

Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society

Volume 20

Article 3

2013

About the Cover

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Recommended Citation

Stehle, Bernard F. (2013) "About the Cover," *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*. Vol. 20, Article 3.

Available at: https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/spring_cummings/vol20/iss1/3

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About the Cover

Bernard F. Stehle

I had reason to be especially elated as our small group of EEC Society members visited 104 Irving St. on May 23, at the invitation of the present owners of the Cambridge property, for although I had twice before journeyed there on my own—in 1979, camera in hand, and again in 2001—on neither occasion had I been able to photograph the gabled mansion except from the outside (and barely so at that, splits being but few in the slats of the high fence and dense hedge growth sealing from public scrutiny this birthplace of our poet).

Once inside, I find myself drawn toward a space of intersecting light and shadow. I gaze upwards, my eyes following the lines of architecture leading to “a blue true dream of sky” pouring through a glass opening in the ceiling of the third-floor landing, the glorious culmination of a zigzagging staircase, the lively oak verticals and curves of which bewitch me with the stern harmony of their music...

Not only the above phrase from “i thank You God for most this amazing” (CP 663) but also the line “Lumberman of The Distinct” (from “Picasso,” CP 195) comes to mind as I remember composing one photograph after another that day, thinking: Estlin, you, too, “hew form truly” — and were born and raised in this space no less truly hewn (in part by your own father). What stairwell inspiration might 104 Irving St. have provoked in you? What skylight awe? And did I, seventy-one years old, look out from perhaps the same high window on this day in May 2013 that you, “(five or six years old) / peering from some high / window” (CP 824) looked out from “at the gold / of november sunset” one day in 1899 or 1900? Silly speculation, of course, even projection, ... but let us not forget the opening line: “who are you, little i,” a question posed by Cummings writing this poem in 1961, the year before his death. “It was at moments like this,” Kennedy writes, having quoted a particularly poignant passage from EEC’s notes at the time having to do with his earliest bedtime memories, “that he could project himself, at age sixty-seven, into a poem recreating an earlier self” (*Dreams* 481).

Such are my associations, the poetics of space I was privileged to explore inside 104 Irving St. that day, evoked now by the photograph gracing the cover of this issue of *Spring*.