

A New Edition of the *Complete Poems*

In the May and June of 2015, your editor spent about six weeks proof-reading a new edition of Cummings' *Complete Poems*. The new edition has been entirely re-set with a new typeface and (alas) different pagination.

Cummings, E. E. *Complete Poems, 1904-1962*. Ed. George J. Firmage. Intro. Stephen Dunn. New York: Liveright, 2016.

Enormous Smallness

*Minh Le, who [blogs on children's books](#) for *The Huffington Post*, annually offers a list of best picture books. For 2015, he picked *Enormous Smallness: A Story of E. E. Cummings* (text, Matthew Burgess; illustrations, Kris Di Giacomo) as "Best Biography (Artist)." Here is his blurb for the book:

The title of this book (*Enormous Smallness*) is perfect. Many of us think of poems as small things, but as much as anyone, E. E. Cummings showed us that even the smallest stanza could hold enormous meaning. Lovingly written (Burgess is himself a poet) and ingeniously illustrated, this book is a treasure for both fans of Cummings, as well as those discovering his poetry for the first time.

Cummings Art News

*Always alert to news of exhibitions of Cummings' artwork, Steven Katz notified us that the poet's most famous abstract painting, *Noise Number 13* (1925), was part of the inaugural 2015 exhibit at the Whitney Museum, "[America Is Hard to See](#)." Cummings' painting was exhibited next to Richmond Barthé's sculpture *African Dancer* (1933) (fig. 1).

*Steven Katz also sent us news of some good online reproductions of "The Kidder Collection," Cummings paintings owned by the late Rushworth M. Kidder, which were posted online by Kidder's daughter Abby. See: <http://thekiddercollection.com/>.



Figure 1: Cummings' *Noise Number 13* and Barthé's *African Dancer*

*Another link sent by Steven Katz guided us to an online auction of a post-card to a correspondent named "Jack F Perfect" in which EEC talks about his use of capitals and of the lower-case "i" (not lower-case initials as the seller asserts). Here is the text of the card:

4 Patchin Place
New York City
Feb 21 '57

capital letters were originally used to EMPHASIZE something worth emphasizing, & that's how i use them(did it ever occur to you that in French, in German, in Italian, etc. the equivalent of "I"-- "je", "ich", "io", etc.--is not capitalized?)

if you can get hold of a copy of a book called *Pleasure Dome* by Lloyd Frankenberg, you'll find this & many other matters discussed at length. Or you might try my Caedmon recording
good luck!"

E. E. Cg's

[Frankenberg's article, "Cummings Times One," is reprinted in S. V. Baum's *EETI: eec: E. E. Cummings and the Critics* (1962), pp. 144-69.]

A New Cummings Self Portrait

Also for sale online (on E-Bay) and also courtesy of Steven, is this rather good (circa 1958) self-portrait (fig. 2).



Figure 2: Self-Portrait in a Red Hat

Five Web Articles on Cummings' Art

In June 2015, the *Cummings at Silver Lake* site hosted by the Friends of the Madison, NH Library posted an article by Cynthia Melendy called "E. E. Cummings: 'Poet and painter'." The article originally appeared in the *Conway Daily Sun*. Another article on Cummings' art, "[The Secret Art Life of E. E. Cummings](#)," by Emily Shire appeared in *The Daily Beast* in April of 2015. Though Shire expresses surprise that Cummings the painter should be found in

the new Whitney Museum's inaugural exhibition, she was savvy enough to conduct a rather extensive interview with Milton Cohen. Shire asked Milt why Cummings resisted painting lessons, and he responded: "[Cummings] was ruthlessly independent. . . . One of the aspects of independence is trying to do things on your own terms."

In the summer of 2013, the Massachusetts Historical Society held an exhibition called "Estlin Cummings Wild West Show," which featured "a selection of E.E. Cummings's childhood writings and drawings, showcasing the young poet's earliest experiments with words and illustrations. 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" ("Estlin"). This exhibition followed upon a 2012 MHS

announcement of the “Discovery of Early E. E. Cummings Works at the Massachusetts Historical Society” that we reported on in *Spring 19* (164-165). In July 2013, Laura Lowell wrote of the exhibition in her MHS blog post, “[A Rhinoceros Tells Tales to a Soldier: The Childhood Imaginings of E. E. Cummings.](#)” In addition, Rebecca Onion wrote of “[E. E. Cummings’ Colorful, Imaginative Childhood Drawings](#)” in the June 17, 2013 issue of *Slate*. (See also Michael Webster’s post on the *EEC Society Blog* titled “Estlin Cummings, ‘Animal Emperor’ and Wild West Impresario.”)

Cummings on the Web

*In March, 2015, the Eastman School of music blog announced the release of a new CD, *Unto Thee I Burn: Song Settings of E.E. Cummings Poetry by North American Women Composers*, featuring “Presidential Scholar and Eastman alumna Eileen Stempel (soprano) and Assistant Professor of Chamber Music Sylvie Beaudette (piano). It combines the inspiring poems of E.E. Cummings with music of several notable American women composers: Jocelyn Hagen, Judith Cloud, Christine Donkin, Libby Larsen, Hillary Tann, and Regina Harris Baiocchi. Stempel and Beaudette commissioned these women composers, who set Cummings’ poetry to music with a variety of stylistic approaches and compositional styles.”

*In an obituary of priest and activist Daniel Berrigan, Daniel Lewis reported that in his early years, “Berrigan spent three years at the Jesuits’ Brooklyn Preparatory School, teaching theology and French, while absorbing the poetry of Robert Frost, E. E. Cummings and the 19th-century Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins. His own early work often combined elements of nature with religious symbols.”

Lewis, Daniel. "Daniel J. Berrigan, Defiant Priest Who Preached Pacifism, Dies at 94." *New York Times* 30 April 2016. Print and Web.

Omitted from *Spring 20*

*A video of [Natalie Merchant performing](#) her setting of “maggie and milly and molly and may” (CP 682) may be found on YouTube by typing in the appropriate search terms. A studio recording of the song is one of the tracks on Merchant’s 2010 double CD *Leave Your Sleep* (Nonesuch), which contains her musical adaptations of poems both famous and quite obscure, many of them children’s poems.

A Blast from the Past: “Leave a *little dirt*”

Surfing the web, I bumped into a blog post by Cynthia Haven from February 2012. The post gives excerpts from an interview of Elizabeth Bishop by George Starbuck, first published in *Ploughshares* in 1977 and reprinted in their Winter 2011-2012 issue:

GS: You seem to write more and more kinds of poems but without exhorting yourself to be suddenly different.

EB: Ha. I know I wish I had written a great deal more. Sometimes I think if I had been born a man I probably would have written more. Dared more, or spent more time at it. I’ve just wasted so much time.

GS: Would it have been extra works in other genres?

EB: No.

GS: Long poems?

EB: No. One or two long poems I’d like to write, but I doubt that I ever will. Well, not really long. Maybe ten pages. That’d be long. I read Robert Penn Warren’s *Collected Poems*. He wasn’t lazy. And Cummings.

Oh. I *did* know Cummings. When I lived in the Village, later on, I met him through a friend. He and I had the same maid for two or three years. “Leave a *little dirt*, Blanche,” he used to say to her. Blanche finally left them. They wouldn’t put traps down for the mice. Mrs. Cummings told her a story about how there was a little mouse that would come out and get right on the bed. They would lie in bed and watch her roll up little balls of wool from the blanket, to make her nest. Well, Blanche was appalled.

GS: Was he sparing the mice on humanitarian, vegetarian principles?

EB: Oh no. Cummings just loved mice. He had several nice poems about mice. He adored them. He used to...

Well, I haven’t said anything profound.

Haven, Cynthia. “On Elizabeth Bishop: ‘The laughter is quick, sharp, deep. No way to transcribe it’.” *The Book Haven: Cynthia Haven’s Blog for*

the Written Word. Stanford University. 17 Feb. 2012. Web.

Starbuck, George. "From the Archive: 'The Work!'"—A Conversation with Elizabeth Bishop." *Ploughshares* 116 (Winter 2011-12). Web.

The EEC Society Blog

In November 2014, Aaron Moe created a blog for the Cummings Society, for which he acts as blog-master, moderator, etc. Posts have been written by Aaron, Roi Tartakovsky, and Michael Webster. (A list of "Notable Blog Posts" is appended at the end of this article.) Here is Aaron's message about ways of participating in the blog:

I am very excited about the opportunity to manage the Cummings' blog [<http://www.eecsocietyblog.org/>] and Facebook page [<https://www.facebook.com/eecsociety>].

Both platforms have the chance to circulate discussions of our non-hero through broad audiences; and in this online age, having an active web presence—with a steady stream of new content—is crucial to the vibrancy of current discussions of a given poet.

I hope that you will consider being involved in some fashion as there are multiple ways to contribute:

- 1) Like us on Facebook. Circulate blog posts and comments through your social media circles not only now, but in the months to come. If you are not on Facebook or Twitter, let your students or colleagues or friends know about us through an email that provides the appropriate URL addresses.
- 2) Respond to posts by leaving a comment. Online readers often appreciate the comments below a post or an article just as much (or more) than the post itself. As you comment, please adhere to our Participation Guidelines found on the website.
- 3) Write a post! If there is a facet of Cummings that you want to explore and circulate, this is a great place to do so. If you want to write a post, and have questions after reading our "Participation Guidelines," email me at amoe@saintmarys.edu.

As the blog emerges, its form will begin to take its own shape. Howev-

er, at the outset, it may be difficult to get a feel for its place in all things EEC. What follows helps outline the blog's purpose and vision:

- 1) The audience is broad. We hope to have discussions that are worthwhile for Cummings scholarship and yet are also welcoming and friendly to readers new to Cummings. Posts *do not* need to provide an exhaustive literature review about a given poem or idea. However, as we seek to maintain credibility, a couple of nods toward scholarly work is encouraged.
- 2) Maintain the discipline of citing sources. We want to be credible, and we want to maintain a professional feel even though blogs by nature are more relaxed.
- 3) Before participating, read the guidelines, for they provide important information regarding Fair Use (found on website).
- 4) Think of every comment and every post as providing a little window into the cosmological space of Cummings' poetry and poetics. This is a window that many people will view; and each window, therefore, gets important work done.
- 5) If you see any typos, please shoot me an email so I can correct them.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to participate. I look forward to seeing you in online spaces shortly!

—for the leaping greenly spirits of trees, Aaron

Notable Blog Posts on the EEC Society Blog

[<http://www.eecsocietyblog.org/>]

Moe, Aaron M. "Cummings as a Descendant of Whitman." *EEC Society Blog*. 17 Nov. 2014. Web.

—. "Cummings' *WARNING* from the Program of his Play." *EEC Society Blog*. 1 Feb. 2016. Web.

—. "'Each Age a Lens': Cummings and Ecopoetics." *EEC Society Blog*. 16 Jan. 2015. Web.

—. "EEC . . . A Major Modernist Poet?" *EEC Society Blog*. 14 Nov. 2014. Web.

—. "'onetwothreefourfive' . . . 'justlikethat'?; or, The Tension between the Performances of the Page and Body." *EEC Society Blog*. 18 Dec. 2015. Web.

- “Shatter a Mirror: Teaching EEC in a Survey Course.” *EEC Society Blog*. 18 Dec. 2014. Web.
- “ ‘SOME [of my poems] are to be seen & not heard’—EEC.” *EEC Society Blog*. 17 Nov. 2014. Web.
- Tartakovsky, Roi. “love are in we.” *EEC Society Blog*. 16 April 2015. Web.
- Webster, Michael. “Audio Cummings,” *EEC Society Blog* 21 Aug. 2015. Web
- “Cummings Centennials (1913).” *EEC Society Blog* 17 Dec. 2014. Web.
- “Cummings Centennials (1914-1915).” *EEC Society Blog* 23 March 2016. Web.
- “Estlin Cummings, ‘Animal Emperor’ and Wild West Impresario.” *EEC Society Blog* 4 Aug. 2015. Web.
- “An Old Door, Cummings’ Personal Printer, and *W [ViVa]*.” *EEC Society Blog* 29 June 2015. Web.

How to Join the Cummings Listserv

On Friday, April 17, 2015, Alison Rosenblitt e-mailed a rather impromptu Cummings group e-mail to announce a more formal one:

I have now set up a Cummings mailing list. If you would like to join, then send an email to sympa@maillist.ox.ac.uk. In the subject line, type:

subscribe eecummings Firstname Surname

(Replace “Firstname” and “Surname” with your own name.) Leave the body message blank.

You should receive a list subscription e-mail asking you to reply in order to confirm list membership. (Just hit your reply button; you don't have to include anything in the reply.) This will be followed by a welcome message! If that doesn't work, feel free to e-mail me at alison.rosenblitt@classics.ox.ac.uk. I can subscribe you manually.

You can unsubscribe at any time by sending an e-mail to the same address (sympa@maillist.ox.ac.uk) with the subject line: **unsubscribe eecummings**

This is not a pre-moderated list. Anyone who is a list member may post. I am sure that civility and common sense will suffice. You can

post to the list simply by e-mailing ecummings@maillist.ox.ac.uk.

I hope the mailing list will be useful for CFPs and other professional notices and discussions, and it will also mean that those of you on this group e-mail can choose to join the list (or not) and thus opt in to (or spare yourself from) future group e-mails of this present kind!
—All best, Alison

“On the Trail of the ‘Elusive’ Lillian and Marion Morehouse”



Marion and Lillian Morehouse

In June of 2015, Jim Dempsey sent me a link to a web article by Rob Couteau on Marion Morehouse and her younger sister Lillian, called “[On the Trail of the ‘Elusive’ Lillian and Marion Morehouse: Unraveling the Genealogical Mysteries of the World’s First Supermodel.](#)” (This essay has now also been published in a collection of Couteau’s articles, from which I quote here.) As we know from Kennedy’s biography (and from his article on Marion in *Spring* 5), Marion’s life before she met Cummings is almost entirely shrouded in mystery. Couteau provides us with much new information on Marion, her parents, and her sister Lillian. For example, although Kennedy told us that Marion was born in South Bend, Indiana, in 1906, Couteau has discovered that she was actually born in 1903 (Kennedy 8; Couteau 45). Here are some key points of his piece:

1. Couteau’s information comes from four main sources: online genealogy sites, Broadway databases, the biographical work of Kennedy and Sawyer-Lauçanno, and online postings by and his own interviews with

a man named Tony Ungaro, who worked with Lillian at Heublein Inc. in Hartford, Connecticut.

2. After Lillian's death in 1994, a legacy of some money and "three large boxes" of papers came to Tony Ungaro (50). These boxes contained legal and financial papers, letters, a few Cummings pastels, and photos of Lillian, Marion, and their parents and brother, some of which Cou-teau reprints at the end of his piece.
3. Besides the photos, the web version of the article reprints the two mar-riage certificates of Marion Morehouse's parents (one civil, from the County Clerk's office in Niles, Michigan, dated 1904, and the other religious, from St. Francis de Sales Church in New York City, dated December 1918). Kennedy was unable to find a marriage certificate for E. E. Cummings and Marion Morehouse, and it is to be doubted that they ever formally ratified or sanctified their marriage (Kennedy 10). In both web and print versions of his article, Couteau lists the plays and shows in which Marion and Lillian appeared, giving their roles (small ones), the dates of the shows, the number of performances, etc.
4. Ungaro tracked down a Morehouse relative and sent most of the mate-rial in the boxes to her. In his interview with Couteau, Ungaro says that he "had 1040s, tax forms, in that pile of papers, and I could see where Lillian was getting the royalties from E. E. Cummings's work. Twenty thousand dollars, or something like that, a year" (67). I had not heard before of royalties being paid to Lillian, but it's certainly possible. Couteau strongly hints at the end of his text that he plans to contact this unnamed Morehouse descendant in Indiana.

—Michael Webster

Works Cited

- Couteau, Rob. "[On the Trail of the 'Elusive' Lillian and Marion Morehouse: Unraveling the Genealogical Mysteries of the World's First Supermodel.](#)" *More Collected Couteau: Essays and Interviews*. New Paltz, NY: Dominantstar, 2016. 41-86. Print and Web.
- Kennedy, Richard S. "[The Elusive Marion Morehouse.](#)" *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society* New Series 5 (1996): 8-17. Print and Web.

Anne Minnerly Barton Cummings Girdansky

Reading Rob Couteau's research on Marion Morehouse brought to mind that none of Cummings' biographers mention when his second wife Anne Barton died. I've long assumed that she was the subject of poem 22 in *73 Poems*, "annie died the other day" (CP 794), and thus must have died sometime after the publication of *95 Poems* and before Cummings' death in 1962. This rather naive literalism was proven false when I (following Couteau's example) searched for "Anne Minnerly Barton Cummings Girdansky" and turned up two articles on Genealogy.com, both from 2006, both written by someone named Charles W. Frank. The first, called "Anne Minnerly – A Story," briefly narrates Anne's life, relying on Sawyer-Lauçanno, Charles Norman, and various online sources. (Frank doesn't mention Richard S. Kennedy.) On the next day, Frank posted "Anne Minnerly – Obit," which transcribes a *New York Times* obituary (dated July 11, 1970) of "Mrs. Girdansky." [Though all of Cummings' biographers give the name of Anne's third husband as "Girdansky," the correct spelling adds a second "s" to the name: "Girdansky."] To the *Times* obituary, Frank added a location indicator, "Monmouth NJ," as well as inserting a date "[7 Feb 1970]" after "Tuesday," indicating that the obituary was placed in the *Times* five months after Anne's death.

As for Joseph Girdansky, Frank writes that he "was a medical doctor, the eldest of six, born to immigrant Russian parents. His father, Max was a founder of the Socialist Party of America.

Joseph had distinguished himself as a basketball player at NYU and became their first Jewish captain. He briefly played professional as Joe Gordon. He would also go on to be Head of Surgery at Gouverneur Hospi-

MRS. GIRSDANSKY

Mrs. Anne M. Girdansky, widow of Dr. Joseph Girdansky, a New York surgeon, died here Tuesday at the age of 72. She was formerly married to E. E. Cummings, the poet, and Ralph Barton, a founder of The New Yorker magazine.

She is survived by two sons, Michael Girdansky of Shenorock, N. Y., and Peter Girdansky of Greenville, R. I.; a daughter, Mrs. Diana Barton McKeown of Freehold, N. J., and eight grandchildren.

Obituary for Anne Minnerly Barton
Cummings Girdansky,
New York Times, July 11, 1970.

tal” (“Story”). Joseph Girsdansky died on February 14, 1952.

One wonders why Cummings created a poem that fictionalizes Anne’s death. The poem certainly invites psychological speculation about both its subject and its writer. (See Kennedy, *Dreams in the Mirror* 296-302 and 324-326.) Or perhaps one should wonder why we are so inclined to read a poem with such biographical literalism. After all, Cummings wrote “mr u will not be missed” (CP 551) well before Louis Untermeyer’s death. (For more on this poem, see the “Notes for Cummings” page on the *Spring* web site, as well as Philip Gerber’s “missing mr u (not)” in *Spring* 10.)

—Michael Webster

Works Cited

Gerber, Philip. “missing mr u (not).” *Spring* 10 (October 2001): 70-101.

Frank, Charles W. “Anne Minnerly – A Story.” *Genealogy.com*. Genealogy.com, 25 Jan. 2006. Web.

—. “Anne Minnerly – Obit.” *Genealogy.com*. Genealogy.com, 26 Jan. 2006. Web.

“Mrs. Girsdansky.” [Obituary] *New York Times* 11 July 1970: L 25. Print and Web.

Joe Gould’s Secret(s) Revisited

Two substantial magazine articles exploring the continuing mystery of Joe Gould appeared in 2014-2015. Gould, you may recall, is the Greenwich Village bohemian and Harvard grad (1911—or maybe 1912) who cadged drinks from the local literati (including Cummings) by pretending (or maybe not) to be writing / compiling a massive work called *An Oral History of Our Time*. Gould makes an appearance in no fewer than four Cummings poems, most notably in “little joe gould has lost his teeth and doesn’t know where” (CP 410). Joseph Mitchell’s 1964 book *Joe Gould’s Secret* explored Gould’s life and the secret of his non-existent *Oral History*. Each of the new magazine articles revisits and in some ways revises and completes Mitchell’s book. In the first, “[The Patron and the Panhandler](#),” Joshua Prager reveals the identity of the mysterious patron who provided room and board for the vagabond from 1944 to 1947. Apparently, Mitchell had discovered the identity of the patron when completing *Joe Gould’s Secret*, but chose to keep her name out of the book. Who was she? Well, you will have

to read Prager's piece to find out.

The second article, Jill Lepore's *New Yorker* piece, "[Joe Gould's Teeth](#): The Long-lost Story of the Longest Book Ever Written," re-examines Joe Gould's life and *Oral History* in the light of letters and other archival documents unavailable to Joseph Mitchell. Lepore has now published a revised and expanded version of her article as a book titled *Joe Gould's Teeth*. Lepore's research uncovers a more troubled and unsympathetic character than Mitchell's "blithe and emaciated little man who has been a notable in the cafeterias, diners, barrooms, and dumps of Greenwich Village for a quarter of a century" ("Professor" 52). More than any other writer on Gould, Lepore documents his mental instability, writing of his numerous stays in psychiatric hospitals and making a strong case that Gould was lobotomized at Pilgrim State Hospital in 1949. Among other compelling evidence, she notes that, as far as she can tell, Gould wrote only four letters and one postcard after the lobotomy would have taken place—one a "pained letter" to William Carlos Williams, and another written in September 1949 to Cummings (*Teeth* 139). Lepore's discussion of Gould's manic and terrifying harassment of African-American sculptor Augusta Savage offers further proof of the "little man's" mental instability.

Though the book steps back a bit from the article's claims that Gould's *Oral History* must have existed, it does not completely retract them. While no one denies that Gould was scribbling *something* in those many notebooks, most writers on Gould (yes, there are quite a few) have agreed with Mitchell that he wrote and rewrote on a few obsessive themes rather than patiently transcribing the talk of his contemporaries. Following Mitchell, your editor wrote in *Spring* 17 (2010) that "Gould never produced anything resembling an oral history; instead, he was obsessively writing and rewriting on the same subjects . . . interrupted . . . by digressions on Unitarianism, Time, Art, or whatever subject occurred to Gould" (Webster 98).

We can add to this list his obsessive writings about Augusta Savage that Lepore uncovered. With titles like "Insanity" and "Marriage," Gould's few published writings fall into the "digressions" category. In both book and article, Lepore offers as evidence that Gould actually did write oral history one snippet from a 1922 notebook that relates an anecdote from a reporter about President Taft speaking to suffragists (*Teeth* 53-54). Lepore does not cite an [April 2000 article in the Village Voice](#) in which Charles Hutchinson and Peter Miller examine eleven of Gould's notebooks. She does, however, quote extensively from these "diaries" found in the archives at NYU.

Hutchinson and Miller concluded that the notebooks are not an oral history, but rather an “often mechanical day-by-day account of Gould’s life from the years 1943 to 1947. . . . The diary’s 1100-odd pages are first and foremost a record of baths taken, meals consumed, and dollars bummed. It’s clear that Gould’s favorite subject was himself.” Lepore draws the opposite conclusion in her book:

Instead of proving that the Oral History never existed, the diaries suggest exactly the opposite. . . . Gould’s diaries are only disappointing if you’re looking for Oral History. As diaries, as a record of life, they’re often dull, but they’re also cluttered with detail and full of speech. (*Teeth* 29)

Then Lepore gives some examples that show that Gould *could* have written an oral history, but these are unconvincing. The evidence so far indicates that while the young Joe Gould made an attempt to write an Oral History, this project seems to have been swamped by his own insistent obsessions.

Books and Articles on Joe Gould

Chan, Sewell. “Revisiting Joe Gould’s Secret.” *New York Times* City Room: Blogging from the Five Boroughs, 17 Aug. 2007. Web.

Fanning, Patricia J. “Cultural Commentary: The Many Secrets of Joe Gould.” *Bridgewater Review* 25.2 (2006): 24-25. Print and Web.

Gregory, Horace. “Pepys on the Bowery.” *The New Republic* 66.854 (15 April 1931): 249-250.

Hutchinson, Charles and Peter Miller. “[Joe Gould’s Secret History](#): The Diary of a Legendary Village Bohemian Surfaces at NYU.” *Village Voice* 4 April 2000. Print and Web.

Kahn, Eve M. “Augusta Savage’s Rural Escape and Clementine Hunter’s Murals. An Artist’s Retreat from a Harlem Harasser.” *New York Times* 24 March 2016: C23. Print and Web.

Lepore, Jill. “[Joe Gould’s Teeth](#): The Long-lost Story of the Longest Book Ever Written.” *The New Yorker* 27 July 2015: 48-59. Print and Web.

—. *Joe Gould’s Teeth*. New York: Knopf, 2016.

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- Mitchell, Joseph. *Joe Gould's Secret*. 1964. New York: Random/Vintage, 1999.
- . "Joe Gould's Secret." *New Yorker* 19 Sept. 1964 / 26 Sept. 1964. Rpt. in *Up in the Old Hotel and Other Stories*. New York: Random/Vintage, 1993. 623-716.
- . "Professor Sea Gull." *New Yorker* 12 Dec. 1942. Rpt. in *Up in the Old Hotel and Other Stories*. New York: Random/Vintage, 1993. 52-70.
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- . "'Why's this so good?' No. 80: Joseph Mitchell and Joe Gould's Secret." *Nieman Storyboard*. Nieman Foundation for Journalism, Harvard University, 9 July 2013. Web. [Both Prager articles may also be found at joshuaprager.com.]
- Saroyan, William. "How I Met Joe Gould." *Don Freeman's Newsstand* 1.2 (April 1941): n. p.
- Shuchter, J. D. "E. E. Cummings and Joe Gould's 'Oral History'." *American Notes and Queries* 4.10 (1966): 148-9.
- Webster, Michael. "Notes for Cummings: A Resource for Students and Teachers." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society* 17 (2010): 96-105. Print and Web.

Writings of Joe Gould in Modernist Periodicals and on the Web

- Gould, Joseph. "Art." *The Exile* 2 (Autumn 1927): 112-116.
- . "Excerpts from Joe Gould's Oral History of the Contemporary World." Ed. O. Nenslo. *Kooks Museum* (n.d., circa 2005) [Also at the Internet Archive.] Web. [The page reprints "Social Position," "Insanity," "Freedom," "Marriage," and "Civilization."]
- . "From Joe Gould's Oral History: Marriage. Civilization." *The Dial* (April 1929): 319-321.
- . "ME TEMPORE: A Selection from Joe Gould's Oral History: 'Insanity' and 'Freedom'." *Pagany* 2.2 (April-June 1931): 96-98. Rpt. *A Return to PAGANY: The History, Correspondence, and Selections from a Little Magazine 1929-1932*. Ed. Stephen Halpert and Richard Johns. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969. 299-301.
- . "Social Position." *Broom* 5.3 (October 1923): 147-150.

The News from Poets and Scholars

Poets and scholars have been busy publishing essays, blogs, poems, pamphlets, and even books that investigate and celebrate the spirit of our nonhero. Some highlights from these publications are noted below. Full bibliographic information will be found in the section below called “Books and Publications by Society Members and Others.”

*Jacques Demarcq has published a book of poems, *Rimbaldiennes* (2015). The publisher writes that “the expressions and characteristic turns of phrase and wit of Rimbaud constantly enliven this writing of great verbal mobility.”

*On the 23rd of November 2015, at his local bookstore, the librairie Tschann, 125 Blvd. Montparnasse, Jacques Demarcq received the Nelly Sachs translation prize for his translation of the collected poems of Tennessee Williams, *In the Winter of Cities* (*Dans l'hiver des villes*, éditions Seghers, 2015).

*We take belated notice of Isabelle Alfandary’s book, *Le risque de la lettre: lectures de la poésie moderniste américaine*. (Also in the “Books and Publications” list below we belatedly notice three Alfandary articles from 2006-2007.) This work studies Gertrude Stein, E. E. Cummings, and John Cage, three writers with a distinct bias for “the letter.” Alfandary writes that although they were by no means of the same school, or even the same generation, they all conceived of writing in some way as “non-transitive,” placing writing “at the fore of their poetics . . . They all follow a way designed to unmask the real through procedures in which nothing is very obvious: neither purely formalist nor simply experimental, they radically interrogated what writing and reading was supposed to mean and be, running literature down and demanding a response” (10).

Here is your editor’s translation of a short sample from the book:

Everything in the poetry of E. E. Cummings is a matter of reading; everything, including writing. What separates writing from reading is not a difference in the conception of the ways Cummings wrote and read, but a time difference. And because nothing escapes the play of the letter, nothing is constrained by the character of the signifier. Writing a poem (as Cummings practiced it) is rarely the product of a first draft; it

is much more often the patient work in the aftermath of the letter.

Poetic meaning is only that which is gathered. As Cummings' manuscripts show, writing does not consist of playing with signs in full knowledge of one's motive, but rather it is an acceptance of being played by language and of composing—in all senses of the word. The subject of the writing is as well the subject of the unconscious; it is seized by the signifier at least as much as he seizes it himself. The poet adopts a tactic that could be seen as innocent: he wants everything except not to be duped by language, and that's his peculiar genius. . . .

What stands out from studying the manuscripts is that Cummings worked incessantly to activate an unthinking meaning, to liberate unforeseen effects by playing with the placement of a caesura or changing the position of a letter. The typographic drafts and notes that surround the sketches for poems are also bits that certainly will not abolish chance but attempt rather to provoke it. It's somewhat as if Cummings applied to the text of his poems the method of fluid listening in order to take the measure of an unthinking graph, seizing on the fly the trace of desire. It's remarkable in this regard that without exception, the poet refrained from erasing or crossing out his typescripts. The poem is a unique throw of the dice among the infinite possibilities of language. (98-99)

*Gerald Locklin has published the second and last volume of *The Complete Coagula Poems* (2011, 2014). The blurb for the book reads in part:

This is the second of two volumes of Gerald Locklin's poetry that was published in *Coagula Art Journal* in the late 1990s thru the Aughts of the 21st century. Countering the entire critical establishment in the visual arts, this self-proclaimed "Anti-Expert" uses artworks as points of departure to discuss life in all of its beauty, foibles, and complexities.

In addition, Locklin's *Poets and Pleasure Seekers: New and Selected Poems* appeared in 2015.

*Michael Casey sent us copies of his volumes of poems, *Obscenities* and *Millrat*.

*George Held has published his third volume of animal poems for children, *Neighbors: The Water Critters* (2015), illustrated by Joung Un Kim. About his poetry chapbook *Bleak Splendor* (2016), Anton Yakovlev writes that it

“bear[s] the full weight of a master poet’s devastating wit and lifelong wisdom.”

*Alison Rosenblitt’s book, *E. E. Cummings’ Modernism and the Classics: Each Imperishable Stanza*, is forthcoming in November 2016. A flyer to purchase the book at a discount is included with this issue.

*On the web site of the *American Printing History Association*, one can find Walker Rumble’s “[Reclaiming S. A. Jacobs](#): Polytype, Golden Eagle, and Typographic Modernism,” a companion-piece to his article on Jacobs and Cummings that appeared in *Spring* 20.

*Aaron Moe has published a chapbook of aphoristic criticism with the intriguing title *Protean Poetics*. I quote one short section:

E. E. Cummings (aka EEC) discovered his own fractal language with protean shapeshiftings across scales of punctuation and individual letters, to words, to lines, to stanzas, to poems until the letters/words/lines/stanzas/ and white spaces of the page morph into moons, eyes, grasshoppers, cats, confetti, buildings, leaves, snowflakes, flowers, bees, and the material-semiotics of hummingbirds.

The cost? His work has been relegated to the margins of the discourse surrounding modernist poetry.

(. . . but this is the very place where parapoetics thrives. . . .) (4)

*Of course, Cummings is central to the discourse on modernist poetry found in *Spring*. And outside of *Spring*, several articles are doing their bit to inch Cummings a bit closer to the center of the larger discourse on modernism. These articles are: Michael Chaney’s “E. E. Cummings’s *Tom: A Ballet* and Uncle Tom’s Doll-Dance of Modernism” (in the *Journal of Modern Literature*), James Cherry’s “Parody, E. E. Cummings, and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.” (in *Modern Drama*), Tyrus Miller’s “Comrade Kemminkz in Hell: E. E. Cummings’s *Eimi* and Anti-Communism” (in *Literature and History*) and Megan Milota’s “‘these immeasurable mysteries’: Cummings’ and Stevens’ Rites of Passage” (in the *Wallace Stevens Journal*). And perhaps another nudge towards the center is Michael Webster’s “Cummings Rewrites Eliot” (in the collection *T. S. Eliot, France, and the Mind of Europe*).

More on Cummings Scholars Abroad

*Scholars abroad have often been more apt to include Cummings in discussions of modernist poetry than those from his native land. For example, besides Isabelle Alfandary's book noted above, Eva María Gómez-Jiménez (Spain) has published since 2010 in various venues no fewer than five articles that apply the insights of linguistic theory to the poems of our nonhero. Among these titles, my favorite is "'oride lesgo eckshun': Spelling foregrounding in the experimental poetry of E. E. Cummings." (One can find all of these articles posted on her [page at Academia.edu](#).) Martin Heusser (Switzerland) has recently published "The Semantics of Structure: Iconicity in the Poetry of William Carlos Williams and E. E. Cummings." Etienne Terblanche (South Africa) has also been busy, publishing articles in *The Explicator* on "Buffalo Bill 's" (in 2012) and "in Just-" (in 2015). In addition, Etienne has published "'A world of made / is not a world of born:' E. E. Cummings's *Oikosnomy*" in the collection *Wirtliche Ökonomie* (edited by Ivo De Gennaro). Etienne has also followed his recent book on Cummings and ecology with a book titled *T. S. Eliot, Poetry, and Earth: The Name of the Lotos Rose*.

An Overlooked Paper

The *RSA Journal* (*Rivista di Studi Americani*) is the annual publication of AISNA, the Italian Association of North American Studies. Thanks to Matthew Schilleman, we were able to track down the reference to this paper, published in the journal in 2003:

Marano, Salvatore. "[Still Life with a Machine](#): E. E. Cummings's Typewriter Poems." *RSA Journal* [*Rivista di Studi Americani*] 14 (2003): 120-138. Web.

Michael Dylan Welch News

In September 2014, Michael Dylan Welch wrote:

I've been asked to continue for a second year as poet laureate for the city of Redmond, Washington. This past year, one of my programs was a series of four quarterly programs called "Poets Wanted: Dead or Alive," in which I featured famous dead poets. The first one I featured was E. E. Cummings, on October 30, 2013. I also staged a poetry festi-

val, called Poets in the Park, made Poem of the Week posters that were displayed at the library, city offices, and many local businesses, led summer poetry walks, and gave numerous poetry readings. In the year ahead, I'll add to this by writing a column on poetry for the local newspaper and doing a multimedia poetry reading/performance of new poetry on the theme of light.

What Was Actually Happening

Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky are acclaimed translators of Russian literature. During their joint interview in the summer 2015 issue of the *Paris Review*, Pevear was asked how he became interested in writing. He responded:

I fell in love with poetry when I was about fourteen. I picked up a couple of the little paperback anthologies of English poetry edited by Oscar Williams and used to carry them around with me everywhere. A little later I acquired E. E. Cummings's *Poems 1923-1954*, my first real book of poetry. Just recently I reread Cummings's *Eimi*, the novelistic journal of his trip to Russia in 1931, and was struck not only by the liveliness of the writing, but also by his grasp of what was actually happening in the Soviet Union under Stalin, when so many enthusiasts failed to see it. (103)

Impressive praise, indeed, from someone with a deep knowledge of Russia and Russian literature. Also impressive is Pevear's casual comment that he was *re-reading EIMI*.

Erratum Finally Noticed (and Corrected)

On pages 22-23 of Friedman's *(Re) Valuing Cummings*, part of a sentence has dropped out of the text. The sentence in question concerns the story "The Little Girl Named I" from Cummings' posthumous publication, *Fairy Tales*. (The words in brackets are missing from the text.)

During the first two encounters, he asks her what she [thinks will happen next and agrees with her answers, but during the third] encounter she gets it wrong.

The words have been restored by consulting the original publication of the article, "Cummings Posthumous" (309).

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The Ordeman Bequest

In January 2016, *Spring* contributor and former editorial board member John Ordeman sent us a cache of Cummings memorabilia that he had collected over the years, asking only that we "put them to whatever use you think is appropriate." Included in the collection are books, journals, musical scores, programs, and pamphlets, along with vinyl records and audio tapes of Cummings' various recordings. Among the books, journals, and pamphlets is a 1903 edition of Raymond McDonald Alden's *English Verse: Specimens Illustrating Its Principles and History*, which Ordeman notes is "an anthology used in courses EEC took at Harvard." In addition, there is a copy of the April-June 1932 issue of *Hound & Horn* containing excerpts from *EIMI*, a July 1943 copy of *Poetry* featuring five Cummings poems, a 1963 copy of *The Massachusetts Review* with some Cummings letters and a poem, and a 1968 pamphlet called *A Birthday Garland for S. Foster Damon*, from which our cover photo was taken. There are also musical scores of settings of Cummings poems by William Bergsma, John Cage, Ron Jeffers, Morton Feldman, and Elie Siegmeister, as well as a program and BBC tape recording from 1971 of an all-Cummings concert organized by British composer Peter Dickinson. The recordings of Cummings' poetry include all of the Caedmon recordings, as well as five of the six nonlectures—missing only nonlecture two. Adding nonlecture two from a library collection, I had these records converted to (rather large) electronic files, which are available upon request to any Cummings Society member.

The *Massachusetts Review* letters concern correspondence about Cummings tape-recording thirteen poems on the theme of Freedom. The recording was made in 1954 but not broadcast because of fears of FCC sanctions. (In one of the letters, Cummings notes the irony of being forbidden to broadcast poems on the theme of freedom.) The reading was finally broadcast January 14, 1963, by the "Educational Radio Network . . . station WFCR in Amherst" (497). The letters article also publishes two of the po-

ems that Cummings recites on the tape: “i sing of Olaf glad and big” and “as freedom is a breakfastfood.” Looking for this tape, I went to the website of New England Public Radio, successor to WFCR, but did not find it. For now, if you want to hear this recording, you must journey to the Houghton Library at Harvard, which has a reel-to-reel tape of the reading. (For more on Cummings recordings available on the web, see my post “Audio Cummings” on the *EEC Society Blog*.)

By far the most important and exciting item in Ordeman’s collection is the program or playbill from the original 1928 production of *Him* at the Provincetown Playhouse in New York. The playbill to *Him* is a paper placard, about 6.5" x 17"—which I scanned and reduced and then posted to the *Spring* web site. (See the *Him* page.) In addition, Aaron Moe has written a short piece about the *Him* playbill (“Cummings’ *WARNING* from the Program of his Play”) for the *EEC Society Blog*.

—Michael Webster

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E. E Cummings Society Presentations at the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900, February 20-22, 2014

After Sex, What?: Miracles, Cultural Parody, and E.E.

Cummings' Modernist Theater

Chair: Bethany K. Dumas, University of Tennessee

1. "E. E. Cummings: *Miracles* Revisited," Bethany K. Dumas, University of Tennessee
2. "Staging Failure: Modernist Parody, the Freudian Mirror, and the Reality Principle in E. E. Cummings' *Him* (1927)," Gillian Huang-Tiller, University of Virginia-Wise
3. "The Popular and the Primitive in T. S. Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* and E. E. Cummings' *Him*," Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University

E. E Cummings Society Presentations at the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900, February 26-28, 2015

Modernist Personage: Lower Case 'i', Language, Race, and Cummings' Cultural Aesthetics

Chair: Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University

1. "Dos Passos' Psyche: Brokenness and Fragmentation of Cummings' Non-Linear Narrative," Wael Salam, University of Texas-Dallas
2. "Archetypal Individuals in Cummings' *The Enormous Room*," Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University
3. "Dancing *Eimi*: Kirstein's American Ballet, Black Being, and Cummings' Modernist *Tom*," Gillian Huang-Tiller, University of Virginia-Wise

E. E Cummings Society Presentations at the American Literature Association Annual Conference, Washington, D.C., May 22-25, 2014

Cummings' Enormous Self: Heirs and Contemporaries

Chair: Bernard F. Stehle, Community College of Philadelphia

1. "*The Young and Evil*: Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, E. E. Cummings' Sassy Gay Friends," Rai Peterson, Ball State University
2. "E. E. Cummings' Self-Portraits in Poetry and Painting," Michael

Webster, Grand Valley State University

3. "The Company He Kept: The Modernist Movement and E. E. Cummings' Visual Aesthetic," Steven Katz, Independent Scholar, The Ohio State University

"The New Art": The Typewriter, the Ampersand, and Rhythmic Precision

Chair: Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University

1. "Cummings and the Typewriterly Aesthetic," Matthew Schilleman, Clemson University
2. "'o- / pening' the 'Book of the Dead': Cummings' Ampersand & Hieroglyphic Sonnetry in *New Poems* (1938)," Gillian Huang-Tiller, University of Virginia-Wise
3. "'That Precision which Creates Movement': Rhythmic Convention, Revision, and Innovation in the Poetry of E. E. Cummings," Richard D. Cureton, University of Michigan [Due to an illness in his family, Prof. Cureton was unable to attend.]

E. E Cummings Society Presentations at the American Literature Association Annual Conference, Boston, MA, May 21-24, 2015

Cummings' Artistry (In Memory of Norman Friedman)

Chair: Bernard F. Stehle, Community College of Philadelphia

1. "The Odd Couple: Emily Dickinson and E. E. Cummings," Maryanne Garbowsky, County College of Morris
2. "A Descriptive Analysis of (Unconventional) Graphological Patterns in the Experimental Poetry of E. E. Cummings: Stylistics and the Theory of Foregrounding," Eva María Gómez-Jiménez, Universidad de Granada
3. "'clinging fingers into hands': Visual Precision, Syn/tactic Movement, and Cummings' Bookend Sonnetry in *is 5* (1926)," Gillian Huang-Tiller, University of Virginia-Wise

Intersections of E.E. Cummings and John Dos Passos

Chair: Victoria M. Bryan, Cleveland State Community College

1. "Burying the Uniform of Grief: John Dos Passos's Critique of Obitu-

ary in *U.S.A.*,” Katherine Stanutz, University of Maryland, College Park

2. “A Flight—Out of Flatness: Cummings and Dos Passos Travel to the Soviet Union,” Michael Webster, Grand Valley State University
3. “The Modern Complex and Its Discontent: Between Cummings and Dos Passos,” Zachary Tavlin, University of Washington
4. “Dos Passos, Cummings, and Radical Tourism to the Soviet Union.” Fredrik Tydal, University of Virginia

Another Session of Interest (ALA Boston, May, 2015)

Comics and Modernism

Chair: Alfred Bendixen, Princeton University

1. “Cartoonists Greet the Future: Comics, the Armory Show, and the Shock of Recognition,” Peter R. Sattler, Lakeland College
2. “The Invisibility of Influence: The Poetics of George Herriman’s *Krazy Kat* and the Comicity of E. E. Cummings,” Ben Novotny Owen, The Ohio State University
3. “Beyond Black: Abstraction and Expression in the Comics and Canvases of Ad Reinhardt,” David M. Ball, Princeton University

Other Conference Presentations

*In the past couple of years, María Teresa Gonzalez Mínguez has given no fewer than four presentations on Cummings:

1. “*The Enormous Room*: Cummings’ Experience in the First World War.” “Rhetoric of War” International Conference, Saint Louis University, Madrid Campus, 23-24 May 2014.
2. “E. E. Cummings and the Jewish Community in the United States: Racism or Social Attitude?” SAAS (Spanish Association for American Studies) Conference, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 25-27 March 2015.
3. “Poetry for Children: E. E. Cummings and American Culture,” Second International Conference on Teaching Literature in English for Young Learners, Universitat de València, 14-15 May 2015.
4. “E. E. Cummings’ Concept of Death in ‘Buffalo Bill ’s’ and ‘Since

Feeling is First’,” “Death, Desire, and Dialogue: In [Death-] Bed with the Text” 13th International Conference, Saint Louis University, Madrid Campus, 22-23 May 2015.

Two Abstracts of Papers from the Tenth Triennial Conference of the International Association of Word and Image Studies, Dundee, Scotland, “Riddles of Form,” 11-15 August, 2014.

Vladimir Feshchenko

Institute of Linguistics, Moscow

From PARIdiSe East-bound: E. E. Cummings’ Cubist Journey from Paris to the Soviet ‘unworld’

In 1931, the American avant-garde poet-and-painter E.E. Cummings was living, writing and painting in Paris. Encouraged by his pro-communist friends L. Aragon and J. Dos Passos, Cummings decides to visit Soviet Russia, having also heard about it from his fellow artists M. Larionov and N. Gontcharova. Cummings encounters a country and society that terrifies him by its absolute denial of the artist’s self in favour of a collectivist proletarian ideology. Cummings may have heard of the Russian Avant-garde revolution in the arts, but what he actually experiences on his 5-week journey to the Soviet land appalls him. Upon return to Paris he decides to publish his travel notes made in Russia as a documentary yet novelized travelogue *Eimi: A Journey Through Soviet Russia* (1933). The book with its hybrid cryptography and experimental style represents an original piece of cubist literature. The hell-like Soviet reality is depicted through the eyes of the Avant-Garde poet-and-painter. Our paper will analyze the verbal and visual poetical tools that E.E. Cummings employs in envisaging the transition from the Paradise world of Parisian Bohemia to the Hell of the Soviet unworld.

Martin Heusser

University of Zurich

Against ‘the naughty thumb / of sciences’: Deviant Visuality in the Poetry of E. E. Cummings

The poetry of the American Modernist E. E. Cummings has achieved a degree of notoriety for typographical deviance. So much so that a number

of early critics denied the visual dimension of his “poempictures” any meaningful function, referring to it as mere “surface pyrotechnics” or “gay logomachy.” While the importance and the functionality of the visuality of Cummings’ poetry are by now undisputed and have been studied variously, there still remains a considerable amount of uncharted territory in the analysis of his idiosyncratic typography. Three phenomena in particular have received no, or, at most, very little, critical attention: Clustering (i.e., the arrangement of usually short) lines in conspicuous groups, symmetry, and catabolism—that is the random occurrence of, e.g., non-standard line-breaks, division of words, deviant use of punctuation etc.

Examining a number of “difficult” poems, I will be arguing that clustering, symmetry and catabolism are an expression of Cummings’ deep-seated aversion to an intellectual, “scientific” world view. What he was trying to create in his poetry was a type of language that would transcend the customary operation of words to achieve a sort of para-linguistic, intuitive meaning—along the lines of a passage from Reginald Blyth’s book on *Hai-ku* which he had underlined—“essentially a wordless state, in which words are used, not to express anything, but rather to clear away something that seems to stand between us and the real things.” At the same time, Cummings’ cryptic typography with its emphasis on symmetry and aesthetic complexity becomes a miniature version of what the poet perceives—in the best Romantic manner—as the supreme harmony of the cosmos.