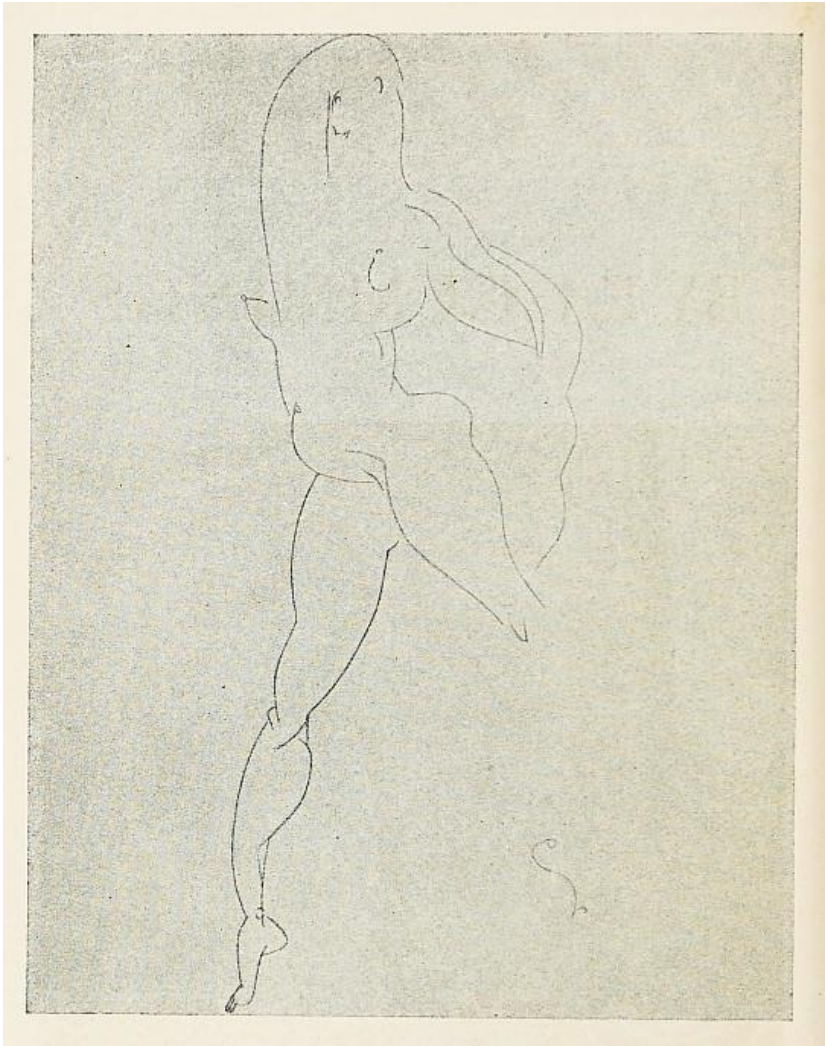


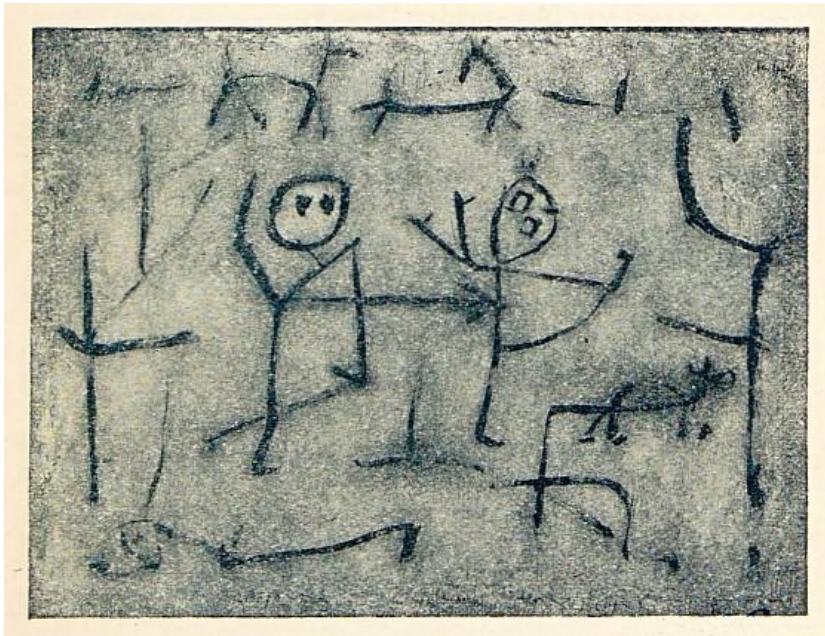
# **PUELLA MEA**

BY E.E. CUMMINGS

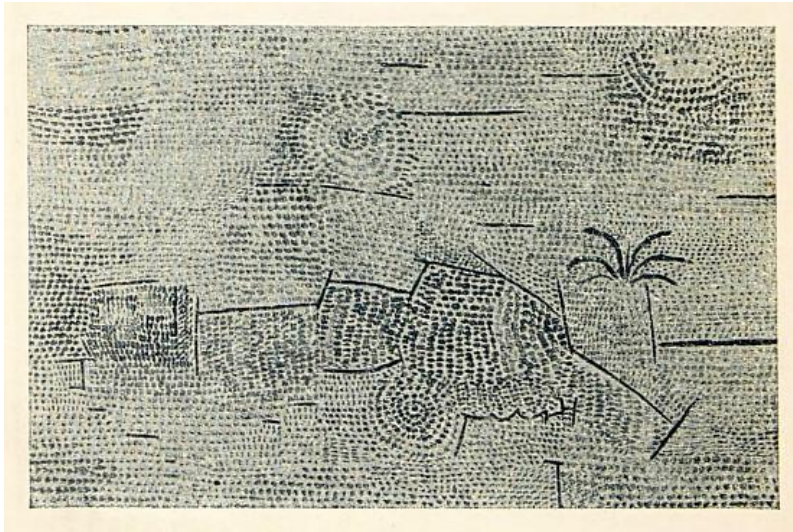


Harun Omar and Master Hafiz  
keep your dead beautiful ladies.  
Mine is a little lovelier  
than any of your ladies were.

In her perfectest array  
my lady, moving in the day,  
is a little stranger thing  
than crisp Sheba with her king  
in the morning wandering.



Through the young and awkward hours  
my lady perfectly moving,  
through the new world scarce astir  
my fragile lady wandering  
in whose perishable poise  
is the mystery of Spring  
(with her beauty more than snow  
dexterous and fugitive  
my very frail lady drifting  
distinctly, moving like a myth  
in the uncertain morning, with  
April feet like sudden flowers





and all her body filled with May)  
—moving in the unskilful day  
my lady utterly alive,  
to me is a more curious thing  
(a thing more nimble and complete)  
than ever to Judea's king  
were the shapely sharp cunning

and withal delirious feet  
of the Princess Salome  
carefully dancing in the noise  
of Herod's silence, long ago.

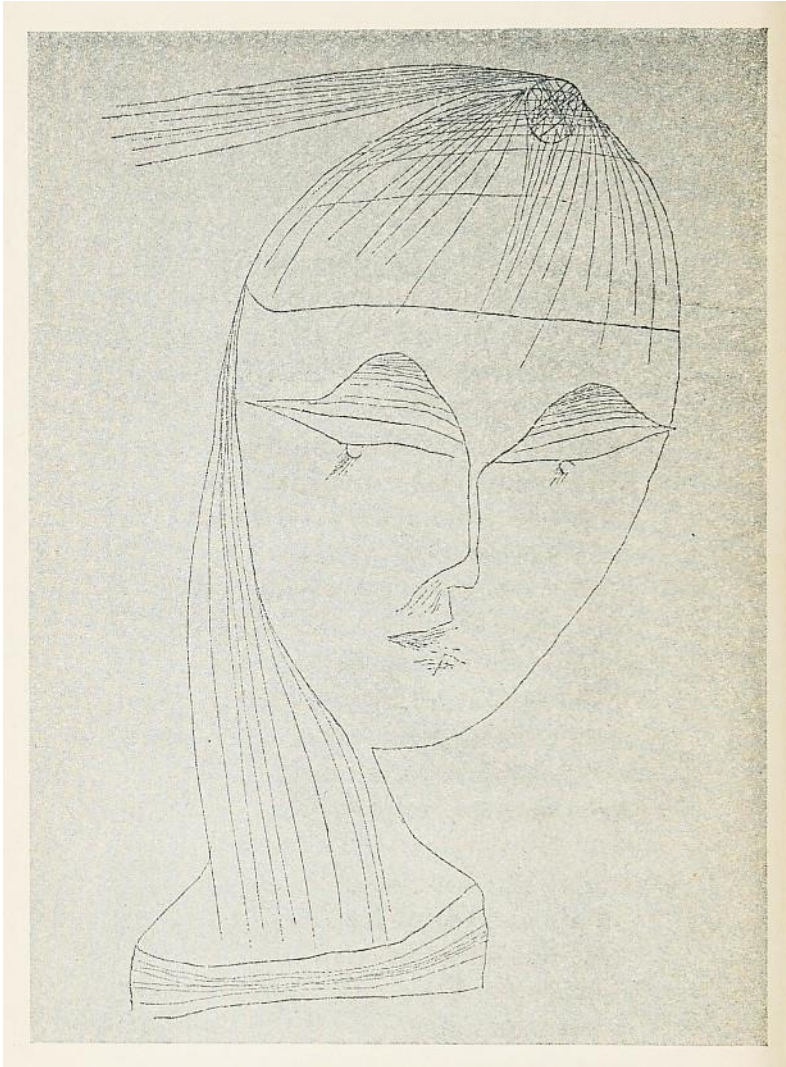
If she a little turn her head  
i know that i am wholly dead:  
nor ever did on such a throat  
the lips of Tristram slowly dote,  
La beale Isoud whose leman was.  
And if my lady look at me  
(with her eyes which like two elves  
incredibly amuse themselves)  
with a look of færie,  
perhaps a little suddenly  
(as sometimes the improbable  
beauty of my lady will)  
—at her glance my spirit shies  
rearing (as in the miracle  
of a lady who had eyes  
which the king's horses might not kill.)



But should my lady smile, it were  
a flower of so pure surprise  
(it were so very new a flower,  
a flower so frail, a flower so glad)  
as trembling used to yield with dew  
when the world was young and new  
(a flower such as the world had  
in Springtime when the world was mad  
and Launcelot spoke to Guenever,  
a flower which most heavy hung  
with silence when the world was young  
and Diarmid looked in Grania's eyes.)  
But should my lady's beauty play  
at not speaking (sontimes as

it will) the silence of her face  
doth immediately make  
in my heart so great a noise,  
as in the sharp and thirsty blood  
of Paris would not all the Troys  
of Helen's beauty: never did  
Lord Jason (in impossible things  
victorious impossibly)  
so wholly burn, to undertake  
Medea's rescuing eyes; nor he  
when swooned the white egyptian day  
who with Egypt's body lay.





Lovely as those ladies were

mine is a little lovelier.

And if she speak in her frail way,  
it is wholly to bewitch  
my smallest thought with a most swift  
radiance wherein slowly drift  
murmurous things divinely bright;  
it is foolingly to smite  
my spirit with the lithe free twitch  
of scintillant space, with the cool writhe  
of gloom truly which syncopate  
some sunbeam's skilful fingerings;  
it is utterly to lull  
with foliate inscrutable  
sweetness my soul obedient;  
it is to stroke my being with  
numbing forests frolicsome,  
fleetly mystical, aroam  
with keen creatures of idiom  
(beings alert and innocent  
very deftly upon which  
indolent miracles impinge)  
—it is distinctly to confute  
my reason with the deep caress  
of every most shy thing and mute,  
it is to quell me with the twinge  
of all living intense things.

Never my soul so fortunate  
is (past the luck of all dead men

and loving) as invisibly when  
upon her palpable solitude  
a furtive occult fragrance steals,  
a gesture of immaculate  
perfume—whereby (with fear aglow)  
my soul is wont wholly to know  
the poignant instantaneous fern  
whose scrupulous enchanted fronds  
toward all things intrinsic yearn,  
the immanent subliminal  
fern of her delicious voice  
(of her voice which always dwells  
beside the vivid magical  
impetuous and utter ponds  
of dream; and very secret food  
its leaves inimitable find  
beyond the white authentic springs,  
beyond the sweet instinctive wells,  
which make to flourish the minute  
spontaneous meadow of her mind)  
—the vocal fern, always which feels  
the keen ecstatic actual tread  
(and thereto perfectly responds)  
of all things exquisite and dead,  
all living things and beautiful.





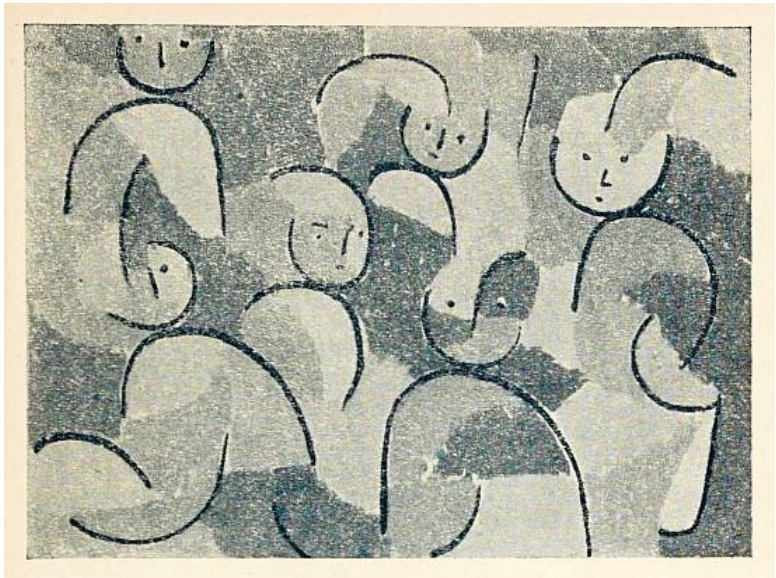
(Caliph and king their ladies had  
to love them and to make them glad,  
when the world was young and mad,  
in the city of Bagdad—

mine is a little lovelier  
than any of those ladies were.)

Her body is most beauteous,  
being for all things amorous  
fashioned very curiously  
of roses and of ivory.  
The immaculate crisp head  
is such as only certain dead  
and careful painters love to use  
for their youngest angels (whose  
praising bodies in a row  
between slow glories fleetly go.)  
Upon a keen and lovely throat  
the strangeness of her face doth float,  
which in eyes and lips consists  
—always upon the mouth there trysts  
curvingly a fragile smile  
which like a flower lieth (while  
within the eyes is dimly heard  
a wistful and precarious bird.)



Springing from fragrant shoulders small,  
ardent, and perfectly withal  
smooth to stroke and sweet to see  
as a supple and young tree,  
her slim lascivious arms alight  
in skilful wrists which hint at flight  
—my lady's very singular  
and slenderest hands moreover are  
(which as lilies smile and quail)  
of all things perfect the most frail.





(Whoso rideth in the tale  
of Chaucer knoweth many a pair  
of companions blithe and fair;  
who to walk with Master Gower  
in Confessio doth prefer  
shall not lack for beauty there,  
nor he that will amaying go  
with my lord Boccaccio—  
whoso knocketh at the door  
of Marie and of Maleore  
findeth of ladies goodly store  
whose beauty did in nothing err.  
If to me there shall appear  
than a rose more sweetly known,  
more silently than a flower,  
my lady naked in her hair—  
i for those ladies nothing care  
nor any lady dead and gone.)

Each tapering breast is firm and smooth  
that in a lovely fashion doth  
from my lady's body grow;  
as morning may a lily know,  
her petaled flesh doth entertain  
the adroit blood's mysterious skein  
(but like some passionate earlier  
flower, the snow will oft utter,  
whereof the year has perfect bliss—  
for each breast a blossom is,

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