

Aria

E . E . C U M M I N G S

A N A N A L Y S I S O F O N E P O E M

...listen:
there's a hell
of a good
universe next
door;
let's go

l(a

le
af
fa

ll

s)
one
l

iness

This haiku-like poem is "the most delicately beautiful literary construct that Cummings ever created"

Kennedy, Richard in *Dreams in the Mirror: A Biography of E. E. Cummings*



SELF-PORTRAIT
OIL PAINTING.
CUMMINGS IN
THE 1950S.

Consisting of just four words, which the poem splits into two distinct phrases— "loneliness," and "a leaf falls"—the poem has generated a wide range of critical analysis.

The reader is first pulled inside the poem since the visual elements of the poem fail to convey direct, unimpeded access to the thing itself.

The reader goes inside the poem—the verbal / semantic—to find meaning. However, because of the decomposition of the words in the poem, the multiple puns, allusions, and meanings, the reader is forced into other systems of signification outside the poem. Thus, the reader looks outward toward fields of French and numerical representation. This oscillation between inside / outside is one of the many

undecided issues within the poem. There are also the undecided issues of abstract / concrete, female / male ("la" and "le"), the numerical / verbal, and the visual / verbal. Furthermore, there is a metaphysical dimension to the poem that links "a leaf falls" and the "autumn" years of a person's life. However, this melancholic reading need not apply, for the state of "loneliness" isn't necessarily a negative one. The poem seems to be dealing with issues far and beyond that of an interpretative meaning. Its undecided status points to this. Cummings is dealing with the problems of representation itself, and that is a major issue currently under debate. Cummings' work then, seems particularly relevant to today's thinking.

Iain Landles

my sweet old etcetera
aunt lucy during the recent

war could and what
is more did tell you just
what everybody was fighting

for,
my sister

isabel created hundreds
(and
hundreds) of socks not to
mention shirts fleaproof
earwarmers

etcetera wristers etcetera, my
mother hoped that

i would die etcetera
bravely of course my father used
to become hoarse talking about
how it was
a privilege and if only he
could meanwhile my

self etcetera lay quietly
in the deep mud et

cetera
(dreaming,
et
cetera, of
Your smile
eyes knees and of your Etcetera)



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

e.e.cummings is a
concentrate of titanic
significance... He does
not make aesthetic
mistakes.

— Marianne Moore