

# A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE LINGUISTIC DEVIATIONS IN CUMMINGS' *IN JUST-/SPRING*

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## Abstract

E. E. Cummings, known as a pioneer and a distinguished representative in the area of experimental poetry in the 20th century, enjoys enduring fame and great popularity for the simplicity of his language and the playful mode in his poems. "in Just-/spring" is one representative, in which Cummings experiments radically with form, punctuation, and spelling to create a new, highly idiosyncratic means of poetic expression. By doing so, Cummings makes the thematic significance buried under the surface of the poem. Therefore, this paper, based on literary stylist's Geoffrey Leech's remarks about deviation, aims to analyze lexical deviation and graphological deviation in the poem, hoping to provide a stylistic analysis of the poem and trying to dig out how this maverick poet integrates his cubist strategy into his poem "in Just-/spring" in an attempt to express his eulogy of innocence.

**Keywords:** "in Just-/spring", Cummings, deviation, innocent children, spring

## I INTRODUCTION

Edward Estlin Cummings (1894-1962), famous as E. E. Cummings, is an American poet of great originality and talent. He is famous for his unique poems and is billed as "the rising star of the poetic avant-garde" (Beach, 2003, p. 101) since he utilizes unusual language and makes a peculiar arrangement of structure in his poems. Readers frequently find his work hard to understand, but after a close reading, we may discover that every word, even every letter has its function and the poems are full of profound meanings. As the forerunner of modern American experimental poetry, he takes the leading role in creating a new type of poetry. He incorporates cubist strategy in his poems, namely deliberately dissociating and recombining elements into a new artistic entity made self-sufficient by its rigorous architecture. "The name 'cubiste' was often applied to poems that made shapes on the page like paintings on a canvas" (Howe, 2014, p. 146). In other words, cubist strategy can result in the effect of a mixture of painting and poem. "in Just-/spring", the poem I want to analyze in this paper, is one example. It goes as follows:

in Just-  
spring when the world is mud-  
luscious the little  
lame balloonman  
  
whistles far and wee  
  
and eddieandbill come  
running from marbles and  
piracies and it's  
spring  
  
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

goat-footed

balloonMan                      whistles

far

and

wee (Cummings, 1976, p. 38)

It can be seen from above that “in Just-/spring” differentiates itself from traditional English poems in the form. From the sentence level, each line has different lengths and there are some blanks in some lines. From the phrase level, some phrases are repeated several times but in different formats. From the word level, the words that should be capitalized are lowercase and only two words are uppercase. All of these seem to be absurd and do not follow the common rules of writing, yet they do carry profound meanings and make great contributions to the advancement of modern poetry in terms of innovation in visual effects, leading a fresh style of expression into modern literature (Chang, 2008, p. 117).

“in Just-/spring” is extracted from the Songs of Innocence, Cummings’ famous poetry anthologized in his first poem collection, *Tulips and Chimneys*, which wins the Sundial Prize in 1923. Thanks to this, Cummings becomes famous in the literary circle and his poems become the studying objects of many scholars’ papers. In the past few decades, scholars such as R. A. Buck and Milton A. Cohen have mainly concentrated on the musical elements, the painting art, and the poetic language of his poems. Recently, some critics such as Xiaoqing Fang and Mahmoud Hegazy explore the features of his poems from the perspective of conceptual metaphor, which further enriches and illustrates the understanding and appreciation of his poems. Nevertheless, few have made efforts to study the deviation of his whole poem in a detailed manner. Considering “in poetry, deviations are not just to be interpreted in isolation, but to be seen as forming a meaningful pattern in themselves” (Leech, 2013, p. 64), this paper, therefore, based on British literary stylist Geoffrey Leech’s remarks and classification about deviation, aims to analyze the lexical deviation and graphological deviation (the two terminologies will be explained in the discussion part) of “in Just-/spring” and fully explore its thematic significance.

## II MATERIALS AND METHOD

This essay will apply the method of close reading and adopt the theory of deviation. In terms of the definition of deviation, Leech and Short (2007) think it is “a purely statistical notion: as the difference between the normal frequency of a feature, and its frequency in the text or corpus” (pp. 39). As one kind of linguistic phenomena, deviation can be seen frequently in various literary genres, especially in poetry. In *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, Leech (1980) points out that “poetic language may violate or deviate from the generally observed rules of the language in many different ways, some obvious, some subtle” (pp. 5). Leech also makes a classification of deviation in his book, he concludes that there are eight categories, namely, phonological deviation, lexical deviation, grammatical deviation, semantic deviation, graphological deviation, deviation of register, dialectal deviation, and deviation of the historical period. In this paper, lexical deviation and graphological deviation in Cummings’ “in Just-/spring” will be analyzed.

## III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 LEXICAL DEVIATION

In stylistics, lexical deviation refers to a new word or expression or a new meaning for an old word used only on particular occasions. Deviation at the level of words and meaning includes rare, dialect, or foreign words that stand out from the surrounding text, and neologisms. In light of neologisms, Leech (1980) concludes that there are three ways to create new words. They are affixation (the addition of a prefix or suffix to an item already in the language), functional conversion (the adaption of an item to a new grammatical function without changing its form), and compounding (the joining together of two or more items to make a single compound one). In “in Just-/spring”, Cummings “has never hesitated to invent a word when he needs one” (von Abele, 1955, p. 920) and he mainly takes advantage of

compounding to coin new words, such as "mud-luscious", "puddle-wonderful", "goat-footed", "hop-scotch", "jump-rope", "balloonman", "eddieandbill" and "bettyandisbel".

Leech also discusses the functions of neologism in his book and comes up with the "concept-making" power of neologism. He maintains that "if a new word is coined it implies the wish to recognize a concept or property which the language can so far only express by phrasal or clausal description" (Leech, 1980, p. 44). Likewise, every new word Cummings invents in his poem "in Just-/spring" has a special meaning. As for "mud-luscious" and "puddle-wonderful", the poet utilizes hyphens to link the two independent words, which corresponds with the stickiness of mud and puddle. Besides, when we notice that mud is luscious and the puddle is wonderful, we cannot help feeling it quite strange and weird. However, this is the poet's intention. He purposefully does this to intrigue our attention and makes us observe the innocence of children. Only in children's eyes, mud and puddle are pleasant things because they can play with them. Therefore, through the invention of new words like "mud-luscious" and "puddle-wonderful", the innocence of children and their happiness are expressed to the greatest extent. Their joyfulness can also be seen in the "hop-scotch" and "jump-rope". These are two games for kids. Just as Geetha (2012) states,

It can be noticed that Cummings carefully preserves for us the games that children played in his time. We find 'hop-scotch' and 'jump-rope' were games that were played by children during his times. Cummings' sister Elizabeth Quayle mentions that the balloon man with his basket was a common occurrence in spring when she was a child. She also recollects playing 'hop-scotch' and 'jump-rope'. (pp. 227-228)

Based on it, we can say that the happy scene in the poem is Cummings' recollection of childhood. In spring, when the weather becomes warmer, everything comes to life, and kids can go out and play games once again after a long staying at home in winter. They are so happy about it and cannot leave it behind, so Cummings uses hyphens to link the words. The hyphens can also be seen as a linkage to relate to Cummings' childhood memory. The happy games he played when he was young have become a pleasant and unforgettable memory that he cannot and is unwilling to get rid of.

In Cummings' poem, lexical deviation can also be found in the compound word "balloonman" which appears twice. It catches readers' eyes because it is not the common form, "balloon man". Cummings does not use the traditional way of writing balloon man but chooses to combine the two separate words to suggest that balloons and man are inseparable. Since the balloons are held in the man's hands all the time, the balloons and the seller are integrated into one wholeness. We readers may find that this new word is a little bit odd but "the oddity of neologism is related to the general usefulness of the concepts they represent" (Leech, 1980, p. 44). Indeed, through the oddity of "balloonman", Cummings draws the picture of the man selling balloons. Besides, this kind of oddity also accords with the balloonman's queer appearance because he is "goat-footed".

In this poem, other new words we should pay attention to are "eddieandbill" and "bettyandisbel". "eddieandbill" consists of two boys' names, which are Eddie and Bill. "bettyandisbel" includes two girls' names, Betty and Isabel. Because literary language has been chosen and manipulated with greater care and complexity than the average language and it contains a higher occurrence of special and deviant features than non-literary varieties, so literary language tends to be richer in its connotations. And Cummings' language is not only rich in connotation, but also in denotation since he has been widely acknowledged because of his unique creation of words. Therefore, even though "eddieandbill" and "bettyandisbel" are two pairs of kids' names, we should not make light of them, instead, we ought to take a detailed view of them. As for the girls' names, we can notice that when Isabel runs toward the balloonman, she loses "a" on the way. Just as Gómez-Jiménez (2015) points out that omission is one device used by Cummings for spelling foregrounding and omission can also "create iconic effects" (pp. 307). As for the lost "a", it may symbolize an "anxious mood" and reflects that those kids are so anxious to buy the balloon that they even drop something.

Secondly, Cummings puts their names together to present a visual metaphor. Seeing the balloonman, all the boys and girls swarm towards him. They are elbowing each other. The swarm of kids reminds us of the fact that they are kids and they have great curiosity about everything. They show great enthusiasm for the newly-come objects. Just like Geetha (2012) says "[b]alloons are insignificant things, they do not have their value, but children are attracted to them because they are little individualists in whom the heart and not the mind that dictates their desires" (pp. 227). Kids do

everything following their hearts and through their behavior, their inner feelings are exposed. Such being the case, the innocence of children has been demonstrated through this visual metaphor.

Based on the above analysis, we can summarize that Cummings seemingly combines words arbitrarily, but it is not that ordinary and straightforward. His unique poetic style, on the one hand, makes the modern poetry circle more diverse and richer and provides a brand-new perspective for scholars who love to appreciate the beauty of poems and want to study them. On the other hand, after a detailed analysis of lexical deviation, the striking poetic style reflects that Cummings compounds originally independent words to unreservedly praise spring and those innocent children. Just as Verdonk (2013) claims “[s]tylistics brings literary critical appreciation into clearer focus” (pp. 171), the study of deviation enables us to concentrate on the hidden thematic significance of Cummings’ poem.

### 3.2 GRAPHOLOGICAL DEVIATION

Graphology is the study of the writing system of a language. It is the expression or realization of language in its written form. The graphological features of a text determine subtle and important aspects such as genre and ideology. Graphological features, therefore, carry the pragmatic force and are an important part of the discourse.

Graphological deviation is applied to any aspect of the form and appearance of a text that modifies meaning in any way. It concerns the use of the alphabet, the number system, punctuation, capitalization, headlining, italicizing, bracketing, diagramming, paragraphing, and spacing. As Leech (1980) says, “Cummings is well known for his ... discarding of capital letters and punctuation where convention calls for them, jumbling of words” (pp. 47). In “in Just-/spring”, Cummings, without exception, makes good use of punctuation, capitalization, decapitalization, and spacing, which arouses readers’ interest to figure out why he does these and what he intends to convey.

Punctuation disappears in this poem, except for one dash. This is his usual practice against the rules of grammar and punctuation. It seems to be a little bit unreasonable to create a new language free of punctuation. But such kind of innovation is evidence of Cummings’ talent and originality. He wants to demonstrate the uniqueness of his poem and his pursuit of unconventionality by manipulating the type of print. Gómez-Jiménez (2017b) analyzes 157 unconventionally punctuated poems by Cummings, identifying 11 poetic effects that derive from such a singular practice. As for “in Just-/spring”, the unconventional punctuation also brings some poetic effects. Since it doesn’t have a large amount of punctuation, it can be read without disruption. Besides, it can also symbolize that the poem has no beginning, nor does it have an ending, which reflects the poet’s thought that life is in constant movement and we will experience countless changes without a dead end. All in all, Cummings wants us to embrace an optimistic attitude toward the future.

Capitalization is often manipulated by literary writers to express their ideas; Cummings is no exception. Eva María Gómez-Jiménez (2017a), for example, concentrates on the unconventional capitalization in Cummings’ experimental poetry and studies its foregrounding effect, pointing out that “capitals are used principally for emphasis” (pp. 15). But under Cummings’ pen, it is not that simple since in his poems meter is rejected and words become the top concern. It is widely acknowledged that Cummings is very good at playing word games. And capitalization is one type of his word games. Such being the case, when he capitalizes some letters, we should pay great attention to them and go to great lengths to figure out their denotative meanings.

In the poem “in Just-/spring”, all words even the first letters of the beginning words of each sentence are lowercase, except two letters have been capitalized, which become comparatively outstanding and eye-catching. The first one is “J” in “Just”, another is “M” in “balloonMan”. This novel writing style, on the one hand, exerts a visual impact on readers. On the other hand, it makes readers think about their deep meanings and functions. As for the word “Just”, it can be an adjective and adverb as well, each of which has several meanings. When we interpret it as an adverb, it can mean “exactly”, “only”, and “almost”. When it is explained as an adjective, it can be “impartial”. The first meaning I want to discuss is “exactly”. It is just spring when the balloonman goes out to sell balloons and comes across those kids who are happily playing games. As such, the linkage between spring and happy life has been established. Cummings chooses to incorporate the innocent children with spring to extol the beauty of spring and children’s inner joy at the same time.

The second is “only”. Some scholar maintains that Cummings wants to emphasize that the happy scene of children playing games doesn’t occur throughout the whole year, but only in spring (Blackmur, 1957, p. 26). Spring is the season that brings warmth, and joyfulness to people who have just experienced the dim and chilly winter. Besides, spring is the first season of the whole year, full of

infinite hope and vitality. Thus, Cummings' thinking on spring is expressed without reservation. Thirdly, the poet makes the word "Just" in upper case to stress that the spring has "almost" come. Winter has not gone completely because snow, the symbol of winter, has just melted into water and made the soil wet so kids can have mud to play with. The last meaning is "impartial". Spring is fair and does justice. We all have the opportunity to enjoy the warm weather and the sunshine in spring. Regardless of our age, class, identity, or anything else, we will be treated fairly by spring. Such being the case, the poet intends to praise the fairness of spring. The fairness of spring can also be seen from the intermittent repetition of "it's spring". Because of this kind of repetition, every section is surrounded by spring.

Just like we use "X" to refer to anyone when we are not certain, Cummings capitalizes the letter "J" to make us associate every meaning of the word with it. No matter which meaning we use to replace the word "Just", we can find that it is plausible. This kind of ambiguity wins many critics' applause, just as Cureton (1986) "appreciates Cummings' use of visual voice or visual ambiguity to complicate and augment an underlying meter or poetic argument, or his use of visual iconicity to add perceptual substance to a text" (pp. 277). Cummings uses such kind of ambiguity to stress that spring is "beautiful". In the beautiful season, the balloonman comes to sell balloons and finds that little boys and girls are playing joyfully. Cummings seems to draw a cheerful picture that demonstrates the happy scene. And he wants to emphasize the fact that spring is the season when everything is beautiful and people enjoy themselves a lot.

Another letter Cummings capitalizes in this poem is the "M" in "balloonMan". Some scholar thinks that it, together with the adjective "goat-footed", reminds us of God "Pan" because Pan is also goat-footed (Kennedy, 1994, p. 39). In my thinking, apart from the appearance, the usual practice of capitalizing God's name, like Father and God, also proves that the balloonMan is, in some sense, the equivalence of the God "Pan", who symbolizes the impending of spring. Pan has an eerie appearance, with a human head and torso but with goat horns, ears, and feet. He is a combination of people and a goat. Even though his appearance is a little bit queer, he is the Greek god of forests and fields, who is in charge of woods, heaven, and earth, as well as sheep. Therefore, he is also billed as the God of Spring. Marchesini (2016) also claims that "Pan stands in for humans' relationship to nature" (pp. 41). So those children's running toward the balloonMan symbolizes kids' pursuit of spring. Spring is the token of every pleasant moment. It is deserved to be pursued.

What's more, Pan is also the god of living and multiplying, who enjoys a close relationship with all living things and plays a vital role in reproduction. In this poem, the balloonman's coming leads to the presence of children. Based on such kind of sequence, it is fair to say that the balloonman also acts an important role in reproduction. What deserves our attention is that only kids appear after the balloonMan. For one thing, it is because kids are innocent and hold a curious attitude toward everything. For another, it is because children are the spring of all human beings. They are our hope and future. Cummings' "in Just-/spring" was published in 1920, the time after the end of the First World War. He once served in an Ambulance Corps in France during the war and was even captured by the enemy. Having experienced the cruel, inhuman combat, Cummings, on the one hand, abhors the treachery of adults, encourages the innocence of children, and admires their yearning for beautiful things, not just the balloons which are often used to decorate the ceremony, like wedding and birthday party, but also mud and puddle, which are not that good in adults' eyes but indeed precious to the kids' eyes. On the other hand, he also wants to stress that when the bad things have gone, new hope will spring up. Pan, the god of living and multiplying, introduces the coming of those innocent kids, which is emblematic of people's longing for spring and their new hope. By doing so, Cummings wants to enlighten everyone that spring is coming, and we should keep hope no matter what we have experienced.

Yet this capitalization serves another function, which we readers may find difficult to realize. The change from "balloonman" to "balloonMan" also signifies the distance between him and the children. At first, he is far away from the children, so he is the small "man", but as he comes closer, he becomes bigger and bigger, ending up being the giant "Man" with the children's close-up view. So, through capitalization, Cummings depicts the process of children's mindsets vividly. This kind of distance change can also be justified by the adjectives used to modify the balloonman. The first two adjectives are "little" and "lame". The second time Cummings uses "queer" and "old" to describe the balloonman. The last adjective is the "goat-footed" mentioned earlier. From the three sets of modifiers, we can see that at first, the balloonman is in the distance, so the kids can only sense that he is little and lame. But when he becomes closer, children can observe that he is old and a little bit queer. When he at last stands in front of them, these kids find that he is goat-footed. The clearer description of the balloonman

signifies that the distance between the balloonman and those kids is shorter. Therefore, it is fair to say that through the devices of capitalization, the poem achieves a far-reaching denotative meaning and a picturesque effect as well.

Decapitalization is another device that is used quite a lot in Cummings' poems, just as Tartakovsky (2009) claims "[a]mong wide circles Cummings is best known as the poet who did not use capital letters" (pp. 216). Cummings even decapitalizes "I" to illustrate his humble attitude towards individuals because he thinks highly of nature and believes that everyone, including himself, or everything is small and insignificant in front of nature. Moreover, he decapitalizes his name as e. e. cummings to express his self-identification that he is nothing more important or distinguished than anyone. This is his modest thinking.

In "in Just-/spring", Cummings breaks the shackles of grammar, and decapitalizes all the letters that should be uppercase. "eddieandbill" and "bettyandisbel" are examples. These two are the boys' and girls' names, which normally should be uppercase. But Cummings disregards the traditional grammar and syntax rules. For one thing, the conceptual metaphor (which refers to the understanding of one idea, or conceptual domain, in terms of another), IMPORTANCE IS BIG, enlightens us to realize that the use of (de)capitalization can symbolize (un)importance. In other words, Cummings puts the children's names in lower-case to demonstrate the less importance of children, just as he changes his name into a lower-case one and decapitalizes the word "i". For another, Cummings also wants to make a comparison between the balloonMan and those little kids. Lower-case names are the tokens of their small statues, especially compared with the giant build of the "balloonMan". Aside from this, these names can also refer to any kids since the lower-case names make a general reference whereas the upper case means a specific person. And "eddie" and "bill" are common names for boys, "betty" and "isabel" for girls. So instead of mentioning that two boys and two girls are running toward the balloonman happily, Cummings wants to illustrate that every kid is running towards the balloonman. This kind of using part to stand for the whole can also be justified in the vowels and consonants of their names. The initial letters of the two boys' names are "e" and "b" and the first letters of the two girls' names are "b" and "i". We can see that these two pairs have a vowel and a consonant. The names with vowels and consonants as the first letter seem to stand for all the boys' and girls' names because no matter what name yours is, the first letter of the name is either vowel or consonant. Thus, these two boys and two girls are representatives of all children. More importantly, the boys' names go from the vowel "e" to the consonant "b", while the girls' names transfer from the consonant "b" to the vowel "i". It constitutes a whole circle that goes from vowel to consonant and then backs to vowel. This circle may be emblematic of the cycle of four seasons. Additionally, it may also depict the scene when the boys and girls are running towards the balloonman in a circle or arm in arm, which is the token of their inseparable friendship.

Spacing is the last typographical distortion I want to analyze in this paper. Rosenthal (2004) concludes that "[e]very unorthodoxy of punctuation, spacing, ... in Cummings' poems generally, can be read functionally" (pp. 147). The same goes for the spacing in "in Just-/spring". As we can observe from this poem, there are some blanks within it. The first one appears in line two, which goes like this: "spring when the world is mud-". It can vividly depict the picture that spring strides toward people. After a long period of chilling winter, spring is anxious to come out and cannot wait to bring warmth to people.

Apart from blank space, Cummings is also a genius who always hides what he wants to convey in the arrangement of the words. To name a few, in his poem "r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r", he arranges words in a weird way to resemble the shape of a grasshopper. Apart from the aim to demonstrate a picture of the animal, Cummings also intends to imitate the grasshopper's hopping and leaping. Such being the case, he brings both the grasshopper and the poem to life. Similarly, in the poem "in Just-/spring", Cummings also injects vitality in it. Two points deserve to be analyzed. The first one is the repetition of the phrase "far and wee". This phrase is repeated three times, each time with different spacing. The first one appears in line 5, which goes like this: "far and wee". The second one is in line 13, which changes to "far and wee". And the last one goes from line 21 to line 24, which also undergoes some change. It is as follows:

far  
and  
wee

Even though the words are repeated, the meanings are different because of their spacings. First, we have to fumble out what the phrase fundamentally means. There is no phrase like that in the dictionary. It is newly coined by Cummings. But we are familiar with another one, namely "far and wide", which means the range is wide. If we analyze the words one by one, we can discover that "far" refers to the distance between the balloonman's whistle and the kids, and "wee" means the duration of his whistle. At first, he is far away and his sound needs to travel through a long journey, so the spacing between the word "far" and "and" is the longest one of the three, but the duration of his whistle is the shortest, so the spacing between "and" and "wee" is the shortest of the three. With the balloonman coming closer, his whistle also becomes closer, so the distance becomes shorter while the duration becomes longer, which can be noticed in their spacings respectively. But the last one is different. The three words are not in the same line. What does that mean? Some scholar maintains that the vertical arrangement of the three words resembles a balloon floating gently in the hands of the balloonman and different lines also stand for the infinite distance and duration of the whistle (Landles, 2001, p. 35).

But I have a different opinion because distance can be measured horizontally and vertically. And if we measure the distance vertically, it is the smallest of the three circumstances. Besides, it can also be seen as a situation when the balloonman stands in front of those kids. Furthermore, it seems that the direction of the balloonman changes because the three words are arrayed in one line horizontally at the beginning, but in the end, the three words are arranged in one line vertically. Even though the distance between the balloonman and those kids seems to be the closest, the balloonman changes his orientation. By doing this, Cummings wants to hint that the balloonman is leaving and it's common that someone appears and then disappears. Apart from this, he also tries to demonstrate the loneliness of the balloonman. In Cummings' famous poem "l(a)", he never puts two words in one line to demonstrate the sense of loneliness to a greater extent. Similarly, in this poem, Cummings also wants to express that the balloonman is lonely as reflected in the scarcely ordinary line arrangement.

Another typographical distortion that deserves to be mentioned is this one:

and  
  
the  
  
goat-footed

The stepped shape reminds us of another poem, "Good Friday" created by Edwin Morgan, the arrangement goes as follows:

He lunges for the stairs, swings down-off,  
Into the sun for the Easter eggs.  
On very  
    Nearly  
        Steady  
            Legs.

In the above poem, "he" walks downstairs, so the stepped shape makes readers see a vivid picture of a man and his steps in their minds. Likewise, in the poem "in Just-/spring", Cummings depicts that the girls and boys are happily jumping toward the balloonman. The stepped arrangement highlights that Cummings takes advantage of the dynamic interaction "between the ideational effects generated by the poem and the static presence of poem itself" (Flajar, 2007, p. 7). Besides, it can also visualize the limp step of the balloonman. As we have discussed earlier, the balloonman is "little lame". So instead of showing one character's step, Cummings uses a special layout to portray all the characters' paces. Besides, as Barry A. Marks (1964) observes in his *E. E. Cummings*, "the spacing of his words suggests the children's shared pleasure, the instinctive hurry and jostle of their play, and their delight in the balloonman's appearance" (pp. 46).

Although the whole poem appears to be a little bit messy and anomalous after Cummings deliberately refuses to use punctuation marks, breaks sentences, makes the words lowercase or uppercase, and utilizes the spacing, the mess is on the surface. It is cleverly conceived and uniquely structured, which is like a moving picture, leaving the readers to experience the visual and aural impact.

More importantly, it contains profound meanings and expresses Cummings' rich ideas, namely, spring is impending, children are still innocent and energetic, so we should always hold hope for the future.

#### IV CONCLUSION

Poetry is the earliest form of literature as well as the essence of literature genres. It can pass on to us the true meaning of life and the rules of nature in incisive and poetic language. From ancient times to the present, many literary critics regard poetry as the philosopher and forerunner of language. And Cummings is one of the representatives who maximize the leading role of poetry in the language. In the poem "in Just-/spring", he breaks through the fixed language expression form and the old literary language rules. He takes full advantage of the "poetic license" to make bold deviations, including graphological deviation and lexical deviation, thus he can use not only the unique words he newly creates but also the whole striking structure to convey his praise to those innocent children and the wonderful spring.

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