Cummings experimentation with style and form

1. dazzling linguistic risk-taking was measured to control sound—pacing, syllable stress, juncture—and sight

2. strong visual characteristics through experiments with typography owed much to his parallel development as a painter

3. absence of capital letters, irregular use of punctuation and parentheses, use of the ampersand sign (&); used enjambment (the continuation of a syntactic unit from one line or couplet of a poem to the next with no pause)

4. his dismemberment of syntax derived from the advances in contemporary European visual art, particularly cubism

Example: I will wade out
Srewolf gninrub ni depeets era shgiht ym llit

5. trained his ear on American speech; attacked the inauthentic and the manipulative; twisted overused words into punning submission; mimicked familiar public slogans in despairing but vigorous poems

Example: “POEM, OR BEAUTY HURTS MR. VINAL”

take it from me kiddo
believe me
my country, ‘tis of

you, land of the Cluett
Shirt Boston Garter and Spearmint
Girl With The Wrigley Eyes (of you
land of the Arrow Ide
and Earl &
Wilson
Collars)of you i
sing: land of Abraham Lincoln and Lydia E. Pinkham,
land above all of Just Add Hot Water And Serve—from every B.V.D.

Let freedom ring[.]
Sonnet CXLVI.

POOR soul, the centre of my sinful earth
Thrall to these rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:
So shall thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

— William Shakespeare

XV

come nothing to my comparable soul
which with existence has conversed in vain,
O scrupulously take thy trivial toll,
for whose cool feet this frantic heart is fain;
try me with thy perfumes which have seduced
the mightier nostrils of the fervent dead,
feed with felicities me wormperused
by whom the hungering mouth of time is fed:
and if i like not what thou givest me
to him let me complain, whose seat is where
revolving planets struggle to be free
with the astounding everlasting air—but if i like, i'll take between thy hands
what no man feels, no woman understands.

—E.E. Cummings

XIV

pity this busy monster, manunkind,
not. Progress is a comfortable disease:
your victim (death and life safely beyond)
plays with the bigness of his littleness
—electrons deify one razorblade
into a mountainrange; lenses extend
unwish through curving wherewhen till unwish
returns on its unself.

A world of made
is not a world of born—pity poor flesh
and trees, poor stars and stones, but never this fine specimen of hypermagical
ultraomnipotence. We doctors know

a hopeless case if—listen: there's a hell
of a good universe next door; let's go

—E.E. Cummings
old age sticks
up Keep
Off
signs) &
youth yanks them
down (old
age
cries No
Tres) & (pas)
youth laughs
(sing
old age
scolds Forbid
den Stop
Must
n't Don't
& youth goes
right on
gr
owing old

nine birds (rising
through a gold moment) climb:
ing i

-- onto
wyntry
twi-

light
(all together a
manying
one

--ness) nine
souls
only alive with a single mys-
tery (liftingly
caught upon falling) silent!
ly living the dying of glory

un (bee) mo
vi
n (in) g
are (th)
(e) you (o
nly)
asl (rose) eep

off a pane) the
(dropp
ingspinson
his
back mad) fly (ly
who
all at stops
(once

mortals)
climb

i
into eachness begi
n
dizzily
swin things
of speeds of
trapeze gush somersaults
open ing
hes shes
& meet

swoop
fully is are ex
quisite theys of re
turn

a
n
d
fall which now drop who all dreamlike

(jm
tho: he couldn't believe it jesus

told him; he wouldn't believe it lao

tsze
certainly told him and general (yes

mam)
sherman;
and even (believe it or

not) you
told him; I told him; we told him (he didn't believe it, no

sir) it took
a nipponized bit of
the old sixth avenue
el; in the top of his head to tell him

Jimmie's got a goil goil
's got a goil and
she coitnly can shimmie

when you see her shake

you see her shake a
shimmie how you wish that you was Jimmie.

Oh for such a gurl gurl

for such a gurl to
be a fellow's twisandtwirl

talk about your Sal- Sal-

about your Salo-mes but gimmie Jimmie's gal.
what if a much of a which of a wind
gives the truth to summer's lie;
bloodies with dizzying leaves the sun
and yanks immortal stars awry?
Blow king to beggar and queen to seem
(blow friend to fiend: blow space to time)
—when skies are hanged and oceans drowned,
the single secret will still be man.

what if a keen of a lean wind flays
screaming hills with sleet and snow:
strangles valleys by ropes of thing
and stifles forests in white ago?
Blow hope to terror; blow seeing to blind
(blow pity to envy and soul to mind)
—whose hearts are mountains, roots are trees,
it's they shall cry hello to the spring.

what if a dawn of a doom of a dream
bites this universe in two,
extinguishes forever out of his grave
and sprinkles nowhere with me and you?
Blow soon to never and never to twice
(blow life to isn't: blow death to was)
—All nothing's only our hugest home;
the most who die, the more we live.
anyone lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)
spring summer autumn winter
he sang his didn’t he danced his did.

Women and men(both little and small)
cared for anyone not at all
they sowed their isn’t they reaped their same
sun moon stars rain

children guessed(but only a few
and down they forgot as up they grew
autumn winter spring summer)
that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf
she laughed his joy she cried his grief
bird by snow and stir by still
anyone’s any was all to her

someones married their everyones
laughed their cryings and did their dance
(sleep wake hope and then)they
said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon
(and only the snow can begin to explain
how children are apt to forget to remember
with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)
busy folk buried them side by side
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep
and more by more they dream their sleep
noone and anyone earth by april
wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men(both dong and ding)
summer autumn winter spring
reaped their sowing and went their came
sun moon stars rain
Working drafts for "n.w.," written in 1962 (by permission of Nancy T. Andrews, the Estate of E. E. Cummings; courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University)
Alzheimer's Test-

Count the "F's" in the following text:

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RE-RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIF-IC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS...(see below)