

The Theatre of E. E. Cummings Published

In the News, Notes & Correspondence section of *Spring 18*, we reported that a new edition of *The Theatre of E. E. Cummings* was in the works, and—behold!—the book appeared on schedule at the beginning of 2013. This book, which contains the plays *Him*, *Anthropos*, and *Santa Claus*, along with the ballet *Tom*, provides readers with a handy edition of Cummings' theatre works. The book also has an afterword by Norman Friedman, "E. E. Cummings and the Theatre," which we printed in *Spring 18* (94-108).

The Thickness of the Coin

In February, 2012 we received a card from Zelda and Norman Friedman. They wrote:

We are okay and want to tell you that the older we get the more skillful and wise E. E. Cummings becomes. Zelda has been trying to locate the line "love makes the little thickness of the coin" and came upon it accidentally in "hate blows a bubble of despair into" across the page in *Complete Poems* from "love is more thicker than forget"—the poem where she thought it might be.

The Cummings-Clarke Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society

*In October 2012, Peter Steinberg of the Massachusetts Historical Society wrote to inform us that some of the Cummings-Clarke family papers containing "some materials by E. E. Cummings" had "recently been processed and made available for research." Peter sent us the following "link to the finding aid / collection guide in hopes that you or your society members might be interested in learning about [the papers and] visiting the MHS": <http://www.masshist.org/findingaids/doc.cfm?fa=fa0367>.

*Later, in 2013, Steven Katz alerted us to an announcement of an exhibition at the MHS called: "Discovery of Early E. E. Cummings Works at the

Massachusetts Historical Society.” [See: http://www.masshist.org/news/story.php?entry_id=822.] Here is part of the announcement:

The MHS is delighted to announce the discovery of childhood correspondence and artwork by Edward Estlin Cummings (1894-1962), better known as poet E. E. Cummings. The writings and sketches, dating from 1900 to 1914, showcase the poet's early experiments with words and illustrations. Uncovered while processing a large collection of Cummings family papers with support from the Peck Stacpoole Foundation, these are likely some of the earliest works by E. E. Cummings.

Among the writings found is a story about life on Joy Farm, his family's retreat in New Hampshire, a 1907 report on “Our Visit to the Public Library,” and the 1914 poem “From a Newspaper.” A sketch of a rhinoceros and soldier drawn about 1902 also includes several lines of text. Cummings writes, “THIS. RHINOCEROUS. IS. YOUNG. MARCHING BY. A. SOLDIER. He TELLS-TALES TO-HIM”. Keepsakes include a self-portrait entitled “Edward E. Cummings, the animal emperor, famous importer, trainer, and exhibitor of wild animals” and three penmanship exercise books from about 1902. Other drawings and paintings include ink blots, watercolors, and sketches in pen and pencil of cowboys and Indians, boats, the “world's tallest tower,” wild west shows, hunting expeditions, locomotives, zoos, circuses, elephants, and house plans.

In addition, the announcement notes that the papers of Cummings' father Edward Cummings “have now been fully organized and described in a collection guide.” And although this collection has been available for research for some time, “the project to describe the collection in more detail has highlighted the importance of these childhood poems and sketches.”

Cummings Letters at Poets House

Another item in the News, Notes & Correspondence section of *Spring* 18 reported on Maryette Charlton's donation of Cummings' desk to Poets House in Battery Park City in Lower Manhattan [poetshouse.org/] (“Cummings' Desk” 174-175). Poets House was founded in 1985 by poet

Stanley Kunitz and Betty Kray, who was Cummings' agent for his readings (as she was for many other poets). A 2012 exhibit at Poets House called "Bettissima: Treasures from the Elizabeth Kray Archives," featured letters to Kray from W.H. Auden, Elizabeth Bishop, T.S. Eliot, Galway Kinnell, George Oppen, James Wright, and of course, E. E. Cummings. One of the three letters from Cummings in the exhibit describes his delight at her expressing a wish to purchase one of his paintings. Cummings ends the letter by claiming to be astonished that Kray would want one of the paintings of "that well nigh fabulously shallwesay nonillustrious artist demioccasionally semiknown as smalls smalls kew-mangs." Cummings asserts here that his reputation as a painter is so small that even his initials and last name are expunged or distorted in the press. (A short article on the exhibit, "E.E. Cummings' Letters Shown for First Time at Poets House," may be accessed at DNAinfo.com.)

Cummings Letters at the University of Washington

Michael Dylan Welch discovered (quite by accident) "that there is a little trove of Cummings materials" at the University of Washington. The materials (mostly letters) are in the papers of poet Eve Triem (1902-1960). A finding aid for the Triem collection may be accessed at <http://digital.lib.washington.edu/findingaids/view?docId=TriemEve1959.xml>. Michael writes: "I hope to be able to arrange a visit to go see the papers, and if I can manage it, I might write a short description of everything for *Spring*. There are 17 letters from Cummings (1946-1955), plus 26 post-cards (1947-1962), and 33 items from Marion Cummings (1957-1968, plus undated material). Probably nothing surprising, but who knows. I'll do my best to check it out."

Fairy Tales News, with a Pencil Update

*Aaron Moe alerted us to this very good blog post on Cummings' *Fairy Tales* (1965):

Winter, Ariel S. "E. E. Cummings: Fairy Tales." *We Too Were Children, Mr. Barrie: Being a Compendium of Children's Books by Twentieth Century "Adult" Authors Currently Out of Print*. 27 Sept. 2011. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

(See Aaron's article, "An Ontological Crisis: Rethinking E. E. Cummings' *Fairy Tales*," in this issue of *Spring*.)

*In addition to publishing (in the premier ecocritical journal *ISLE*, no less) "Cummings' Urban Ecology: An Exploration of *EIMI*, *No Thanks*, & the Cultivation of the Ecological Self," Aaron has started an online journal called *Merwin Studies: Poetry | Poetics | Ecology*. Aaron blogs about Merwin at www.merwinstudies.com/blog.html and about everything else (including Cummings) at www.aaronmoe.wordpress.com. I liked reading the entry "People Who Claim They Don't 'Get' Poetry."

*Yasuo Fujitomi wrote on June 1 that "five young Japanese poets (including me) are now translating the *Fairy Tales* of EEC. I was given this book by Marion." He noted that he enjoyed reading in *Spring* 18 the news about Cummings' desk being donated by Maryette Charlton to Poets House in New York. Then he added with fine humor: "Well, I have A SHORT PENCIL USED BY EEC, which was presented to me by Maryette. I would like to send you a picture of HIS PENCIL someday."

Ad Reinhardt "Attacks E. E. Cummings for comments on Krazy Kat"

Jacques Demarcq sent us a photo of abstract expressionist painter Ad Reinhardt's 1946 review of Cummings' "A Foreword to Krazy" (*Miscellany* 323-328). Titled "Hey, E. E. Cummings, don't do that to Krazy!" the review appeared in the now-defunct New York newspaper called *PM*. Reinhardt objects to what he calls Cummings' "active argument for passivity, your palming off some fillossiffical-idealism on us, your old *love will find a way* business and *the meek shall inherit the eaSrth* stuff." Speaking for the *PM* collective, Reinhardt further says that "we see no irreconcilable conflict between the individual and the collective, and we know freedom is achieved through form and discipline. We are against people who push other people around." He concludes: "We all need to escape occasionally from our day-to-day drubbing. But *Krazy Kat* is no tool of vested-interests and sourpusses with extra-artistic axes to grind."

Certainly Cummings' view of the cartoon as political allegory might be questioned. However, Reinhardt's characterization of Cummings' view of Krazy as a passive tool of the bosses misses Cummings' presentation of Krazy as a third—a he-she who goes beyond the pairs of opposites of Pupp

and Ignatz. This “love will find a way” path could be seen as a kind of mysticism rather than passive acceptance of a philosophical idealism (i.e., the opiate of the intellectuals) that allows the ruling class to go on ruling. And Reinhardt, for all his talk of the necessary coalition between the individual and the collective achieved through form and discipline, is still very much for an autonomous art where one can escape “to an imaginary realm beyond space-time.” Perhaps this art-world escapism is not so different from Cummings’ Krazy who is “a spiritual force, inhabiting a merely real world.”

Buffalo Bill’s Semi-Defunct

Larry Chott informs us that “Cummings’ poem ‘Buffalo Bill ’s’ (CP 90) is recited (fully but inaccurately) in the movie *Man on the Train* (2011), with Donald Sutherland and Larry Mullen, Jr.”

Trig and Yegg Updates

William Harmon says this about his efforts to update the OED: “I noticed that the latest citation in the OED for ‘trig’ was pretty early, so I submitted info on the word in ‘i sing of Olaf glad and big’ (CP 340). The dictionary has about 100 Cummings items, but I’m sure there must be hundreds more.” Later, Bill sent them a note about “inley” (distorting “inly” in the direction of “in [Robert E.] Lee”), which is just one of the remarkable bits of wordplay in “remarked Robinson Jefferson” (CP 323). (Notice, for example, how “inley” rhymes with “McKinley.”) Next, Bill tackled “yeggs” (CP 259), and I pointed him to Robert Wegner’s classic treatment of the term in his “Where Are the Yeggs of Yesteryear” in *Spring* 5. Wegner debunked the OED’s notion that a “yegg” is slang for “safe-cracker,” noting that such a usage does not fit the context of EEC’s poem. (For the passing of Wegner, see the “Memorials” at the beginning of this issue of *Spring*.)

The News from Scholars, Poets, and Translators

* Glen MacLeod alerted us to a review in the December 10, 2011 *New York Times* of a concert celebrating Elliott Carter’s 103rd birthday. In his review titled “A Composer Still Vital in His Second Century,” *Times* critic An-

thony Tommasini wrote that the concert “offered the premiere of the major new score [Carter] composed last year, “A Sunbeam’s Architecture,” an inventive, urgent 12-minute work for tenor and a 19-piece instrumental ensemble, which sets six poems by E. E. Cummings, offering Mr. Carter’s astute take on the elusive, seemingly fanciful words. The young tenor, Nicholas Phan sang with sweet, full sound; rhythmic punch; and impressively clear diction. The excellent conductor Ryan McAdams drew a vibrant performance from an ensemble that featured major artists long associated with Mr. Carter and younger musicians who seemed thrilled to be a part of the evening.”

Almost a year to the date after this concert, Carter died in New York City. According to his Wikipedia page, Carter “was extremely productive in his later years, publishing more than 40 works between the ages of 90 and 100, and over 14 more after he turned 100 in 2008. His last work, *Epigrams* for piano trio, was completed on August 13, 2012. As Cummings wrote, “you shall above all things be glad and young” (CP 484).

*Just into the new year, Lewis Turco wrote with news about three new publications in 2012: *Dialects of the Tribe: Postmodern American Poets and Poetry*, *Wesli Court’s Epitaphs for the Poets*, and *The Book of Forms: A Handbook of Poetics, Including Odd and Invented Forms* (Revised and Expanded Edition). Lewis also informed us of the release of the e-book edition of *Satan’s Scourge: A Narrative of the Age of Witchcraft in England and America 1580-1697* (2009) in a Kindle format. All the above titles are relatively self-explanatory, with the possible exception of the mysterious *Wesli Court*. Fortunately, the Amazon.com description of the book clarifies matters:

Wesli Court’s Epitaphs for the Poets consists of 100+ very short poems (in various forms including the limerick) encapsulating the lives (and often the manner of death) of poets ranging from the extremely well known, such as Christopher Marlowe—whose handsome and touchingly youthful portrait appears on the cover—to the gifted-but-obscure.

Not all the poets included are quite ready for their tombstones to be carved; some are alive and well. But not a one of them is exempt from the mordant wit of Wesli Court, aka Lewis Turco.

*Jacques Demarcq has published *Érotiques*, his translation of Cummings' *Erotic Poems* (see the two reviews of this volume in the last issue of *Spring*, pages 164-171). Unlike the original volume, Jacques' afterword to his translation ("Sexe, amour et poésie") places the poems in the context of Cummings' early poetry. And just as we went to press, Jacques sent notice that he has published his translation of *I x I* [*Une fois un*] with La Nerthe., as well as publishing his "novel in verse," *Avant-taire*, with Nous.

*In December, 2012, Jacques sent us notice of a dramatic "creation" called *Le mystère des-mystères*, presented in Paris by the Company of Endimanchés. Jacques describes the production as "an artful and energetic, musical and acrobatic, theatre piece in the tradition of the avant-garde (but not of poetic drama), giving life to a litany of Cummings poems."

*At last! A volume of selected poems by the much-missed long-time *Spring* contributor Tony Quagliano (1941-2007) has been published. [For an appreciation of Tony's life and work, see *Spring* 14-15 (2006-2007), pages 77-80.] Published by NYQ Books, an arm of *New York Quarterly*, the volume is titled *Language Matters: Selected Poetry*. (Tony is still speaking truth to poetry after all these years. For more information, see nyqbooks.org.)

*Guy R. Beining sent us two chapbooks in May, 2012. He writes that "*The Centipede that Dances with Scrub Brushes* comes closest to the Cummings magic. It was published in 2010 but written in 1990."

*April Fallon wrote to inform us that her new book of poetry, *Mindseye's Consort*, is now available on Amazon.com. Anyone want to review her book (or any of the other books of poetry mentioned in News & Notes) for the next issue of *Spring*?

*George Held has published *After Shakespeare: Selected Sonnets*. Of *After Shakespeare*, Eric Greinke writes: "George Held's new collection is an appealing balance of form and content that incorporates classical sonnet techniques and strophes, presenting an intimate portrait of its author. Stepping outside current trend, Held is determined to stay true to himself without concern for parochial prohibitions against rhyme and meter, and abstraction. The poetic pleasure comes from two sources: Held's verbal skill

(witty, lyrical) and his honesty in showing us his feelings, attitudes, and fears.”

In addition, Held has embarked on a new venture for him, publishing two books for children, *Neighbors: The Yard Critters* and *Neighbors: The Yard Critters, Book TOO*. Both books are illustrated by Joung Un Kim. See <http://www.filsingerco.com/Neighbors.html>.

Here’s a selection from the first *Neighbors* book:

Playing Possum

Roll up in a ball
as if you’d had
a fatal fall

Close your eyes
as if asleep;
fake your demise.

Go slack,
relax your back,
hold your breath.

Then, when
all’s clear,
run like a deer.

*Gerald Locklin has published *Deep Meanings: Selected Poems 2008-2013*. [The title of this book tickles me (your humble editor) in ways that cannot be entirely explained.] In addition, Silver Birch Press has re-issued Locklin’s *New and Selected Poems (1967-2007)*. Gerry has also re-issued or published for the first time a trilogy of novellas from the lost world of the 1980s. They are: *The Case of the Missing Blue Volkswagen*, *Come Back, Bear*, and *Last Tango in Long Beach*. All three novellas are published by Spout Hill Press.

*In our last issue we neglected to mention James Dempsey’s article “A Lost E. E. Cummings Poem Discovered,” which appeared in the online

publication *The Awl* on May 25, 2011. The article details his discovery of an unpublished Cummings poem, “(tonite” while researching a (we hope) soon-to-be published biography of Cummings’ friend and mentor Scofield Thayer.

*Salvatore Di Giacomo’s article commemorating the 100th anniversary of Cummings’ death, “E. E. Cummings: Il modernismo romantico e visuale,” was published in the September 2012 issue of the distinguished journal *Poesia*. Salvatore writes that his was “the only article on Cummings published this year in Italy.”

*Etienne Terblanche has published a major new critical study, *E. E. Cummings: Poetry and Ecology* (Amsterdam / New York: Rodopi, 2012). Through close readings of the poetry, the book examines Cummings’ engagement with “being on earth.” Its five chapters are:

1. Cummings’s poetic status and his *eco-logos*
2. The rise of Cummings’s ecological status
3. The scope of Cummings’s poetic ecology
4. The manner and achievement of Cummings’s poetic ecology
5. A modernist reconfiguration? Cummings, Eliot, Pound, and the modernist poetic *eco-logos*

In addition, Etienne has published an article in *The Explicator* titled “Is There a Hero in this Poem? E. E. Cummings’s ‘Buffalo Bill’s / defunct’.” The article notes the interdependence of the three heroes of poem: Buffalo Bill, Jesus, and Mister Death. However, Etienne does not neglect the “watersmooth silver stallion,” seeing the horse as a non-capitalized nonhero who represents in some ways the “lyrical, flowing” nature of the poet.

*Michael Webster published “Pound Teaching Cummings, Cummings Teaching Pound” in *Ezra Pound and Education*, a volume that contains papers from a conference held way back in 2005. The wheels of academia do turn slowly at times.

*Bob Grumman has been blogging on all manner of what he calls “otherstream poetry” (much of it “mathematical”) for the *#StorySaturday*

Guest Blog of Scientific American. Bob's blog is titled "M@h*(pOet)?ica" and has appeared approximately every month for the past year. Bob's four most recent posts are cited below.

Books and Publications by Society Members and Friends

- Beining, Guy R. *The Centipede that Dances with Scrub Brushes*. St. Paul, MN: unarmed chapbook, [2010]. [Poems]
- . *nozzle 1-36*. Rockford, MI: Presa :S: Press, 2011. [Poems]
- Cowen, John Edwin. *Poems from Dylan's Wales*. Merrick, NY: Cross-Cultural Communications & The Seventh Quarry, 2012.
- Cummings, E. E. *Érotiques*. Trans. Jacques Demarcq. Paris: Seghers, 2012. [Translation of *Erotic Poems* (Norton, 2010), with an afterword ("Sexe, amour et poésie") by the translator.]
- . *1 x 1 [Une fois un]*. Trans. and Afterword Jacques Demarcq. Toulon: La Nerthe, 2013.
- . *The Theatre of E. E. Cummings*. Ed. George J. Firmage. Afterword Norman Friedman. New York: Liveright, 2013. [Contains the plays *Him*, *Anthropos*, *Santa Claus*, and the ballet *Tom*.]
- Demarcq, Jacques. *Avant-taire: roman en vers*. Caen, Normandy: Editions Nous, 2013. [A novel in verse]
- Dempsey, James. "A Lost E. E. Cummings Poem Discovered." *The Awl* May 25, 2011. Web.
- Di Giacomo, Salvatore and Sergio Di Giacomo. "E. E. Cummings: Il modernismo romantico e visuale." *Poesia: Mensile internazionale di cultura poetica* 274 (Sept. 2012):
- Fallon, April D. *Mindseye's Consort*. Seattle: CreateSpace, 2013. [Poems]
- Grumman, Bob. "M@h*(pOet)?ica – Karl Kempton." #StorySaturday *Guest Blog Scientific American* 9 February 2013. Web.
- . "M@h*(pOet)?ica – Mathematics and Love." #StorySaturday *Guest Blog Scientific American* 9 March 2013. Web.
- . "M@h*(pOet)?ica – Mathekphrastic Poetry." #StorySaturday *Guest Blog Scientific American* 6 April 2013. Web.
- . "M@h*(pOet)?ica – Mathekphrastic Poetry, Part 2." #StorySaturday *Guest Blog Scientific American* 4 May 2013. Web.
- Held, George. *After Shakespeare: Selected Sonnets*. Somerville, MA: Cer-vená Barva Press, 2011.

- . *Neighbors: The Yard Critters*. Illus. Joung Un Kim. New York: Filsinger & Co., 2011. [Held says this is his “first book for children.”]
- . *Neighbors: The Yard Critters, Book TOO*. Illus. Joung Un Kim. New York: Filsinger & Co., 2013. [See: <http://www.filsingerco.com/Neighbors.html>]
- Locklin, Gerald. *Deep Meanings: Selected Poems 2008-2013*. Rockford, MI: Presa Press, 2013.
- . *New and Selected Poems (1967-2007)*. 2008. Los Angeles: Silver Birch Press, 2013.
- . *The Case of the Missing Blue Volkswagen*. 1984. Walnut, CA: Spout Hill Press, 2013.
- . *Come Back, Bear*. Walnut, CA: Spout Hill Press, 2013.
- . *Last Tango in Long Beach*. Walnut, CA: Spout Hill Press, 2013.
- Moe, Aaron. “Autopoiesis & Cummings’ Cat.” *Rupkatha Journal: On Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 3.1 (2011): 110-20. Web.
- . “Cummings’ Urban Ecology: An Exploration of *EIMI, No Thanks*, & the Cultivation of the Ecological Self.” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 18.4 (2011): 737-762. Print and Web.
- . “Zoopoetics: A Look at Cummings, Merwin, & the Expanding Field of Ecocriticism.” *Humanimalia: A Journal of Human/Animal Interface Studies* 3.2 (2012). Web.
- Quagliano, Tony. *Language Matters: Selected Poetry*. New York: NYQ Books, 2012.
- Shapiro, Julie. “E. E. Cummings’ Letters Shown for First Time at Poets House.” *DNAinfo.com New York*. 9 July 2012. Web.
- Terblanche, Etienne. *E. E. Cummings: Poetry and Ecology*. Amsterdam / New York: Rodopi, 2012.
- . “Is There a Hero in this Poem? E. E. Cummings’s ‘Buffalo Bill ’s / defunct’.” *The Explicator* 70.4 (Dec. 2012): 304-307.
- Turco, Lewis Putnam. *Dialects of the Tribe: Postmodern American Poets and Poetry*. Nacogdoches, TX: Stephen F. Austin State UP, 2012.
- . *Wesli Court’s Epitaphs for the Poets*. Baltimore, MD: BrickHouse Books, 2012. [Short epitaphs on poets both living and dead.]
- . *The Book of Forms: A Handbook of Poetics, Including Odd and Invented Forms*. Rev. ed. Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 2012.

Webster, Michael. "Pound Teaching Cummings, Cummings Teaching Pound." *Ezra Pound and Education*. Eds. Steven Yao and Michael Coyle. Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 2012. 47-66.

Winter, Ariel S. "E. E. Cummings: Fairy Tales." *We Too Were Children, Mr. Barrie: Being a Compendium of Children's Books by Twentieth Century "Adult" Authors Currently Out of Print*. 27 Sept. 2011. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

E. E. Cummings Society Presentations at the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900, February 23-25, 2012

Session E-6 Sex and Death: Re-reading Modernism, E.E. Cummings, and the Erotic

Organized by Gillian Huang-Tiller, E.E. Cummings Society
Chair: Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University

1. "my sweet old etcetera: Reading and Critiquing the Erotic in E. E. Cummings' Poetry," Liz Reilly, Rutgers University-Newark
2. "Love, Unlove, and Lust: Cummings' Use of the Surreal in His Love and Erotic Poetry," April Fallon, Kentucky State University
3. "Armor amoris: Modernist *Blason*, History, and the Body Politic of Cummings' Erotic Sonnetry in & [AND]," Gillian Huang-Tiller, University of Virginia at Wise

E. E. Cummings Society Presentations at the American Literature Association Annual Conference, San Francisco, May 24-27, 2012

Session 8-L The Body of / in the Cummings Text

Organized by the E. E. Cummings Society

Chair: Bernard F. Stehle, Community College of Philadelphia

1. "Writer as Cyborg; or, 'the Making obsession': Whitman, Cummings, & Teaching Textual Delivery in the Technical & Professional Writing Classroom," Aaron Moe, Washington State University
2. "Pursuing a Strategy of Fulfillment: Cummings' Erotic Language," Millie Kidd, Mount St. Mary's College
3. "How to Plot a Grasshopper," Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University

Session 11-L Genre, Reception, and Inner Form

Organized by the E. E. Cummings Society

Chair: Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University

1. "Cummings and the Problem of Form: The Desire for Wholeness," April Fallon, Kentucky State University
2. "E. E. Cummings and Kurt Vonnegut, Adult Adolescents," Rai Peterson, Ball State University
3. "Portrait Textures in the Poetry of E. E. Cummings," Richard D. Cureton, University of Michigan

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here's to one undiscoverable guess
of whose mad skill each world of blood is made
(whose fatal songs are moving in the moon

—E. E. Cummings (CP 424)