



Article

Unconventional patterns in the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings: A stylistic approach to punctuation marks

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Abstract

For some time scholars have examined unconventional linguistic patterns in E. E. Cummings' poetic style. Of all the aspects under consideration, it is grammar, lexis and morphology that have been most widely researched, while only a small number of studies have looked at graphology or, least of all, punctuation. This article is a contribution to the latter research field, and is aimed at developing a systematic approach to the use of punctuation marks in E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry. I deal with two fundamental research questions: What foregrounding patterns are present in E. E. Cummings' unorthodox use of punctuation marks, and what effects derive from his singular use of marks? Using 157 experimental poems as a corpus, I identify any instances of unconventional punctuation and classify the different devices that break with convention, determining the meaning implications (if any) that derive from these particular uses. An in-depth analysis of these poems reveals that there are three basic unconventional devices in Cummings' use of punctuation marks (substitution, omission and insertion) and that these help Cummings to achieve a variety of purposes: emphasize certain elements within the poem, shift the tempo of the lines, create chaotic scenes, produce iconic effects, schematize any unit within the poem, omit letters and words, signal heteroglossia, indicate imperative voice, articulate the poem into different layers, create plays on words, and reproduce features of spoken language.

Keywords

Punctuation, foregrounding, experimental poetry, E. E. Cummings, emphasis, tempo, corpus, stylistics, graphology, punctuation marks

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I Introduction

The present paper relies on the idea that punctuation is a powerful linguistic resource for the literary writer and, to a greater extent, for the poet.¹ Rhetorically speaking, punctuation affects matters like rhythm, meter and versification. From a more communicative perspective, it facilitates the articulation of meaning, and it also contributes to the aesthetic dimension of the lines when used in a creative way.² Thus, punctuation is a central element to poetry because of its influence over prosody, but at the same time it constitutes a matter of artistic choice that increases the expressive complexity of the literary text (Tartakovsky, 2009: 216). Parting from this central idea, previous approaches to this subject can be classified into two main trends: those that identify the functions that derive from the (un)conventional uses of punctuation (Baron and Ling, 2011; Dürrenmatt, 2011; Lennard, [1991] 2003; Poyatos, 2002) and those that analyse how punctuation marks function in individual works like *Dubliners*, *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land* (Levenston, 1992: 64, 74–75) or *Little Dorrit* (Toner, 2011a). The latter are far more common, with studies that look at, for instance, dashes in *The Adventures of David Simple* (Barchas, 1996), dots and dashes in *The Tragic Comedians* (Henry, 2006), commas in *Mansfield Park* (Sutherland, 2000) and parentheses in *Mrs Dalloway* (Cui, 2014). Articles in Bray et al. (2000) and in a special issue on punctuation in the journal *Visible Language* (Toner, 2011b) are a reflection of how important commas, suspension dots, dashes or hyphens have become in recent years for the study of literary texts, while constituting great advances towards considering the functionality of punctuation marks beyond established conventions.

The unconventional use of punctuation has been considered one of E. E. Cummings' prominent stylistic features. Upon publication of his first poetry book, *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923), Munson argued that Cummings makes 'punctuation and typography active instruments for literary expression', and that 'his typographical design in every example reinforces his literary content' (1923, reprinted in Baum, 1962: 10). Reception was not so positive in all cases, but scholars like Riding and Graves (1928), Spencer (1946) and Baum (1954) focused their attention on punctuation in E. E. Cummings' poetry. This initial interest peaked in the late sixties, when linguists such as Leech (1969: 47–48) or Widdowson (1975: 14–15, 32) started analysing Cummings' handling of linguistic resources in detail. Since then, other scholars have contributed a number of studies that address this issue, especially within the field of stylistics.³ The majority of analytical approaches to Cummings' poetry have concentrated, however, on the grammar (Berutti, 1970; Cureton, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981; Fairley, 1971, 1975; Lord, 1966) and morphology (Cureton, 1979b, 1985; Fairley, 1975), while those who have addressed Cummings' graphological technique have considered punctuation marks in conjunction with other visual elements on most occasions (see Alfandary, 2002; Babcock, 1963; Crowley, 1972; Cureton, 1986; Heusser, 1997; O'Brien, 1973; Von Abele, 1955; Webster, 1995).

Exceptions to these general approaches are very limited, but they deserve consideration here. A first attempt to identify the concrete effects that derive from Cummings' unorthodox use of punctuation marks was made by Friedman (1960). His valuable contribution to the topic relies on his effort, for the first time within Cummings' studies, to more accurately define how this writer uses punctuation marks and with what effects (1960: 115–116). This critical step was not developed further by scholars except for the

occasional reference to punctuation marks (O'Brien, 1973: 96–104; Triem, 1969: 10–11) and one in-depth study on parentheses (Tartakovsky, 2009), where seven functional categories in Cummings' use of this sign are proposed: iconicity, protection and intimacy, direct address, plural layers and framed poems, heteroglossia and interpolation, subverting formal expectations and temporality, simultaneity and tmesis. Tartakovsky's work (2009) is of great importance here for two reasons: firstly, it approaches parentheses from an exhaustive perspective, explaining in detail the effects derived from Cummings' unconventional practice; secondly, it foregrounds the idea that 'punctuation must be read, and read with no less critical attention than any of the other, more recognized, poetic devices' (2009: 241). In sum, previous research on this topic has contributed to a better understanding of Cummings' use of punctuation marks, but has failed, with the exceptions of Friedman (1960) and Tartakovsky (2009), to offer in-depth explanations as to how the writer uses marks unconventionally and how this practice affects his poems.

Bearing this in mind, I attempt to answer two questions in this article: Which foregrounding devices are present in E. E. Cummings' unconventional use of punctuation marks? And, consequentially, which functions or effects derive from this singular use? In the sections that follow, I first explain the methodology and data I have used here. After evidencing the foregrounding devices present in Cummings' unorthodox use of punctuation marks, I illustrate the major functions that result from this unconventional practice. I then finish the paper by discussing these findings. In doing so, it is my intention to offer additional information that, in conjunction with the previous approaches dealing with this issue, may provide a more systematic account of Cummings' unorthodox use of punctuation marks and its meaning implications in his poetry.

2 A stylistic approach to E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry

In this study I have analysed 157 experimental poems by E. E. Cummings. By experimental poems I mean those which are innovative from a more technical perspective, more radical and which display more avant-garde features. I decided to focus on these because they have received less attention, otherwise more often devoted to the transcendental poetry of E. E. Cummings. To select these texts, I used *Complete Poems 1904–1962* (Cummings, 1994), the most recent and complete anthology of Cummings' poetry. The main reason for choosing this collection is that it contains no typographical changes from the original typescripts (Firmage, 1994), which proves essential for this particular piece of research. I applied three criteria to the poems to be selected from this collection: they had to be written in free verse, they had to display unconventional linguistic patterns and they had to include at least one punctuation mark. According to these parameters, a total of 157 poems were selected, which represents approximately one-fifth of the 766 poems in *Complete Poems 1904–1962* (1994).

The selected poems were then analysed stylistically, according to the methodological principles in, e.g., Short (1996), Simpson (1997, 2004), Wales ([1994] 2011) and Leech (2008). Subsequently, I identified all single instances of punctuation marks in these poems and categorized them as follows: *stops*, *tonal indicators*, *dis/aggregators*, *signs of omission* and *rules* (see Table 1). This classification is based on the proposal by Lennard

Table I. Punctuation marks in E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry.**Stops**

.	CP 64, CP 65, CP 82, CP 87, CP 98, CP 103, CP 108, CP 113, CP 114, CP 195, CP 201, CP 228, CP 246, CP 263, CP 268, CP 278, CP 312, CP 320, CP 321, CP 322, CP 333, CP 335, CP 343, CP 347, CP 351, CP 354, CP 362, CP 372, CP 384, CP 388, CP 396, CP 397, CP 401, CP 416, CP 417, CP 423, CP 426, CP 430, CP 431, CP 444, CP 445, CP 447, CP 448, CP 449, CP 469, CP 471, CP 487, CP 495, CP 532, CP 584, CP 632, CP 656, CP 657, CP 697, CP 701, CP 710, CP 793, CP 820, CP 823, CP 838.
:	CP 82, CP 87, CP 98, CP 103, CP 108, CP 113, CP 195, CP 201, CP 228, CP 246, CP 250, CP 253, CP 263, CP 273, CP 278, CP 311, CP 319, CP 320, CP 321, CP 332, CP 333, CP 343, CP 346, CP 347, CP 348, CP 351, CP 362, CP 372, CP 384, CP 387, CP 388, CP 389, CP 396, CP 397, CP 416, CP 417, CP 423, CP 426, CP 430, CP 431, CP 444, CP 445, CP 447, CP 448, CP 449, CP 471, CP 487, CP 495, CP 532, CP 553, CP 584, CP 604, CP 627, CP 628, CP 632, CP 653, CP 655, CP 656, CP 657, CP 674, CP 697, CP 701, CP 710, CP 722, CP 726, CP 791, CP 792, CP 793, CP 820, CP 835, CP 838.
;	CP 82, CP 87, CP 103, CP 108, CP 113, CP 195, CP 246, CP 253, CP 263, CP 287, CP 319, CP 320, CP 321, CP 332, CP 336, CP 343, CP 346, CP 347, CP 348, CP 351, CP 362, CP 372, CP 384, CP 387, CP 388, CP 389, CP 396, CP 397, CP 416, CP 417, CP 423, CP 426, CP 430, CP 431, CP 444, CP 445, CP 447, CP 448, CP 449, CP 471, CP 487, CP 495, CP 503, CP 532, CP 553, CP 584, CP 604, CP 632, CP 653, CP 655, CP 656, CP 657, CP 674, CP 676, CP 697, CP 701, CP 710, CP 722, CP 726, CP 779, CP 791, CP 792, CP 793, CP 820, CP 835, CP 838.
,	CP 61, CP 64, CP 72, CP 76, CP 82, CP 87, CP 103, CP 108, CP 113, CP 114, CP 195, CP 201, CP 228, CP 235, CP 246, CP 250, CP 253, CP 263, CP 268, CP 273, CP 278, CP 287, CP 311, CP 312, CP 319, CP 320, CP 321, CP 322, CP 332, CP 333, CP 336, CP 343, CP 346, CP 347, CP 348, CP 350, CP 351, CP 354, CP 362, CP 372, CP 384, CP 387, CP 388, CP 389, CP 396, CP 397, CP 403, CP 416, CP 417, CP 423, CP 426, CP 429, CP 430, CP 431, CP 444, CP 445, CP 447, CP 448, CP 449, CP 471, CP 474, CP 487, CP 495, CP 503, CP 532, CP 553, CP 584, CP 604, CP 611, CP 632, CP 655, CP 656, CP 657, CP 674, CP 676, CP 697, CP 701, CP 710, CP 722, CP 726, CP 779, CP 792, CP 793, CP 820, CP 835, CP 838.

Tonal indicators

?	CP 72, CP 108, CP 228, CP 253, CP 278, CP 287, CP 312, CP 319, CP 320, CP 321, CP 348, CP 351, CP 384, CP 387, CP 388, CP 397, CP 416, CP 417, CP 421, CP 423, CP 426, CP 429, CP 430, CP 431, CP 444, CP 445, CP 455, CP 469, CP 471, CP 487, CP 571, CP 604, CP 611, CP 618, CP 628, CP 653, CP 655, CP 697, CP 701, CP 715, CP 722, CP 727, CP 791, CP 831.
!	CP 72, CP 87, CP 103, CP 113, CP 201, CP 263, CP 268, CP 311, CP 320, CP 321, CP 322, CP 348, CP 350, CP 384, CP 387, CP 389, CP 396, CP 401, CP 416, CP 417, CP 421, CP 423, CP 426, CP 429, CP 431, CP 444, CP 445, CP 447, CP 449, CP 469, CP 471, CP 487, CP 495, CP 503, CP 604, CP 606, CP 611, CP 627, CP 628, CP 653, CP 655, CP 715, CP 722.

Table I. (Continued)**Dis/aggregators**

- () CP 65, CP 87, CP 98, CP 103, CP 108, CP 113, CP 114, CP 195, CP 201, CP 228, CP 235, CP 238, CP 242, CP 246, CP 250, CP 253, CP 263, CP 268, CP 269, CP 273, CP 278, CP 287, CP 311, CP 312, CP 318, CP 319, CP 320, CP 321, CP 322, CP 327, CP 330, CP 332, CP 333, CP 335, CP 336, CP 343, CP 346, CP 347, CP 348, CP 350, CP 351, CP 354, CP 362, CP 372, CP 384, CP 387, CP 388, CP 389, CP 392, CP 396, CP 397, CP 400, CP 401, CP 403, CP 408, CP 416, CP 417, CP 421, CP 423, CP 426, CP 429, CP 430, CP 431, CP 436, CP 444, CP 445, CP 447, CP 448, CP 449, CP 455, CP 464, CP 469, CP 471, CP 472, CP 474, CP 487, CP 488, CP 495, CP 503, CP 519, CP 532, CP 534, CP 536, CP 548, CP 553, CP 571, CP 581, CP 584, CP 600, CP 604, CP 606, CP 610, CP 611, CP 618, CP 627, CP 628, CP 632, CP 635, CP 653, CP 655, CP 656, CP 657, CP 668, CP 673, CP 674, CP 676, CP 680, CP 691, CP 692, CP 693, CP 696, CP 697, CP 699, CP 700, CP 701, CP 703, CP 708, CP 713, CP 715, CP 719, CP 722, CP 723, CP 724, CP 726, CP 727, CP 729, CP 739, CP 740, CP 779, CP 782, CP 785, CP 791, CP 792, CP 793, CP 795, CP 803, CP 820, CP 823, CP 826, CP 827, CP 829, CP 830, CP 831, CP 833, CP 835, CP 838.
- ‘ ‘ CP 82 CP 98, CP 238, CP 253, CP 273, CP 287, CP 319, CP 321, CP 322, CP 332, CP 333, CP 354, CP 388, CP 423, CP 430, CP 464, CP 548, CP 656, CP 697, CP 708, CP 710, CP 803, CP 823.

Signs of omission

- ’ CP 27, CP 28, CP 65, CP 72, CP 76, CP 90, CP 113, CP 114, CP 195, CP 228, CP 235, CP 238, CP 242, CP 268, CP 273, CP 287, CP 318, CP 319, CP 321, CP 330, CP 333, CP 354, CP 362, CP 372, CP 387, CP 392, CP 397, CP 400, CP 401, CP 417, CP 423, CP 429, CP 430, CP 447, CP 448, CP 469, CP 472, CP 474, CP 534, CP 548, CP 553, CP 571, CP 600, CP 604, CP 606, CP 611, CP 635, CP 668, CP 674, CP 676, CP 680, CP 697, CP 699, CP 700, CP 701, CP 708, CP 719, CP 726, CP 729, CP 739, CP 779, CP 782, CP 789, CP 791, CP 793, CP 795, CP 827, CP 835.
- ... CP 82, CP 98, CP 114, CP 195, CP 235, CP 273, CP 320, CP 321, CP 333.

Rules

- CP 27, CP 28, CP 65, CP 72, CP 78, CP 82, CP 87, CP 90, CP 98, CP 103, CP 108, CP 195, CP 201, CP 228, CP 246, CP 250, CP 253, CP 263, CP 273, CP 278, CP 311, CP 319, CP 320, CP 336, CP 343, CP 346, CP 347, CP 348, CP 350, CP 351, CP 362, CP 384, CP 387, CP 388, CP 396, CP 401, CP 403, CP 416, CP 417, CP 421, CP 423, CP 426, CP 430, CP 431, CP 436, CP 444, CP 445, CP 447, CP 449, CP 464, CP 469, CP 471, CP 495, CP 503, CP 534, CP 571, CP 618, CP 627, CP 628, CP 632, CP 655, CP 656, CP 676, CP 697, CP 715, CP 719, CP 726, CP 739, CP 779, CP 791, CP 793, CP 795, CP 820, CP 835, CP 838.
- CP 228, CP 268, CP 312, CP 321, CP 333, CP 335, CP 348, CP 384, CP 426, CP 431, CP 444, CP 697, CP 701, CP 779, CP 835.

([1996] 2005: 114–146), who devotes almost a full chapter in *The Poetry Handbook* to identifying and classifying punctuation marks. In this way, *stops* (full stop, colon, semicolon and comma) indicate ‘syntactic completion (with concomitant pauses)’ ([1996] 2005: 114); *tonal indicators* (question mark, exclamation mark, percontation mark, string-commands and emoticons) are connected ‘with spoken or emotional tones’ ([1996]

2005: 120); *dis/aggregators* (brackets, slashes and inverted commas) ‘display a/word/s as mutually exclusive alternatives or (distinct) units with ‘individual status’ of some kind ([1996] 2005: 122); *signs of omission* (apostrophe, suspension-mark and ellipsis) indicate omission ([1996] 2005: 132) and *rules* (hyphen, en-rule and dash) are used to assemble text ([1996] 2005: 135).⁴

I then made an overall distinction between conventional and unconventional uses. Although general rules on how to use punctuation are generally well known, I used the guide by Partridge (1983) to clarify less evident cases. I selected this guide because it refers exclusively to punctuation as conceived in this research, while manuals in general tend to include other aspects such as spelling, spacing, capitalization and additional graphological features (see, for instance, Fowler, [1926] 2009; Strunk and White, 2009; The University of Chicago, 2010 [*The Chicago Manual of Style*]). The unconventional samples were then classified according to the very basic operations undertaken by Cummings (see the ‘Punctuation foregrounding devices’ section). This quantitative approach to unconventional punctuation devices led me to establish punctuation foregrounding patterns and their frequency of appearance in the selected poems. It was also a preparatory step towards a final qualitative approach in which I examined each case of misuse of punctuation and its contribution to the poem in which it appears (see the section on ‘Creative functions’).

3 Punctuating foregrounding devices

The analysis reveals that there are three different devices for punctuation foregrounding in the experimental poems selected. To date, we are yet to witness a theoretical model that deals with the analysis of punctuation foregrounding and scholarly agreement regarding the range of devices that emerge in the deviation of punctuation marks. But the terms used here are those, I believe, that most closely mirror the type of devices under discussion in this piece of research:

1. *Marks substitution*: The use of an incorrect mark instead of another in a phrase or a sentence. This occurs, for instance, in the expression *exeunt ax:by;c* (CP 82). In this line, where the letters represent five different characters exiting a bar, commas would have been used to separate these characters instead of the colon and semicolon, as it is commas that are normally used to separate elements within a list. Additional exemplary cases include the use of punctuation marks other than the dot at the end of a poem (CP 311, CP 320, CP 396, CP 429, CP 471), among others.
2. *Marks insertion*: The addition of punctuation marks that are not required in a word, a phrase or a sentence, as in *will anyone tell him why he should// blow two bits for the coming of Christ Jesus// ?/ ??/ ???* (CP 72) or *pho/ nographis-runn/ ing d o w, n* (CP 82). In the former case, Cummings has included six question marks where normally only one is expected; in the latter, a comma has been inserted within the word *dow,n* [down] while punctuation marks are not normally inserted within words in English (with the only exception of the apostrophe).

3. *Marks omission*: The suppression of required punctuation marks in a word, a phrase or a sentence. Typical examples include the omission of a dot at the end of the poem and the omission of quotation marks to indicate what is said by the poetic voice, as in *oride lesgo eckshun* [*all right, let's go, action!*] (CP 474) when referring to the words uttered by a film director in Hollywood. An enormous number of examples that fall within this category were detected in Cummings' experimental poetry, with far more instances than substitution and insertion cases. They have not been considered here as I think they deserve an exclusive, in-depth examination to determine clearly the way they have been used and how effectively.

4 Creative functions

The unorthodox devices described so far are functionally significant in Cummings' experimental poems, as they strengthen the meaning of the lines on most occasions and produce creative effects. The analysis reveals that there are 11 different functions that I have categorized as either primary or secondary. *Primary functions* are those identified in the unconventional use of two or more punctuation marks. This occurs for instance with emphasis, which is conveyed through commas, dots, hyphens and dashes. In line with this, the analysis has demonstrated that punctuation marks foregrounding is used to emphasize certain elements in the poem, to shift the tempo of the lines, to create chaotic scenes, to schematize any unit within the entire poem and to produce iconic effects. *Secondary functions* are those identified in the unconventional use of only one mark. This is evident, for example, with heteroglossia, which is conveyed exclusively through parentheses (Tartakovsky, 2009: 233–235). That is, marks foregrounding is employed by Cummings to omit letters and words, to signal heteroglossia, to indicate imperative voice, to structure the poem into different layers, to create plays on words and to reproduce features of spoken language (see Table 2).

In the following sections, I explain each of these effects. More specifically, I introduce each function and mention any existing previous references to it. After giving the number of poems in which such an effect is observed, I also indicate which specific marks are responsible for producing it. I end by giving some examples that typify this practice whenever this is possible. For space reasons, examples are limited here, although the tables that summarize the findings will help the reader locate punctuation marks in each individual poem to check how these are used.

4.1 Emphasis

Emphasis refers to the stressing of certain elements in a poem. As such, this is the most rudimentary creative function, because all foregrounding devices constitute cases of emphasis in one way or another. Emphasis in Cummings' unconventional poetry was first mentioned in the twenties, after the publication of Cummings' first poetry collection, *Tulips and Chimneys* (Cummings, 1923). Since then, critics have repeatedly linked this effect to capital letters (Baum, 1954: 114; Friedman, 1960: 113; Levenston, 1992: 105; Mannani, 1999–2002: 53; Munson, 1923, reprinted in Baum, 1962: 10), spacing

Table 2. Marks foregrounding creative functions in the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings.

Primary function	Poems
Emphasis	CP 61, CP 64, CP 103, CP 108, CP 114, CP 228, CP 253, CP 287, CP 311, CP 343, CP 346, CP 347, CP 384, CP 387, CP 396, CP 417, CP 426, CP 436, CP 444, CP 448, CP 469, CP 471, CP 532, CP 655, CP 656, CP 701, CP 726, CP 739, CP 792, CP 820, CP 835, CP 838.
Tempo shift	CP 82, CP 103, CP 113, CP 114, CP 195, CP 201, CP 246, CP 250, CP 253, CP 263, CP 278, CP 287, CP 312, CP 321, CP 332, CP 336, CP 343, CP 346, CP 372, CP 388, CP 389, CP 396, CP 397, CP 417, CP 423, CP 429, CP 430, CP 431, CP 444, CP 445, CP 448, CP 471, CP 495, CP 487, CP 532, CP 627, CP 632, CP 653, CP 655, CP 656, CP 657, CP 673, CP 674, CP 676, CP 691, CP 692, CP 697, CP 710, CP 722, CP 740, CP 779, CP 820, CP 830, CP 833, CP 835.
Chaos	<i>Impress. scene</i> CP 87, CP 263, CP 320, CP 321, CP 348, CP 423, CP 445. <i>Sexual act</i> CP 195, CP 246, CP 447. <i>Boxing match</i> CP 387, CP 430.
Scheme	<i>Progression</i> CP 347, CP 351, CP 362, CP 372, CP 384, CP 387, CP 416, CP 423, CP 426, CP 431, CP 445, CP 448, CP 471, CP 487, CP 495, CP 503, CP 532, CP 553, CP 584, CP 632, CP 655, CP 656, CP 657, CP 674, CP 710, CP 722, CP 726, CP 792, CP 793, CP 820, CP 838. <i>Repetition</i> CP 87, CP 416, CP 417, CP 431, CP 464, CP 627, CP 739, CP 803.
Iconicity	<i>Visual</i> CP 82, CP 268, CP 346, CP 423, CP 429, CP 653, CP 722. *Concrete cases: – <i>Moon</i> : CP 103, CP 351, CP 571. – <i>Parenthesis</i> : CP 103, CP 113. – <i>Bridge</i> : CP 113. – <i>Emptiness</i> : CP 444. – <i>Birds descend</i> : CP 448. – <i>Cat immobility</i> : CP 655. – <i>Eyes</i> : CP 740.
	<i>Aural</i> CP 268, CP 387, CP 421, CP 426, CP 445, CP 469, CP 627, CP 655.
Secondary function	Poems
Omission	CP 319, CP 321, CP 455, CP 571.
Heteroglossia	CP 201, CP 253, CP 312, CP 318, CP 319, CP 389, CP 392, CP 519, CP 618, CP 791.
Imperative voice	CP 113, CP 287, CP 449, CP 503, CP 604, CP 610, CP 715, CP 779, CP 792, CP 793, CP 835, CP 838.
Plural layers	CP 269, CP 327, CP 354, CP 400, CP 403, CP 408, CP 430, CP 436, CP 503, CP 536, CP 548, CP 581, CP 600, CP 611, CP 676, CP 693, CP 722, CP 729, CP 740, CP 795, CP 829.
Plays on words	CP 327, CP 351, CP 548, CP 606.
Spoken language features	CP 98, CP 228, CP 278, CP 320, CP 426, CP 431, CP 618, CP 656, CP 791.

(Baum, 1954: 108; Friedman, 1960: 123) and parentheses (Baum, 1954: 108; Friedman, 1960: 123), but no studies have looked at this aspect from a more comprehensive perspective. In line with this, the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings includes 33 poems in which punctuation marks foregrounding emphasises elements within. The analysis has

Table 3. Punctuation marks foregrounding in E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry: Emphasis.

Marks	Poems	Examples
Comma	CP 61, CP 64, CP 103, CP 108, CP 114, CP 253, CP 287, CP 311, CP 343, CP 396, CP 426, CP 448, CP 471, CP 532, CP 656, CP 701, CP 792.	<i>As peacefully,</i> (CP 61) <i>under,</i> (CP 64) <i>,grasshopper;</i> (CP 396) <i>birds(/ here,</i> (CP 448)
Dot	CP 347, CP 384, CP 471, CP 739.	<i>moon over gail -té.</i> (CP 384) <i>. Love</i> (CP 793)
Hyphen	CP 228, CP 278, CP 346, CP 387, CP 396, CP 417, CP 436, CP 469, CP 655, CP 726, CP 820, CP 835, CP 838.	<i>hun-dred-mil-lion-oth-ers</i> (CP 228) <i>-selves-</i> (CP 278) <i>p-e-r-f-e-c-t-l-y-d-e-a-d</i> (CP 726)
Dash	CP 384, CP 426, CP 444, CP 835.	<i>—look—</i> (CP 835)

also revealed that four punctuation marks exist that provoke this effect in these poems: the comma, the dot, the hyphen and the dash (see Table 3). While these four marks are normally positioned before or after the emphasized word or expression, in the case of the hyphen and the dash, the mark may also be placed inside them; that is, between the letters that form such elements, as in *p-e-r-f-e-c-t-l-y-d-e-a-d* (CP 726) or in *not-merely-wonder-ing-&* (CP 469). In all these cases, emphasis is given through the use of one of these marks that isolates the corresponding element (a specific letter, a word or a whole line), which forces the readers to focus their attention on something in particular.

While the emphasized elements do normally correspond to the main character(s) or element(s) in the poem, such as a flock of birds (CP 448), a mouse (CP 287), a grasshopper (CP 396), a town (CP 103) and love (CP 793), emphasis may also fall on any peripheral information within the lines.

4.2 *Tempo shift*

While in musical terms tempo makes reference to the relative speed of movement, pace or time, from a more figurative perspective it consists of the rate of motion of someone or something ([*The Oxford English Dictionary*] Oxford University Press, 2015). Through applying this notion to poetry, then, tempo reflects the flow or rhythm of the lines. Consequently, tempo shift makes reference to the alteration in the natural flow of the poem. Many studies on Cummings' work have already recognized this effect in his poetry, though approaches are yet to delve into this matter in any depth. In this sense, critics have usually linked this effect to punctuation marks (Baum, 1954: 108; Munson, 1923, reprinted in Baum, 1962: 11; Tartakovsky, 2009: 238; Triem, 1969: 10–11), blank spaces (Munson, 1923, reprinted in Baum, 1962: 11; Triem, 1969: 10) and the fragmentation of words into different typographic lines (Munson, 1923, reprinted in Baum, 1962: 11). What is clear from previous approaches, though, is that signs and spacing (especially pause) play a crucial role in altering the natural flow of the poem, precisely because these are the graphological devices that have been traditionally used to indicate pauses and set the rhythm in written texts.

Table 4. Punctuation marks foregrounding in E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry: Tempo shift.

Marks	Poems	Examples
Comma	CP 82, CP 246, CP 250, CP 278, CP 287, CP 332, CP 346, CP 388, CP 389, CP 423, CP 431, CP 487, CP 655, CP 676, CP 697, CP 835.	<i>pho/ nographisrunnl ingd o w, n phonograph/ stopS. (CP 82) again slowly;bare,ly nudg. Ing (CP 246)</i>
Dot	CP 103, CP 113, CP 114, CP 246, CP 263, CP 278, CP 312, CP 343, CP 388, CP 417, CP 423, CP 445, CP 448, CP 710.	<i>last wel on the groaning flame of neat huge/ trudging kiss moistly climbing hideously with/ large/ minutel hips, O / .press (CP 114)</i>
Colon	CP 103, CP 113, CP 201, CP 246, CP 332, CP 343, CP 388, CP 389, CP 396, CP 397, CP 417, CP 431, CP 445, CP 471, CP 627, CP 653, CP 655, CP 657, CP 674, CP 835.	<i>brought allofther tremBl -ling/ to a:dead./ / stand-/;Still) (CP 246)</i>
Semicolon	CP 103, CP 113, CP 246, CP 253, CP 321, CP 332, CP 336, CP 343, CP 346, CP 372, CP 388, CP 389, CP 396, CP 431, CP 444, CP 445, CP 653, CP 655, CP 657, CP 722, CP 779.	<i>again slowly;bare,ly nudg. Ing (CP 246) brought allofther tremBl -ling/ to a:dead./ / stand-/;Still) (CP 246)</i>
Parenthesis	CP 195, CP 278, CP 287, CP 396, CP 429, CP 430, CP 495, CP 532, CP 632, CP 656, CP 673, CP 691, CP 692, CP 740, CP 820, CP 830, CP 833.	<i>pigeons fly ingand/ / whee(:are,SpRiN,k,LiNg an in-stant with sunlight/ then) l- ing (CP 195)</i>
Hyphen	CP 195, CP 287, CP 429, CP 835.	<i>a-motion-upon-motion (CP 429) o-p-e-n-i-n-g (CP 835)</i>

According to my analysis, the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings includes 55 poems displaying tempo shift through punctuation marks foregrounding. This study has also shown that tempo shift in these poems is produced by the comma, the dot, the colon, the semicolon, the parenthesis and the hyphen (see Table 4). These marks are commonly used in the same poem simultaneously and/or in conjunction with blank spaces, which forces a change in the rhythm of the lines.

Tempo shift through punctuation marks foregrounding in Cummings' poetry is connected either to movement or sound in most of the poems under analysis, though the samples analysed here correspond typically to the former category. In relation to movement, this study has demonstrated that whereas Cummings more frequently reduces or increases the speed of the motion depicted, he also indicates simultaneity in action. The change in the speed of the action is usually indicated by pause signs. This is appreciated, for instance, when Cummings simulates the pace or rhythm of a sexual act – *again slowly;bare,ly nudg. ing* – in 'she being Brand' (CP 246). Other examples include the depiction of the falling of dominoes (CP 332) and snowflakes (CP 113, CP 417), the jumping movements of a grasshopper (CP 396) and the movement of the sun during sunset (CP 103, CP 346). The simultaneity in the action(s) depicted is indicated through the parentheses, as already explained by Tartakovsky (2009: 238). In this manner, parentheses highlight the text within and suggest that the action/image outside of the marks occur at the

same time as the action/image inside them. Linearity in language is, thus, resolved by the insertion of these marks. One of the poems that best represents this is the famous '1(a)' (CP 673), in which Cummings joins two different images together: a leaf falling – (a//le/af/fa//ll/s) [*a leaf falls*] – and solitude – l/ *oneliness*: l(a/ / le/af/fa/ / ll/s)/one/l/ / iness.

The analysis performed here has also demonstrated that tempo shift is linked to sound, though this is much less common than movement implications. This is the case of '(b)' (CP 445) and '5' (CP 82), with the latter including a comma and a dot that clearly illustrate, in conjunction with blank spaces, the manner in which a phonograph stops running: *pho/ nographisrunn/ ingd o w, n phonograph/ / stopS*.

4.3 Chaos

Chaos, defined as 'complete disorder and confusion' (Oxford University Press, 2015), consists of the depiction of a fragmented scene that increases the sense of anarchy in the lines of the poems under consideration. This kind of effect may confuse the readers and make their reading much harder, if not impossible on some occasions. Punctuation marks used with this effect highlight the structural disorganization of the poem. For this reason, the text has to be looked at from a distance and as a single object, rather than as a poem to be read aloud. The analysis undertaken has revealed that, within Cummings' experimental poetry, there are 12 poems describing chaotic scenes through the insertion of six punctuation marks: the comma, the dot, the colon, the semicolon, the parenthesis and the hyphen. From all these, pause signs are especially relevant, as they are largely responsible for reflecting such messy scenes (see Table 5). As with other creative effects, this function is not exclusive to the marks already mentioned, but also produced through other graphological devices, i.e. blank spaces and capitals mainly. Very often, these resources are mixed together with punctuation marks in the same poem, as a way to reinforce chaos.

Table 5. Punctuation marks foregrounding in E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry: Chaos.

Marks	Poems	Example
Comma	CP 87, CP 195, CP 246, CP 263, CP 320, CP 348, CP 387, CP 423, CP 430.	[...] <i>the how</i>
Dot	CP 87, CP 320.	<i>disappeared cleverly)world</i>
Colon	CP 87, CP 195, CP 246, CP 263, CP 320, CP 321, CP 348, CP 387, CP 423, CP 430, CP 447.	<i>iS Slapped:with;liGhtninG !</i>
Semicolon	CP 87, CP 195, CP 246, CP 263, CP 320, CP 348, CP 387, CP 430, CP 447.	<i>at which(shal) pounceupcrackw(ill)jumps of THuNdeRB</i>
Parenthesis	CP 87, CP 263, CP 348, CP 387, CP 445.	<i>loSSo!M iN -visiblya mongban(gedfrag- ment ssky?wha tm)eani ngl(essNessUn</i>
Dot	CP 87, CP 320.	[...] (CP 348)

The poems falling under this category recreate impressionistic scenes or landscapes (CP 87, CP 263, CP 320, CP 321, CP 348, CP 423, CP 445), sexual acts (CP 195, CP 246, CP 447) and boxing matches (CP 387, CP 430). A boxing match is described, for example, in the poem 'on du monde' (CP 430), which includes snippets of conversations between spectators and incidental details surrounding the depicted boxer. The breakdown of this scene and the many different impressions it offers are marked by the use of parenthesis, capitals, blank spaces and hyphens, all of which contribute to a confusing effect on the displayed image.

4.4 Scheme

Whereas chaos is a function that mainly disorganizes the poem and reflects an anarchical view of its content, scheme reflects a totally opposing functional effect, i.e. that of schematizing or articulating the poem, a line or even a single word. Defined as a 'particular ordered system or arrangement' (Oxford University Press, 2015), the analysis performed here suggests that Cummings occasionally uses punctuation marks throughout the poem in an orderly way, following sequential patterns that take on different forms. More specifically, this practice has been observed in 37 poems, where this is achieved through the use of mainly the comma, the dot, the colon and the semicolon, but also through the question mark, the exclamation mark, the parenthesis and the hyphen (see Table 6).

The schematic use of punctuation marks reflects two opposing patterns: whereas on some occasions different marks are inserted as a means for progression – , ; : . . . ; , (CP 838); on other occasions a single mark is repeated twice or more – , , , , (CP 416). We can also identify a third pattern in which a progressive sequence may be repeated either in the same or in an inverted order. This – 'emptied.hills.listen.' (CP 416) – is an example of this third category, in which the stop signs, the ampersand and the exclamation marks are repeated throughout most of the lines.

As for the position these marks occupy in relation to the poems, they are normally inserted between the letters in single words – *t,h;r:u;s,h;e:s* (CP 820), *s,p;r:i;n,g* (CP 726), *groa/ning. ish:ly;* (CP 656), between the letters in a group of words – *s.ti:rst;hiso,nce;ma:n* (CP 710), *c r O/ wing;ly:cry.be,gi N s* (CP 423), *a,strut:do;colours;are:m,ove* (CP 445) – or spread over the whole poem, as in 'the little horse is newly' (CP 657) and '(im)c-a-t(mo)' (CP 655).

The analysis has also revealed that on most occasions, this practice has nothing to do with the content of the poem, but is simply a formal feature of Cummings' graphological style. The only exceptions to this rule are found in 'D-re-A-mi-N-gl-Y' (CP 838) and 'POEM(or)' (CP 803). In the former, 'the progression of punctuation toward openness (the comma) on either side of the period (“,; : . . . ;, ”) re-enacts the trembling leaf caught in the liminal moment between shuttiness and openness' (Moe, 2011: 755–756). In the latter, parentheses have been used to create a numbered list throughout the poem, with the text becoming organized around five statements about love and feelings.

4.5 Iconicity

Within Semiotics, the term iconicity is conceived as the resemblance between a linguistic sign and the object it refers to. While there are mainly two kinds of iconicity (visual and

Table 6. Punctuation marks foregrounding in E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry: Scheme.

Marks	Poems	Examples
Comma	CP 351, CP 362, CP 372, CP 387, CP 416, CP 423, CP 445, CP 471, CP 487, CP 495, CP 532, CP 584, CP 632, CP 655, CP 657, CP 710, CP 722, CP 726, CP 792, CP 820, CP 838.	, <i>not,alive,trees,drem</i> (CP 416) ::, (CP 471) <i>s.ti:rst;hiso,nce;man</i> (CP 710)
Dot	CP 351, CP 362, CP 372, CP 416, CP 423, CP 426, CP 445, CP 471, CP 487, CP 495, CP 532, CP 584, CP 632, CP 656, CP 657, CP 710, CP 838.	<i>emptied.hills.listen</i> (CP 416) ::, (CP 471) <i>t,h;r;u;s,h;e;s</i> (CP 820)
Colon	CP 347, CP 351, CP 362, CP 372, CP 384, CP 387, CP 416, CP 423, CP 426, CP 445, CP 448, CP 471, CP 487, CP 495, CP 532, CP 553, CP 584, CP 632, CP 655, CP 656, CP 657, CP 674, CP 710, CP 722, CP 726, CP 792, CP 793, CP 820, CP 838.	<i>every.wheres:extending:</i> <i>hush</i> (CP 416) ::, (CP 471) :::,, (CP 838)
Semicolon	CP 87, CP 351, CP 362, CP 347, CP 351, CP 362, CP 372, CP 384, CP 387, CP 416, CP 417, CP 423, CP 426, CP 431, CP 445, CP 448, CP 471, CP 487, CP 495, CP 532, CP 553, CP 584, CP 632, CP 655, CP 656, CP 657, CP 674, CP 710, CP 722, CP 726, CP 792, CP 793, CP 820, CP 838.	::, (CP 471) <i>wing;ly.cry.be,gi N s</i> (CP 423)
Question mark	CP 487.	!?,::, (CP 487)
Exclamation mark	CP 416, CP 487, CP 495.	<i>!throughwhich!brittlest!</i> <i>whitewhom!</i> (CP 416)
Parenthesis	CP 495, CP 803.	(1) [...] (2) [...] (3) [...] (4) [...] (5) (CP 803)
Hyphen	CP 416, CP 464, CP 495, CP 503, CP 627, CP 739.	<i>ing-roundly-dis</i> (CP 416)

aural), this resemblance itself is a matter of degree, which very much 'depend[s] on the accuracy of representation' (Wales, [1994] 2011: 206). Within Cummings' literary production, quite a large number of approaches have considered this issue, as visual aspects are deliberately exploited by Cummings. It is interesting to see here how Tartakovsky (2009: 219–221) has approached the use of parentheses in some detail, while scholars in general have considered the visual appearance of Cummings' poems mainly in connection with content (see Cureton, 1986; Heusser, 1997; Webster, 1999, 2001) and humour (González Mínguez, 2010).⁵ In my analysis, the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings includes 21 poems depicting some sort of iconicity through the use of punctuation marks. My study has also revealed that, although there are a few cases in which this resemblance is produced through the colon and semicolon (CP 82, CP 346), most of the examples correspond to tonal indicators (CP 82, CP 268, CP 346, CP 387, CP 421, CP 423, CP 426, CP 429, CP 445, CP 469, CP 627, CP 653, CP 655, CP 722) and parentheses (CP 103, CP 113, CP 351, CP 444, CP 448, CP 571, CP 655, CP 740) (see Table 7).

Table 7. Punctuation marks foregrounding in E. E. Cummings' experimental poetry: Iconicity.

Marks	Poems	Examples
Colon	CP 82, CP 346.	<i>exeunt ax:by;c</i> (CP 82)
Semicolon	CP 82, CP 346.	<i>towers;captured:in</i> (CP 346)
Question mark	CP 387, CP 445, CP 469, CP 655.	<i>ish(a stopped A)with!notgirl'swith?dumb</i> (CP 387) <i>(b!eL!s?/bE/ /-ginningly</i> (CP 387)
Exclamation mark	CP 268, CP 387, CP 421, CP 423, CP 426, CP 429, CP 445, CP 469, CP 627, CP 653, CP 655, CP 722.	<i>and before! you can! / !! & we're! / NOT</i> (CP 268) <i>n(o)w! / the! how! disappeared cleverly</i> <i>world! / is Slapped:with;lightning!!</i> (CP 348)
Parenthesis	CP 103, CP 113, CP 351, CP 444, CP 448, CP 571, CP 655, CP 740.	<i>(ta-te-ta/in a parenthesis!said the moon//n</i> (CP 103)

Depending on the sort of connection between the punctuation marks and the elements they are referred to iconically, examples in Cummings' experimental poetry have been classified as either visual or aural. The majority of instances correspond to visual iconicity, which includes cases such as the physical space between five characters leaving a bar scene (CP 82), the first rays of sunlight after an electrical storm (CP 348), the rain itself (CP 653) and the appearance of the moonlight in the sky at night (CP 722). Cases of aural iconicity are produced mostly through the insertion of tonal indicators, which are connected to sounds and noises in the depicted images, such as a boxing match (CP 387), church bells (CP 445), a hunter shoots at birds (CP 627) and the sounds of a group of black dancers (CP 426). Within all these cases, the poem that best represents this creative function is 'it's jolly' (CP 268), as it carries visual and aural connotations at the same time. The poem, which describes the death of a soldier because of a shell explosion, includes an exclamation mark – ! – that represents the explosion itself, both in terms of the visual impact and the noise produced through it:

it's jolly
odd what pops into
your jolly tete when the
jolly shells begin dropping jolly fast you
hear the rrrmp and
then nearerandnearerandNEARER
and before/ you can
!
& we're
NOT

[...] (Cummings, 1994: 268)

Iconicity produced through parentheses is particularly relevant here. The singular design of these marks contributes to suggesting different concepts that are visually similar to them. As such, this close connection has been highlighted and fully developed by Tartakovsky (2009), who considers that the iconic use of parenthesis is the most rudimentary case of all the effects connected to this mark:

Cummings, unlike the Dadaists, ‘does not attempt to replace traditional linguistic utterance but to modify and enhance it,’ claims Martin Heusser, and to that effect he ‘makes particularly apt use of the iconic dimensions inherent in the typography’ (19). Indeed, Cummings explored iconicity in many aspects of language, and when dealing with his use of parenthesis the most rudimentary examples are those that draw on its graphic shape. (Tartakovsky, 2009: 219)

In this sense, my analysis has revealed that parentheses in the poems under consideration are capable of representing the moon (CP 103, CP 351, CP 571), a bridge (CP 113) (Tartakovsky, 2009: 220), a group of birds descending through the sky (CP 448) (2009: 220), the immobility of a cat (CP 655) or emptiness (CP 444) (2009: 220). From all these cases, the visual connection between parentheses and the moon is the most frequent, normally becoming isolated from the rest of the poem by means of blank spaces and/or blank lines.

4.6 Secondary functions

The term omission refers to the act of leaving something out. In language this is normally reflected through the use of asterisks and suspension dots to indicate the absence of letters, words and other linguistic units. As such, the foregrounding of punctuation marks in Cummings’ experimental poetry also reflects this practice, although this is not very frequent in the poems considered here. In this case, the analysis has revealed that there are four poems in which omission is indicated through the insertion of the question mark (see Table 2). While the elements omitted may be a word or a phrase, as with ‘y is a WELL KNOWN ATHLETE’S BRIDE’ (CP 319), ‘a/mong crum/bling people a’ (CP 321) and ‘a-’ (CP 571), it is also a single letter that can be omitted, as reflected in ‘brIght’ (CP 455). The poem that best represents this function is precisely the latter, in which some of the letters in *star – s???* (line 2), *st??* (line 6) and *sta?* (line 8) – and *bright – ???Ht ??????T* – are substituted for the interrogation sign.

As stated by Tartakovsky (2009: 233–235), heteroglossia consists of the identification of different discourse typologies within a single poem. This function may also refer to the alternation between different poetic voices or a change in the tone of the lines, where the reader may notice different conversations, descriptions, narrations and other text typologies. In line with this, the analysis has shown that 10 out of the experimental poems studied here display this effect by the insertion of parentheses (see Table 2). To show a few examples, in ‘(one)!’ (CP 201) parentheses foreground a voice that indicates the beginning of a film-like scene – *(one!)* – as opposed to the description of the scene itself – *the wisti-twisti barber/-pole is climbing//people high,up-in//tenements talk.in sawdust Voices*. Similarly, parentheses specify the discursual change made by the main poetic voice in ‘oil tel duh woil doi sez’ (CP 312), where he switches from a narration of

a past conversation in which he was fired to a direct address to his present audience at a bar:

oil tel duh woil doi sez
dooyuh unnurs tanmih eesez pullih nizmus tash,oi
dough un giv uh shid oi sez. Tom
oidoughwuntuh doot,butoiguttuh
braikyooz,datswut eesez tuhmi. (Nowoi askyuh
woodundat maik yurarstoin
green? Oilsaisough.)
 [...]

[I'll tell the world I says
do you understand me as he's pulling his moustache,I
don't give a shit I says. Tom
I don't want to do it, but I got to
break youse,that's what he says to me. (Now I ask you
wouldn't that make your arse turn
green? I'll say so.)].
 [...] (Cummings, 1994: 312)

Together with these functions, I have identified 12 poems (see Table 2) where the imperative voice is indicated through the insertion of parentheses. While this unconventional use may refer to any other participant in the poem, it normally reflects the desire of the main poetic voice to make the reader pay more attention or carry out a particular action like listening to the noise of snow (CP 113), imagining the pairing up of two lovers (CP 779), trying to guess that love is the primary feeling for humanity (CP 793) or seeing the opening-up of the petals of a flower (CP 838).

Plural layers consist of the articulation of the poem into different levels, normally achieved by inserting parentheses (Tartakovsky, 2009: 228–232). Regarding the present study, this function has been observed in 22 experimental poems (see Table 2) where parentheses clearly foreground the affected elements. One of the poems that best illustrates this is ‘look at this)’ (CP 269): in a first layer (in-parentheses lines), the main poetic voice uses an imperative tone to make the reader focus on the element described in the ‘outer’ lines – *look at this)/ / (collect* ; in a second layer (in-parentheses lines), Cummings describes a pine box in which a soldier friend of the main poetic voice lies dead: *this was my particular/ / pal [...] we was/ buddies [...] a nice pine box*. The poems ‘i’d think wonder’ (CP 354), ‘go(perpe)go’ (CP 403), ‘this(that’ (CP 408), ‘ondumonde’ (CP 430) or ‘mortals)’ (CP 536) include similar examples.

A play on words consists of a witty use of words that are phonetically similar, normally with the aim of producing amusement or humour. Either a single word suggests two or more meanings or two or more words of the same or nearly the same sound may suggest different meanings (Oxford University Press, 2015). As wordplays are found very frequently in Cummings' poetry, some scholars have mentioned this effect before, mainly in connection with satire and mocking aspects (see Friedman, 1960: 52; Levenston, 1992: 52; Tartakovsky, 2009: 239). Though this function is more frequently achieved through spelling and typographic foregrounding, the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings includes only four poems displaying wordplays through the inclusion of unexpected parentheses (see Table 2). The lines *m// usil(age)ini* (CP 327), for instance, reproduce an expression that can be read in three different ways: *musilini* [*Mussolini*], *micilage* and *age* (Webster, 2015). Other similar cases include the expression *c(h)luck* (CP 351), where the verbs *cluck* and *chuckle* are combined, and *now(he)re* (CP 606), in which the adverbs *nowhere* and *here* are also joined to produce a double meaning.

Lastly, I have identified nine poems whereby unconventional punctuation represents particular properties of spoken language (see Table 2).⁷ Some of these properties include interruptions, repetitions, intonation or speed variation, which are not normally displayed in written language. This practice is introduced by the hyphen in all cases. See, for example, 'the waddling' (CP 98), where the use of two hyphens suggests the lower speech rate of the waiter of a whorehouse in *the waiter intones bloo-moo-n* [blue moon] (Webster, 2015). Similarly, I have found expressions like *il treno per/ Roma si-gnori?* (CP 278) and stanzas that reproduce the rhythmic structure of popular songs, such as the one in 'POEM,OR BEAUTY HURTS MR. VINAL' (CP 228), where the lengthy pronunciation of the vowel <a> is indicated by the unexpected insertion of a hyphen: *therefore my friends let/ us now sing each and all fortissimo A-/ mer/ i/ ca,I/ love,/ You.*

5 Conclusion

In this article I have analysed 157 unconventionally punctuated poems by E. E. Cummings. The analysis suggests that the unconventional punctuation reinforces the meaning of the texts and produces singular creative effects. More specifically, it indicates that misuse of punctuation is produced through three main foregrounding devices: marks insertion, substitution and omission. It also suggests that these devices frequently result from the emphasizing of certain elements, the shifting of the tempo of the lines, the creation of chaotic scenes, the schematization of units within the poem and the production of iconic effects, as well as in the omission of letters and words, the signalling of heteroglossia, the indication of imperative voice, the articulation of the poem into different layers, the creation of plays on words and the representation of spoken language features. Aided by previous research on unconventional punctuation in Cummings' poetry (Friedman, 1960; O'Brien, 1973; Tartakovsky, 2009; Triem, 1969), my aim here has been to expand on that work. To do so, I have adopted a systematic approach with the aim of establishing three unconventional patterns in these poems and identifying 11 poetic effects that derive from such a singular practice.

As opposed to some misconceptions, the analysis I have undertaken here demonstrates that the foregrounding of punctuation marks in Cummings' experimental poetry

does not correspond to an arbitrary practice, but it constitutes a poetic device capable of systematically adding new values to poetic expression beyond the functions that traditionally have been attributed to punctuation marks. In this sense, some critics have attacked Cummings' punctuation style, instead considering this practice immature, inefficient or arbitrary. Though somewhat antiquated, this way of thinking is reflected in the following quote by Wilson (1923, reprinted in Baum, 1962: 26–27) when he remarks:

Mr. Cummings's eccentric punctuation is also, I believe, a symptom of his immaturity as an artist. [...] a writer is obliged to depend on the words themselves, through the order in which they are written, to carry his cadence and emphasis. The extent to which punctuation and typography can supplement this is certainly very limited.

The study of unconventional punctuation in the poems selected here leads, however, to a very different consideration of Cummings' graphological style; one that may transform Cummings' experimentation into pleasure. This kind of approach has facilitated the recognition of all these linguistic features as important poetic issues from the 1970s onwards within Cummings' studies, in a way that it is suggested here that the more we know about Cummings' style, the more we will appreciate his poetry. In this sense, Cummings' use of unconventional punctuation has also demonstrated that, while some of the creative functions identified here are exclusive to individual marks, some others are produced repeatedly by two or more signs. The latter cases give strong support to these findings, as they have been observed recurrently in a number of poems. Additionally, three of the functions produced through unconventional punctuation (iconicity, word-plays and spoken language features) have already been identified in the unconventional use of spelling (see Gómez-Jiménez, 2015a). It is possible to infer from these findings that unconventional graphological patterns in the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings are not an arbitrary practice, but are present in the different written resources and can be researched in a systematic way.

The approach that I have adopted in this paper leads to the consideration of some further issues. Initially, work on the omission of punctuation marks in Cummings' experimental poetry is called for, as this foregrounding device has not been studied here due to time and space constraints. Additional research on Cummings' graphological style would also be useful. In this sense, if spelling (Gómez-Jiménez, 2015a) and now punctuation marks have proved to be stylistically significant, it is logical to think that other graphological aspects such as capitalization, spacing and further visual aspects will also be useful devices for Cummings to reinforce meaning and perform specific functions. Given the evident significance of such atypical punctuation usage, my contribution here has been to offer insights into the way that it functions in Cummings poetry as well as draw the reader's attention to a potential area of research that is worth pursuing further.

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Notes

1. The concept 'punctuation' as used in this paper consists of two main elements that are responsible for facilitating the reading and clarification of meaning in texts: punctuation marks and spacing. This formulation avoids including under this term any other writing elements that have traditionally been considered within, such as capitalization, spelling or typographical symbols (see Lennard, [1996] 2005: 109–114). My terminological choice here is based on the approach used by Levenston (1992) for the analysis of graphical aspects of texts, which makes it possible to organize the study of graphological aspects in a clearer and more systematic way (see Gómez-Jiménez, 2015b: 77–80).
2. The different functions attributed to punctuation (illocutionary, syntactic, deictic and typographic) are strongly connected to the different ways it has been used throughout history. See especially Parkes (1992), who describes in full the way punctuation has been used since antiquity until the present day. Baron (2001), Bateson (1983) and Lennard (2000: 6–8) are also worthwhile readings on this matter.
3. Some notable references include the aforementioned Leech (1969: 47–48, 2008: 188) and Widdowson (1975: 14–15, 32, 1992: 180, 214), but also other literary linguists like Short (1996: 13, 28–30, 51, 53, 59, 72–76, 78, 156–157), Simpson (1997: 44–53, 2004: 54, 210, 228), McIntyre (2004), Burke (2007) and Jeffries and McIntyre (2010: 32, 47, 57).
4. Lennard ([1996] 2005: 114–146) includes other families and signs in his taxonomy that I have not used here because they are not present in Cummings' experimental poems (i.e. the percontation mark) or because I conceive them to be typographic symbols that do not fit within the category of 'punctuation' (i.e. the ampersand and the currency symbols).
5. It is worth considering general references to iconicity as a semiotic effect produced through the use of typography. For more details on this matter, see especially Nänny (1999) and Fischer and Nänny (1999, 2001).
6. This transliteration has been taken from Chott (1997: 48).
7. For discussion on the differences between speaking and writing as alternative language systems, see Vachek (1973: 21–26) and Baron (2001: 17–20).

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