

Cummings' Granddaughter

Cummings' granddaughter Elizabeth Aldred attended the Cummings sessions at the American Literature Association meetings in Boston. Bernard Stehle invited Elizabeth to attend our session on "Cummings and the Child," and she actually seemed to enjoy the proceedings, especially the photos Bernard showed of her mother (and Cummings' daughter), Nancy T. Andrews. After adjourning to the hotel bar for further talk and refreshment, we decided by acclamation to make Elizabeth the first ever honorary life member of the Cummings Society.

The First *Spring* Is Reborn (Electronically)

This summer, Bernard Stehle sent me an almost-complete set of the old series of *Spring* 1-10 (1981-1990). We had this set of the first *Spring* copied and converted those copies into electronic PDF files. Before making the CD available, I asked David Forrest, the editor of the first *Spring*, for permission to send the PDF files of the old series to interested EEC Society members. David enthusiastically consented, and now a CD of the entire old series of *Spring* is available to those who contribute (or have contributed) \$15 above their regular subscription.

Even a cursory glance at this *Spring* reveals some astonishing treasures. I say "astonishing" because the gems that David Forrest and his contributors (who included Norman Friedman, Richard S. Kennedy, George James Firmage, and D. Jon Grossman) carefully folded into the newsletter format are never less than surprising, humorous, and insightful. Aside from publishing accounts of the regular New York City meetings of the EEC Society, the first *Spring* printed announcements of various Cummings-related performances, letters from contributors, and short discussions and reviews. In addition, David Forrest would occasionally publish supplements to an issue, the most notable of which appeared with volume 3, number 4 (1984): a reproduction of all 16 pages of that very rare pamphlet *Him and the Critics*. The old series also printed letters from subscribers like Cummings translator D. Jon Grossman, as well as the occasional Cummings letter (or

book dedication as in issue 10.2)—a most welcome surprise. The discussions of elephants and inferiority complexes are not to be missed either. As Norman said in issue 2.2 (1982), the first *Spring* is much “more fun” (4) than an academic publication.

The Theatre of E. E. Cummings

In response to my inquiry, Peggy Fox, former editor at New Directions and Liveright, wrote to inform us that “there is indeed a valid contract for *The Theatre of E. E. Cummings* (*Him, Tom, Santa Claus, Anthropos*, etc.); however they [Liveright publishers] don’t seem to have a manuscript, but they will look further, including in George Firmage’s papers. [Former Cummings editor] Vic Schmalzer says that Firmage would have been working from copies of the Cummings papers which are, of course, at the Houghton Library at Harvard.” Peggy concludes that “Liveright/Norton does seem to be interested in publishing the plays if a proper manuscript can be found or prepared.” Of course, we applaud this welcome news and have since discovered that Liveright has found a proper manuscript, and that the volume is scheduled to be published in January 2013, with an Afterword by Norman Friedman. (This Afterword is substantially the same as the article “E. E. Cummings and the Theatre,” published in the current issue of *Spring*.)

*Speaking of Norman, on January 30, we received a late holiday / New Year’s note from Zelda. She writes: “In Norman’s words, we are not doing too badly for old coots. In Zelda’s words, we are hanging in here with our day-to-day functioning & joyous in our togetherness.”

* On May 25, Yasuo Fujitomi sent us a postcard from Tokyo: “Thank you very much for sending me *Spring* 17. The cover picture by Marion reminds me of my visits in 1986, ’88, ’92, and 2001. Maryette Charlton, a friend of Marion, always took me to Patchin Place.” (For more on Maryette Charlton, see “Cummings’ Desk” below.)

*Larry Chott’s note on receiving *Spring* 17 was shorter but somewhat more demonstrative: “Mike: Congratulations on New Series Number 17! It’s a lovefest. Larry.”

Cummings' Desk

Eve Kahn, who writes the Antiques column on Fridays for the *New York Times*, wrote at the end of June to alert us that Cummings' desk had been donated to Poets House in Battery Park City in Lower Manhattan [<http://www.poetshouse.org/>], and that she would soon be including in her column a short piece on the desk. (The piece, called "A Poet's Desk," appeared in the *Times* on July 7, 2011.) The link that she provided from DNAinfo.com noted that Poets House was co-founded by Elizabeth Kray, who met Cummings in the 1950s when she was assistant director of YMWHA Poetry Center. As Richard S. Kennedy notes, Kray "soon became a perceptive admirer and a friend who dropped in for tea every Friday afternoon at Patchin Place. She later founded Craymore Associates and became Cummings' agent for his readings" (*Dreams* 447).

The desk was donated to Poets House by Maryette Charlton, a friend of Marion's and caretaker of her photographs. Readers may remember Maryette's article, "Memories of Marion," that appeared in *Spring* 5 (1996). The desk itself is large and heavy, made in Boston around 1830. Eve Kahn wrote in her column:

Staff members and visitors often recite Cummings poems around the boxy, austere piece, at the end of long rows of bookshelves in the library. Its unpretentious design reinforces a basic lesson about how literary careers start. "You sit at a desk and you write your poem," Maggie Balistreri, the librarian, said. "It's very democratic."

Some veneer chips are missing, and a crack has formed in the mahogany. "It has some condition problems, but nothing too egregious," Jude Hughes, a furniture conservator, said. He spent a recent afternoon crawling around the desk with a flashlight, along with John Hays, a deputy chairman at Christie's.

"This is a virgin-growth, unbelievable slab of mahogany," in a wood variant called plum pudding, Mr. Hays said; dark spots like raisins are scattered across the lid. The furniture maker, the Boston woodworker William Fisk, stenciled his name on the airtight popular drawers. The poet, or perhaps his father, Edward, a Harvard professor, left a few ink stains in the cubbyholes.

As Eve notes, no doubt Cummings inherited the desk from his father, Edward Cummings (1861-1926), the Harvard sociology professor who had a second career as a Unitarian minister. This desk was surely one of Cummings' links to his father, of whom he wrote in the notes to the *six nonlectures*: "My father was a true father—he loved me. And because he loved me, I loved him: first as a child, with the love which is worship; then, as a youth, with the love that gives battle; last, as a man, with the love which understands" (quoted in Kennedy, *Revisited* 11 and *Dreams* 103).



A 2012 Cummings Calendar

Gail Kempler wrote in April to inform us of a 2012 E. E. Cummings wall calendar, issued in commemoration of 50th anniversary of the poet's death. The calendar's cover, as well as the month of October, feature a photo the Madison Church in Madison, NH, said to be the inspiration for Cummings' poem "i am a little church(no great cathedral)" (CP 749). Striking photos of other churches throughout the world appear above the other months of the year. The poem is printed on the back of the calendar, which may be ordered from amazon.com or <http://eecummings2012calendar.com/>.



At Long Last, a Cummings Stamp

Michael Dylan Welch e-mailed us with this welcome news: if the U. S. Postal Service survives until 2012, poet E. E. Cummings will be honored with a postage stamp of his own. Norman Friedman will certainly be pleased to hear that this stamp is finally about to become a reality, almost 20 years after he lobbied for a Cummings stamp to commemorate the centenary of the poet's birth. "Is will still occur" (CP 452).

The Cummings stamp will be one of ten that comprise what the postal service describes as "the Twentieth-Century Poets stamp pane." The ten poets honored on the stamp sheet are: Elizabeth Bishop, Joseph Brodsky, Gwendolyn Brooks, E. E. Cummings, Robert Hayden, Denise Levertov, Sylvia Plath, Theodore Roethke, Wallace Stevens, and William Carlos Williams.

The photograph of Cummings on the stamp was taken by Edward Weston in 1935.

Part of the announcement at the postal site beyondtheperf.com reads: "E. E. Cummings (1894-1962) expertly manipulated the rules of grammar, punctuation, rhyme, and meter to create poems that resembled modernist paintings. His works transformed notions of what a poem can do and delighted readers of all ages."



And another Stamp

A waka (tanka) poem from a book translated by Michael Dylan Welch and Emiko Miyashita (*100 Poets: Passions of the Imperial Court* from PIE Books in Tokyo, 2008, a translation of the thirteenth-century text *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu*) will be featured on the back of a cherry blossom stamp to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the cherry trees in Washington, D.C. The postal service will be printing 15,000,000 copies of the stamp, to be issued in the spring of 2012. The following poem will appear on the back side of the cherry blossom stamp. (Read more at beyondtheperf.com.)

ひさかたのひかりのどけき春の日にしづ心なく花の散るらん
hisakata no hikari nodokeki harunohi ni shizugokoro naku hana no chiruran

紀友則 Ki no Tomonori

the light filling the air
is so mild this spring day
only the cherry blossoms
keep falling in haste—
why is that so?

Ki no Tomonori

The News from Scholars, Poets, and Translators

Two of the contributors to this issue of *Spring* have recently published books:

*April Fallon's book of poetry, *Universe of Discourse*, is now available at Finishing Line Press. April has also recently presented papers on Cummings and burlesque and Cummings and Crazy Kat at the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900 and the American Literature Association conference.

*Thomas Fahy's book, *Staging Modern American Life: Popular Culture in the Experimental Theatre of Millay, Cummings, and Dos Passos*, was published in late October. Here is the publisher's description of the book:

The theatrical works of Millay, Cummings, and Dos Passos, which have largely been marginalized in discussions of theater history and literary scholarship, offer a hybrid theater that integrates the popular with the formal, the mainstream with the experimental. Fahy examines the integration of and challenges to popular culture found in their works and offers new readings with an eye to American cultural studies and the impact of mass entertainment on modern life.

*In January 2012, David V. Forrest will publish *SLOTS: Praying to the God of Chance* (Delphinium/Harper Collins). Part of the jacket copy for the book reads:

There is more to slots than fun, relaxation, the peace that comes dropping slow, and dreams of wish-fulfilling payouts and million dollar jackpots. To dwell among slots is to participate in a trance-like meditation. As the author puts it, the repeated ritual mantra and methodically spinning reels . . . is the slots player's communion with immensity, and I do not mean here an immense win." Ultimately it becomes a form of prayer at solitary shrines that often speak to the player in the consoling voices of exalted celebrities. Those who invest in the industry may not understand its intimate dynamics—although they freely employ pagan symbols—but they are aware that players are already plunking more than \$365 billion into slots, of which casinos keep about \$30 billion, and that 75-85% of casino profits comes from slots.

Harold Bloom says of the book. "In David Forrest's vision, the slot machine becomes a trope for the transcendence of desire."

*Mike O'Neill alerted us to a Clive James article from the May, 2011 issue of *Poetry Magazine*, "Product Placement in Modern Poetry." James wonders what poets like Cummings in the early twentieth century were up to when they included so many brand names in their poems, and concludes that "writers were taking on a fresh supply of vocabulary." See <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/article/241854>

*Etienne Terblanche has a contract with Rodopi publishers for a book whose working title is *E. E. Cummings: The Ecology of his Poetry*.

*In March, Thomas Dorsett sent us a copy of his chapbook of poems, *Spiders*. (Austin, TX: Black Buzzard P, 2009).

*T. P. Perrin has published *Snarge: Poems* (Shelbyville, KY: Wasteland Press, 2011). Perrin writes that the book contains “poems on subjects of nature, men and women in nature, music, American history (including a one-scene verse play with Thoreau as protagonist), modern technology, and humor.”

*Henry Denander has published *The Loulaki Bar and other Poems from Hydra*, a collection of his own poetry and artwork. Henry describes his book as “poems about life and spending time on a small Greek island; tales about food, poets, bugs, Henry Miller, electricians, cats, plumbers, music, and weather The title poem tells about an encounter with Leonard Cohen, sometime in the ’80s.”

*Aaron Moe has published three articles recently, all of them available in various formats online. The first, “Chaos & the ‘New’ Nature Poem: A Look at E. E. Cummings’ Poetry,” can be found by going to the CT Review site <http://www.ct.edu/ctreview/> and downloading a PDF file of the entire issue [volume 32, number 1 (Spring, 2010)]. (I could not find a separate PDF file for this article.) The article “Autopoiesis and Cummings’ Cat” appears in the online *Rupkatha Journal* [3.1 (2011): 110-120]. Although Aaron reports some dissatisfaction with the formatting of the pictures, this article is an excellent reading of “(im)c-a-t(mo)” (CP 655). The third article, “Trees, Ecophilia, & Ecophobia: A Look at Arboriculture along the Front Range Cities of Colorado,” appears in the online *Journal of Ecocriticism* [3.2 (2011)]. Aaron writes that this is a “creative nonfiction piece on my experiences as an arborist. It’s not really scholarly; it’s more of a blend between ecocritical ideas and personal anecdotes and some light discussion of arboriculture. I do, though, work in Cummings!! I mention his ‘(hush’ in the essay, and then discuss it in one of the end notes. I mention your insight that you shared with me at one of the past conferences, that *citi / zens* shows that even in the city, one can encounter the hushness of zen when encountering animals.” Your editor has only a vague memory of muttering something about “city zens,” but he’s happy to receive credit for the insight. [For more on “(hush)” (CP 600), see Aaron’s article in this issue of *Spring*.]

*Poet and translator Augusto de Campos sent us the latest incarnation of his translations of Cummings poems into Portuguese. Titled *Poem(a)s*, this edition translates 74 Cummings poems, with an appendix that reproduces correspondence from EEC.

*As ever, Gerald Locklin has been busy. Quite recently he published *You Need Never Look Out a Window: The Complete Coagula Poems* (Vol. 1). These poems are all evocations of or meditations on a specific art work, and all of them first appeared in *Coagula Art Journal*. Volume one reproduces these ekphrastic poems in chronological order of the artworks treated, “beginning with ancient Egypt, quickly working through the Dutch painters into the Impressionists and others before arriving at the halfway point of his coverage, abstract painting at the end of the 1950s.” Locklin has also recently reprinted *A Simpler Time A Simpler Place: Three Mid-Century Stories*. Gerry writes: “I don’t think I’ve ever written better than in the title novella.” Here’s a sample from that story:

Ellen sat waiting in the Buick while Fr. Dean Finn checked in at the motel office. He always registered them as Mr. and Mrs. George Adams of Syracuse, New York. There was no objection to a couple without luggage taking a room for a couple of hours at the Hit-the-Sack. The desk clerk, a poorly-shaven, perpetually smirking man of thirty-five lewd years, had managed, in the midst of an ambiance of sexuality which should have inoculated him against disgust, to cultivate a urinal of a mind. People came to his office thinking of their affair as a matter of love or fun or nature or bawdry or even mystical oneness. The desk clerk never allowed these patrons to raise him to their level of innocence. Rather, he saw to it that their ecstasies were not unashamed. His grin evoked for them the puritanism of their parents, the prurience of the adolescent gang, the hellfire of the preachers, the chancres of sex hygiene movies, the self-consciousness of the stag party. Finn hated the man; he was always tempted to sprinkle holy water on him.

Visit to Jacques Demarcq (and Thierry Gillyboeuf)

Your editor and his wife Jane would like to extend their thanks to Jacques Demarcq and Rachel Stella for their hospitality this summer while

we attended the T. S. Eliot Society conference in Paris. (For an abstract of my paper, “Cummings Rewrites Eliot,” see “Other Scholarly Presentations” below.) In addition to staying with one Cummings translator (Jacques), we were able to meet another, Thierry Gillyboeuf, for a long lunch.

Since Jacques lives in Montparnasse, I enjoyed a leisurely walk every day to the conference venue in the Latin Quarter. The walk took me east down the Boulevard Montparnasse, turning left at the Select (across from the Coupole), then following the Rue Vavin up to the Jardin de Luxembourg, through which I would stroll to reach the Boulevard St. Michel and the Latin Quarter. Just a bit past my turn at the Rue Vavin, at 125 Blvd. Montparnasse, is Librairie Tschann, which was (and is still?) owned by the sister of the wife of D. Jon Grossman, who translated *The Enormous Room* into French. (Jacques knew Grossman in the old days.) Thierry took us to the bookstore. Thierry said that Librairie Tschann is probably the only bookstore in France that has not one, but TWO photos of Cummings on the wall. Also, Jacques’ new translations of *No Thanks* and *is 5* were there, as well as Thierry’s translations of Wallace Stevens and Marianne Moore. I bought *Le flaneur des deux rives* (A Walker on Both Banks of the Seine), by Guillaume Apollinaire, which is about (appropriately enough) walking around Paris and noticing curious things.

In addition to the Tschann bookstore, we visited one other Parisian place with Cummings connections. On the first day of the conference, we had lunch at Au Père Tranquille, which, as all EEC fans know, is the setting for a scene in act III of *Him*. The café is on the east side of what used to be a vast outdoor market called Les Halles and now is a site in perpetual redevelopment. (In the play, Him carries a cabbage that he has just bought at the market.) The café fare was superb—however, unlike the drunken and rather obnoxious imbibers in Cummings’ play, we limited ourselves to one glass of wine each.

Jacques gave us a copy of the journal *Alliage* (May 2011) in which his article “Un poète contre la science: E. E. Cummings” appears. Jacques also presented us with a copy of *Nervaliennes*, a book of extended poetic and fantastic variations on the writings of French Romantic poet and eccentric Gérard de Nerval.

Thierry said that his latest project is a translation of the journals of Thoreau, in their entirety. He figures this task will take him 10 years or so, and when he has finished, his publisher has promised him a trip to Concord and Walden Pond.

As for Cummings translations, now that Jacques has published his translation of *is 5* and *No Thanks*, when he and Thierry complete and publish their proposed translations of *XAIPE*, *W [ViVa]* and *I x I*, then, as Thierry writes, “all of EEC’s collections of poems will be put into French. Rather good, no?” In addition, of course, Jacques continues to work at the monumental task of translating *EIMI*. And at the beginning of the year, a theatre group asked Thierry and Jacques to translate *Him*—whether that translation will see the light of day is anyone’s and no one’s guess.

The following chapters from Jacques’ translation of *EIMI* have appeared in the neo-dadaist Parisian journal *Luna Park*:

Vendredi 15, *Luna Park* 3, 2006 [“Friday 15” (61-73)]

Mer 13 [mai], *Luna Park* 4, 2008 [“Wed. 13” (35-50)]

Mar 26 mai, *Luna Park* 5, 2009 [“Tues. 26 mai” (194-206)]

Ven 29 mai, *Luna Park* 6, 2011 [“Fri. 29 mai” (228-238)]

Meanwhile, Thierry has been warming up for the prodigious labor of translating Thoreau’s *Journals* by translating numerous other works of Thoreau. Most notable among his many translations are: *De la marche* [“Walking”] (2003), *La Vie sans principe* [“Life without Principles”] (2004), *De l’esclavage: Plaidoyer pour John Brown* [“A Plea for Captain John Brown”] (2006), and *Je suis simplement ce que je suis: Lettres à Harrison G.O. Blake* [*Letters to a Spiritual Seeker*] (2007).

Books and Publications by Society Members and Friends

Cowen, John Edwin. *Mathematics of Love*. Cochran, GA: Anaphora Literary Press, October 2011. [Poems]

Cummings, E. E. *The Theatre of E. E. Cummings*. Ed. George J. Firmage. Afterword Norman Friedman. New York: Liveright, forthcoming January 2013.

—. *No Thanks*. Trans. Jacques Demarcq. Caen, Normandy: Editions Nous, 2011.

—. *font 5*. Trans. of *is 5* by Jacques Demarcq. Caen, Normandy: Editions Nous, 2011.

—. *Poem(a)s*. 2nd ed. Trans. Augusto de Campos. Campinas SP, Brazil: Unicamp, 2011. [Translation into Portuguese of 74 Cummings poems, with an appendix that reproduces correspondence from EEC.]

- Demarcq, Jacques. "Un poète contre la science: E. E. Cummings." *Alliage* 68 (May 2011): 25-28.
- . *Nervaliennes*. Paris: José Corti, 2010. [Poetry, stories, fantasy centering on the figure of the poet Gérard de Nerval]
- Denander, Henry. *The Loulaki Bar and other Poems from Hydra*. Calumet, MI: Miskwabik P, 2009. [Poetry and artwork]
- Dorsett, Thomas. *Spiders*. Austin, TX: Black Buzzard P, 2009. [Poems]
- Fahy, Thomas. *Staging Modern American Life: Popular Culture in the Experimental Theatre of Millay, Cummings, and Dos Passos*. London / New York: Palgrave Macmillan., 2011.
- Fallon, A. D. *Universe of Discourse*. Georgetown, KY: Finishing Line Press, September, 2011. [Poems]
- Forrest David V. *SLOTS: Praying to the God of Chance*. Delphinium / Harper Collins. Forthcoming, January, 2012.
- James, Clive. "Product Placement in Modern Poetry." *Poetry Magazine* (May, 2011). Web. [Discusses brand names in "POEM,OR BEAUTY HURTS MR. VINAL" (CP 228).]
- Moe, Aaron. "Autopoiesis and Cummings' Cat." *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 3.1 (2011): 110-120. Web.
- . "Trees, Ecophilia, & Ecophobia: A Look at Arboriculture along the Front Range Cities of Colorado." *The Journal of Ecocriticism: A New Journal of Nature, Society and Literature* 3.2 (2011): 72-82. Web.
- Locklin, Gerald. *You Need Never Look Out a Window: The Complete Coagula Poems*. Vol. 1. Ed. Tom Callinan. Seattle: CreateSpace, 2011.
- . *A Simpler Time A Simpler Place: Three Mid-Century Stories*. Seattle: CreateSpace, 2011.
- Perrin, T. P. *Snarge: Poems*. Shelbyville, KY: Wasteland Press, 2011.

Cummings on YouTube

*Professor Christina Giacona of the University of Oklahoma sent us the following link to a clever video of a setting of "who knows if the moon's" (CP 202) by a group called Good King Friday:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIMF76OKUtg> .

*Augusto de Campos, Brazilian concrete poet and long-time Cummings translator, also sent us a link to his reading / performance of his translation

of “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r” (CP 396), featuring music by his son, Cid Campos: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZJfOPuruK4>

De Campos’ performance of his poem “Pérolas para Cummings,” which appeared in *Spring* 4 (1995), may also be viewed and heard on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZV4MbI2BZg>

A non-video color reproduction of “Pérolas para Cummings”—with a translation and a short commentary—may be found on the *Spring* web site. See <http://www.gvsu.edu/english/cummings/perolas.htm>.

Björk and Cummings

In August Franck Liu alerted us to a videoed performance by the Icelandic singer and songwriter Björk of her tune “Sun in My Mouth,” an adaptation of Cummings’ mysterious early poem “i will wade out” (CP 68). You can find the video on YouTube. Björk has recorded two other adaptations of Cummings poems, “it may not always be so;and i say” (CP 146) [on *Medúlla*], and the third stanza from “Belgium” (CP 876), a song that Björk calls “Mother Heroic.” Performances of these songs may also be found on YouTube. For more on Björk’s adaptations of Cummings, see Emília Barna’s article in the essay collection *Words into Pictures*:

Barna, Emília. “ ‘with chasteness of sea-girls . . .’ Björk’s Adaptation of E. E. Cummings’ Poetry.” *Words into Pictures: E. E. Cummings’ Art Across Borders*. Ed. Jiří Flajšar and Zénó VERNYIK. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007. 170-186.

Franck also alerted us a February 2011 blog entry by poet Joe Brainard, called (in unfortunate lowercase), “Bjork Interprets e.e. cummings.”

EEC Collections, Small and Large

Bibliophiles will be interested to hear that this summer book collector and bibliographer Michael Broomfield offered a large collection of Cummings books and ephemera for sale through Clouds Hill Books (New York). The breadth of this collection is indeed impressive. In addition to the usual multiple first editions of Cummings’ books, many of them signed, the collection contains “uncorrected proof copies of *Selected Poems* 1923-

1958 (1960) and *73 Poems* (1963), the broadsides *Pax* [2] (1956), *Christmas Tree* (1960), and “little tree” (1961); Cummings’s own copy of *New Poems* 1944 (1944); a signed proof copy of *The Case of Ezra Pound* (1948); recordings; exhibition catalogues; and original artwork including a watercolor self-portrait [n.d.] and a pencil sketch inscribed to Marion Morehouse [n.d.]” [Your editor notes, however, that there is no copy of the very rare pamphlet *Him and the Critics* (1927). But see “The First *Spring* Is Reborn” above.] Although many items have already been sold, interested collectors may request more information and a catalogue from Clouds Hill Books at cloudshill@cloudshillbooks.com.

Another smaller and more personal collection has also recently come to our notice. This collection was not bought and paid for in the usual manner, but gathered by corresponding with the alive poet himself. In July, Bill West e-mailed us, sending scans of his father’s Cummings collection, which consists of five postcards and two Christmas cards from Cummings. The first Christmas card is from 1960, a reprinting in green ink of the poem “little tree.” The second card is from 1961, reproducing a Cummings pastel drawing of a Christmas tree. The five postcards date from 1959 to 1962—they are all short and rather cryptic replies to letters and poems that Mr. West Sr. sent to the poet. (One reply reads in its entirety: “good for Eve!”) These replies could probably be clarified by consulting the four letters to Cummings by Mr. West that reside in the Cummings collection at the Houghton Library. Interested researchers may look up the following: MS Am 1892 (923): Letters to E. E. Cummings: West, Bill C. 4 letters; 1960-1961 & [n.d.].

Bill West’s e-mail to us about his father is also of some interest:

From: Bill West
To: <websterm@gvsu.edu>
Date: 7/14/2011 9:07 PM
Subject: a small collection of missives and cards from E. E. Cummings

dear professor Webster,

E. E. Cummings . . . was my father's favorite poet and they traded poetry and cards over a period of time from 1959 until 1962. My father, William C. West, got his Ph.D. degree from Northwestern University in 1939 (his dissertation was on “Elizabethan Love Po-

etry”) . . . and he went on to have a distinguished career with the CIA. I know, strange. (10 years of which we spent in Berlin 1952-1962) hence the NY APO addresses [on the postcards]. He passed away in 2006 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Only in the last few years have I started to take a more worldly look at some of the items I was bequeathed by my father. In 2007 I sold letters from Hitler to Paul Joseph Goebbels that he had confiscated from P. J's brother when his patrol of Nazi hunters stopped a train on which said brother was fleeing at the end of WWII. My father was then head of military security at the Nuremburg trials.

If you are at all interested in this “stuff” please let me know what you think.

sincerely,

William C. West Jr.

Bill Junior's father seems to have led quite an interesting life. I wonder if he said anything to EEC about his jobs as Nuremberg trial security head or CIA agent.

Poesie d'amore in Taormina

A recital of poems by E. E. Cummings taken from the book *Poesie d'amore*, translated by Salvatore Di Giacomo, was held on 5th of January at the Mazzullo Foundation for the Arts in Taormina, Sicily. The poems were recited by the actor Luca Fiorino, accompanied by the young harpists Sabrina and Simona Palazzolo. Participants at the event included Milena Romeo, Francesco Bonardelli, Maria Froncillo Nicosia, and Sergio Di Giacomo. Alongside the recital the artist Eliseo Laganà exhibited his “poetic representations,” paintings which display verses from Cummings' poems and illustrations inspired by the poetry. One of Laganà's paintings, “Dive for Dreams,” appears on our cover, with the gracious permission of the artist.

A review of Salvatore's translation has appeared in the British journal *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 47.1 (2011): 107. Here is the review:

CUMMINGS, E. E. *Poesie d'amore*. Translated by Salvatore di Giacomo. Florence: Le lettere, 2009. 141 pp. €19.50. ISBN 9–788860–871855.

The American poet E. E. Cummings (1894–1863) is one of the most challenging to translate, given his complex poetic texts which were strongly influenced by modernist writers and closely related to avant-garde styles. In prefacing the volume, Maria Luisa Spaziani likens the relationship between the original texts and their (previously published) translations into any language to the difference between the flames of hell and a mere painting of them. The only way to enjoy and feel Cummings' poetry, she adds, is to dive into its "ocean of signs and figures until the moment of abandonment" (6). It is an enterprise of love and not one for the intellect.

Salvatore di Giacomo has indeed dived into the flames of hell by taking on the challenge and has come out slightly burnt at times, but whole. His new volume of Italian translations, *Poesie d'amore*, demonstrates a capacity to feel and mould Cummings' language and poetic experience into the less concise Italian language, and yet create a surprising result whereby an Italian reader can come close to feeling, touching and seeing, more than reading, Cummings' visions. The volume comprises translations of some of the most beautiful love poems by this American author who has not been translated as extensively as he deserved and still deserves. Some poems come with annotations. The volume concludes with a short essay by Michael Webster, an essay by di Giacomo on his translating choices, and a short bibliography on E. E. Cummings. All in all, *Poesie d'amore* is a delightful book to read and to return to.

Performances, Celebrations, Talks, CDs, and Scholarly Presentations

*From May 1 to July 15, 2011 Laura Ruby presented an exhibition of prints called "I'm Always Thinking of Chaucer"—"a series of prints that incorporates and interweaves Geoffrey Chaucer's medieval *Canterbury Tales*—his narration, his story's pilgrims, and the stories those pilgrims told—with the contemporary stories and the poem "Say Jazz" that Tony Quagliano wrote of modern-day literary and jazz pilgrims. The series is about medieval manuscripts, early books, and musicians—and twentieth and twenty-first century poetry, jazz, and painting."

*Shortly after the ALA conference in June 2011, Bryan Page and friends performed a concert titled “Square Root of 25 Poems,” with texts by E. E. Cummings and music by Bryan Page. The concert presented five poems set for Tenor, Baritone & Bass soloists, muted trumpet, banjo, and string bass at Waltham Government Center, Waltham, MA. Bryan writes that the “project actually started with the black bean soup poem [CP 1023], and grew from there; what a GREAT poem!” He noted that the concert was recorded—if you’d like a copy, try contacting him at <http://www.bryanpagecomposer.com/index.html>.

*The filmmaker Andrea Melville wrote to inform us of a project that she is beginning: a documentary film on Cummings with the working title *the vOice of your eyEs - the poetry AND paintings of E.E. Cummings*. Melville recently completed the film *Brush and Pen: Artists and Writers of the White Mountains, 1800-1900*.

E. E Cummings Society Presentations at the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900, February 24-26, 2011

Modernist Cummings, Reading Form, and Writing History (Panel 1)

Chair: Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University

- Aaron M. Moe, Washington State University “Autopoiesis & Cummings’ Cat: An Exploration of (im)c-a-t(mo)”
- Gillian Huang-Tiller, University of Virginia at Wise “Repeating ‘iness’: The Topology of Lines and Cummings’ Sonnetry of Time in *95 Poems*”

Modernist Cummings, Reading Form, and Writing History (Panel 2)

Chair: Gillian Huang-Tiller, University of Virginia at Wise

- April Fallon, Kentucky State University “TO BE INTENSELY ALIVE: Burlesque as Cummings’ Aesthetic Model”
- James Dempsey, Worcester Polytechnic Institute “*The Dial* Context: Scofield Thayer’s and Cummings’ Textual Relations”
- Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University “Learning to be Modernist: Some Cummings Letters to Scofield Thayer”

E. E Cummings Society Presentations at the American Literature Association Annual Conference, Boston, May 26-29, 2011

Session 1 Cummings and the Child

Chair: Gillian Huang-Tiller, University of Virginia at Wise

1. "His Dream, Her Reality: Two Principles of Mental Functioning in E. E. Cummings' *Him*," Simon Powers-Schaub, Grand Valley State University
2. "*Lugete*: The Divine Lost and Found Child in Cummings," Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University
3. "Researches on Nancy T. Andrews: The Visual Record in Brian McDermott's Family Albums," Bernard F. Stehle, Community College of Philadelphia

Session 2 The "small eye poet" among the Moderns

Chair: Millie Kidd, Mount St. Mary's College

1. "'A Foreword to Krazy': E. E. Cummings' Love of the 'Lively Art' of Krazy Kat," April Fallon, Kentucky State University
2. "The American Small-Scale in the Poetry of E. E. Cummings and Marianne Moore," Kaitlin Mondello, Stetson University and Daytona State College
3. "Cummings in Paris (1921-1923): More than Surviving among Communist Demonstrations, Joyce, and Dada," Jacques Demarcq, Independent Scholar

Other Scholarly Presentations

Abstracts from the Eighth International Symposium on Iconicity in Language and Literature, 16-18 June 2011; Linnaeus University, Växjö, Sweden [<http://es-dev.uzh.ch/en/conferences/index.php>]

1. "Thick and Thin in T. S. Eliot's 'The Hippopotamus' "
- Etienne Terblanche, North West University

Studies of iconicity in literature have been paying fair (although not exhaustive) attention to the modernist poet E. E. Cummings (Heusser,

Webster, Terblanche), but little if any to his contemporary poet T. S. Eliot. The iconic study of his poetry beckons from the poems themselves. For instance, *The Waste Land* employs onomatopoeia, accentuated blank space, and a Sanskrit patterning which mimes wholeness. As part of a larger project that is in the process of examining Eliot's iconic limits and values, this paper briefly puts into focus one aspect of responding to the poet in this manner. It makes an iconic reading of his minor 1920 poem "The Hippopotamus" against the actuality of concrete being on earth. The sound-forms in this poem, it will be posited, carefully mime the ironic twist that it carries with regard to matter, materialism, earthly being, and the notion of spiritual eternity. The poem plays significantly with [ʌ]- and [I] sounds as well as [OI], [eI], and [ʤ], generally attaching the lower-pitched sounds to the hippo and the higher ones to the church. But this is done ironically, so that organic disgust related to the hippo—and carried by the iconic sound [ʌ] in particular—is shown to be celestial, while the church's shrill celestial aspirations are shown to be dubious and stagnant. At some stages (notably stanzas 7 & 8), this size-sound-symbolism (naming) switches to its opposite conditions with fine modernist ease, as will be demonstrated. This has the effect of breaking the irony to show that the poem means business when it says that the hippo enjoys the true spirit.

Overall, "The Hippopotamus" ironically suggests that the materialistic church will not go to heaven, while the material and hoarse flesh and blood hippo will. The said sound-symbolic device carefully imbues this irony with concrete poetic meaning, as the paper will conclude: a singular imagic iconicity is at work which mimes the actual sizes of the spiritual conditions. And this evolves, so to speak, into a diagrammatic iconicity which mimes the process of going to heaven. The paper concludes that even in the echelons of "high" modernist poetry the iconicity of size-sound symbolism plays a vital, creative role, and one infers that the generic notion that modernism in poetry is "deracinated" from nature (Jonathan Bate 2000) needs to be critically revisited, while the study of iconicity, as in the case of this poem, provides an exact avenue for the pursuit of this important revisitation.

2. "Essence and Entropy: Iconicity in the Poetry of William Carlos Williams and E. E. Cummings"

Martin Heusser, University of Zurich

The visuality of modernist poetry is characterized by a strange heterogeneity. On the one hand there is a rich diversity of imagic and diagrammatic iconicity that complements and enhances the linguistic level, while on the other hand many texts appear visually flamboyant but refuse to yield decipherable visual information. Why would that be so? Despite claims to the contrary, the Modernists yearn for a visionary world of language – like the Romantics before them. What they are trying to evoke through their texts is a sort of non- or proto-linguistic experience. The words on a page are supposed to act upon the mind of the readers not by way of linguistic signification but by visual immersion. It is such a process that Bob Brown has in mind when he exults “I bathe in Apollinaire.” To allow such – quite sensual – abandon, the linguistic aspect of poetic discourse, that is its sense and signification, is systematically put under erasure by means of visual opacity or even entropy.

The issue of meaning – or rather its precarious nature – is reflected upon explicitly by the majority of Modernist poets: William Carlos Williams refers to it in “The Great American Novel”: “Break the words. Words are indivisible crystals. One cannot break them—Awu tsst grang splith gra pragh og bm—Yes, one can break them.” Bob Brown, characteristically, takes things one step further when he announces “I don’t mean maybe breakemup words I mean smashum.” And E. E. Cummings shows the same fundamental diffidence in language when he contends that poetry is “that which neither means nor unmeans but IS.” The result of this highly ambiguous attitude towards meaning is, I would like to argue, a visual poetics that oscillates unstillably between essence and entropy.

3. “The Iconicity in Cummings’ Poem ‘bright’ ”

Mírían dos Santos, Luicana Coutinho Pagliarini de Souza, and Maria Ogécia Drigo, University of Sorocaba, Brazil (UNISO)

In this talk we present a semiotic analysis of “brIght” (CP 455), a poem by E. E. Cummings. The analysis will be based on Charles Sanders Peirce’s (1839–1914), speculative grammar, aimed at showing how the word, usually, predominates as a symbol, in this poem it goes through graphic deconstructions and thus the similarity relation with the sign object (poem) becomes clear, in other words, the poem emerges as an icon [difficult structure]. The relevance of these ideas is the possibility of showing that the verbal language may get rid of the conventional and the arbitrariness.

Abstract from The T. S. Eliot Society's 32nd Annual Meeting, 18–22 July 2011, Institut du Monde Anglophone, Université de Paris III Sorbonne nouvelle

“Cummings Rewrites Eliot”

Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University

“I have a very high opinion of Mr. Cummings as a poet, in spite of my dislike of his typography.”

—T. S. Eliot to Charles Norman (1957)

This talk will restore Eliot to a Cummings context (and vice-versa), showing how Eliot was a particularly appropriate poetic mentor for Cummings because both sought to widen and deepen the forms of expression available to modern poets and because both fought against the culture of their genteel upbringing. Although it is a mistake to separate a “high,” impersonal, learned, allusive, and classic Eliot from a “low” personal, spontaneous, idiosyncratic, and romantic Cummings, the two poets did differ in temperament, poetic technique, and political and religious views. And though both shared an obsession with finding new forms of expression, they differed also on how far a poet could push innovative techniques and still remain connected to the tradition.

Cummings rewrote Eliot into his own idiom and experience, both as poetry and prose. Cummings’ serious formal transformations of Eliot also almost invariably include elements of play, satire, and sly allusion. In his only published critical essay on any writer, Cummings discussed the techniques by which Eliot creates an intense and vivid individuality in his work. He praised Eliot’s “directing” of the “thoroughly built thing” while also praising the “sensitivity” (28) of some very Cummings-esque lines about the moon from “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” (*Miscellany* 28-29). Cummings and Eliot differ, however, in the ways they approach the dislocation of language: Eliot dislocates images, phrases, and emotions from a personal and traditional storehouse, creating sometimes parodic structures of allusion and metaphor, while Cummings dislocates not so much a tradition as the basic elements of language—syntax, words, and letters—to make imagist poems of life, death, and rebirth that are for the most part devoid of literary references.

Concluding Quotation

“the 2nd ‘world war’ finds me trying to cheer up my native land; I feel responsible to certain anonymous-or-otherwise admirers”

—E. E. Cummings, February 14, 1948
(qtd. in Kennedy, *Dreams* 400)