

E. E. Cummings:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Cummings, E. E. (Edward Estlin), 1894-1962
Title:	E. E. Cummings Collection
Dates:	1902-1968
Extent:	12 document boxes (4 linear feet), 8 galley folders, 8 oversize folders
Abstract:	Manuscripts of poems, short stories, and collections of verses, notes from his school days, and correspondence make up the bulk of the Cummings Collection.
Language	English.
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchase and gifts, 1965-1983 (R3942, R3819, R11908, G1647, R7995, R7996, R5913, R5067, R4488, R4289, R2738, R2394)
Processed by:	Chelsea S. Jones, 1998
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Edward Estlin Cummings (1894-1962) was brought up in a conservative Cambridge, Massachusetts, home. His father, with degrees in both philosophy and divinity, taught at Harvard University until 1900 when he received ordination by the Unitarian Church and became a pastor at the South Congregational Church of Boston.

According to family diaries, Cummings wanted to be a poet from an early age. He was supported in this ambition by his mother who made up word games and other activities to encourage his creativity. Cummings attended public schools, including the Cambridge High and Latin School, prior to entering Harvard in 1911. While there, he concentrated in the classics, including Latin, Greek, and literature, and he mastered the various forms of poetry, gaining the foundation he needed in order to begin the experimentation with poetic form and shape that became his trademark. While at Harvard, Cummings published poetry in the Harvard *Monthly* and the Harvard *Advocate*. Through these organizations he became acquainted with S. Foster Damon, Stewart Mitchell, John Dos Passos, Scofield Thayer, and J. Sibley Watson. These friends would encourage and support Cummings through much of his artistic career.

Cummings earned his BA from Harvard in 1915, *magna cum laude*, like his father before him, and was invited to speak at the commencement ceremony. He presented a term paper on "The New Art." This paper demonstrated Cummings' affinity with the modern artistic sensibility, especially his interest in the overlap between the visual arts and literature, a keystone in his distinctive typographical style.

After finishing his Master's degree, also from Harvard, in 1916, Cummings moved to New York City in January of 1917. He worked at P. F. Collier for a few weeks, but became bored and quit, deciding instead to pursue the freedom of life as a full-time artist and poet. In April, he volunteered for the Norton-Hajes Ambulance Service and shipped out for France. On the trip he met William Slater Brown and their friendship was cemented by an unexpected five weeks of free time in Paris awaiting the rest of their ambulance unit.

Several months later, events took a defining turn for Cummings when he and Brown were detained by the French military on suspicion of espionage and undesirable activities. As a result of censor-provoking letters home by Brown and a preference for the company of French soldiers over their fellow American ambulance drivers, the two young men were held for three months in a concentration camp at La Ferté Mace. They were kept, along with their fellow detainees, in a large room which was represented in the title of Cummings' book about this experience, *The Enormous Room* (1922). Cummings' father worked through diplomatic channels and finally wrote a letter to President Wilson to obtain Cummings' release in December 1917. Brown was released two months later.

Cummings returned to the United States, first to his parents' home in Massachusetts and then to New York, where he was joined by Brown. For the next several years, Cummings painted and wrote. In 1924, he married Elaine Orr Thayer, the mother of his daughter Nancy. They divorced after two months and in 1929, Cummings married Anne Minnerly Barton. They spent much of the next two years living and traveling in Europe.

In 1931, Cummings left Barton and traveled to the Soviet Union. Pre-disposed to enjoy the trip, Cummings found his personal sense of individualism disturbed by the lack of intellectual and artistic freedom that he found. He published his diary from the trip under the Greek title *Eimi* (1933), which translates to "I am."

In 1932, while his divorce from Barton was being settled, Cummings met Marion Morehouse, who was to be his companion and common law wife for the rest of his life. In 1933, Cummings received the Guggenheim Fellowship for the purpose of writing a "book of poems." In 1935, unable to find a publisher for his book, he published *No Thanks* (1935) with the help of his mother. It was dedicated to the fourteen publishing houses that had turned him down.

E. E. Cummings continued to produce a steady stream of poems and publications throughout the forties and fifties. In 1952, Harvard offered him the Charles Eliot Norton Professorship for the 1952-53 school year. Also during the fifties, Cummings began to tour, reading his poetry across America. In 1958, he won the Bollingen Prize for Poetry from Yale University and published his final volume of new poems, *95 Poems*.

He died at his family farm on September 3, 1962.

Sources

Dictionary of Literary Biography -- Volume 48: American Poets, 1880-1945, Second Series. Peter Quartermain, Ed. (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1986).

For further information on E. E. Cummings see:

E. E. Cummings, The Magic Maker. Charles Norman. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972).

Dreams in the Mirror: A Biography of E. E. Cummings. Richard S. Kennedy. (New York: Liveright Publishers, Corp., 1980).

Scope and Contents

Manuscripts of poems, short stories, and collections of verses, notes from his school days, and correspondence make up the bulk of the Cummings Collection, 1902-1968. The collection is organized into four series, with materials arranged alphabetically by author or title: I. Works, 1908-1968 (6 boxes), II. Letters, 1902-1962 (.5 boxes), III. Recipient, 1913-1962 (1 box), and IV. Miscellaneous, 1902-1968 (4.5 boxes). This

collection was previously accessible through a card catalog, but has been re-cataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.

The Works series contains drafts of several collections of verse as well as individual poems. The editing of *Poems: 1923-1954* is particularly well represented in both typed manuscript and galley format. There are also essays written by Cummings for college exams and two notebooks with notes and poetry fragments.

The Letters series is mostly composed of single letters to various people, with the exception of Howard L. Nelson, with whom Cummings maintained a lively correspondence concerning books, poets, and fatherhood over a 22 year period. The Recipient series contains letters from admirers, publishers, and friends, including Merle Armitage, Robert Bly, Hart Crane, Judson Crews, Foster Damon, John Dos Passos, Harvard University, Amy Lowell, Stewart Mitchell, Marianne Moore, Marion Morehouse, Charles Norman, James Purdy, Stephen Spender, Samuel Ward, and Louis Zukofsky.

The Miscellaneous series is largely composed of notes from Cummings' school days, some elementary, but mostly collegiate. Most of these are preprinted items and lecture notes, rather than original material. Additionally, a large number of letters sent to Marion Morehouse by several individuals, most of them written after Cummings' death, are present, along with quite a few letters to Charles Norman. Other miscellany includes manuscripts by other authors, a copy of Cummings' birth certificate, musical scores, and photostats of an advertisement series.

Separated Material

Elsewhere in the Ransom Center is a large collection of newspaper clippings covering the publication and criticism of Cummings' works, as well as programs, invitations and calendars (Vertical File folders and three scrapbooks). Located in the Art Collection are about 300 items, including oil paintings, sketches, portraits, self-portraits, anatomical studies, landscapes, and cartoons by Cummings. In the Literary Files of the Photography Collection, there are about 100 photographs of Cummings, his friends, and his art. The Center's Book Collection includes Cummings' personal library of 2,725 titles, described in "Exhibit Features Author's Libraries," *Library Chronicle*, N.S. 34 (1986), 7-8

Index Terms

Correspondents

Armitage, Merle, 1893-1975.

Bly, Robert.

Crane, Hart, 1899-1932.

Cummings, E. E. (Edward Estlin), 1894-1962

Crews, Judson.

Damon, S. Foster (Samuel Foster), 1893-1971.

Dos Passos, John, 1896-1970.

Lowell, Amy, 1874-1925.

Mitchell, Stewart, 1892-1957.

Moore, Marianne, 1887-1972.

Morehouse, Marion, 1906-1969.

Nelson, Howard.

Norman, Charles, 1904-.

Purdy, James.

Spender, Stephen, 1909-.

Ward, Samuel, fl. 1931.

Zukofsky, Louis, 1904-1978.

Subjects

American poetry

Children's poetry, American

Fairy tales

Poets, American -- 20th century

Young adult poetry

Document Types

Birthday cards

Christmas cards

Galley proofs

Juvenilia

Love letters

Postcards

Series I. Works, 1908-1968

Unidentified works, A-B, nd	box 1 folder 1
<i>By E. E. Cummings with illustrations by the author</i> , 1930	folder 2-3
C, 1914-1931, nd	folder 4
The casualty list, tipped into <i>Eight Harvard Poets</i> after page 10, nd	folder 5
College notebook, poetry workbook, ca. 1915	folder 6
<i>Complete Poems: 1913-1935</i> , 1968, 864pp	folder 7-8
D-E, 1908-1941, nd	box 2 folder 1
Early poems, 1910-1914, 54pp	folder 2
F-I, 1909, nd	folder 3
I & my parents' son [removed to oversize folder 1]	
<i>Fifty Poems</i> , nd	box 2 folder 4-5
J-O, 1909-1916, nd	folder 6
Juvenile poems, 1902-1914, 106pp	folder 7
<i>A Miscellany</i> , cut and full galleys, 1958 [full galleys removed to galley folder 1]	folder 8-9
The New Art, ca. 1915	box 3 folder 1
P, 1914, nd	folder 2
Picture stories, drawings, nd	folder 3
Poems with author index, 1912, 249pp	folder 4-5
<i>Poems: 1923-1954</i>	
Composite print	box 3 folder 6-7

Composite print (continued)	box 4 folder 1-4
Composite print (continued)	box 5 folder 1-2
Table of contents	folder 3
Unbound proof copy, 1954, 492pp [galleys removed to galley folders 2-5]	folder 4-5
The Poetry of a New Era, nd, 47pp	folder 6
Poetry workbook, nd	box 6 folder 1
R-Z, 1909-1968, nd	folder 2
<i>73 Poems</i> , 1963 [galleys removed to galley folder 6]	folder 3-5
<i>Selected Letters</i> , 1969 [removed to galley folder 7]	
<i>Six Etudes for Voice and Piano</i> , nd [removed to oversize folder 2]	
"Story's story," nd, 29pp	box 6 folder 6
<i>Tulips and Chimneys</i> , nd, 38pp	folder 7
Workbook, 1912-[c. 1915], bound volume	folder 8
"A world of men and women," 1912	folder 9
Xli poems, nd, 7pp	folder 10

Cummings, E. E. (Edward Estlin), 1894-1962

Series II. Letters, 1902-1962

Unidentified; A-Z, 1902-1962 [letter and drawing to unidentified recipient removed to
oversize folder 8]

box 7
folder
1

Lougée, David, 1951-1959

folder 2

Morehouse, Marion, Valentine cards [removed to oversize folder 3]

Nelson, Howard L., 1940-1962

box 7 folder 3

Series III. Recipient, 1913-1962

Unidentified; A-B, 1917-1962	box 7 folder 4
C-G, 1917-1962	folder 5
Cummings, Edward, 1923-1926	folder 6
Cummings, Rebecca Haswell, 1917-1935	folder 7-8
H-O, 1913-1962, nd [musical score removed to oversize folder 7]	folder 9
Harvard University, 1911-1916	box 8 folder 1
Hindus, Milton, 1948	folder 2
Huff, Robert, 1948	folder 3
Jacobs, Sam A., 1931-1935	folder 4
P-Z, 1914-1965	folder 5
Qualey, Elizabeth, 1928-1935	folder 6
Ward, Samuel, 1931-1936	folder 7

Series IV. Miscellaneous, 1902-1968

Unidentified, A-Cu, 1964, nd	box 8 folder 8
Arrowsmith, William, <i>The Birds: The Complete Greek Comedy</i> , 1961, 181pp	folder 9
Boni and Liveright, Inc., 1921, 3 pp	folder 10
Cummings, E. E.	
Unidentified; A-I, 1907-1951, nd	box 8 folder 11
Collected poems, index of first lines, 1938	folder 12
English notebook, 1915	box 9 folder 1
<i>The Enormous Room</i> , page layout, no text, 1956	folder 2
History notes, nd, 30pp	folder 3
Geology notebook, 1915	folder 4
Harvard course notes, loose pages, 1912-1916	folder 5-6
Harvard course notes, loose pages, 1912-1916	box 10 folder 1-2
J-R, 1913-1917, nd	folder 3
Latin notebook, 1912	folder 4
Mementos, 1911-1917, nd	folder 5
Memoranda of Agreement, 1924-30, 6pp [removed to galley folder 8]	
Report cards, 1902-03, 1911, 1912	box 10 folder 6
S-Z, 1917, nd	folder 7
School notebook, nd, 240pp	folder 8

Cummings, E. E. (Edward Estlin), 1894-1962

School notes on English literature, nd	box 11 folder 1
D-G, 1922-1968, nd	folder 2
H-N, 1915-1968, nd [musical score removed to oversize folder]	folder 3
Hindus, Milton, <i>The Crippled Giant</i> , nd, 112pp	folder 4
Kennedy, Richard S., "E. E. Cummings at Harvard"	
"Studies," nd, 45pp	box 11 folder 5
"Verse, Friends, Rebellion," nd, 61pp	folder 6
Modell, Merriam, <i>Bunny Lake is Missing</i> , nd	folder 7
Nelms, S. Randolph, <i>A Checklist of the Works of E. E. Cummings and of the Critical Writings on E. E. Cummings with a Sketch of the Directions of that Criticism to 1950</i> , nd, 99pp	folder 8
Nelson, Howard L., "The Literary Guide to Paris," nd, 157pp	box 12 folder 1-2
Nordoff, Paul	
"It's been a long hard winter," nd [removed to oversize folder 4]	
"Three songs for mezzo-soprano on poems by E. E. Cummings," nd [removed to oversize folder 5]	
O-Z, 1921-1951, nd [photostats removed to oversize folder 6]	box 12 folder 3
Wegner, Robert E., "The Poetry and Prose of E. E. Cummings," 1965, 112pp	folder 4
Miscellaneous envelopes, fragments, and blank forms, 1946-1951, nd	folder 5

E. E. Cummings Collection--Index of Correspondents

Index entries followed by the notation [from Cummings] indicate that the person is the recipient of correspondence from Cummings. Box and folder numbers followed by a number in parenthesis indicate the number of items by (or to) that person. Where there is no number in parenthesis, there is only one letter. So in the example Benson, Deborah--7.1(5) [from Cummings], 7.4(2) there are five items from Cummings to Benson in box 7, folder 1 and two items, from Benson to Cummings, in box 7, folder 4.

- Acton Foundation --7.4(2)
- American Red Cross --7.4
- The Anderson Galleries --7.4
- Andrews, Kevin --7.4
- Appleton-Century Company --8.8(7)
- Armitage, Merle, 1893-1975 --7.4
- Arrow Editions, New York --7.4
- *Atlantic Monthly* --7.1 [from Cummings]
- Battan, David, 1938- --7.4
- Bayed, Ronald H., 1932- --7.4
- Bell, Muriel --7.4
- Benson, Deborah --7.1(5) [from Cummings], 7.4(2)
- Berrigan, Ted --7.4
- Bly, Robert --7.4(2)
- Bodley Head (firm) --7.4
- Boni & Liveright, Inc. --8.10(3)
- Bosquet, Alain, 1919-1997 --7.4
- Brandt & Brandt --7.1(2) [from Cummings]
- Brown, Andreas --7.4, 8.8
- Campos, Augusto de --7.5
- Carroll, Donald, fl. 1962 --7.5
- Cary, Sylvia Preston --7.5
- Charles Boni Paper Books --7.4(2)
- Charles Scribner's Sons --12.3
- Charlton, Margette --8.8
- Colonna, Roy --7.5
- Cookson, William, 1939- --7.5
- Courlander, Harold, 1908- --7.5
- Cowley, Malcolm, 1898- --8.8
- Crane, Hart, 1899-1932 --7.5
- *Creative Art* --7.5(2)
- Crews, Judson --7.5
- Cummings, Edward, 1861-1926 --7.1 [from Cummings], 7.6(5)
- Cummings, Jane --7.5(3)
- Cummings, Rebecca --7.7-8(45)
- Curtiss, Mina Kirstein, 1896- --7.5
- Damon, S. Foster (Samuel Foster), 1893-1971 --11.2
- Davis, Philip (Cambridge) --7.5
- Deuell, Harvey Vail --11.2
- Dickerson, George --7.5
- Dickson, Robert Cook --7.5
- Dos Passos, John, 1896-1970 --7.5(4), 11.2(3)

- Doubleday and Company, inc. --11.2
- Drake, Lawrence --7.5
- Duell, Sloan and Pearce, Inc. --7.5
- Eastman, Max, 1883-1969 --7.5
- *Les Éditions du point du Jour* --7.5
- Ellis, E. Virginia --7.5
- Engle, Paul, 1908- --7.5
- *Epoch* (Cornell)--7.5
- *Eros Magazine*, Inc. (New York)--7.5
- Evans, Mike, fl. 1960 --7.5
- Eversole, Noorna --7.1 [from Cummings]
- Farr, Howard Acton --See Acton Foundation
- Firmage, George James --7.5
- Fleet Publishing Corporation --7.5
- Foote, A. D. --7.5
- Ford, Peter, fl. 1956 --7.5
- Forrest, Cleo --11.2
- Freedgood, Anne --7.5, 11.2
- Fritchey, Clayton --11.2
- Frye, Burton C., 1920- --7.5
- George Braziller, Inc. --7.4
- Gibson, Michael, 1929- --7.5
- Goldstone, James R. --7.5
- Goodson, Wilbur Chapman --7.1 [from Cummings]
- Gotham Book Mart --11.2
- Hagen, Yvonne --7.9
- Hall, Carol --See *Epoch*
- Harcourt, Brace, and Company, Inc. --7.9, 11.3(2)
- Harper, Alastair --7.9
- Harris, Cyril B. --7.9
- Hart, James Alfred, 1927- --11.3
- Harvard University --8.1(12)
- Henry Holt and Company --7.9
- Hindus, Milton --8.2
- Hopper, John --7.9
- Horace Liveright, Inc. --7.9
- Huff, Robert, 1924- --8.3(2), 11.3
- Hugo, Adele, fl. 1957 --7.9
- Hunt, Edward Eyre, 1885- --7.9, 11.3
- *Imagi* --7.9
- Jacobs, Hildegard --11.3
- Jacobs, S. A. (Samuel Aiwaz) --8.4(4), 11.3
- King, Alexander, 1900-1965 --7.9
- Labarthe, Pedro Juan, 1906- --7.9
- Laughlin, James, 1914- --7.9
- Layton, R. E. J. --7.9
- *The Light Year* --7.9
- Limes Verlag (Publisher) --7.9
- Lougée, David --7.2(20) [from Cummings]
- Lowell, Amy, 1874-1925 --11.3
- Lyman, Frank H. --7.9

- MacIver, Loren --7.9
- MacMillan Company --11.3(3)
- McCarty, Catherine --7.9
- McCord, David Thompson Watson, 1897- --7.9
- Mead, Frederick Sumner, Mrs. --7.9
- Mears, Alice Monks --7.9
- Meredith Press --11.3
- Messner, Julian --7.1 [from Cummings]
- Mitchell, Stewart, 1892-1957 --7.9
- Moore, Marianne, 1887-1972 --7.9
- Morehouse, Marion, 1906-1969 --7.1(5) [from Cummings], 7.9(8), 11.3(6)
- Mulcahy, Dione Matte --7.9(2)
- Neagoe, Peter --7.9(2)
- Nelson, Christine, fl. 1957 --7.1 [from Cummings]
- Nelson, Howard --7.3(65) [from Cummings]
- New Hampshire Motor Vehicle Department --7.9
- New York Committee Against Child Misery --7.9
- *New York Post* --7.9
- Nist, John --7.9
- Norman, Charles, 1904- --7.1 [from Cummings], 11.3(4)
- Old Settler Bookshop --7.9
- Orr, Alexis --7.9
- Parrish, Dilwyn --7.1 [from Cummings]
- Patchen, Miriam --12.3
- Pinkerton, Bobs --See Appleton-Century Company
- Plas, Michal van der, 1927- --8.5
- *Poetry Dial* --8.5
- Posner, David Louis, 1921- --8.5
- Provincetown Playhouse --8.5(2)
- Purdy, James --8.5
- Qualey, Elizabeth F. Cummings --8.6(3), 12.3(3)
- Qualey, John --8.5
- Rachewiltz, Mary de --8.5, 12.3
- Rainer, Dachine --8.5
- Rappaport, Herman A. --7.1(7) [from Cummings]
- Reck, Hanne Gabriele --12.3
- Redman, Ben Ray, 1896-1961 --12.3
- Reid, Alastair, 1926- --8.5
- Roodenko, Igal --12.3
- Roseliep, Raymond --12.3
- Ruder & Finn --12.3(2)
- Salinas, Pedro, 1892-1951 --8.5
- Schevill, Ferdinand, 1868-1954 --7.1(5) [from Cummings]
- Scott, Laurence --8.5
- *Scribner's Magazine* --8.5
- *The Seven Arts* --8.5
- Solbert, Oscar N., 1885- --12.3
- Sorrentino, Gilbert --8.5
- Spender, Stephen, 1909- --12.3
- Steffens, Roger --12.3
- Theatre Guild --8.5

Cummings, E. E. (Edward Estlin), 1894-1962

- Titus, Edward W., 1880- --7.1 [from Cummings]
- Toklas, Alice B. --12.3
- Triem, Eve, 1902- --12.3
- Tuck, Margery --12.3
- Tucker, Robert, fl. 1966 --12.3
- Turner, W. Price (William Price), 1927- --7.1 [from Cummings]
- *Vanity Fair* --8.5(2)
- Vaughan, Rita C. --12.3(10)
- Viking Press --8.5
- Villa, José García --8.5
- Ward, Samuel, fl. 1931 --8.7(12)
- Wasserstrom, William --8.5
- Watson, Hildegard Lasell --8.5
- Werner, M. R. (Morris Robert), 1897- --8.5, 12.3
- Weston, Carol H. --8.5
- Wilson, Barbara --7.1 [from Cummings]
- Wilson, Arthur W. "Tex" --7.1 [from Cummings]
- Wilson, Jane, 1916- --12.3
- *Wisconsin English Journal* --12.3
- Wood, Audrey --12.3
- Zukofsky, Louis, 1904-1978--8.5

E. E. Cummings Collection--Index of Works

Unidentified Works

- "The boys I mean are not refined" --1.1
- "Dear H" -----1.1
- "Under the New Hampshire moon the loons' wild laughter..." --1.1

Identified Works

- An Appeal--1.1
- "The auto experiences of Hiram Featherbrain Teddy Bear" --1.1
- Ballad of an Intellectual--1.1
- "Ballad of blushing May" --1.1
- *By E.E. Cummings with illustrations by the author* --1.2-3
- "The call of the sea" --1.4
- Camp Fire Tales--1.4
- *The Casualty List* --1.5
- "Chaucer" --1.4
- *C I O P W* --1.4
- "The coming of spring" --1.4
- *Complete Poems: 1913-1935* --1.7-8
- "Danger men working (A.D. 1941)" --2.1
- *Eight Harvard Poets* --2.3
- "Elizabeth Eliza: A history of her and her doings" --2.1
- "Fancy of May the first" --2.4
- *Fifty Poems* --2.5-2.6
- "For a lady's birthday" --2.4
- "God's messenger" --2.4
- I & My parent's son--oversize folder 1
- Invocation--2.4
- King Arthur--2.7
- Lectures--2.7
- Legend of Mr. Chockom--2.7
- "A little domestic incident with Orientals" --2.7
- Manuscript found in a bottle--2.7
- *A Miscellany* --2.9-2.10, galley folder 1
- "My specialty is living said" --2.7
- The new art--3.1
- "Ode to temptation" --2.7
- "The other man" --2.7
- "The persecuted hermit" --3.2
- *Poems: 1923-1954* --3.6-7, 4.1-4, 5.1-5, galley folders 2-5
- The Poetry of a New Era--5.6
- Rex--6.2
- *Selected Letters* --galley folder 7
- *73 Poems* --6.3-4
- *Six Etudes for Voice and Piano* --oversize folder 2
- Sketches and watercolors of the twenties and thirties--6.2
- Story's story--6.5
- "Song" --6.2
- "Thanksgiving prayer" --6.2

- "Three poems" --6.2
- "To an Olympic winner" --6.2
- "To start, to hesitate; to stop" --6.2
- "To the night moths" --6.2
- "The true epic" --6.2
- *Tulips and Chimneys* --6.6
- "Two composers" --6.2
- "Two poems" --6.2
- When Calvin Coolidge laughed--6.2
- "A world of men and women" --6.8
- Xli poems--6.9
- "ygUDuh" --6.2