



Special Collections Department

Cid Corman Letters to David Giannini

1980 - 1999
(bulk dates 1990 - 1994, 1997 - 1998)

Manuscript Collection Number: 351
Accessioned: Purchases December 1995, 1999
Extent: .3 linear ft. (173 items)
Content: Letters, postcards.
Access: The collection is open for research.
Processed: October 1997 by Shanon Lawson; November 2000 by Gerald Cloud

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Biographical Note

American poet Cid (Sidney) Corman was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on June 29, 1924. After receiving a B.A. from Tufts College in 1945, he did graduate work at the University of Michigan, where he won the Hopwood Award for poetry, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 1948, Corman returned to Boston, where he organized a series of poetry groups and broadcast a radio show called "This is Poetry." This program brought Corman into contact with several established poets, including John Crowe Ransom, Archibald MacLeish, Richard Wilbur, Theodore Roethke, and Marianne Moore. The latter introduced him to the writer's colony at Yaddo, where he met William Carlos Williams, who would become a strong influence in Corman's own poetry.

In 1951, Corman founded and edited the literary quarterly *Origin*, which published the work of new or little-known authors. The magazine printed works by several poets from the Black Mountain community, including Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, and Robert Duncan. In addition to promoting the works of many American poets, including Corman himself, *Origin* published several poems in translation. The magazine would eventually go through five series, the last ending in 1986.

In 1954-55, Corman received a Fulbright fellowship to study at the Sorbonne. The next year, he taught in Italy, and began publishing volumes of poetry under the Origin Press imprint. From 1958-1966, Corman taught in Kyoto, Japan, at Kyoto Joshidai, Ryukoto University, and Doshisha University. He and his wife, Shizumi Konshini, have lived primarily in Kyoto ever since, where they run a successful business, Cid Corman's Dessert Shop.

Corman has published over seventy volumes of poetry, beginning with *A Thanksgiving Eclogue from Theocritus* (1954), and including *Sun Rock Man* (1962), *Livingdying* (1970), *Of*, Vol. I-II (1990), *Of: Volume Three* (1998), and *Nothing / Doing* (1999). He has also translated several French and Japanese poems, including works by Bashō, Kusano Shimpei, and Francis Ponge, and published four volumes of essays. His anthology, *The Gist of Origin* (1975) contains a brief history of the magazine and several excerpts from the first three series.

David Giannini

American poet David Giannini was born on March 19, 1948 in New York City. His first book of poetry, *Opens* (1971), was published by Genesis: Grasp Press, which he edited and co-founded that same year. Other publications include *Stem* (1982), *Antonio and Clara* (1992), and *Seaphorisms* (1993). His most recent work, *Other Lines* (1997), is a collection "collage haikus," which Giannini constructs with three lines from three different poems. He has also contributed poems to various anthologies and magazines.

Sources:

Coony, Seamus. "Cid Corman." *Contemporary Poets*, 6th edition. Ed. Thomas Riggs. New York: St. James Press, 1996.

Corman, Cid, ed. *The Gist of Origin, 1951-1971: An Anthology*. New York: Grossman Publishers, 1979.

Who's Who in Writers, Editors, and Poets, United States and Canada, 5th Edition. Highland Park, IL: December Press, 1996.

Scope and Content Note

The collection of American poet Cid Corman's letters to fellow poet David Giannini contains 173 items and spans the dates 1980-1999, with bulk dates of 1990-1994, 1997-1998. The material in the collection consists primarily of autograph postcards, and to a lesser extent, typed letters on aerogrammes. Nearly all the postcards from the early nineties are colorful photographs of Kyoto and the Japanese countryside; the postcards from 1996-1999 depict traditional Japanese woodblock prints.

Corman writes all his letters from Kyoto, and many contain brief descriptions of Japanese life and surroundings. In addition, most of the postcards contain pictures of Kyoto, some of them near Corman's residence. Although he enjoys Japan, Corman frequently laments his limited finances, which he claims prevents him from returning to America, the health of his wife, and his cramped and tenuous housing. Despite these obstacles, he is able to make a living as a poet by giving readings and publishing his work, though the difficulties Corman has in this latter endeavor cause him to complain about the state of publishing in the United States. He expresses his suspicion that much of his current poetry will not see publication in his lifetime.

Corman writes of his opinion of and experiences with the "Lang Gang," his name for language poets such as Susan Howe and Ron Silliman. He mentions several other acquaintances, both literary and personal, but refers to many only by initials. He also writes about his own poetry; during this period, Corman is composing and publishing *Of*, a single work of 3,750 poems divided into five volumes of equal length. He discusses both the reading and the limited promotion and reception of the first two volumes, published in 1990 as a boxed set. In the later letters of 1997-1998 Corman acknowledges that *Of's* publication would not have been possible without the assistance of American artist Sam Francis (1923-1994). Letters indicate that Francis contributed finances, original art work, and encouragement for the project. Corman discusses plans for *Of: Volume Three* (1998), which was published in Japan, and an edition of selected works, *Nothing / Doing* (1999), published by New Directions. Other topics include popular movies, American politics, books that Corman is reading, and his 1991 trip to New York City for a poetry reading.

Contents List

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Cid Corman Letters to David Giannini

F1	Letters, 1980 - 1989 7 items, 10 pp.
F2	Letters, 1990 18 items, 24 pp.
F3	Letters, 1991 22 items, 30 pp.
F4	Letters, 1992 22 items, 23 pp.
F5	Letters, 1993 29 items, 29 pp.
F6	Letters, 1994 16 items, 17 pp.
F7	Letters, 1996 7 items, 8 pp.
F8	Letters, 1997 20 items, 23 pp.
F9	Letters, 1998 25 items, 33 pp.
F10	Letters, 1999 7 items, 8 pp.