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Introduction/About the Cover

The Editor

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Introduction / About the Cover

The Editor

Our cover shows Marion Morehouse's photo of Patchin Place, dating from 1958. In the News, Notes, & Correspondence section at the end of this issue, Gillian Huang-Tiller comments on how little has changed between a recent photo of Patchin Place and Marion's photo. While we can be sure that Cummings would deplore the loss of some of the trees on the lane, we can rejoice in the (at least partial) survival of 4 Patchin Place, which, as Cummings wrote, meant for him "Safety & Peace & the truth of Dreaming & the bliss of Work" (*Letters* 195).

Our seventeenth issue begins with two different considerations of one of Cummings' most seldom considered works, his "Jottings," a collection of aphorisms that stimulate thought even as they exalt feeling. While Michael Dylan Welch finds echoes of Cummings' major themes in these seemingly "slight" and "ephemeral" sayings, John Edwin Cowen compares Cummings' jottings with the aphorisms (called Xocerisms) of the poet José García Villa, disciple and friend of Cummings in the 1940s and '50s. These essays are followed by three even more disparate considerations of Cummings' creative process. Adam C. Vander Tuig explores Cummings' typographic creativity by approaching the poet's idiosyncratic language use through psychologist and linguist Steven Pinker's notion of "mentalese." Next we print for the first time Cummings' explication of his dust jacket blurb for *Him*, one of the many fugitive and unpublished texts among the Cummings papers at the Houghton Library at Harvard University. We also reprint Cummings' 1927 blurb, along with his "WARNING" to playgoers, printed in the program to the first stage production of *Him*. Michael Webster follows with an explication of Cummings' explication, showing how all three of Cummings' texts may be read as genuine criticism, even though they are phrased in riddling, jokey, and sometimes aggressive language.

After steeping themselves in the actuality of our first grouping of poems, readers will encounter five essays on teaching Cummings. In the first essay, called "The Bonus Question," Drew Lankford writes of a teaching strategy (actually, his students call it a "trick") that succeeded in getting his 7th grade students involved and thinking about how "maggie and milly and molly and may" spoke directly to their lives and concerns. Rai Peterson's essay takes us through a typical college class (or two) on Cummings, show-

ing how she helps students read our non-hero's poems closely enough to see that his "innovations are not chicanery but literary master strokes." W. Todd Martin's "'IS' as an Action Verb" shows how in the classroom "Cummings' concept of 'IS' [can become] a foundational idea that provides a context for understanding the ideology that permeates much of Cummings' poetry." Richard D. Cureton then briefly explains how his brilliant theory of "temporal poetics" is "especially useful in exploring the conflicted sensibilities" and psychological complexities of a great modern poet like Cummings. This teaching section concludes with Michael Webster alerting us to a resource available at the *Spring* web site—annotations to the *Complete Poems* and many of Cummings' prose works.

After our second section of alive poems, we present our final two essays, both of which examine cultural considerations that underlie Cummings' varied responses to WWI. Tim Dayton's "'Writers Etcetera': Cummings, the Great War, and Discursive Struggle" explores the sentimental patriotic poetry that Cummings satirizes in "my sweet old etcetera," and shows how his satire affirms values contrary "to the lies enacted and the destruction enabled by [this] pro-war discourse," thus contesting "the [conventional] meaning of the Great War." In "E. E. Cummings and the Under Classes: *The Enormous Room*," Millie Kidd focuses on Cummings' "profound appreciation for those who are of an inferior social class," which "includes not only the poor and those who rank below the middle class, but social outcasts as well."

This issue of *Spring* concludes with Aaron Moe's review of Iain Landles' *The Case for Cummings*, along with an extensive selection of "News, Notes, & Correspondence." Much of the latter section supplies details of the publishing, performing, and conference-going activities of society members and friends. The list of new publications includes a surprising number of volumes devoted at least in part to E. E. Cummings and his work. This welcome surprise leads us to an invitation: would anyone care to review one or more of these publications for a future issue of *Spring*?

Work Cited

Cummings, E. E. *Selected Letters of E. E. Cummings*. Ed. F. W. Dupee and George Stade. New York: HBJ, 1969.