CP 389, CP 680, CP 729, CP 791) in which capital letters produce this particular effect. From these 9 poems, 4 cases reproduce proper names: while 3 of them correspond to people's names – Fred *someBody* (CP 250), Lord John *Unalive* (CP 332), mr *Big/[...]Busi/ness notman* (CP 389) –, 1 case corresponds to a ship's name – S. S. *VAN MERDE* (CP 335) – that E. E. Cummings used to attack Wright, a writer who signed his texts as S. S. Van Dine (Kidder 1979: 91). Together with these, capitals letters are also used to emulate a paper's headline – *WELL KNOWN ATHLETE'S BRIDE/[...]*

⁷ Please, note this poem is written in conjunction with the pronunciation of the main poetic voice, presumably Newyorkese (see Friedman 1960: 76). To see further information on this poem, read Kidder (1979: 158–159), Kennedy (1994 [1980]: 391) and Friedman (1960: 76).

SHOT AND KILLED (CP 319) –, to reproduce prohibition signs in the street – *Keep Off, No Trespassing, Forbidden, Stop, Mustn't, Don't* (CP 729) –, to indicate the interlocutors in an interview – Q [for question] and A [for answer] (CP 791) –, to reproduce a lorry rear mudflaps labelled *ZOOM* and *DOOM* respectively (CP 680) (Kidder 1979: 201–202) and to recreate advertising slogans (CP 228):

[...]

do you get me?)according
 to such supposedly indigenous
 throistles Art is O World O Life
 a formula:example,Turn Your Shirrtails Into
 Drawers and If It Isn't An Eastman It Isn't A
 Kodak [...]

(Cummings 1994: 228)

5 Conclusions and future works

In this paper, I have analysed 96 experimental poems by E. E. Cummings in which capital letters emerge. The results lead to some discussion concerning the role of foregrounding of capitals in E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry. The close analysis supports the idea that capitals are used principally for emphasis, but this research also reveals that there are six additional functions produced through unorthodox capitalization, and which also deserve attention. This issue is linked to the idea that all cases of unconventional capitals can be regarded as emphatic for the purposes of capturing the reader's attention, since foregrounding is an emphatic process per se. Within all these cases, some unconventional patterns limit themselves to this emphatic function, but others imply further effects. Secondly, the contribution of these processes to the poems in which they appear is a matter of degree. Compare, for instance, the schematization of linguistic units to the emphasizing of certain elements and the creation of chaotic scenes, which contribute more significantly to the poems in which they appear. Thirdly, if we examine some of the functions identified here and those already suggested in previous works on Cummings' graphology (Gómez-Jiménez 2015; Gómez-Jiménez 2017), we note that some of these effects are repeated through different graphological resources. Thus, the creation of word-play, the representation of spoken language features and the production of iconic effects, which are produced through unorthodox capitalization, are also achieved through unconventional spelling; additionally, the emphasizing of voices and elements in the poem, the creation of chaotic scenes, the systematic

articulation of linguistic units, the production of visual iconic effects, the representation of word plays and the reproduction of spoken language features are also produced through unconventional punctuation marks. This suggests that additional overlapping might be found on other graphological resources in E. E. Cummings' poetry.

From these findings, it seems that the foregrounding of capitals in Cummings' avant-garde poetry is not an arbitrary practice. While Von Abele (1955: 916) claimed that, although unconventional capitalization sometimes emphasizes, "quite frequently for no discoverable reason letters midway of words are honored", my close analysis leads to an opposite conclusion. As already suggested in previous approaches to the topic (Tartakovsky 2009; Gómez-Jiménez 2015; Gómez-Jiménez 2017), a close look at Cummings' poetry demonstrates that his unconventional use of capital letters can be analysed stylistically, and that both the foregrounding devices and their corresponding effects can be examined systematically.

This research is not without limitations, however. Some of the functions identified here have been detected in very few poems (e.g., tone of voice, observed in just five poems, systematic use of capital letters observed in six). The main issue here, though, is the lack of a theoretical model for the analysis of typographic (and more generally graphological) foregrounding. As already indicated by Van Peer (1993), there has been little attention given to these devices and, consequently, further methods are needed to deal with them within the wider framework of linguistic criticism (1993: 58). There remains work to be done in order to gain further insights into the use of capital letters and graphology as a literary tool. From a more practical perspective, the study I present here prompts the consideration of additional applied research. With regard to E. E. Cummings, the use of lowercase letters and other graphological devices are yet to be studied. Additional research on Cummings' graphology is, therefore, to be encouraged. In this sense, if spelling, punctuation marks and capital letters are considered stylistically significant, other graphological resources like spacing or layout may also be meaningful in Cummings' poetic discourse. With unorthodox capitalization proving relevant, my study has tried to increase the understanding of capitals foregrounding in Cummings's experimental poems and to establish a point of departure for further graphological stylistics.

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