

AN ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE UNWORLD
ON THE INDIVIDUAL AS EXPRESSED IN
THE PROSE AND POETRY OF E. E. CUMMINGS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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May 1967

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The prose and poetry of e.e. cummings contains both a transcendentalist's belief in a spiritual world and a skeptic's observations of human folly. cummings sees that the individual is continually threatened by the unworld, that is, the restricting elements in society which will eventually destroy him.

cummings exposes a particular instance of the unworld's existence in The Enormous Room. In the prison-camp of La Ferté he witnesses individuals struggling to maintain true values against the French war machine, which attempts to relegate them to the position of subservient, de-personalized pawns. By the end of the novel he sees that the unworld is not restricted to France, but exists in America as well.

Eimi enlarges the concept of the unworld to include an entire country, Russia. Here the unworld is far more powerful than in The Enormous Room, and individuals are either destroyed outright or restricted to the point where their chances of escape are negligible. cummings himself is threatened, to a greater degree than before.

The poetry examines the unworld extensively. Individuals from all walks of life are affected by the unworld's tendency to view man as an insignificant digit who possesses meaning only in the mass sense. The politician's lies and the scientist's false knowledge combine to crush the individual and all but nullify his chances for perception of transcendental truth. cummings sees that the cause of man's downfall is his inability to love, but the power of the unworld is such that he is unable to communicate his truth and thereby overcome it successfully.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

e.e. cummings is both a twentieth-century transcendentalist and a bitter critic of human society. "Each of his volumes can be divided into two: one part violent loathing, one part gentlest love."¹ He has attempted to reject the temporal world in favour of a spiritual realm, but his escape has not been entirely successful. This inability to achieve complete transcendence is due to the unworld, a malevolent force that imposes restrictive rules and meaningless values on the individual. From these false values is created

a world so blurred
that its inhabitants are one another
-- an idiotic monster of negation:
so timid it would rather starve itself
eternally than run the risk of choking;
so greedy nothing satisfies its hunger
but always huger quantities of nothing --
a world so lazy that it cannot dream;
so blind, it worships its own ugliness;
a world so false, so trivial, so unso,
phantoms are solid by comparison.²

Critics have found it understandably difficult to reconcile these two aspects of cummings' work, for if the forces of the unworld are as significant as the body of his satiric writing would indicate, it is hard to escape the

¹George Haines IV, "The World and E.E. Cummings," Sewanee Review, LIX (Spring, 1951), p. 207.

²e.e. cummings, Santa Claus (Vol. III of Religious Drama, ed. Marvin Halverson; New York: World Publishing Co., 1963, pp. 79-97,) p. 84.

conclusion that his transcendental poetry lacks sincerity. If cummings' affirmative writing is accepted as genuine, it would appear that the satiric themes represent a man merely toying with the problems of society. It is only when the unworld is viewed as a general threat to humanity that his work becomes a self-consistent whole. All aspects of human life are vulnerable to the unworld's influence, and real values are everywhere ~~subject~~ to its destructive powers.

cummings is found to be aware of this threat, even to his individuality. He is seen at times admitting an essential alienation from the bulk of humanity as a result of his knowledge of spiritual truth; consequently, he will exist apart from the unworld, unable to communicate the truth he possesses.

Eleanor Sickels mistakenly suggests that this very factor renders his transcendental vision immature: she remarks that cummings' concept of love "can never expand to the rest of humanity -- to the multitudes who exercise authority or submit to it. . . ." ³ Yet his vision need not be regarded as immature but rather as comparatively ineffective against the strength of the unworld. For that matter, this inability to communicate in itself implies a victory for the forces of evil. The artist is left virtually alone, unable to tell others of his vision and thereby combat the elements in society that threaten man.

³ Eleanor M. Sickels, "The Unworld of E.E. Cummings," American Literature, XXVI (Mar. 1954--Jan. 1955) p.227.

CHAPTER II

A PARTICULAR MANIFESTATION OF THE UNWORLD: THE ENORMOUS ROOM

In cummings' first major prose work, The Enormous Room, various individuals are seen in contrast to the unworld, whose forces are manifested in the First World War. Later it becomes evident that the war itself is merely one instance of a general denial of values responsible for the suppression of truth.

The Enormous Room contrasts the individual, struggling to maintain his humanity, with the grotesque, sub-human representatives of the war machine. It is made clear early in the book that one's individuality is strengthened and given new meaning through any defiance of the rigid and unflinching military society. cummings' reply to a friend is significant: the friend asks, "'Did y' do something to get pinched?'" 'Probably', I answered importantly and vaguely, feeling a new dignity."⁴ He replies vaguely because in reality he has done nothing wrong, but importantly because he feels his self personally strengthened by this unconscious defiance of the unworld. Being a criminal in the light of the military's values is tantamount to being a hero or martyr in reality.

cummings' 'crime' is examined by the French officials,

⁴e.e. cummings, The Enormous Room (New York: The Modern Library, 1949), p.9. All subsequent references are to this edition.

who, in their adherence to the unworld have in effect sold their individual souls or personalities. The examiners are described as "six eyes which sat at a desk." (Enor. Room, p.13). They ask cummings if he hates the Germans, to which he replies, "Non. J'aime beaucoup les francais." (Enor. Room, p.19).

In other words, he has denied the accusation that there is hatred in his soul, denial of which in the perverted terms of the unworld is a punishable crime. Essentially, he is sent to prison for his ability to love; the dismay of his inquisitors at his refusal to admit hatred only serves to show the hold the unworld has upon them.

In addition, they wish him to succumb to the manufactured 'truth' of propaganda that the unworld furnishes the masses. For example, cummings refuses to believe without adequate proof the rumours of German atrocities, although he is aware of their possibility. His inquisitors are attempting to force cummings to hate through their mention of the atrocities. cummings cannot allow himself to be duped in this way, and is thus found guilty for refusing to hate.

As a result he is filled with a sense of joy at having defied the soul-crushing force from without:

An uncontrollable joy gutted me after three months of humiliation, of being bossed and herded and bullied and insulated. I was myself and my own master. (Enor. Room p.23)

In contrast to this newly-developed self is the de-humanized

guard who "woke up, straightened and buckled his personality, and murmured, 'It's time, come on, '" (Enor. Room, p.12). Any true values he possessed have been supplanted by the false values of the unworld.

Later it is seen that the military men who accompany him to La Ferte concentration camp, when divested of their military trappings, regain their humanity. When one of the guards offers him food, cummings notices in astonishment that he

had relaxed amazingly: his cap lay beside him, his tunic was unbuttoned, he slouched in a completely undisciplined posture -- his face seemed to have been changed for a peasant's, it was almost open in expression and almost completely at ease. (Enor. Room, p.49)

Continuing, it is seen that from "that moment till we reached our destination at about eight o'clock the other /soldier/ and I got on extraordinarily well." (Enor. Room, p.49). Yet as soon as the train arrives, the situation reverses itself:

Finally watches were consulted, tunics buttoned, hats donned. . . . Looking at the erstwhile participants in conversation, I scarcely knew them. They had put on with their caps a positive ferocity of bearing. (Enor. Room, pp. 50-51)

The two scenes are important as they show the result of the unworld's influence on potential human beings. The train exists as a symbol of freedom from society. While on the train the unworld's hold on the guards is relaxed, and

their basic human kindness emerges. However, they are reclaimed by society as the train stops and returns them to the world of de-humanized values. Their personalities are replaced by the uniform that perverts true values and suppresses the self.

Once in jail cummings discovers that he has not been the first to be imprisoned for refusing to relinquish his humanity. "It was then that I noticed the walls. Arm-high they were covered with designs, mottoes, pictures." (Enor. Room, p.24). In other words, he sees in the profusion of art on the cell walls a testimony to the existence of truth despite the attempts of the unworld to crush it. However, the scene, like many others in cummings' work, is ambiguous. It is first made obvious that true individuals can exist throughout the world irrespective of geographical boundaries and the efforts of propaganda to convince the world that the Germans alone are detestable: "There had been Germans and Frenchmen imprisoned in this cell. On the right wall, near the door-end, was a long selection from Goethe" (Enor. Room, p. 24). This suggests that meaningful values in life will endure no matter how strong and concentrated are the unworld's efforts to stifle them.

Yet cummings simultaneously suggests that any triumph of the individual is transitory. It becomes apparent that the

unworld is perfectly capable of crushing such values.

Last, I found a drawing surrounded by a scrolled motto. The drawing was a potted plant with four blossoms. The blossoms were elaborately dead. Their death was drawn with fearful care. (Enor. Room, p.24)

It turns out that the scroll is a funereal scroll which reads, "Mes derniers adieux a ma femme aimee Gaby." (Enor. Room, p. 25). cummings notices that a "fierce hand, totally distinct from the former, wrote in proud letters above: 'Tombe pour desert. Six ans de prison -- degradation militaire.'" (Enor. Room, p.25).

Significantly, cummings reads this latter quotation last, which acts as a countering emotion to the previous suggestion of the individual's triumph depicted by the symbolic survival of true value in Goethe's poetry. In contrast is seen the picture of the four dead flowers, which shows the triumph of the unworld in one specific instance.

Like cummings, the man who drew the flowers and deserted from the unworld's army possessed meaningful truth. His affirmation of love is seen in his last good-byes to his wife. Here the unworld has not only destroyed his personal values, as symbolized by the dead flowers, but also has torn him from the most important of all relationships, love. The 'fierce hand' probably belongs to a guard, representative

of the unworld, who significantly has the last word and thereby shows the persistence of the false values and the destruction of the true ones. Elsewhere cummings refers to his 'trial' as an attempt by the military to separate him from his friend 'B', and in so doing, prevent the development of a meaningful human relationship.

cummings says that the "attempt of the three gentlemen sitting before me to endow my friend and myself with different fates had irrevocably failed." (Enor. Room, p. 20). This is an ironic passage and an important one, for it will later be seen that they are successful in effecting their separation.

The concept of the true individual who is seen by the unworld as a criminal is basic to The Enormous Room and is found throughout the book. When cummings is being taken to La Ferté he encounters another 'criminal:

a beautifully-smiling shortish man, with
a very fine blanket wrapped in a waterproof
oilskin cover. We grinned at each other
(the most cordial salutation, by the way,
that I have ever exchanged with a human
being). . . . (Enor. Room, p.31)

cummings is given food and wine from the man, acts which suggest the Christian communion service. This is substantiated by his repeated reference to the travelling-companion as a 'divine' man.

This 'criminal' is a deserter, which is enough to signify

his humanity. Yet he is aware of the unworld's strength, for he remarks that he was fortunate to be a bachelor and escape the heartache of being torn from his family. Also, he is powerless against the guards whose eyes cummings refers to as "little and cruel, [as they] woke from the trance of digestion and settled with positive ferocity on their prey." (Enor. Room, p.34). The 'divine' man sees that he is beaten and piteously asks, "'What can we do, we criminals?'" (Enor. Room, p.34) against the forces of hate in the world.

cummings is imprisoned before being moved on to La Ferté, an imprisonment which ironically signifies freedom from the unworld. Correspondingly, release from jail is tantamount to being imprisoned in the unworld, a condition to which cummings refers at the end of the book. In prison, he sees the extent to which the unworld has intruded on humanity; the sight of the innocent children at play is more than countered by the "bored silhouette of the soldier moving imperceptibly and wearily against a still more gloomy piece of autumn sky." (Enor. Room, pp. 37-38).

This suggests that the innocent world of the children is being observed by the unworld which in time will make them a part of its system. By becoming a part of the unworld's society they will forget or lose any intuitive spiritual awareness they may have possessed.

That the unworld is seen not merely in the military becomes evident as cummings walks through the night with his guards towards La Ferté. He "drank heavily of its [the night's] perfect blackness. It was icy, talkative, minutely alive." (Enor. Room, p.53). Yet such communion with nature is not to be tolerated by the unworld, and immediately thereafter the guard's command forces him back to the world of false values. cummings' attempt to return to his communion with nature is again thwarted by their arrival at a town:

I was wrong, the moon and I and he
were not alone. . . . A glance up
the road gave me two silhouettes at
pause. The gendarmes were waiting. . . .
Nor had we gone a half-hour before
several dark squat forms confronted
us: houses. I decided that I did not
like houses -- particularly as now
my guardians' manner abruptly changed;
once more tunics were buttoned,
holsters adjusted. . . . (Enor. Room, p. 54)

Here the unworld has prevented to a degree his ability to communicate with the real world of true values. For that matter, its forces can be found even in the midst of the real world, of which he is here attempting to be a part. The latter inference is further supported by his awareness that the moon, symbol of the spiritual world, is endangered by the presence of the houses:

Yet when I examined the moon she too
seemed but a painting of a moon, and
the sky in which she lived a fragile

echo of colour. If I blew hard
the whole sky mechanism would
collapse gently with a neat, sound-
less crash. (Enor. Room, p.55)

Also, he sees that the unworld has extended its influence to that of religion in its perversion of true spiritual values. He remarks that he was told to walk "in the direction of a long, dull, dirty mass not a hundred yards away, which (as near as I could see) served either as a church or a tomb." (Enor. Room, p.55). In the blackness of the night's truth he is unable to differentiate objects in the town, because they are all equally meaningless distortions of reality.

Later, inside the chapel of La Ferte, he becomes aware of the essence of the unworld at its strongest and most repugnant. He is surrounded with images that call to mind futility and decay:

To the left and right through lean
oblongs of stained glass burst dirty burglars
burglars of moonlight. The clammy,
stupid distance uttered dimly an
uncanny conflict -- the mutterless
tumbling of brutish shadows. A
crowding ooze battled with my lungs.
My nostrils fought against the
monstrous atmospheric slime which
hugged a sweet unpleasant odour.
Staring ahead, I gradually disinterred
the pale carrion of the darkness --
an altar, guarded with the ugliness
of unlit candles, on which stood
inexorably the efficient implements
for eating God. (Enor. Room, pp. 58-59)

Here cummings is confronted by the unworld at its full strength. All of his senses are attacked, leaving him completely at its mercy. He sees that religion itself has been perverted by the unworld. For the majority of the prisoners in the Enormous Room going to church is merely a chance for an 'outing', an opportunity for the male prisoners to view the women. The Mass itself becomes a grotesque comedy, cummings likening it to a burlesque show. The prisoners eat the Communion wafer out of sheer hunger rather than from desire to participate meaningfully in a religious ritual.

The Enormous Room to which cummings is assigned is initially described in the most sickening terms possible, in order to demonstrate its complete separation from the world of truth and beauty. His surroundings are degrading; manure and sputum litter the floor. As it is at night when he first enters the room he cannot distinguish individual people: his eyes waded "laboriously through a dank atmosphere, a darkness gruesomely tactile." (Enor. Room, p.61). He is only aware of a chaos and insanity about the place.

However, in the midst of this degradation he is reunited with his friend 'B', an ironical situation since he previously remarked that this separation was the main purpose of his imprisonment.

'B''s initial remark is significant and links with the earlier impression cummings received in the temporary cell. He says, "'There's a man here who is a friend of Vanderbilt and knew Cezanne.'" (Enor. Room, p.63). This would imply that the true values exist despite the unworld's efforts to suppress them. Unfortunately, the man referred to turns out later to be a fraud, but the remark in itself is significant.

The remainder of The Enormous Room is mainly concerned with portraying certain true individuals among the prisoners and contrasting their humanity with the lack of humanity in the prison officials. In many instances a conflict is seen in the form of personal battles for survival on the part of these individuals. The prisoners are naturally aware of the conflict, and in retaliation display their individuality in any way possible. cummings remarks that, having told him the rules of the jail, "my friends proceeded to enliven the otherwise somewhat tedious morning by shattering one after another all rules and regulations." (Enor. Room, p.81).

In comparison with their display of individuality is cummings' description of the plantons who stand by helplessly. One such planton has "wise eyes situated very far apart in a mealy expressionless ellipse of face, to the lower end of which clung a piece of down" . . . (Enor. Room, p. 81) .

In addition, the planton has a wooden hand. For that matter, it is elsewhere mentioned that with the odd exception, all the plantons are physically disfigured. cummings comments that nearly "all of them were witless." (Enor. Room, p.152). This mention of their defects gives a picture of men both spiritually and physically deformed.

The plantons are representatives of that type of humanity that willingly succumbs to the forces of the unworld without a fight; perhaps they have never had a true personality. They are distinctively 'hollow men' and are lost to the false values of the unworld. They willingly "do their bit for world-safety, democracy, freedom, etc." (Enor. Room, p.82) without the awareness that such abstractions are untrue perversions of real values.

Elsewhere are seen the perpetrators of the gigantic hoax, the men who coin the slogans and write the propaganda whereby the 'witless' are lured into a willing servitude. Friedman points out that theirs is the world of mere mind which prevents man "from keeping in harmony with natural process, which causes him to look around the corners of the seasons and fear what he sees. . . and which fabricates lies and machines and bureaucracies to protect him from reality."⁵ They rely on cheap, histrionic patriotism which not only sways the masses but gives

⁵Norman Friedman, e.e. cummings -- the art of his poetry (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), p. 19.

a facade of importance to the tangle of bureaucratic red-tape which cummings repeatedly shows to be ridiculous and petty.

The stupidity of the war machine is seen in numerous ways. For example, cummings remarks that without knowing it, the French were actually liberating him by putting him in prison, in the sense that when apart from the unworld he was thus able to see true values held by real people. 'One-Eyed Dah-veed' tells the story of the French army's attack on their own men. Although the general in command has been informed of his mistake, he refuses to countermand the order on the grounds that once begun, it must be carried out. The inflexibility of the general's reasoning becomes horrifying when viewed in the light of the meaningless slaughter that occurs.

Pomposity is personified in the Gestionnaire whom cummings describes as an 'it' who looks 'very German' and is possessed of "frank and stupid eyes." (Enor. Room, p. 105). His physiognomy suggests that members of the unworld exist in Germany as well as in France. This is also supported by the wide variety of nationalities imprisoned in the Enormous Room. Behind his pompous bearing there is a basic stupidity which cummings is quick to see; the Gestionnaire can barely read or spell, nor can he count. cummings' name "had been spelled, erased, and re-spelled several times He counted two [bills] off,

licking his big thumb with a pompous gesture, and having recounted them passed them heavily to me." (Enor. Room, p.108).

Behind the humour of this scene lies the frightening truth that such stupidity has the power to degrade in every possible way the only true men in France. The food is "a faintly-smoking urine-coloured broth, in which soggly hung half-suspended slabs of raw potato . . . " (Enor.Room, p. 94) and the men live in the midst of filth and excrement, their every act tightly regimented to allow no possibility of individual action. Any sign of 'insubordination' results in the ultimate degradation of cabinot or solitary confinement, which again serves only to make heroes of those confined in this way.

Nevertheless, the men and women in the prison, subjected as they are to every conceivable form of will-crushing punishment, represent but one aspect of the unworld's activities. cummings mentions that in theory anyone who defies the unworld in any way is a potential prisoner:

For who was eligible to La Ferté? Anyone whom the police could find in the lovely country of France (a) who was not guilty of treason, (b) who could not prove that he was not guilty of treason. By treason I refer to any little annoying habits of independent thought or action
(Enor. Room, p. 115)

For that matter, cummings compares the situation with conditions in the United States, remarking that an American

institution like Leavenworth is essentially the result of a similar unworld existing in America. Another parallel with the U.S.A. is given in the case of the 'Machine-Fixer', the universality of whose condition is seen in cummings' remark that he "might have been a Polak or an Idol or an Esquimo so far as his nationality affected his soul. By and large that was the trouble -- the Machine-Fixer had a soul." (Enor. Room, p. 137).

cummings mentions the similarity between the 'Machine-Fixer's' plight and that of many a man "at the hands of the great and good American government." (Enor. Room, p. 139). The existence of the unworld is not restricted to France; all 'great and good' nations demand "of their respective peoples the exact antithesis to thinking; said antithesis being vulgarly called Belief." (Enor. Room, p. 139). Any manifestation of true thought is met with the stifling forces of the unworld, no matter where it may occur. Many of the prisoners are not French; M. Auguste is arrested presumably for being Russian, the 'Schoolmaster' for spreading truth: "Did he, [the 'Schoolmaster'] by any chance, tell the children that there are such monstrous things as peace and goodwill. . . a corrupter of youth, no doubt." . . . " (Enor. Room, p. 119). In the unworld's terms, of course, he is in fact 'corrupting' youth by revealing the existence of love. The 'Schoolmaster's' case is similar to that of the others; none are criminals in

the true sense of the word, and their imprisonment only serves as further evidence of the perverted values in the unworld.

Nor are the women exempt from the general evil. In the Directeur's eyes the women are worthless whores; cummings' subsequent description of them more than negates his opinion. The putains are spoken of as 'individuals' and indeed they are. Celina Tek exudes life and vitality in contrast with the decay of the prison. "Her firm girl's body emanated a supreme vitality." (Enor. Room, p. 161). Her voice is rich, her face full of youth and her body "absolutely and fearlessly alive." (Enor. Room, p. 161). Naturally the unworld of death attempts to destroy this vitality, which spells guilt in the eyes of the French Government.⁶ Similar to her is Lena who represents to cummings, "Energy rather than vitality." (Enor. Room, p.162).

On the other hand cummings observes Lily, the German who appeared to him unbelievably old despite the fact that she was eighteen. In her we see the physical breakdown brought about by the conditions of her imprisonment; her flesh is green and putrescent, her body consumptive, her hands 'bluish' and dead. Renée also has been broken by the unworld: her "exact movements were the movements of a mechanism. . . . Renée was in fact dead." (Enor. Room, p. 163). Yet cummings

⁶ The Government refers to her as 'incorrigible'.

sees despite the picture of wasted humanity before him the fact that "there may be something stylish about death" (Enor. Room, p. 163).

Through the women cummings sees a dignity in resistance to the unworld. Lena, for instance, is confined to cabinot for sixteen days. cummings notes "the indestructible bravado of her gait and carriage. . . . [along with] the increasing pallor of her flesh." . . . " (Enor. Room, p. 167). This is reminiscent of the time when cummings observed the writing on the cell wall. Again cummings leaves the situation ambiguous by showing her dignity and decay simultaneously. A sense of futility further suggests that one can never establish true values without having to defend them constantly against the forces of the unworld.

The Enormous Room not only exposes the false values of the military machine but also shows the struggle between the false values and the true ones held by the imprisoned individuals. cummings encounters four major individuals whose respective stories represent differing degrees of oppression by the unworld. The first of these is the "Wanderer", whose wife and child, rather than starve, have come to La Ferté to stay. The "Wanderer" and his son display a genuine love which alone has meaning and is contrasted with the mechanical stupidity of the planton who threatens to shoot the child when he climbs a tree, on the grounds that he might try to escape.

The child's world is one of joy and song, full of the love of life peculiar to children; his presence brings the 'Wanderer' some semblance of happiness. As cummings says, "I think The Wanderer, with his wife and children, whom he loved as never have I seen a man love anything in this world, was partly happy." . . . (Enor. Room, p. 225). Naturally such a happy state the unworld cannot allow to continue. The 'Wanderer' is found 'guilty' of being a human being:

Le gouvernement francais decided in its infinite but unskilful wisdom that The Wanderer, being an inexpressibly bad man (guilty of who knows what gentleness, strength and beauty) should suffer as much as he was capable of suffering. (Enor. Room, p. 227)

Accordingly, his wife and children are taken from him, ostensibly on the grounds that he is not the legitimate father. In this cummings shows the depths of cruelty to which the unworld will go to achieve its aims. He points out that the government can actually justify its action with the excuse that the 'Wanderer' is not living within the legal confines of marriage, and is thus evil and immoral. cummings' sarcasm parodies the self-righteous indignation felt by the "utterly and incomparably moral French Government." . . . (Enor. Room, p. 228). They salve their consciences and protect their corrupt system by rationalizing that they have a duty to punish the 'sinner' concerned, and leap into the breach with

inquisitorial zeal. The real basis for their action is, of course, a savage desire to crush out any signs of humanity within the prison. In its sophistication it is more than mere brute cruelty. cummings mentions that if "ever I can create by some occult process of imagining a deed so perfectly cruel. . . I shall consider myself a genius."

(Enor. Room, p. 228). It is perfectly cruel because it is entirely rational and inhuman; since it can be justified by reference to 'law' (in itself a perverted system of regulations) it cannot be attacked. The 'conscience' of the unworld, through its ability to rationalize its cruelty, is clean.

It will be noted that there is no sign that the 'Wanderer' is able to withstand the forces of the unworld. He cries bitterly when he leaves his wife, and cummings remarks that when he left, "with him disappeared unspeakable sunlight, and the dark, keen, bright strength of the earth." (Enor. Room, p. 230). There is no evidence in his case of any hope for the future.

The second major figure representing true individuality in the Enormous Room is called Zulu. To cummings this man symbolized true being in its most basic form. As he says, "There are certain things in which one is unable to believe for the simple reason that he never ceases to feel them." (Enor. Room, p. 231). Feeling, or pure response to life, is a basic part of the true individual because without it he is

at the mercy of false values of the unworld. As Friedman says, the "individual, for Cummings, is an apotheosis, a revelation of the organic miracle of life, a vision of nature in man which is salvation for the beholder, redeeming him from the death of the stereotype into the life of the actual and transcendent world."⁷ The individual's vital involvement with the eternal qualities alone meaningful in life is that which separates him from the average sub-human being who is assuredly lost.

The Zulu personifies such a man, so much so that cummings can only describe him in terms of a verb, that is, pure being: "The Zulu, then, I must perforce call an IS." (Enor. Room, p. 231). His relationship with true values is so direct that in describing him cummings cannot separate one from the other.

As a result he has little corresponding contact with the everyday world. He wears no socks, barely speaks, and appears oblivious of all that is going on, observing his surroundings with an expressionless face. Yet as a result of his involvement with transcendental truth he can communicate perfectly. cummings remarks:

I have never in my life so perfectly understood (even to the most exquisite nuances) whatever idea another human being desired at any moment to communicate to me, as I have in the case of Zulu.
(Enor. Room, p. 238)

⁷ Norman Friedman, e.e. cummings--The Growth of a Writer (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966), p. 29.

Naturally, there is no real reason for the Zulu's imprisonment. He has been taken to La Ferté for no reason at all and during his journey is exposed to the unfeeling cruelty of the guards, who refuse to remove his handcuffs. Every attempt to strip him of his human dignity is employed; they "slept sitting up or falling over one another. They urinated and defecated with the handcuffs on, all of them hitched together." (Enor. Room, p. 240).

The Zulu exhibits true humanity, as expressed through his generosity with food. In addition he appears to possess a type of magic, for he produces money apparently from nowhere. On the other hand he is spoken of repeatedly as having a "face perfectly at once fluent and angular expressionless and sensitive." (Enor. Room, p. 251). This mixture of opposites implies that he is to a large degree unknowable to others. cummings himself remarks that although he could tell when Zulu was hurt, there were things "which in order entirely to suffer he kept carefully and thoroughly ensconced behind his rigid and mobile eyes." (Enor. Room, p. 251).

In other words, there are certain aspects of suffering which the individual is unable to communicate; others are unable to understand and sympathize with his plight. A man whose sufferings are of this nature is thereby isolated from his fellows.

In *Surplice*, the third major figure, cummings views isolation and its results in greater depth and intensity.

Thus Surplice is initially described in revolting circumstances; he is first seen picking "chewed cigarette-ends from the spitty floor" (Enor. Room, p. 256) or heard retching in the night. For no apparent reason other than his meekness, Surplice brings out the worst in the prisoners, and thereby serves an important function. He is their punching-bag, the means whereby the other prisoners manifest their own cruelty and bestiality; through this cummings shows inhumanity on both sides of the prison.

Surplice represents a man whose naturally good qualities go unnoticed. He cleans up after the others and expects no reward. He possesses a proud and noble face and displays a total lack of spite when seen sharing the good news of his fellow prisoners. He is one of the few people in prison who has retained a true religious integrity; he goes to Mass for its own sake, rather than to look at the girls. "Surplice goes in order to be surprised, surprised by the amazing gentleness and delicacy of God. . ." (Enor. Room, p. 257) in Whom he still believes.

Like Zulu, he is essentially ignorant of the unworld's existence. Significantly he "does not know that there is a war." (Enor. Room, p. 257). Yet when told of the events of the world he is immensely surprised and pleased; his reactions are those of one who possesses a child-like thrill of life. As a child he feels pleasure "upon being informed that people

are killing people for nobody knows what reason" (Enor. Room, p.257), which suggests an obliviousness to the evil of the unworld. However, cummings speaks favourably of him, and in general he appears as a child-figure who is closest to reality through virtue of his state of innocence.

Surplice's passive and Christ-like acceptance of his treatment compared with the brutality of his fellows is similar to the numerous other scenes where humanity is bullied by the insensitive members of the unworld. Now the persecuted have become the persecutors; the victims of the unworld have themselves become transformed into its representatives.

That Surplice's state of being is a negative one becomes evident when cummings mentions his attempt to create some semblance of individuality through a willing acceptance of the role of fool, which "constituted or at least implied a recognition of his existence. To be made a fool of was, to this otherwise completely neglected individual, a mark of distinction. . ." (Enor. Room, p. 262). He plays the part of a fool and plays it well, feigning anger when he is the butt of a joke and secretly enjoying his 'fame'. Even cummings is taken in by this role to some degree, because he expresses surprise when it is learned that Surplice has an aesthetic sense. During the scene when he plays the harmonica it becomes evident that Surplice is indeed a man in direct communion with true value.

Immediately after this manifestation of spiritual values the unworld diabolically enters, declaring that Surplice has been found guilty of 'humanity' and must be sent away for the duration of the war. At this point, cummings gives him a true personality by ~~treating~~ treating him like a human being. He has demonstrated an emergence of a true self during his stay at La Ferté which culminated with his playing of the harmonica. cummings concludes by assuring the reader of Surplice's divine nature: he is 'guilty' for having made the people laugh and dance, for having shown them the true joy of life as opposed to the everyday world of war, hypocrisy and cruelty.

The fourth major character cummings encounters is Jean Le Negre. Like Surplice he too resembles to some degree a child. However, whereas Surplice was intuitively aware of the spiritual values in life, Jean accentuates the sheer joy of being alive. He is first heard laughing, and his laugh is described as "the inimitable, unmistakable divine laugh of a negro." (Enor. Room, p. 269).

As would be expected, Jean has little use for fact and his stories are complete fabrications; his world is one vast joke. As his entire being is basically apart from that of the other prisoners he is treated in the same manner as was Surplice; the prisoners become the persecutors and torment him when his girl Lulu leaves. In anger he lashes

out at one of his tormentors and incurs the wrath of the prisoners. His spirit is broken when he feels that he has done wrong, and he ~~submits~~ willingly to punishment. Both sides, guards and prisoners alike, combine to force Jean into a submission of his will. Overcome by the feeling of guilt that the unworld has imposed upon him, he assumes the role of servant in an attempt to punish himself.

Jean recovers his 'stolen' individuality by suddenly stealing a towel and thereby defying the forces of the unworld by playing a joke on them. When the towel is found, "Jean laughed--the utter laughter of old days. . . ." (Enor. Room, p. 292) . He has successfully regained his sense of the joy of life through this seemingly petty act of defiance, but ~~cummings~~ notes that it "was that the incident had absolutely removed that inhibition which. . . had held the child, which was Jean's soul and destiny, prisoner." (Enor. Room, p. 292). ~~cummings~~ sees that Jean, like Surplice, had captured in his very being this essential part of the real world to which the unworld is opposed.

The ending of the novel, ~~cummings~~ rightly assures us, is by no means optimistic, despite his constant allusions to the luck he had in being sent to La Ferté. He says, in trying to justify this 'luck' to the reader, that here, at least, he had experienced human trust and companionship, more so than ever at home:

Had I, at this moment and in the city of New York, the complete confidence of one-twentieth as many human beings I should not be so inclined to consider the Great American Public as the most aesthetically incapable organization ever created for the purpose of perpetuating defunct ideals and ideas.
(Enor. Room, p.307)

In other words, the U.S.A. is merely another branch of the unworld, its people similarly filled with false values. cummings adds ironically that in "the course of the next ten thousand years it may be possible to find Delectable Mountains without going to prison. . . ." (Enor. Room, p. 307). He sarcastically suggests that even if ten thousand years should elapse the chances of true values gaining ground in the unworld is only a remote possibility.

Later cummings makes it clear that

to leave La Misère with the knowledge. . .that some of the finest people in the world are doomed to remain prisoners thereof for no one knows how long. . . cannot by any stretch of the imagination be conceived as construing a Happy Ending to a great and personal adventure.
(Enor. Room, pp. 313-14)

It is important to combine this statement with the previous indications that the unworld was ubiquitous. There is no real escape from the ever-present unworld and

⁸The term 'Delectable Mountains' is one of many allusions to Pilgrim's Progress throughout the novel. In that work, the 'Delectable Mountains' provided Christian's first glimpse of the 'Celestial City' of God. cummings, of course, refers to the four major characters in The Enormous Room as 'Delectable Mountains' because they, too, enable him to see true values in contrast with the unworld which surrounds him.

the soul-stifling forces; cummings himself has been separated from his friend B., and no mention is made of the possibility of reunion. When he leaves La Ferté he emphasizes that he is not really escaping but merely returning to the unworld. For instance, while in prison the Directeur of the Enormous Room was described as "a Satan whose word is dreadful not because it is painstakingly unjust but because it is incomprehensibly omnipotent." (Enor. Room, pp. 147-148). The Directeur's cruelty was only exceeded by his hypocrisy. However, just before cummings leaves, the Directeur speaks to him in a voice "so subdued, so constrained, so mild, so altogether ingratiating, that I could not imagine to whom it belonged." (Enor. Room, p. 324). cummings has in fact returned to the unworld, where evil is seen as good, and men like the Directeur become 'human' beings.

Upon reaching the outside world his first impression is one of being a sardine, a non-human in the midst of others. "We are wedged in and on and over and under each other. Sardines . . . I, sardine, look at three sardines, at three million sardines, at a carful of sardines." (Enor. Room, p. 328). Later in Paris he says: "Every one hurried. Every one hard, Every one cold. Every one huddling. Every one alive; alive; alive." (Enor. Room, p. 330). The repetition of the word 'alive' renders it as meaningless as are the lives of the

de-personalized people he sees about him. His first reflection of New York is: "My God, what an ugly island. Hope we don't stay here long." (Enor. Room, p. 331).

From his experience in France cummings can now see an equal unworld in the U.S.A. As Baum points out, the unworld now "widens, contains the world, its sufferings, injustices, unsuspected beauties."⁹ He comes to see that the unworld is not restricted to France but exists everywhere.

⁹Paul Rosenfeld, "The Enormous Cummings," (E.E. Cummings and the Critics, ed. S.V. Baum; East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1962), p. 74.

CHAPTER III

THE UNWORLD AS AN ENTIRE WORLD: EIMI

cummings' second prose work, Eimi, examines the unworld's threat to the individual more extensively. Here the unworld is an entire country rather than a single prison. The "U.S.S.R. was the Enormous Room on so monstrously enlarged a scale that escape from it was unthinkable. No longer was it a room: it was a world."¹⁰

Here cummings is more concerned with the system itself than with those who act in its behalf. Friedman points out that Eimi is "based lightly on the structure of The Divine Comedy, as embodying a similar archetype of death and rebirth."¹¹ Consequently, one would expect to find a progression throughout the book from a negative to a positive attitude on the author's part. Yet cummings' optimism in Eimi is countered by a pessimistic awareness of the unworld's power to stifle the development of the individual. For example, behind the "outward movement of grateful escape as Cummings leaves Russia"¹² there is evidence similar to that found in The Enormous Room which suggests he is not actually leaving anything.

In Eimi the unworld is likened to a Hell complete with Satan in the form of Lenin. The book opens with the word 'shut' showing that cummings is being closed off from true values

¹⁰ George Haines, Sewanee Review, p. 210.

¹¹ Friedman, Growth of a Writer, p. 110.

¹² Ibid., p. 111.

by the unworld of Russia: he is confined to a world of "corpses collectively illatease"¹³ who, having lost their souls, cannot converse.

Russia initially appears to him as "a world of Was-- everything shoddy; everywhere dirt and cracked fingernails (Eimi, p. 8). The people appear "hideously lonesome in hideousness, in rundownness, in outatheelness, in neglectedness, in strictly omnipotent whichnessandwhatness" (Eimi, p. 10). This image suggests a loss of vitality through the rejection of life's meaningful values. As a result the Russians appear mechanical, and cummings is surprised to see a group of Russian women eating which "actually seems almost more than mechanically animated." (Eimi, p. 12). For the most part he views the Russians as phantoms or corpses, de-personalized in every respect.

Basic to the unworld is its desire to classify man and negate the only distinctive part of him. "The theme of the book is the unreality of any mechanized life, of life under a 'shrill collective myth', and the artist's testimony against it."¹⁴ An example of this testimony occurs when cummings is asked why he wishes to go to Russia; attempts are made constantly to limit him to a category, be it that of

¹³e. e. cummings, Eimi, (New York: Grove Press Inc. 1933), p. 3. All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁴Haines, Sewanee Review, p. 211

writer or painter. cummings wishes to go as himself and he is advised against it. The unworld is distrustful of any individual's presence as it would be a threat to its stability.

Although cummings maintains his individuality during his visit, it is perfectly clear that others do not. Virgil, his original guide, has been taken in completely by the Russian system and his values are accordingly distorted. For example, he remarks that "even my worst enemies can't accuse me of being religious. . . ." (Eimi, p. 19). Elsewhere he expresses a belief in the meaningless ideal: "after all, the ideal is what counts, isn't it. . . ." (Eimi, p. 23) to which cummings replies that it is rather life in itself that counts, that is, direct involvement with actual life as opposed to the abstractions of the unworld. Virgil believes that the people "for the first time in human history [are] free," (Eimi, p. 23), where actually the Secret Police are ubiquitous, propaganda abounds, and restrictions on the individual are evident everywhere.

This perversion of values is difficult for cummings to comprehend, and throughout the book there are references to the unreality of what he sees. Women, for the most part, are referred to as 'nonmen'; the streets are filled with amorphous beings. The bank is called "a singularly unbanklike bank", the youths "youthless". (Eimi, p. 21). The unworld of Russia has replaced God and the Church with Lenin

and his tomb. Yet the substitute religion is based on hate and fear rather than on love. He describes Lenin's mausoleum initially as:

a rigid pyramidal composition of blocks;
 an impurely mathematical game of edges: not
 quite cruelly a cubic cerebation. . .
 perhaps the architectural equivalent for
 "boo! -- I scared you that time!"
 (Eimi, p. 25)

One form of propaganda is observed in the numerous plays cummings attends, which are without exception perversions of true art. The plays are childish and of generally poor quality. More interesting to cummings is the atmosphere of restriction he notices in the audience; "everywhere a mysterious sense of behaving, of housebrokenness, of watch-your-stepism," (Eimi, p. 32) that surrounds the spectators who have lost their souls and the individuality that goes with them.

In another instance cummings enters expecting the "sense of pretend, / and the / promising nonsense of actuality" (Eimi, p. 58) typical of the theatre; initially he sees some genuine and rather artistic techniques. However, the art soon becomes lost in a morass of propaganda: "Dogma--the destroyer of happens, the killer of occurs, the ugliness of premeditatedly--here stalks And How." (Eimi, p. 58).

The reason for the destruction of true art is pointed out to cummings in conversation. He is told that if a poet should disagree with the State's brand of public sentiment,

he is automatically an enemy; even if he feels neutral about a particular issue he is considered an enemy by the unworld. The State is intended to control human emotions in all their aspects. Ironically, the very concept of a 'hero' is an implication of an individual self and therefore a violation of the tenets of the unworld.

Loss of individuality is seen even in the streetcar, where the freedom of choice as to which end to leave by is regulated by law. The horror of this somewhat humorous scene is perceived when one considers that "a tyranny is more dangerous in the long run with the acquiescence of its victims."¹⁵ Whereas cummings observed the unworld in France as imposing its system on individuals to whom such false values were repugnant, in Eimi the mass of citizens and foreigners alike are unaware of its evil. Virgil, cummings' first guide in Russia, is completely enslaved and praises its 'virtues' while rationalizing its faults on the grounds that Russia "is bound to make mistakes like anything else; but the mistakes are being rectified as quickly as possible." (Eimi, p. 23). As a result of his blindness, he firmly believes the

¹⁵ Barbara Watson, "The Dangers of Security: E.E. Cummings' Revolt Against the Future," Kenyon Review, XVIII, 4 (Autumn 1956), p. 533.

Secret Police to be a benevolent organization when in fact it is a ruthless instrument of suppression and fear. During a conversation his fear becomes evident when an observer appears to be listening to their discussion of the merits of Marxism, 'questionable' in a society that attempts to destroy true thought. Yet he refuses at the same time to admit that the Communist Revolution is "a joyless experiment in force and fear. . . ." (Eimi, p.49) . cummings sees that "anyone who pretends to know what's good for somebody else might as well admit the immaculate atonement's vicarious conception. . . ." (Eimi, p. 52) and can see the hypocrisy behind the denial of religion on one hand and the adoption of an equally rigid political dogma on the other. He is aware that when the ideal has been abstracted from the real world it ceases to have any actual meaning. Yet when he states his belief in truth, he is treated contemptuously by those who refuse to see behind the unworld. The reporter he meets at a party believes everything in Russia to be wonderful and thinks cummings naive and "just like A Little Boy. . . ." (Eimi, p.212); others think of him merely as blind to the wonderful reality of communism.

The supposed idealism of the Russians is exposed as sham in the many examples cummings sees of hypocrisy in the

country. For example, the Russians make numerous attempts to emulate the capitalism they profess to hate. The best hotel patterns itself on the American fashion and is complete even to the American toilet paper present in the rooms. More hypocrisy is seen in Virgil's essentially capitalistic nature when he buys 'ikons' in the hope of their going up in value and rationalizes that he is doing the government a favour; "I'm anxious to make a good investment, the government of workers and peasants needs my dollars, I need their treasures, each of us can do the other a good. . . ." (Eimi, p. 37).

Nor is Virgil alone in his capitalistic spirit. Later in a taxi before tipping, cummings asks if five roubles is too many (the bill was for three); ". . . five is not too many(gradually the taker and very sullenly answers) " (Eimi, p. 123). Tipping is supposedly anathema in a classless utopia of equal brothers, but tips are accepted nevertheless. Elsewhere it is shown that classes indeed exist in Russia. cummings is told that there are possibly five classes divided into various forms of workers and intellectuals. Again, though there is supposedly no crime in the country, cummings attends a party with bootleg liquor and visits a jail similar to the Enormous Room: he remarks upon entering the prison, "Feeling, remembering La Ferté, now comrade myself descends the steps. . . ." (Eimi, p. 152). Many Russians, either

consciously or not, have in fact rebelled against the ideology that has been imposed upon them.

The root of the problem is a denial of love on the part of the unworld. cummings describes the State as a "running amok streetsprinkler, a normally benevolent mechanism. . . " (Eimi, p. 107) which has gone wild and has resulted in catastrophe. By reducing the problem of human life to principles and rendering these principles ultimate, Russia has defeated its own originally benevolent purpose. In conversation cummings is told of an order given by Lenin to the effect that if demanded by the Revolution the Communists would destroy a thousand cathedrals despite their great beauty. This is a typical example of a system where meaningful realities such as beauty and love have been replaced by a meaningless ideal.

Since cummings stands for the glorification of the self, it is natural that he be essentially isolated from real communication with the Russians. He remarks that if

the (somewhere invisible) millions upon
literally millions of somebodies. . . only
could freely speak! If at least this
(perhaps this most magical) 1/6 of a wordless
world somehow were not afraid; only did not
remember wars; impossibly could forget
everything and opening its spirit pour a true
structure into space and into time!
(Eimi, p. 160)

The Russians have the potential necessary to escape the unworld; unfortunately its hold on their souls is too strong to permit any manifestation of true personalities.

Naturally there are some individuals who dare to defy the system; a scientist who failed to show the proper enthusiasm for woodcutting duties is pronounced guilty of 'audacity', a crime which cost him "all but one microscope and all his specimens and his laboratory (not to mention almost his residence, and his past present future. . . ." (Eimi, P. 98). Yet when cummings visits the man he is aware of a dignity which has not been crushed; upon meeting him cummings is aware of "a man, a human being, natural and unafraid." (Eimi, p. 169). He is one who "creates always a universal dignity by always the very modesty of his aliveness." (Eimi, p. 169). He is seen as surrounded by flowers which to him have not died, and he has an engraving of a flower in his house as well as buttercups in a vase.

In another visit to the scientist's home, cummings sees that values can be maintained despite the restrictions imposed upon them. An excellent dinner is prepared "via single round gas burner almost big enough to unchill 1 thimbleful of milk." (Eimi, p. 179). The scientist's son, despite his serious eyes, "dances for joy silently." (Eimi, p. 180). This ambiguity within the scene is interesting for it suggests cummings' pessimistic position. For example, the bells outside, traditional symbols of joy, do not ring. In the case of the scientist himself, both his social ruin and his dignity must be taken into consideration. Although he is

left with his life he is still imprisoned in a way similar to that of the group that was seen in The Enormous Room, where cummings' comments on their position were far from optimistic.

For cummings, a circus represented pure spontaneity and vitality, and manifested a joy of life that contrasted bitterly with the bleak everyday world. In his play Him the hero Him, disillusioned with life in general, says "Damn everything but the circus!"¹⁶ For Him the unworld has destroyed values to the extent that only in the joy of a circus are true values seen.

However, in Russia the unworld has penetrated and destroyed this sense of joy. For that matter, cummings sees a parallel between the Russian State and the particular circus he attends. The circus building, like Russia itself, is a "tired structure. . . ungay, colourless, not from whose noiseless portals seeps any least thrill of magic. . . " (Eimi, p. 170). Here the circus has become "an altruistic game of human prisoners, uncircus of noncreatures, calling itself 'Russia'!" (Eimi, p. 171) What was originally a source of joy has been distorted into one of cheap propaganda; even the M.C. is a perverted imitation of joy and spontaneity, cummings remarking that he looked like a "depraved Buffalo

¹⁶e.e. cummings, Him (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1955), p. 12.

Bill." (Eimi, p. 172). The animal act again calls to mind the parallel situation in the State itself; drugged and starved animals "lifelessly now cringe now stutter through and most infantile and generally excruciating. . . tricklesses." (Eimi, p. 172). The animals are trained to do propagandistic tricks; a collie makes patriotic sentences with wooden words. In this the animals not only represent the Russians themselves, stumbling through the prescribed idealism of the unworld, but also provide another example of the extent to which the unworld is capable of going in the furtherance of its gigantic lie.

One central aspect of this lie emerges in conversation with the 'Turk' who originally tried to believe in the Russian system but became aware of the truth. He expresses a view similar to that of cummings in the words:

I cry shame on capitalism, for making a
fetish of machinery in behalf of personal
profit. I cry doubly shame on the 5 year
plan for glorifying goetting, in behalf--
if you please--of impersonal profit."
(Eimi, p. 181)

Again, a similarity between Russia and the U.S.A. is mentioned; both nations are merely manifestations of a universal evil. Friedman supports this conclusion when he says that cummings believed any "government must look at men as [de-personalized] Man, and therefore no government can save men." ¹⁷

¹⁷Friedman, Growth of a Writer, p. 112.

Another similarity between the two countries is seen when cummings compares an experience at a Russian theatre with a similar one in America. The play itself is pure drivel, except in this case even more absurd proportions are reached; the audience is required to stand up and declare their willingness to fight for Russia. cummings is reminded of a similar case in the U.S.A. where he was subjected to the same appeal to pseudo-patriotism. In America cummings did not stand up; here he does and significantly remarks that he felt "just simply ashamed, not quite like a poodle begging for a biscuit." (Eimi, p. 196). Even cummings must at times pay lip-service to the unworld, an act which further substantiates the strength of its evil.

cummings shows sympathy for those who, filled with idealistic intent, have come in ignorance of the truth to serve communism, and were ruined as a result. In exposing the miserable fates of these misled people, yet another example of the unworld's ruthlessness is seen.

There are many such examples of people who were crushed in this way. One case is that of the "little engineer (who came to Russia to build socialism)" (Eimi, p. 189) and finds that the system is not the utopia he previously conceived it to be. They keep him idle and he objects; objecting is of course a sign of individuality and therefore a crime. Consequently he is branded as a spy and denied permission to leave the country.

cummings' contempt for the man is obvious in this case but in another more pitiful instance, definite sympathy is seen for those persons honestly misled by the unworld. The Italian who came to work and was denied such a 'privilege' is an example. cummings meets him near the end of his visit to Russia. "Great by them things had he been promised; immediate work; a big salary to start with, rapid advancement." (Eimi, p. 297). The unworld has clearly capitalized on his trust, for in such trust he did as he was bid and brought no money with him, thinking he would be met on his arrival. Naturally he is not met and is forced into the role of beggar as a result. His entire future is collapsing before him due to his submission to the unworld. His pride and dignity have been taken from him, and he "says he feels somewhat as if his honour had been taken away from him but more as if he had been castrated." (Eimi, p. 297). The nickname cummings gives him is 'Stunned' and its propriety is justified by the subsequent picture of a man in a state of quandary, the victim of forces which he cannot understand. In this example, it is seen how the unworld uses the sincerity of an individual in order to destroy him. His honour has been taken away from him, he has been made a fool of by the Russians, and he is left in a position of uselessness and indecision.

The Italian's situation parallels that of the scientist. He maintains his dignity up to a point by refusing to enter the dining room unless invited by the manager to do so, as he is penniless. The manager refuses and the Italian breaks down. cummings offers to lend him money, but he again refuses; he says there "is one source and one source only from which I will accept money; that source is the soviet government." (Eimi, p. 332). Significantly, he later does give in and although he is given some encouraging news from the Italian consul, it does not detract from his earlier humiliation and the fact that his future depends entirely on the unworld.

Another example of the crushed individual is the mother of cummings' Russian teacher, whom he has promised to visit. As he approaches her house, he enters a scene of darkness and gloom; she is referred to contemptuously by the landlady as 'the cripple' and they climb "through blind unlight stairless unstair" (Eimi, p. 304) to see her.

cummings sees her initially as an extremely lonely person; she has surrounded herself with trinkets in the hope of stifling her isolation in vain. She appears as merely a "head: not a face; not, merely, a look." (Eimi, p. 304). He sees that she was not made for the unworld and in revenge it has broken her. He looks upon her figure: "the once how

(a now dwindling) tall how erectly (a crookedly now) body marvellously whom this Head magically once upon a time inhabited." (Eimi, p. 305).

Suffering is all that has been left to her by the unworld: "To suffer (I believe) is what Head can only and must do." (Eimi, p. 306). The separation of a human relationship is seen in cummings' remark that she "somewhere does-not-have 2 daughters." (Eimi, p. 306). All she has left of her loved ones is photographs of them, and it is clear that they are a poor substitute. As in the case of the 'Wanderer', there is no sign of hope given by cummings, and it must be concluded that her destruction has been complete.

cummings arrives at the centre of 'Hell' during his visit to Lenin's tomb which represents the ultimate in the de-personalization of man. In the waiting-line he is only aware of the indistinct numbers of conforming Russians whose characteristics are not those of individuals but of a massive thing in itself, and are described in these terms; their faces mix together and cummings receives an impression of an infinite number of de-humanized automatons moving robot-like to Lenin's Shrine. cummings sees that this grave is actually their own: "All toward the grave of himself of herself (all toward the grave of themselves) all toward the grave of Self." (Eimi, p. 241). In their acceptance of the

unworld they have indeed sacrificed or killed their Selves, that part of the individual which the unworld desires to possess. They do not smile because such emotion would signify a vestige of personality left to them by the unworld, and cummings fails to see that anything in fact has been retained. The victory of unworld is here complete.

The influence of this on cummings' is seen in the lines "Obediently and now we form a dumb me-sandwich." (Eimi, p. 242). He is forced into a type of conformity despite his personal awareness of Self. In addition he is regimented by the soldier at guard who "yanks bearded to the inside pushes to the outside me." (Eimi, p. 243). He temporarily loses his freedom of will, for he remarks: "Wheel we. Now I am somehow (for a moment) on the inside" (Eimi, p. 243) of the line; he is seen being pushed by a force other than his own.

As a result, cummings' later claim that he was unimpressed by Lenin's grave must be interpreted not in the sense that he was unaffected by his experience, but that he failed to see any true greatness in Lenin. His feeling that Lenin is a "silly unking of Un-, --/a/ how trivial idol throned in stink" (Eimi, pp. 243-244) appears rather as a personal reassurance on his part that he had not been affected. The horror he himself has seen up to this point would suggest that it was folly to label the original cause of it as 'silly' or 'trivial'.

Threat to cummings is also seen in the difficulty he has in leaving the country; it is as if an extra effort had to be made to break loose from the hold the unworld has on him. When he finally leaves, a number of contrasting positive and negative images surround his departure. Superficially the situation would appear to be changing for the better; he meets his second mentor, a vast improvement over the first, and shortly after sees a group of "boys not men of girls not nonmen" (Eimi, p. 294) who actually appear to be enjoying life.

The 'NOO INGLUNDUR', cummings' second mentor, is a man who has refused to accept the lie of Russia and as a result has maintained a distinct personality. He refuses to be deluded by the superficial appeal of Russia and can see the unworld as it actually is. Meeting this man results in cummings feeling somewhat more at ease; the world begins to appear brighter after having come in contact with another human being.

However, even the 'NOO INGLUNDUR' shows signs of being influenced by the unworld. When cummings remarks that he had been told by his mentor of maids in hotels spying on guests, 'NOO' replies "'eye didn say any such' quickly 'thing!' (He had. And more)." (Eimi, p. 309). Even 'NOO' has been influenced to some degree; his triumph over the unworld is not complete.

The atmosphere of love in the mentor's house provides some defence against the unworld's force: mentor's son would not join the Communist Party because he thought too much of his parents. Yet love can be taken from the individual, as is seen in cummings' visit to his Russian teacher's mother. In that instance love is denied outright, and cummings' conversation with the tourist establishes that even children are denied love. He is told that "the state begins pumping propaganda into that baby like mad and the pumping never for one instant ceases. . . ." (Eimi, p.316).

Later cummings shows that influence of this nature exists in one form or another virtually everywhere; the danger is not limited to geographical boundaries, for as the Italian explains, fascism is also sustained by "taking them when they're young and moulding their youngness." (Eimi, p.320). In the poetry cummings portrays a similar perverting of the child's world in America.

Granting the universality of the unworld, it is not surprising that cummings asks Dante, who also journeyed through Hell, to 'aid' him by helping him escape. He sees in the mud-bath the grotesque distortions the people have become as a result of the unworld, "not creatures not things but grotesquely how hideous entities." (Eimi, p.329), their activities surrounded by a barbed-wire fence.

Although cummings is naturally pleased with the prospect of leaving Russia, there is evidence that he is not really leaving the unworld or its influence. For example, the boat he sails on, a "(Dirty little) was of a boat" (Eimi, p. 348) he believes to be French as he had mistakenly translated it the 'French Marine'. He learns soon after that its name is 'Franz Mering' called after "'one. . . of the great. . . est socialists who ever. . . lived'." (Eimi, p. 355). The unworld, in extending its forces to other places of the world, is by no means restricted to Russia.

Typical of Russian inefficiency, the boat is delayed an intolerable length of time before it sails; Russia is reluctant to part with an individual who might prove destructive to the system through his exposure of it. In addition to restraining the individual, Russia sends out unconscious emissaries in the form of the two Jews cummings meets who are completely oblivious to the actual horror of the unworld: they remark that "its all so perfectly miraculous everyone working all together without any distinction of any kind for the good of all." (Eimi, p. 351).

For every person who sees the ~~horror~~ of the unworld there are many who are unwittingly made its disciples. These people will carry the lies throughout the world and infect others with the meaningless ideals of the unworld. In the case of the Jews on the boat it is clear that they will

continue to preach the 'wonders' of communism to others who, unlike cummings, may be unaware of the truth and thus unable to see its horror. In a sense the Jews suggest cummings' inability to communicate the truth he has discovered, for in conversation with them he is rendered almost speechless by their endless babbling.

cummings' inability to communicate his awareness of the unworld is also seen on the train, when he looks about him at the nonmen and nonwomen. He remarks, "To those eyes I do not exist-- I never shall exist, I never have existed. Those eyes, which do not see the absurd fountain, cannot have not and shall never see my dream." (Eimi, p. 421).

Although cummings expresses joy when he finally reaches the outside world in phrases like "O, now everything begins everything expands increasing now even the air celebrates," (Eimi, p.376), he is subjected to the same police-state passport examination that he encountered in Russia. His initial impression of the outside world is far from optimistic; he sees in addition to the 'aliveness' "a perishing world. . . a world of disillusion and illusion." (Eimi, p. 377).

Danger is visible as soon as he enters Turkey; an attempt is made to steal his baggage and perhaps kill him. His Turkish friend's brother reminds him that "you're in Turkey now, understand? people steal and kill! you're not in Europe, understand? anything goes here!" (Eimi, p. 380).

The atmosphere of lawless disorder suggests that he has not escaped the unworld at all; physical danger exists in

Turkey as did spiritual danger in Russia.

Conditions are in many ways the same in both countries. Loss of freedom is seen in the case of the Turk "who went to Russia 'en cachet' and who was located and who was brought back." (Eimi, p. 381). The brother of cummings' friend is horribly nervous at the customs-house, and a great deal is made over the possession of trivial articles in the brother's trunk.

cummings' description of his stay in Turkey is a curious mixture of realism and naiveté on his part. Realism is seen in his comments on the American family he visits in Turkey. Earlier he had received a letter of introduction to them from his second mentor.

In general his description of them is ironic; their ingenuousness is difficult to accept. For example, the son speaks in the language one would expect of the stereotyped American boy. cummings parodies his speech in the words "the darn sail promptly ripped (and presently 1 goshdarn carpin sunders." (Eimi, p. 392).

He is equally contemptuous of their house, and remarks that

this prettily picturesque courtyard
and. . . this unpretty staircase even
more picturesque, spells COMFY. To
find a gosh darn comfier--outside the
(always to be expected) gosh darn U.S.A.--
were gosh darn difficult, hek; if not
impossible. (Eimi, p. 393)

His contempt is justified when it is seen that the father has submitted to the unworld and manages a tractor plant in Russia.

cummings shows that danger lurks behind the facade of innocence when he describes their dinner conversation:

Graciously & we all now sit down to a
comfy table to all do full justice to
a believe me comfy luncheon. . . .
/discussing/ from various comfy angles
comfily to our hearts' content a
singularly uncomfiness called Russia.
(Eimi, p. 393)

Their complacency is further seen when the son remarks that Russia "'was the berries'" (Eimi, p. 393). Having been treated nicely by the Russians his actual knowledge is limited, and it is implied that he did not desire to see the truth. He feels sorry for cummings' second mentor, who alone possessed an awareness of the actual conditions existing in Russia. Surrounded by a self-imposed wall of sweetness and light they remain comfortably unaware of existing conditions, nor do they wish to be informed.

Turkey itself is depicted as an equally oppressed country by the 'Dude', cummings' friend. He is told that Mustapha Kemal, the ruler, has forbidden veils and the use of the Arabic tongue among the Turks. This suggests a desire to crush individuality similar to that seen in Russia. Oppression is also evidenced in the remark

they are still very ignorant over there, they are very dirty and very uncivilized over there and still live very primitively a most miserable dirty horrible ignorant life of thieving and prayer and lice.
(Eimi, pp. 399-400)

As in Russia, their religion has been taken from them; the 'Dude' remarks that religion is "not yet everywhere dead but everywhere dying--now enters everywhere a new age, an epoch of scientific achievement, an era of progress" (Eimi, p. 400). Such a statement could as easily have been made about the unworld of Russia, and the 'Dude's' use of the word 'everywhere' should not be restricted to Turkey alone. Thus when cummings visits the museum and remarks that the rusty weapons are "negative monuments to love" (Eimi, p. 397) as they are no longer used, his statement should be taken ironically. For that matter, he adds that these ancient swords and axes are "now useless all imperfect now superceded" (Eimi, p. 397), implying that such brutal forms of suppression have merely been replaced by more deadly and sophisticated methods.

These impressions have an effect on cummings, for he 'salutes' the members of the unworld in the words "O you all unyous around me now seeming and elsewhere, and nowhere somewhere/anywhere--O all youless nonalive ungivers--wherever in hell, whenever not in hell" (Eimi, p. 413). He qualifies

by adding that he can see the horror in the entire world that arises from lack of love. Later, he supports this in the words "ah! but not all hell's Red" (Eimi, p. 413); the forces of evil are ubiquitous and not restricted to Russia. Even aboard the 'Orient Express' and presumably safe, memories of the unworld linger on; he is reminded of the human corpses of Russia, the uniforms of the Secret Police and the whores, from their equivalents which he sees while on the train.

Beside him on the train are nonmen and nonwomen, as in Russia: "To unmy right, unsheltered by a not quite ridiculous unhedge, the nonwoman shaped like a bear is wooing the nonman shaped like a seal." (Eimi, p. 420). His dream of Spring on the train is clouded by his awareness of the absence of love and beauty in the unworld. The people become ghosts, moving in a predetermined pattern and unresponsive to the true values which cummings alone sees. These people are not merely hopeless, for they are beyond hope, never having felt what hope is.

cummings ends Eimi with a jumble of his impressions given in reverse; the book ends with the word 'open' which in itself would imply a return to a world of values and truth. However, it has been shown that such is not the case, and cummings' final statement that whoever has the ability to love, create and imagine thereby opens his life to truth

is tempered accordingly.

Eimi shows that the unworld is an entire world rather than merely a branch of government; it is manifested in virtually every corner of the world from Turkey to America. Unknowing disciples spread the lie and others are duped by its superficial lure. Even cummings has had to struggle against a force that has become an active, malevolent system of great strength which poses a threat to the individual at all times and which almost invariably is successful in crushing him.

CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF THE UNWORLD AS EXPRESSED IN THE POETRY

The body of cummings' verse concerned with the unworld as a threat to true values deals with the problem from two aspects. cummings examines both the active agents of the unworld who create abstractions such as political or scientific theories in an attempt to understand and thereby control life, and the victims of such control. The rulers create abstract and meaningless principles that detract from individuality; such theories involve a collective response to life on the part of man. cummings sees such 'lords' of the unworld as both propagating false values and crushing any resistance to these meaningless standards.

Yet he is equally critical of those who submit willingly to the social patterns imposed from without. For example, the 'Cambridge ladies' who accept without limitation society's values demonstrate an evil in the world through their complacent acquiescence. They "believe in Christ and Longfellow, both dead"¹⁸ in the sense that any real value has been lost to them. Their concept of Christ is as diluted as is their appreciation of art, two aspects of truth which they prefer to ignore or adapt to meet their own shallow sensibilities.

¹⁸ e.e. cummings, Poems:- 1923-1954 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1954), p. 58, #1. Subsequent references are to this edition.

Totally unaware of the spiritual values symbolized by the moon, which 'rattles' in its frustrated inability to communicate truth, they wallow in the meaningless activities and petty problems of the false world.

Theirs is the world "of Sumner Volstead Christ and Co." (Poems, I, p. 191) which establishes a ludicrous moral code. This 'moral' code, rather than opposing vice, is a vice in itself. True humanity is lost in the pseudo-ethics of the unworld; only he who can manufacture "word by word / his own unrivalled brand of pyro/ -technic blurb" (Poems, I, p. 191) is respected. The real heroes receive artificial limbs and are quickly disposed of. Values are reversed to the point where "earth's biggest grafter. . . landed a seat in the legislat-/ure" (Poems, I, p. 192) while "an erring child of circumstance" (Poems, I, p. 192) is thrown into jail for a relatively paltry 'crime' of which, cummings suggests, he should actually not be held guilty.

Hypocrisy is seen most vividly in the politician who mouths meaningless patriotic clichés for the benefit of the voters in a way that clearly indicates his contempt for them. cummings parodies his speech in the words "'next to of course god america i / love you land of the pilgrims and so forth'" (Poems, III, p. 193). Here the politician glorifies those killed in war with the words "what could be more beaut- / iful than these heroic happy dead. . . ." (Poems, III, p. 193) His purpose is to impress others with the same

patriotism to the point where they will willingly rush out to almost certain death for the meaningless glory supposedly bestowed upon them.

cummings expresses his disgust for both politician and public alike in "the way to hump a cow" (Poems, 14, p.359). Here a politician is giving instructions on how to successfully influence the people. The cows are the people taken in (i.e., 'humped') by the politician. Friedman points out that the "poem is perhaps even more complicated by the fact that the satire hovers ambiguously between attacking the gullible electorate on the one hand, and the cynical politician who thinks they are gullible, on the other."¹⁹ The way successfully to win over the people, the speaker says, is not to be direct and truthful but through the use of euphemisms and outright lies. This, it is correctly claimed, will be successful for the public prefers meaningless rhetoric and senseless though high-sounding slogans to the truth.

It is through the propounding of false values that the public comes to elevate the frivolous and deny the meaningful. In "Buffalo Bill's / defunct" (Poems, VIII, p. 50) cummings examines the actual status of many American heroes through the stock example of Buffalo Bill Cody. David Ray points out

¹⁹Norman Friedman, e.e. cummings - The Art of his Poetry (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), p. 79.

that the poem must be read "in the context of cummings' obstinate attitude of hatred toward an American culture that invites children (and even men) to create an unworthy gallery of heroes."²⁰

Buffalo Bill in reality is remembered only for the superficial aspects of his life that have little universal meaning. He could ride, shoot and was handsome, but, it is implied, that was all. Consequently he did not deserve the hero-status that society has given him. Actually he was a 'blueeyed boy' whose life had little or no real meaning, yet he was elevated in society's eyes to the position of a god. This is seen by the single isolated word 'Jesus'. The speaker's insolent attitude suggests that 'Mr. Death' was likewise taken in by the myth surrounding Bill, and hoped to triumph by claiming him. In actual fact, the prize is small indeed; 'Mr. Death' is left only with an innocuous pretty-boy that Bill really was, rather than the pillar of strength society has pictured him to be.

The above poem is basic to a general understanding of false values in the unworld, for Buffalo Bill is merely one of many American 'gods' whose actual worth is negligible. The desire to erect a system of worthless values is examined

²⁰David Ray, "The Irony of E.E. Cummings," College English, Vol. XXIII, p. 287

more extensively in "Humanity i love you" (Poems, II, p. 151). cummings sees that mankind "would rather black the boots of / success than enquire whose soul dangles from his / watch-chain" (Poems, II, p. 151) as it would be uncomfortable to admit that people had in fact sold their souls in return for such success. Man as a part of the unworld and influenced by its lies is only concerned with outward appearances that perpetuate it; for instance, all songs "containing the words country home and / mother" (Poems, II, p. 152) are applauded without thought, for such words give the appearance of values and come to have value in themselves.

The speaker keeps listing characteristics of the unworld until he himself can no longer accept it, and he ends by hating what 'humanity' has done to man. cummings sees that as a result of this perverted process not only are false values praised but legitimate concerns are forgotten. The people remove their hats before the king and queen, bow before the "pale softish almost round/ young man" (Poems, XVI, p. 176) whose "latest Seeds / Of Evil sold 69 carloads before / publication" (Poems, XVI, p. 176), or jam traffic in order to see "the famous doctor who inserts / monkeyglands in millionaires" (Poems, XVI, p. 176), but remain unaware of the speaker who lives in a garret and eats aspirin. Alone aware of the absurdity of the public's adoration of false

heroes, he is forgotten and relegated to a position of physical sickness, poverty and hunger.

The loss of values has an effect on man's ability to love, and the humorous "she being Brand" (Poems, XIX, p. 178) compares making love to the experience of driving a new car. Marks points out that the poem "suggests a satirical attack on that particular kind of modern human sterility which cannot distinguish between humans and machines. . . ." ²¹ The responses of most people to values such as love have become as regulated and mechanical as are those of an automobile. It is to be noted that the woman &/or car of the poem submits passively to the speaker; her response is treated as merely a reflex action which implies a loss of individual will far from comical. Although the 'driver' is aware of the need to get the best response possible, a type of horror is felt at the comparison. The woman is treated solely in terms of her efficiency as a machine; there is nothing spiritual about this affair because the false emphasis on the practical and mechanical has deprived both of any sense of higher values.

This loss of value is applied to art and beauty as well. In "Memorabilia" (Poems, XXVII, p. 183) cummings depicts the masses of ignorant American tourists who yearly descend on Italy to devour its art treasures without any

²¹ Barry Marks, E.E. Cummings (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1963), p. 75.

real knowledge or appreciation of what they are seeing. Clyde Kilby mentions that the allusion to the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" "suggests the endless tramp, tramp of the army of tourists,"²² an army quite capable of destruction. For 'armour' the 'marriageable nymphs' bring "large legs rancid / voices Baedekers Mothers and kodaks" (Poems, XXVII, p. 183) rather than a genuine desire to appreciate art.

The tourists barely listen to the guide, and cummings shows their actual indifference to art by mixing together the guide's information with their meaningless babble. They actually ruin the art by their very presence and cummings wryly comments that the relationship of the two contrasts completely with the perfectly conjoined metopes and triglyphs upon which they gaze.

The religion of the unworld is one which glorifies death rather than life. In "candles and" (Poems, IV, p. 201) cummings satirizes the Church's adoration of death in the form of relics: "Here comes a glass box / which the exhumed / hand of Saint Ignatz miraculously / inhabits." (Poems, IV, p. 201). The scene is rendered ludicrous by use of the name 'Ignatz', taken from cummings' favourite comic strip 'Krazy Kat', before whose hand the masses crumble obsequiously in their worship of it.

The grovelling crowd is pictured as entirely depraved;

²²Clyde S. Kilby, "Cummings' 'Memorabilia'", Explicator, Vol. XII, No. 2 (Nov. 1953) Item 15.

they blubber and howl like demented animals which of course they are. Depravity has many manifestations, and the unworld is seen by cummings as catering to and encouraging such dehumanized responses to life. In "let's start a magazine" (Poems, 24, p. 293) cummings shows that a significant portion of the population denies the true value of literature in the words "to hell with literature / we want something redblooded." (Poems, 24, p. 293). cummings outlines a formula typical of many of today's trash magazines; it can be obscene as long as it appears clean, authentic and genuine "like a mark / in a toilet." (Poems, 24, p. 293). In short, if a semblance of authenticity can be effectively produced, the public will willingly accept it.

The speaker is seen in the last line beating the producers of trash at their own game, for the vulgar remark "squeeze your nuts and open your face" (Poems, 24, p. 293) conveys a degree of truth in itself. He tells them to open their eyes, as it were, to the real and meaningful and discard the trivia which they are about to produce.

As a threat to individual man the unworld is manifested in many diverse walks of life. In "raise the shade" (Poems, V, p. 88) cummings pictures a scene where a ruined individual ironically comments on the equally miserable fates of others. The scene is a whore speaking to a man with whom she is in bed. In a pitiful attempt to elevate

her own social status, the girl remarks: "yknow / i'm / sorry for awl the / poor girls that / gets up god/ knows when every / day of their / lives." (Poems, V, p. 88).

In a sense, of course, her pity is justified; the mass of people indeed live a life of drab drudgery. However, any possibility of her possessing real sympathy is negated by her role of 'lover'. Her very life is a travesty of human relationships; as such it is too strong to escape, and the poem ends with her mechanical and false expression of sexual pleasure. Her momentary attempt to alleviate her status has been a failure, not only through her return to the role of whore but also because of the lack of real relationship she has with the man, whose silence indicates that he is totally indifferent to her as a human being.

Ironically, the whore states her own fate at the end of the poem in the lines "you're killing me" (Poems, V, p. 88); the man is truly killing her soul through this perversion of love. The perversion of love is also seen in "twentyseven bums give a prostitute the once" (Poems, XXI, p. 115) where derelicts gaze longingly upon a whore who struts lazily by, believing herself to be superior to her admirers. Her "careless movements carefully scatter / pink propaganda of annihilation." (Poems, ~~XXI~~, p. 115). Again love is reduced to the base and solely physical; the girl is praised in terms of her physical parts alone. Yet she, a living

advertisement for vulgar love, does in fact annihilate the possibility of genuine love existing in such surroundings.

The above poems concerned themselves not only with the threat to true love, but also pictured human beings destroyed through adherence to false values. In "it really must" (Poems, XIII, p. 175) cummings views another example of essentially the same conditions. Here the speaker laments the sterility of his life. He is more than aware of his mistakes, and the poem shows the false values that were responsible for his ultimate ruin.

His mind strays from the responsibilities of keeping a family to his past; he recalls the "slim hot queens with dam next to nothing /on" (Poems, XIII, p. 175) and thereby shows himself to be in possession of a standard of values not unlike the ~~tramps~~ of the previous poem. It is implied that he married one of these 'queens' who has lost her looks; he watches "her /face grow old and tired. . . and hands get red washing /things and dishes." (Poems, XIII, p. 175). He is^a frustrated and pitiful creature, dimly aware that something is horribly wrong with his life yet unaware as to what it actually is. cummings makes his ruin complete by even denying him the pleasure of a good cigarette and he is forced to smoke "sawdust /cigarettes in the /middle of the night." (Poems, XIII, p. 175). He represents a type of man for whom there are millions of counterparts and his position is a hopeless one.

Equally hopeless is the position of the "man who had fallen among thieves." (Poems, XXVIII, p. 184). Here the 'thief' is society itself, which has so crushed this individual that he is able to achieve peace only in alcoholic oblivion. It is implied that he has previously submitted to the unworld and the poem shows the final result; this is seen in the line "dressed in fifteenthrate ideas." (Poems, XXVII, p. 184).

Yet the inhabitants of the unworld, the "dozen staunch and leal /citizens" (Poems, XXVII, p. 184), refuse to involve themselves with his fate; he is isolated as a result of his past submission to the unworld. cummings ironically excuses their lack of humanity with the suggestion that they possibly thought "he did not care to rise." (Poems, XXVII, p. 184). In this, he achieves a double effect for as well as commenting on the inhumanity of man he implies that as a result of this inhumanity he probably does not wish to return to society; his stupor represents an attempt to escape from the unworld. Alone, the speaker aids this victim of society and staggers, "banged with terror through /a million billion trillion stars." (Poems, XXVII, p. 184). The speaker has been made aware of the unworld's extent and realizes that he, in possessing genuine humanity, is alone.

The poem examines the individual who, in his desire

to escape, found dubious solace through the oblivion of drink. Suicide is merely another type of escape and "Will i ever forget that precarious moment?" (Poems, XXXII, p. 187) concerns a person about to achieve total negation. The speaker is standing on the third rail of a subway train, reviewing his life at the instant of his death. It appears to him initially that he "had first of all really made /quite a mistake in being at all born" (Poems XXXII, p. 187) when the futility of his life has been taken into account.

His entire existence has been one of petty discomforts and frustrations; he is wifeless, cursed with pimples, and possesses a "collarbutton which had always not nothurt me not /much and in the same place." (Poems, XXXII, p. 187). In this he admits he epitomizes the American lost in a society of meaningless laws, mores and social prejudices. Like many others he submitted to these restrictions on his individuality. He admits to having had "Inexpressible itchings /to be photographed with Lord /Rothermere playing with Lord Rothermere billiards /very well by moonlight with Lord Rothermere." (Poems, XXXII, p. 187).

This desire to identify with the false world constitutes his guilt. Significantly his acceptance of the unworld brought him nothing but frustration and loneliness; he is unmarried and he remarks that "Personne ne m'aime et j'ai les mains froides." (Poems XXXII, p. 188). Behind his reflections, cummings includes absurd bits of 'news' which

add to the impression of his meaningless existence. They are in fact representative of the world to which he has submitted; the futility of such submission becomes all the more vivid when viewed in relation to his suicide.

He remarks that the prospect of death in the light of his past is beautiful in comparison. He adds that he was frightened that he might fall off the third rail before the train arrived and render even his suicide a futile and inefficient act. He closes in the words "If i should have made this perfectly /clear, it entirely would have been not my fault." (Poems, XXXII, p. 188). This implies that his attempts to place the blame on society have been ineffective. At the moment of death he has seen his personal guilt in affiliating with the unworld.

The individual may also be destroyed by merely being an unconscious instrument of the unworld's evil will. In a theme reminiscent of The Enormous Room Cummings examines those who have been physically or mentally broken by the ravages of war. In "look at this)" (Poems, V, p. 194) the speaker represents one who has managed to survive physically yet finds it difficult to accept what has happened to his friend. Behind his casual speech one sees a sense of bewilderment at the absurdity of the loss. He remarks, "funny aint /it we was /buddies" (Poems, V, p. 194); in this he shows that war is never merely the death of one individual, but in itself is the result of a death of human relationship

in general. cummings suggests that it is through this loss of which the speaker is aware that the full effects of war can be seen.

The speaker also indicates the indifferent attitude of society when one of its human units has ceased to be of use: "this side up handle /with care /fragile /and send him home /to his old mother in /a new nice pine box /(collect." (Poems V, p. 194). The dead soldier is treated like a piece of machinery for which the sender cares so little that postage is not even paid. The last lines render the labels on his coffin even more hypocritical; he is treated with more dignity dead than when alive.

A similar feeling is expressed in "first Jock he" (Poems, V, p. 194) which again shows society's ruthless and indifferent attitude to those who have served their purposes. The speaker recalls the deaths of his numerous friends. As he proceeds it becomes evident that each possessed a certain quality that was killed along with them: beauty and rational behaviour have indeed been destroyed by war. In addition, the speaker's son has died as well: he says, "my youngest /boy was kilt last with /the big eyes i loved like you can't /imagine" (Poems, VI, p. 194). Love has also been crushed by the ravages of war. The speaker adds that everybody was killed, and indeed they were in the sense that humanity was crushed in the wake of the unworld's destructive processes.

The last line further demonstrates that the unworld cares nothing for those who die in its service. Rather it is so callous as to make a pun on their deaths and their nationality in the words, "they called them the kilties." (Poems, VI, p. 194).

Society's indifference to reality in general is seen in "lis /-ten" (Poems, VII, p. 195). After mentioning his personal disgust with war, the speaker points out that "a god damned lot of /people don't and never /never /will know, /they don't want /to /no." (Poems, VII, p. 195). They are indeed 'damned' for their evil is as great as that of those who caused the war. Theirs is the evil of apathy to conditions which must be fought in order that true values can be maintained. cummings suggests that evil will never be overcome until the mass of the unworld's inhabitants allow themselves to realize its true horror.

Apathy is also seen in its full horror when pitted against the evil of Fascism. In "red-rag and pink-flag" (Poems, XI, p. 357) cummings shows that most people are unaware of true values simply because they are too concerned with the satisfaction of their personal lusts and desires. While the evil of Hitler and totalitarianism enters the world, the complacent merely sit back, concerned only with the fulfilling of their carnal appetites, unconcerned with the evil that exists in the world. cummings also shows that evil

is not restricted to Europe, for the use of the word 'some' in the second verse links the Fascist murderers with the apathetic sensualists.

cummings gives an example of such an obtuse person in "'Gay'" (Poems, XVIII, p. 236), the young woman of Cambridge, Mass. cummings is first impressed with her "uneyes safely ensconced in thick glass" (Poems XVII, p. 236) which suggests specimens submerged in a preservative glass jar. Her eyes are indeed safe from the realities of life, of which she prefers to remain unaware.

The poem is flippant and humorous on the whole, but it is seen that 'Miss Gay' is representative of the living dead and contrasts vividly with the 'erotic' animals at the zoo which he takes her to see. For that matter, she prefers stuffed animals, a preference indicative of her death-like state. She is "unacquainted with ^{the} libido" (Poems, XVIII, p. 237), that is, she possesses no emotions.

Light as the tone of the poem may be, it is nevertheless an accurate description of a large segment of modern society, who in their emotionless stupor are blind and indifferent to life. Of such persons it might be said that they are dead to begin with; they have nothing to lose by submitting to the unworld. However, cummings makes it clear that there exists a type of individual in the true sense, a man who possesses truth and refuses to relinquish it without a fight. In various poems this resistance of the individual is seen

as a type of martyrdom. The poem "i sing of Olaf glad and big" (Poems, XXX, p. 244), examines conscious resistance in detail.

In keeping with cummings' belief that the true individual is not of the ordinary world, Olaf is described in vivid contrast to the society about him. cummings shows that virtually all of society is indoctrinated to false concepts of patriotism, meaningless in themselves. These active members of the unworld concentrate all their efforts on subduing Olaf and destroying his values.

Initially the reader becomes aware of the contrast between 'glad and big' Olaf, who suggests genuine responses to life, and his colonel, a "trig /westpointer most succinctly bred" (Poems, XXX, p. 244) in the unworld's tradition. The colonel is seen in contrast with the warm and responsive Olaf; he is a vicious animal bred carefully by the unworld to serve the cause of evil. Olaf 'errs' because in adhering to the code of love he defies the unworld and is subject to brutal torture by the sadistic soldiers as they justify their lusts on the grounds that they are fulfilling a patriotic function. The 'overjoyed noncoms' care nothing for truth, and jump at the opportunity to satisfy their brutality. Other soldiers "evoke / allegiance per blunt instruments" (Poems, XXX, p. 244) and achieve the same effects.

It becomes evident that brutality and hypocrisy are

universal; cummings includes all aspects of military society culminating with the president, who is similarly a part of the unworld. He sees Olaf only as a coward who must, as he fails to meet the requirements of the unworld, be destroyed.

An interesting comparison is seen in the lines "where he died /Christ." (Poems, XXX, p. 245). The lack of punctuation between the lines implies that they should be read as one thought. It is now seen that Olaf in a sense is Christ; both suffered the same fate. Both stood for principles of love against a world that destroyed them for their beliefs. Secondly, cummings takes pains to impress the reader with Olaf's purity of soul; "he was /more brave than me: more blond than you." (Poems, XXX, p.244). He existed as a human being qualitatively apart from most men, and his destruction is seen by cummings as a type of martyrdom. It will be noted that Olaf's destruction was complete; the values which he held were not enough to sustain him against the forces of the unworld. In the poem, "anyone lived in a pretty how town" (Poems, 29, p.370), cummings deals with this inability to withstand pressures of the everyday world.

Initially cummings presents a picture of bliss; 'anyone' sings through his life, full of the joy that

direct contact with the spiritual world brings. His surroundings are 'pretty' and the sound of the bells further enhances this picture of happiness. However in stanza two it becomes clear that there is opposition to anyone's intuitive and direct relationship to life. The "Women and men (both little and small) /cared for anyone not at all" (Poems, 29, p. 370) because his life is in vivid contrast to their own. The mass of society, cummings claims, wallows in conformity and thus negates any potential individuality. He remarks that "they sowed their isn't they reaped their same, " (Poems, 29, p. 270), a line which suggests that their negation of values resulted in the dismal conformity that comes from such denial of spiritual truth.

The only ones who sympathize with the life of 'anyone' are the children, but "down they forgot as up they grew." (Poems, 29, p. 370). In short, the children, though initially possessing an awareness of the true world gradually lose this contact as they age.

By stanza three we are given a picture of the individual pitted against the hostile forces of society. 'Anyone' alone is capable of being loved by 'noone', but there is no evidence in the poem that he is aware of her love; rather it is portrayed as a type of spiritual sympathy that 'noone' feels for 'anyone' through virtue of his way of life.

Herbert C. Barrows Jr. points out that

it seems probable that in lines 12 and 26 the poet has used 'noone' not only as the name for the woman who loves 'anyone', but also in the literal sense of 'nobody', employing the pun to make statements about the isolation of the two people in a world full of selfish 'someones'.²³

It now becomes evident that anybody who possesses spiritual values will doubtless be crushed by the hostile forces of the unworld. cummings supports this view in the last stanza where it is seen that although 'anyone' and 'noone' are dead, the unworld continues. The women and men continue to exist in a world devoid of truth and meaning. In addition, they have stifled 'anyone's' attempt to live a life based on meaningful values.

The above poem mentioned the inability of children to retain their initial purity of vision; a small number of poems are devoted to this destruction of the child's world. In "in Just-" (Poems, I, p. 21) cummings examines the invasion of such a world. The poem begins with an ambiguous reference to spring, the first line suggesting the injustice of the season as well as describing its worth as a moral agent. The presence of "the little /lame balloonman" (Poems, I, p. 21) introduces an unnatural element in the

²³ Herbert C. Barrows Jr. and William R. Steinhoff, "Cummings' 'Anyone Lived in a Pretty How Town'," Explicator, Vol. IX, No. 1, Item 1.

supposedly innocent scene of the children at play. The reader sees that he is not normal, and his lameness suggests a physical deformity which contrasts vividly with the exuberance of the playing children. We are thus introduced to him as a character not in direct harmony with his surroundings.

The second stanza depicts the children's play again seen in vivid contrast to "the queer /old balloonman" (Poems, I, p. 21). cummings' use of the word 'queer' adds to the suspicion that there is something unnatural and wrong with the balloonman's presence. This is confirmed by the last reference to the balloonman as a 'goat-footed' satyr. Here he appears both as a degenerate beast and a symbol of the adult world which enters the environment of the children and waits patiently for their ruin which he knows is inevitable. The child's intuitive contact with truth will be supplanted as he ages by the perverted ideals of the adult world.

A more explicit example is seen in "i walked the boulevard" (Poems, IV, p. 47) where the speaker sees a 'dirty' child in the process of being ruined by the adult world. Though dirty, the child is attuned^{to} the transcendental world; she is seen "skating on noisy wheels of joy," (Poems, IV, p. 47), enjoying to the fullest degree this transitory

period of happiness which cummings finds pathetic in light of her inevitable change.

Her father is described in terms of his insensitivity and stupidity. He is a "thick cheerful man" (Poems, IV, p.47) who makes jokes with a pregnant whore. His association with the whore identifies him as one possessed with false values as is the 'mothermonster', whose "red grumbling face" (Poems, IV, p. 47) sees no joy in life. The scene would lack importance if the child were not set in contrast to the surroundings of the mother, father and whore, all identified as being of the same kind. They are all members of the unworld in one way or another. cummings shows this through his description of their physical distortions. The mother's red face, the father's bulbous lips and piggish hands, and the whore's purple eyelids combine to form an image of unnatural human beings.

Only the girl possesses a sense of joy, and that this will be taken away from her is seen in cummings' mention of the 'girlish' whore which implies a similar ruin has befallen the prostitute. She too was once a child who possessed truth and through this allusion to her past cummings implies a similar ruin in the future to the little girl.

The subsequent poem deals with the same theme, the ruin of the child's world by the adult. Here a young girl-turned-whore is examined by a man in conversation with Death. The

young man, Death points out, is responsible for her present state because he gave her over to him, probably meaning that youth eventually is forced to accept the world of death and the resulting negation of love. The girl, deprived of real values, is at the mercy of the tired old business man "who at her /redstone mouth renews his /childhood." (Poems, V, p. 48). His attempt is vain for in taking her he has perverted the very innocence that he craves.

The girl herself has come to see her own ruin and gazes "beyond the /kissing and the striving of /that old man" (Poems, V. p. 48) in futile and desperate longing for the world that has been denied her. Death refers to the world of the child as mere illusion which it indeed is in the unworld's terms. The end of the poem is bitter as it concludes with Death's speech; the girl presumably will continue to entertain old men and feel a sense of loss, with no hope for the future.

A similar poem to the above is "being" (Poems, I, p.85) where the subject is a twelve-year-old victim of gonorrhea. cummings speaks of her as an "Oldeyed /child" (Poems, I, p.85); her childhood vision of reality has been destroyed by the unworld. The speaker, in trying to sum up her life in the hope of finding some meaning to it, reaches a negative conclusion. All he can add to her life is her eventual death; other than that there is no perceivable future for her.

Cases similar to the above are seen in "kitty" (Poems, V, p. 59) where a sixteen-year-old child has been perverted into a mechanical and 'unspontaneous' sexual machine, and the "little ladies more /than dead" (Poems, XI, p. 97) that he meets in Europe; In both instances cummings points out the spiritual death of their souls. The concept of death in life is also observed in "open his head, baby" (Poems, 39, p. 451) where it is seen that a perverted and sterile form of human relationship results in the spiritual death of the participators involved. His heart, or true capacity for love, is 'cracked' or destroyed; likewise his mind is shown as dead, for he has destroyed himself through this association with the unworld.

In "this little bride & groom are" (Poems, 8, p. 337) cummings examines another aspect of the death of love. Through the candy bride and groom on a wedding cake the falsity of love in the unworld is observed. A picture of innocence is gradually undermined; cummings shows the false atmosphere in many marriages through the 'pretend' flowers and the 'thin' ring they stand on, both of which suggest the lack of real substance to their relationship. They have been protect@d by a covering of cellophane against the real world, and their artificiality is made clear in the lines "everything is protected by /cellophane against anything (because /nothing really exists." (Poems, 8, p. 337). The people they represent

have walled themselves off from contact with true values and live a sterile existence based on meaningless ceremony.

It has been seen that the unworld attacks individuals from every walk of life, be they children, whores, or those like Olaf and 'anyone' who were able to maintain their sense of truth past childhood. However, the unworld also exerts a powerful force on the world of nature and love, of which cummings felt were representative proofs of a transcendental world. Through an awareness of these qualities in life the individual perceives, at least theoretically, transcendent reality and learns that the everyday world is corrupt and false.

Unfortunately, the world of nature is a frail world compared to that of man. In "the rose" (Poems, VII, p.50) cummings shows the frailty of truth as compared with the unworld of death and decay: "the rose /is dying the /lips of an old man murder /the petals." (Poems, VII, p. 50). The man as a figure of the everyday world destroys the beauty of the rose through his age and lack of appreciation. Those who mourn the rose's death "move /with prose faces" (Poems, VII, p. 50); they live in a world of prosaic reality and cannot comprehend the poetic beauty the rose represents.

The concept of man as an unwitting destroyer of nature is found elsewhere. In "I remark this beach has been used too" (Poems, VI, p. 76) cummings contrasts the natural

beauty of the breaking sea with the debris and smell of the public beach. The remains the bathers leave behind them is spoken of as "originally spontaneous twirls-of-excrement." (Poems, VI, p.76). He sees putrescence in the cubicle shapes of the bath-houses and the numerous 'uncouth' aromas, "shivers of crin Ging stink" (Poems, VI, p. 76) which detract from the purity of the clean sea. The scene of decay and filth is powerful enough to lessen his ability to love, for he remarks that his love's expression "is that of a fly pre-cisely half / (squashed)." (Poems, VI, p. 77). In short, the stench and debris of the beach have won a partial victory in that his love is seen as a half-squashed fly.

In "of this wilting wall the colour drub" (Poems, XV, p.112), cummings continues his examination of the unworld's ability to blot out the world of nature. Despite the fact that sunbeams beat against the wilting wall, the unworld remains in a state of decay, even to the extent of 'souring' the sunbeams. Here, cummings pictures the unworld in most uninviting terms; the 'wilting wall', the 'rickety unclosed blinds', and the disintegrating cigar stub all combine to create an impression of decay and futility. The underdrawers "club/the faintly sweating air with pinkness" (Poems, XV, p. 112) and a pale dog further pollutes the atmosphere with his manure. Words such as 'pinkness' and 'pale' suggest the sickness that is present in man's world.

The total effect of the images is such that the star, symbol of the transcendental world, is rendered feeble and virtually impotent as it attempts in vain to impress upon man the existence of a higher reality. cummings sees the full effect of the unworld when he remarks:

But i am interested more
intricately in the delicate scorn
with which in a putrid window every day
almost leans a lady whose still-born
smile involves the comedy of decay (Poems, XV, p.112)

The picture of the woman, surrounded by the unworld as symbolized by the 'putrid window', gazing listlessly at nothing in particular as she slowly decays, signifies the real importance of the scene to the poet. It is the effect on man that such surroundings have that troubles cummings; she, like her environment, is dead and the absurdity of her position, as she is not significant enough to be a part of a tragedy, can only be seen as comedy.

The poem pictures a woman too immersed in the unworld to be able to appreciate the world of nature. In "a blue woman" (Poems, XVI, p. 125), another slum scene is pictured, except here there is some progression beyond the immediate boundaries of the unworld. Amidst the dirt the speaker almost moves to a position of being able to see the moon and the significance therein. The peace of the twilight scene prepares him for such realization, only to be destroyed by the turning on of the city lights, which obscure his twilight vision.

It will be noticed that the images progress from the woman to suggestions of fertility in the mention of her 'sticking out breasts' and her twelve children. From there the scene broadens to include happiness in the image of the "little puppy hopping between /skipping /children." (Poems, XVI, p. 125) . Next cummings includes an instant of playful banter between husband and wife suggestive of love; finally the moon appears to round out the entire scene with its spiritual significance. The speaker hears the Negro's voice, 'curiously cool' because he is on the threshold of a transcendental experience and is beginning to feel the inexplicable sense of wonder and mystery at what he has seen. Suddenly, as if aware that it was to be exposed, the unworld invades the scene by the flashing on of the street lights, obscuring the twilight, hiding the moon, and destroying the vision.

In a similar type of poem cummings again shows that true values are hidden by the unworld. In "mOOn Over tOWns mOOn" (Poems, I, p. 277) cummings shows the significance of the moon by picturing it in the 'O'. The first two stanzas show the moon's actual greatness as compared with the towns, symbols of man's society. These verses contrast with stanza three, which by reversing the lettering shows the actual significance given to the moon by man. cummings' use of the 'o' against the capital letters to describe the towns indicates that man's false standards minimize the

moon and eclipse its spiritual worth. The moon and that which it represents is hidden by the town.

In another scene from the unworld, "infinite jukethrob smoke & swallow to dis." (Poems, 31, p. 446), cummings presents a picture of meaningless activity and shows how such surroundings render any appreciation of the real world impossible. The scene is a cheap night club filled with whores, drunks, homosexuals, and the noise of cheap jukebox music. The 'fog' of the cigarette smoke clouds the sight, the 'infinite jukethrob' the ears. The poem's structure is chaotic, implying a like chaos within the scene. In the midst of the disorder someone remarks "It's Snowing Isn't That Perfectly Wonderful" (Poems, 31, p. 446) but fails to see the significance of the snow. Like the moon, snow is a symbol of the transcendental world to which those restricted by the unworld are oblivious.

Elsewhere cummings suggests that man, because he is surrounded by false values, is totally ignorant of the spiritual significance of nature. In "in" (Poems, 62, p. 462), he remarks "in /Spring comes. . . a mender /of things" (Poems, 62, p. 462) who renews life and thereby demonstrates the wondrous process of rejuvenation. Yet "no- /one /asks his name" (Poems, 62, p. 462) because no one is fully aware of this process. In other words, though the wonder of the natural process is always about us, demonstrating the power of the life force through the change of seasons, man is too

obtuse to see and understand. We are not even aware of the coming of spring, so immersed are we in the affairs of the unworld.

It is now necessary to examine the results of living within the unworld. Man is basically trapped and alone, deprived of real values and given nothing in return. cummings refers to him as a man with "a narrow thudding timeshaped face." (Poems, X, p. 52). He has been moulded by the unworld's concepts of time and conformity, and "carefully /inhabits number 1 on something street" (Poems, X, p. 52). His entire life has been restricted and framed to fit the pattern imposed from without. The world he lives in is 'lean' and 'definite', further suggesting the boundaries and restrictions to the Self. Despite the existence of the transcendental world, the "man with /the brittle legs" (Poems, X, p.52) is unaware of its presence. The existence of nature, further shown by the children playing and the pigeons flying about him as he sits in the park, is unable to enter his mind and show him the true world.

In "POEM, OR BEAUTY HURTS MR. VINAL" (Poems, II, p.167) cummings elaborates on the general effect of the unworld on human life. The poem lists a series of advertising slogans that surrounds man and restricts his freedom of will. As the speaker says, the real values in the world are the everyday brand-name products that surround us; ironically, Abraham Lincoln

is included among the products, showing that the Americans are as apt to sell and promote their historical figures as they do chewing-gum. Such a tendency de-values all things, and Lincoln's memory becomes debased to the point where a brand of patent medicine is of equal importance in the American system of 'values'. cummings adds bitterly, "let freedom ring" (Poems, II, p. 167) showing the actual loss of freedom involved in the barrage of trivia that surrounds mankind. We have glorified 'merde' and sold it as 'divine poesy' in our periodicals; advertising has indeed reversed values through its disastrously effective propaganda.

Art has also been affected by the general tendency to cheapen everything, and is reduced to a formula. Verses in advertisements have in fact replaced true art, slogans have supplanted poetry.

cummings feels that men and women have become 'gelded' in this process, because they do not possess the strength or courage to combat this perversion of value. For that matter, modern man can be described in terms of the products that surround him, even to his defecatory processes which cummings compares to toothpaste being squeezed out of a tube. Nor does he know where to relieve himself, and must be guided to a "sternly allotted sandpile." (Poems, II, p. 168). so deeply has his free will been stifled by the forces of the unworld.

The unworld is visible in every walk of life, from the burlesque society of Flo, "keen chassied like a Rolls /Royce" (Poems, III, p. 169) to the "infantile ghost of Professor / Royce" (Poems, III, p. 169) whose mind is totally immersed in petty concerns, in this case a forgotten necktie. It is also manifested in the "yonder deadfromtheneckup graduate" (Poems, V, p. 170) who affects a picturesque pose, or the impotent "Mr Do / -nothing the wellknown parvenu" (Poems, VII, p. 171), both of whom represent the results of succumbing to the false knowledge and values of the unworld. 'Mr. Donothing' is rendered impotent by his study of Freudian psychology in an effort to explain his 'problems'. cummings of course is commenting on the failure of the unworld's pseudo-knowledge to provide any real truth.

In i --six nonlectures he remarked that "lecturing is presumably a form of teaching; and presumably a teacher is somebody who knows. I never did, and still don't, know." ²⁴ Consequently, any attempt to 'know' anything in the static sense of possessing a tangible fact is a gigantic lie, and those who purport to possess such 'truth' are tragically wrong. The transcendental vision is the only knowledge worth having; as he says elsewhere, "all ignorance toboggans into

²⁴ e.e. cummings, i--six nonlectures (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 3.

know /and trudges up to ignorance again"(Poems,XXXIX,p.412); that is, if we are to perceive truth we must move from a position of false knowledge and in doing so see that the mystery of life defies attempts at categorization; if we do claim knowledge, we are merely deluding ourselves with unimportant and meaningless fact. Such is the world of the scientist, for example, whose self-satisfied attitude is critically examined in "Space being (don't forget to remember) Curved " (Poems, VII, p. 227).

Not only is the transcendental world obscured by 'civilized' society's mere existence, but also by the conscious effort on the part of modern scientific thought to deny spiritual significance to the universe. Here cummings deals with the various theories of the day whose cold and dispassionate methods all tend to detract from the world of the spirit. cummings' approach is sarcastic, but behind the witty exposé of the modern age's futile attempts to find real meaning in the universe through scientific means alone, there lurks an awareness of its destructive influence. cummings shows that the result of such discovery is a negation of life and value rather than an increase in knowledge. Life is reduced to "just a Reflex you /know since Everything is Relative." (Poems, VII, p. 227). God, or any spiritual value has been killed and buried, leaving man only with a picture of himself as a mere quadruped

at the mercy of the same deterministic forces as is a billiard-ball.

Under such influence, the people of the unworld become 'anthropoid' and de-humanized, and contrast sharply with the few who still maintain ideals despite the mass of slogans and scientific propaganda. In "16 heures" (Poems, IX, p.196) cummings writes favourably of the communists for this very reason. While the theme of the poem is at variance with the whole of Eimi, it must be remembered that cummings stands for no system, and an attack on one need not imply a leaning to another. He is in this sense 'apolitical'. Consequently, when writing this poem he was not identifying or sympathizing with communist doctrine, but with the plight of the human beings involved who only happened to be communists and were being bullied, much as was Olaf.

cummings contrasts the communists' idealism with the unworld and shows the results. The forces in this instance are the 'flics' or police, and cummings depicts their inhumanity by describing their conformity in dress and actions. They are

very tidium reassuringly similar,
they all have very tidium
mustaches, and very
tidium chins, and just above
their very tidium ears their
very tidium necks begin (Poems, IX, p.196)

In short, the unworld's influence has been so great that all the police can be described as one thing, since they share

the same characteristics. In contrast the communists "have fine Eyes /some are young some old none /look alike." (Poems, IX, p. 196). Their ideals are necessarily attacked by the unworld which, by definition, is a denial of ideals of any kind. They look about, bewildered and questioning, unable to comprehend or combat the unworld's oppression.

Another instance of the unworld's cruelty is seen in "but mr can you maybe listen there's" (Poems, VI, p.226), where a pitiful social outcast begs for sympathy on the grounds that forces beyond his control were responsible for his present state. As he says, "Some /people/'s future is toothsome like /(they got /pockets full may take a littl /e nibble now And then /bite) candy." (Poems, VI, p. 226). In other words, to a fortunate few life is an easy matter; to others it is a constant struggle against a hostile and unfeeling world where one's dignity is taken from him for no rational reason whatsoever. As the bum says, "who may /you /be /any /how." (Poems, VI, p.227) to the more fortunate person he is speaking to; the unseen listener is actually no better qualitatively than the derelict, who is aware of this irrational distribution of wealth and happiness.

Another poem concerned with the social outcasts that result from society is "one day a nigger" (Poems 24, p.442) where a Negro shows the extent to which the unworld has influenced him. He fails to see himself as a human being in

his own right and demands, in a mythical world where stars shine during the day, that he be made white. By granting him his wish the star has conformed to the social belief in white supremacy. Friedman mentions that "it would seem, then, that the stars shining at night represents a diminishment as a result of the blackman's mistaken choice, for they were once bright enough to shine by day."²⁵ The point is that the Negro has been forced by the unworld to accept his blackness as a sign of inferiority; once this state of mind has taken place a conformity to the values of the unworld is seen, which cummings deplores.

Like the Negro, the Jew has also been reduced to a position of inferior status by the unworld. Norman quotes cummings' comment on the poem "a kike is the most dangerous" (Poems, 46, p. 454): "for me a jew is a human being; whereas 'a kike' is a machine--the product of that miscalled Americanization, alias standardization (id est dehumanization."²⁶

cummings bitterly remarks in the poem that "a kike is the most dangerous /machine as yet invented /by even yankee / ingenu /ity." (Poems, 46, p. 454). The Jew has indeed been reduced to a stereotyped and inhuman creature in the minds

²⁵ Friedman, Growth of a Writer, p.153.

²⁶ Charles Norman, The Magic-Maker (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 344.

of the masses through the popular association with money and racially discriminatory laws. cummings' last line, "it comes both priggish and canted" (Poems, 46, P. 454) suggests both an obscene pun which adds to the image of the Jew as a machine or article and also shows the reasons accounting for this false image, indeed a result of prigs filled with cant.

Such conditions are apt to drive one to desperate action; the awareness of the empty and cruel unworld may prove too much for the persecuted human being. In "in a middle of a room" (Poems, XXIX, p. 243) such a person is pictured, who stands in limbo between the two worlds. Dissatisfied with the unworld, he is unable to believe in the existence of the transcendental realm; his position further demonstrates the influence of the unworld on man, for here the strength of society is such that the man in question cannot allow himself to hope for better conditions elsewhere.

The unworld seems all-pervading, and he remarks:
 "'somewhere it is Spring and sometimes /people are in real;
 imagine /somewhere real flowers, but /I can't imagine real
 flowers for if I /could, they would somehow /not be real."
 (Poems, XXIX, p. 243). He sees the unreality of the world around him and perceives that such is not true being. However, his vision is exclusively that of the unworld, so much so that he thinks even if he could imagine real being it too would come within the scope of the unworld and cease to be real.

His mistake lies in refusing to see examples of the true world that are in fact present; cummings mentions that "a moon swims out of a cloud" (Poems, XXIX, p. 243) while he is enclosed in his room smelling the paper rose. The truth is there, but he cannot see it, so completely has the unworld influenced him.

The last stanza suggests the suicide's situation. Although the moon is present, it is accompanied by the striking of a clock, symbol of the unworld's presence; all he perceives is the striking of the clock, and fails to see the moon's significance. The line "a finger pulls a trigger" (Poems, XXIX, p. 243) implies that he is merely one of many who see lack of meaning to their lives and surroundings, but who cannot branch beyond its restrictive boundaries, and perceive the truth that is in fact present.

Yet even the suicide's state is to be preferred to that of the man so completely indoctrinated by the 'thoughts' of others that he is beyond any feeling. In the poem "he does not have to feel because he thinks" (Poems, 23, p. 292) the destructive forces of the unworld have been complete. cummings progressively lists characteristics of this man that finally expose him as an automaton, totally at the mercy of the unworld yet without any security, despite his enslavement.

His mind has been filled with the pre-determined responses of the unworld; conditioned to act in a certain way conformable with the unworld's wishes, his power of will

has been negated to the point where he 'knows' exactly what the unworld wishes him to know. Yet he cannot understand the dichotomy between what he has been told to believe and what actually happens in life. Led to believe in empty moral obligations, he is dumbfounded when such practices are not observed in real life. The result of this is frustration and uncertainty on his part, and he tries through drinking to obliterate the growing awareness that something is wrong with his controlled existence. cummings adds that his condition is typical of the majority of Americans who have sold their souls to the unworld.

There are many such examples of frightened, de-humanized men in the unworld. cummings examines their common lot in "most (people)" (Poems, 29, p. 295). Here the masses are examined, whose acts are regulated by a world of restrictive rules, of 'can't', 'mustn't', 'shouldn't' and 'daren't'. Their lives are so dependent on society's approbation that every move must be contrived and unspontaneous. cummings questions their humanity in the phrase "sortof people" (Poems, 29, p.295) and concludes that they cannot really be said to die, because they only have life in a mass sense of the word; for every one who dies there are others to take his or her place. The slaves of the unworld, it is suggested, will always exist in this sense of the word.

Nor is such slavery restricted to America, for "kumrads die because they're told" (Poems, 30, p. 296) deals with the

Russian counterparts of 'most people'. cummings' conclusion here is basic to his poetic vision. Pointing out that "every kumrad is a bit /of quite unmitigated hate," (Poems, 30, p. 296), he adds that their sin of hate is the ultimate reason for the unworld's existence. As he says, "they are afraid to love" (Poems, 30, p. 296); their lives are rendered futile and meaningless as a result of this denial of true value.

Because all true values are destroyed through a denial of love, the mass of men are correspondingly reduced to the level of beasts; "worshipping Same /they squirm and they spawn" (Poems, 55, p. 314) in a 'futile groove' of meaningless activity. The cycle of birth and death becomes a tedious and painful experience; "cringing they brood/ breeding they wince" (Poems, 55, p. 314) as they defile the miracle of life with their perverted existences.

In this poem the inhabitants of the unworld are seen as conscious antagonists to the forces of love. Realizing its power, they make every attempt to destroy it. cummings doubtless has Christ in mind when he says "his birth is their fear is their blind fear" (Poems, 55, p. 315) which they dispel through attacking love, the very thing that promises salvation. The threat is seen in the lines "let all /unfools of unbeing /set traps for his heart, /lay snares for his feet" (Poems, 55, p. 315). Although here cummings suggests

the futility of such an attempt to combat the power of love, in a later poem the speaker describes a meeting with Christ which has definite pessimistic overtones.

The poem, "no time ago" (Poems, 50, p. 455) shows Christ's isolation and inability to communicate truth in the lines "made of nothing /except loneliness." (Poems, 50, p. 455). Here the impression is received that the speaker could not himself communicate with Christ; he merely passed by, leaving the speaker with a profound sense of the tragedy of Christ's fate.

Christ's inability to communicate is also seen through the perversion of His message that the Church has become; Cummings sees these representatives as sterile testimonials to death in "nouns to nouns" (Poems, 22, p. 365). Marks points out that the description of nuns as 'nouns' shows that "they are inactive things, 'nouns' as opposed to verbs."²⁷ Also, they are essentially dead and nonexistent; 'nouns too' implies a pair of ciphers or nothings. They truly walk in sin, as they remain oblivious to the wonder of the spring scene which surrounds them.

It has been observed that the spokesmen for love, Christ, 'anyone', and Olaf, without exception were scorned, rejected and destroyed by the unworld. This fact suggests there is little hope for the citizens of the unworld, who stubbornly refuse to see the truth and willingly submit to

²⁷ Marks, Cummings, p. 62.

their sterile lives. In "If you can't eat you got to" (Poems, 3, p. 353) cummings describes such a scene where the unworld, responsible for the speaker's state of physical and mental poverty, is passively accepted. The lives of the two characters in the poem are so barren of meaning that they cannot really be said to be alive at all; as the speaker himself remarks, "we aint got /Nothing to die." (Poems, 3, p. 353). Nor is there any hope for their ruined lives; they have nothing to dream about because their sterile existences leave them with nothing.

Ironically, the use of the double negative throughout the poem shows that in fact they could rise above their condition and achieve a meaningful existence, but this possibility escapes the speaker. The only thing left to them is a complete negation of being, and the speaker's repeated phrase "come on kid /let's go to sleep" (Poems, 3, p. 353) suggests the unwitting acceptance of the sterility of his life.

Whereas a certain sympathy for the desperate condition of man was seen in the previous poem, "proud of his scientific attitude" (Poems, 13, p. 359) contains no such pity because the object of the poem does not even possess an awareness of his sterile and meaningless life. Buttressing his state of being with useless knowledge, he exists quite unaware that anything is wrong. His bourgeois attitudes render him

a ludicrous figure indeed; his 'scientific' approach to life has so limited his breadth of perception that a complete list of his 'qualities' can be given in eleven lines, implying that there is nothing else to him. This is seen in the speaker's repetition of the first line in a manner suggestive of a recording.

Ironically, his pseudo-knowledge has helped him not at all; his wife "wants to die" and his son is a "woopsing queer" (Poems, 13, p. 359). Also, what little knowledge he does possess is confused and distorted. cummings deliberately mis-spells Jung's name 'Young' in the lines "considers frood /whom he pronounces young mistaken" (Poems, 13, p. 359) to show that the man in question not only fails to distinguish between the two psychologists, but also believes Jung to be an American. This tendency to credit the Americans with the achievement of other countries is typical of his self-satisfied nature.

As if to shout above the recitation of the man's characteristics, cummings interrupts himself in the lines "hear /ye! the godless are the dull and the dull are the damned." (Poems, 13, p. 359). He is indeed godless as he has no real sense of spiritual value, and he is damned accordingly.

The above condition of man leads cummings in an unusually bitter poem to exclaim "there are possibly $2\frac{1}{2}$ or impossibly 3 /individuals every several fat /thousand years." (Poems, 28, p. 369). He adds that to expect any more would

be "neither fantastic nor pathological but /dumb." (Poems, 28, p. 369). In other words, real spiritual progress, in the sense of a significant number of individuals rising above the unworld, is virtually impossible. Such a statement recalls his ironic comment at the end of The Enormous Room, where he remarked that it 'might' be possible to encounter more individuals outside of prison within ten thousand years or so.

cummings' statement "The number of times a wheel turns / doesn't determine its roundness" (Poems, 28, p. 369) suggests the endless revolutions of the earth and the little good that has come out of the passage of years. Civilization, in its refusal to see the truth, is the smallest and most narrow product of the universe. Man is doubly guilty of both failing to see truth and in distorting what he does see. The most recent manifestation of this distortion of values is Hitler, whose evil cummings links with those who listened to his speeches without seeing the evil he represented.

As a result, cummings is forced to renounce the unworld and give it up for lost. In "pity this busy monster, manunkind" (Poems, XIV, p. 397) he views man as a monster which is not to be pitied, for any sentiment would be wasted on him. Sarcastically, cummings points out that man is not even aware of his miserable state, and may as well be left in his ignorance: "Progress is a comfortable disease: /your victim (death and life safely beyond)/ plays with the bigness of

his littleness." (Poems, XIV, p. 397). Man has forgotten the real questions of his life and death and substituted meaningless ones in their place. Science, for example, gulls him into imagining himself all-powerful; the microscope distorts reality by turning "one razorblade /into a mountainrange." (Poems, XIV, p. 397). Similarly, the theory of relativity turns the course of light back upon itself, and in doing so, cummings suggests, proves nothing. Such a universe has been conceived solely in man's mind in terms of abstract principles divorced from human reality; as such it has no real meaning whatsoever. If we are to pity anything, cummings suggests we pity the loss of truth that has been the result of such folly: "pity poor flesh /and trees, poor stars and stones, but never this /fine specimen of hypermagical /ultraomnipotence." (Poems, XIV, p. 397).

John Britton points out that materialistic, "unimaginative²⁸ manunkind no longer wishes or is able to rise above itself."²⁸ This is essentially man's fate; his tragedy "is that does not realize his sickness and will not be pitied."²⁹ Fully aware of 'manunkind' as a 'hopeless case', cummings nevertheless tells the unworld in exasperation to "listen: there's a hell / of a good universe next door; let's go." (Poems, XIV, p. 397). However, the possibility that they will actually take his advice and see the trees, stars and stones is small indeed.

²⁸John Britton, "Cummings' 'Pity this busy Monster'", Explicator, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, (Oct. 1959), Item 5.

²⁹Ibid.

Man's refusal to see truth amounts to a determination to destroy himself, as is seen in "when god decided to invent" (Poems, XXVI, p. 404). In contrast to God's creative power, man's denial of spiritual truth for static fact is actually a destructive process: "he picked the was /of shall and finding only why /smashed it into because." (Poems, XXVI, p. 404). By starting from a false premise man has indeed destroyed his chances of seeing truth.

The preceding poems showed that the unworld affects every conceivable aspect of life, hiding truth and in so doing destroying the individual. In The Enormous Room and Eimi it was observed that cummings himself felt this threat explicitly; at certain times he was aware of a personal threat to his Self. Throughout the poetry there are a number of poems that further suggest cummings' awareness of being personally caught and restricted by the unworld. In these poems a definite threat to the poet himself is seen.

In "at the head of this street. . . " (Poems, VI, p. 56) the speaker sees an organ-grinder and a monkey; an image of decay and corruption is evidenced in the very words used to describe the scene. Far from a cheerful picture, cummings sees "a gasping organ. . . waving motheaten tunes." (Poems, VI, p. 56). 'Sour' gnomes and 'rancid' elves spill from it, filling the filthy air and frightening the children with these "agile swarming sonal creatures." (Poems, VI, p. 56). There is also the image of the dead tunes crawling insect-like upon the speaker's face, and he senses a putrescence in

the supposedly cheerful music. There is no joy here as there should be, only a shabby pretence of music; the atmosphere is unnatural and mechanical rather than alive and spontaneous.

The mechanical aspect of the scene is epitomized by the 'queer' monkey who performs his duties joylessly, gazing in fear at his master "with his solemn blinky eyes which never smile." (Poems, VI, 56). Such mechanized and false entertainment is seen both as a threat to nature and to the speaker; cummings sees himself as the monkey in an equally false and joyless society:

i feel the jerk of the little string!
the tiny smiling shabby man is yelling
over the music i understand him i shove
my round red hat on my head i sit up
and blink at you with my solemn
eyes which never smile. (Poems, VI, p.57)

This is not merely a sentimental identification with the cruelly-treated monkey, for in becoming a part of the scene and losing his identity in the process, the reader is led to see cummings' position in similar terms. The organ-grinder and monkey become a microcosm of society and man who is similarly trapped and relegated to a mechanical existence by the unworld.

In another poem, (Poems, VIII, p. 78) cummings finds himself completely surrounded by the 'snug' and evil unworld and virtually unable to escape to the outside where it is "New/York and beautifully snowing." (Poems, VIII, p. 78).

A cacophony of noise overwhelms him as he sits drinking in a bar; although he is aware of the sordid circumstances of his environment, and senses his isolation, he makes no effort to leave and enter the world of the snow. All he sees is his awareness of the unworld as a chaotic force that envelops him to the point where he cannot escape it.

Another rather odd poem pictures cummings as a morsel in the 'mouth' of society, which is about to spit him out. All the images of the unworld surround him; the Woolworth Building is a lozenge held on the tongue. Again, outside the mouth of society the "snow speaks slowly" (Poems, IX, p.150) but he cannot really see it for he stares "only always into the tremendous canyon" (Poems, IX, p.150) of the month. This 'canyon' of society digests men, whom cummings hears as "a climbing dark exact walloping human noise of digestible millions," (Poems, IX, p. 150) and any real escape is doubtful. The image of his decomposition within society further suggests the power of the unworld to at times overwhelm even cummings.

While poems of this theme are few, they show that cummings himself felt a sense of personal restriction from the unworld's existence. Since he saw virtually everyone else as affected, it is not surprising that such should be the case. Thus, although he can say "who cares if some oneeyed son of a bitch /invents an instrument to measure Spring with" (Poems, XXXIII, p. 190), it is clear that he nevertheless

feels a definite threat to himself as well as to mankind.

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