

Tributes To Norman Friedman

Homage to Norman Friedman

we of spring more sparrow like
than they in wingless spirit
who better than we in anyone's
flight tomorrow's flutter bigger

we of summer more arrow like
than they in hitting the mark
who better than we in everyone's
target together better farther

we of autumn more furrow like
than they in leaving the bough
who better than we in someone's
falling to mothers children fathers

we of winter more fallow like
than they in lifelessness acquired
who better than we in noone's
life than i am you are we are *spring*

John Edwin Cowen
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Remembering Norman Friedman: Truly a Gentleman and a Scholar

John Edwin Cowen



When I hear the adage—
“He’s a gentleman and a scholar”
– I think of Norman Friedman,
who embodies both descriptions. I
know that Norman can be ex-
tremely critical when wearing his
critic’s mantle, but I can also re-
call how diplomatic he can be
when pushed to the extreme. I
observed Norman’s gentlemanly
persona and diplomacy the first
time I met him; it was the night I
accompanied the feisty Filipino-
American poet, José Garcia Villa
to the Gotham Book Mart recep-
tion for *Etcetera: The Un-
published Poems of E. E. Cum-
mings and Hist Whist and other*

poems for Children. (Anyone who has been to Gotham knows the famous large portrait of the Dame Edith Sitwell party in December 1948 that included notables such as Stephen Spender, Tennessee Williams, Richard Eberhart, Gore Vidal, Elizabeth Bishop, Marianne Moore, Delmore Schwartz and José Garcia Villa next to W. H. Auden who is standing on a ladder.)

It was also at this reception that Richard S. Kennedy, co-editor of *Etcetera* was honored. As a matter of fact, David Forrest’s account of the reception in the old series of *Spring* records the exact date and time I met Norman Friedman: it was Tuesday, November 15, 1983, five to seven o’clock. Villa conducted his poetry workshop on Tuesdays in his Greenwich Village apartment at 8:00 p.m., so he asked if I wanted to attend the reception with him before class, and I gladly did. The evening included a remarkable reception list, and David Forrest, Norman Friedman’s predeces-

sor as editor of *Spring*, provides a partial *Who's Who* list in literature and the arts of the 175 guests who attended that evening:

...Many of the personages whose names frequently grace the pages of *SPRING* were present, such as Cummings' biographer and, as co-editor of *Etcetera*, the evening's guest of honor, Dick Kennedy; Cummings critic Norman Friedman and his wife Zelda; and the author of the forthcoming Liveright book of Cummings' paintings, Dick Faulkner; as well as various Bratches, Stetsons and Forrests. The society was especially pleased to welcome Arthur Abelman, who with Victor is co-trustee of Cummings' copyrights; David Diamond, the composer (and Juilliard teacher) who wrote the music for Cummings' ballet *Tom*; Helen Deutsch, whose publication of critical reviews of the production of *HIM* at the Provincetown Playhouse appears in this issue; Samuel Menashe, an old friend of Marion's [and poet]; Vincent Perischetti, who has set Cummings to music; William Jay Smith, author of *The Streaks of the Tulip*; Judith Rossner, author of *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, *Attachments*, and most lately, *August*; and José Garcia Villa, editor of the Cummings number of the *Harvard Wake* that brought Cummings to academic currency in 1946. José is also editor of *Bravo*, a poetry journal with the credo, "poetry must have formal elegance, poetry is not prose, poetry must be lyrical," and he was accompanied by John Cowen, publisher of *Bravo*. "This beautifully printed periodical...in Dave's opinion, who read 2 issues, not only fulfills its credo, but would please those who love Cummings' poetry." We in turn were welcomed by Andreas Brown, Philip Lyman, and the legendary Frances Steloff of the Gotham.

Of course, I was in awe of this august group gathered at the famous Gotham Book Mart, a perfect literary space to meet Norman Friedman for the first time. When introduced to Norman Friedman, José Garcia Villa recoiled and said something unsavory to him like: *Yes, I know you; you're the academic from Harvard who dissects every poem Cummings ever wrote and explicates it in a thousand possible unnatural ways. But, I know Cummings liked and trusted you in spite of your PhD ways of reading, thinking, and writing about poetry.* Naturally, I was embarrassed by this harsh, antagonistic encounter because, even though I had never met Norman Friedman, I greatly admired him as a critic, having read numerous

articles and books he had written about my nonhero, E. E. Cummings, and I felt great empathy for him in this bristling and humiliating first encounter. Norman shook Villa's hand and acknowledged him (but never responded to his rude behavior), and I knew from that moment that he understood the feisty, irreverent and critical side of Villa because he must have observed similar behavior from Cummings, who was also known to have that irascible personality as well.

Naturally, Norman had to have known Villa if not his reputation because José was one of Cummings' closest friends and a poet whom Cummings ranked as one of the few who mattered in contemporary poetry, writing only two poems about contemporary serious poets: Marianne Moore and José Garcia Villa (cf. my "Doveglion" 102-109).

Shortly thereafter, at Villa's suggestion we both joined the E. E. Cummings Society, and Villa even asked me to send a copy of his "Memoir of E. E. Cummings" to *Spring* (Volume 4, No. 1, April 1984), which had previously been published in Manila, the Philippines. I would correspond with David Forrest and Norman Friedman occasionally, and Norman published poems of mine from time to time in the new issues of *Spring*.

I was surprised some time later to receive a phone call from Norman asking me if I would like to speak at the American Literature Association conference to be held in Baltimore, Maryland—later he asked to publish that paper in *Spring* ("E. E. Cummings' Lyricism Today"). I was more surprised when Norman suggested that I might want to write my paper on the Villa / Cummings connection. I was naturally honored that Norman would consider me to do so, but I couldn't help recall that infamous first meeting we had had with Villa—and yet Norman was gentlemanly enough and forgiving of that situation to make that concession. In fact, Norman invited me to present the Villa paper in Long Beach, California. At both of these conferences, I found Norman to be a gracious host, and when he spoke about Cummings, he was as brilliant, precise and articulate in person as he was when writing about the work of Cummings.

What I admired most about him was his caring about others; naturally, his love for Zelda was always evident, and they were inseparable at all of the many engagements and receptions at which my wife Jay and I had the pleasure in joining them over these past twenty-three years. In particular, I admired Norman's unflagging love and loyalty to his longtime friend, the great iconoclast E. E. Cummings.

Many Norman Friedman admirers are probably not aware that he is also a very accomplished poet and not at all in the Cummings style. I was very moved after reading two books of his poetry, *The Intrusions of Love* (1992) and *The Magic Badge, Poems 1953-1984*, so when I was writing the *English Teacher's Portfolio of Multicultural Activities*, I asked Norman's permission to publish a very personal, imagistic poem he wrote, "Prayer on Seeing My Second Grandchild on the Sonogram" (Norman served as a sonar officer on a Navy destroyer during World War II), which I would like to share here:

**Prayer on Seeing My Second Grandchild
on the Sonogram**
With Apologies to Wordsworth

Dear Lord, you see the baby in my
daughter's belly on the screen,
astronaut curled in his cockpit
upside down, lifesustaining equipment
attached to his navel, enfolded in
his pilot's bubble, hands fixed on
the controls, traveling on his trip
to life and to us, who have forgotten
You and this perilous journey from
wherever he came from, that unknown
planet, mysterious star and heat
of generation, assigned to enter our
atmospheres and climates here,

whatever weathers and conditions
he may find among us and our storms,
may his landing be gentle and safe,
and may he have been provisioned
against our viruses and tempers,
accomplishing his secret mission
to fill our hearts with such joy
that we will never again forget

the source and marvel of its fruit.

(Cowen, *Portfolio* 40)

Perhaps the most moving occasion that I shared with Norman was at the October 26, 1997 dedication of E. E. Cummings' election into the Poet's Corner at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. Dana Gioia read "anyone lived in a pretty how town," "maggie and millie and molly and may," "Buffalo Bill 's" and "somewhere I have never traveled, gladly beyond." And Gioia read these poems as Cummings would have himself, exquisitely with rhythm, precision, and drama. Rachel Hadas also read poems from Cummings. As Norman and David state in "Choral Vespers by Candlelight," "The Cummings stone, featured on the cover of this issue of *Spring*, was inscribed with the lines 'A world of made / is not a world of born—' (*CP* 554)" (10). I attended the first ceremonial dedication of the Poet's Corner with José Garcia Villa, and at that time he whispered that E. E. Cummings should one day be so honored but probably would not be for political and other reasons. I only wish that Villa had lived to see Cummings elected to the Poets Corner, but he died eight months earlier on February 7, 1997.



At the end of this beautiful ceremony, the Dean of the Cathedral offered a short prayer: "Direct, O Lord, those who speak words to which many listen and write what many read; that they may do their part in making the heart of the people wise, its mind sound and its will righteous...Amen." Norman and David write of this occasion, "Through its sacredness, one may admit poetry into one's soul as well as mind, and incorporate creativity into lives which are often devoid of it, a principle Cummings would surely have embraced" (10).

These are just a few of the most memorable moments I've had the good fortune to share with Norman Friedman: gentleman and scholar.

—Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck, New Jersey

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Tribute to Norman Friedman

Patricia Cherin

I first knew of Norman Friedman as the eminent critic. Our Cal State University Dominguez Hills Humanities External Degree program used his essays in their introduction to graduate study in English courses. But I didn't get to know him



personally until I asked him to be on a panel I chaired in 2000 at the American Literature Association in Long Beach, California on the life and work of Gerald Locklin.

When I picked him up at the LA Airport, I was worried I wouldn't know who he was. He was, of course, quite distinguishable.

Driving Norman

I have ferried and carpooled
with the best of them
across the styxes and the 405

Right away I knew him
with the sailor hat.
30,000 feet up
it's always the Aegean.

Norman was as recognizable as Ulysees, a timeless sailor in the world's seas and skies. And then there was Zelda.

Zelda's Poem

I had known the other one
all my life. the one who had
the best times of all
and then sad and sadder

This one has
a Grandmother's iron on the hearth
ancestral laundry lists
palimpsests of labor

We honor both:
the burning out and up
the quieter bests and sads
a dialectic of Zeldas

The panel was a success and we all had a fine time. I remember we all teared up at 8:00 in the morning as Norman read Gerry's Firebird

poem. I am grateful to Norman for publishing me in his wonderful *Spring*, and for writing back to me marvelous and wise letters. Thank you, Norman, for all your compelling literary labor, your always gracious interactions with the human being enterprise, and, most of all, your dearnesses to me.

—California State University, Long Beach

Tribute to Norman

David V. Forrest

As founding Editor of *Spring*, I spent the first ten years documenting quarterly the constant and indefatigable contributions of Norman Friedman to the E.E. Cummings Society, before turning *Spring* over to him to edit for the next ten years. Norman Friedman is Cummings' critic as Charles Norman and Richard Kennedy were his biographers and George Firmage was his steward. Norman was a co-founder of the Society with Dick Kennedy and me, and named the journal *Spring*. His devotion to the spirit of Cummings' work has always exceeded his scholarly fidelity, and been the very heart of the Society, which can't help being celebratory. Nor should it! As Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia, a designation that means I am primarily a practitioner, I have had the privilege of knowing another dimension of Norman Friedman, and that is his devotion to the people we have worked with in common. Inasmuch as this devotion includes the application of Cummings' creation of a universe of esthetics and feeling—in which Norman has always tried to live—the people he treats are most fortunate. Last, Norman and Zelda have been our treasured family friends, as willing ever to lend empathy as they have been to embark upon Cummings-related adventures and share the fun.

—Rye, NY

Norman Friedman: Illuminations and Inspirations

Gillian Huang-Tiller

I love and admire Norman Friedman just as much as I love and admire E. E. Cummings. I'm not sure it is easy to separate the two when I come to the appreciation of Cummings' sensory perception and linguistic cognition in his painterly poetry or "poempictures." In my Cummings studies, it was first and foremost through Norman's introduction to the art of Cummings' poetry that Cummings and this "unworld" that he mocks and wishes to transform came alive. Norman was right that "many readers lack this visual and tactile



sense and find his [Cummings] typographical distortions irritating" (*Art* 122), but after his illuminations and keen sense of interpreting Cummings' visual effects—both conceptual and aesthetic through Cummings' use of parentheses, grammar dislocation, typographical distortion, world-joining, word-splitting, telescoping, interlacing, punctuation marks (*Art* 112, 115, 124)—the pleasure derived from Cummings' poetry becomes immense.

Even as one blessed with a Chinese eye for painterly poetry and appreciative of Cummings' comment on his visual poetry—"he lives in China where a poet is a painter" (*Art* 122)—I have to admit that I came to a deeper understanding of Cummings through Norman Friedman. Perhaps one of Norman's other illuminations is helpful: "although many descriptive poems may contain visually imitative elements, the effect of suggestion as a whole is produced mainly in the reader's mind as he reads rather than in his eye as he sees" (*Art* 124). It was also Norman's monumental arrangement of the Harvard Norton Lectures in 1952-53 that led to a publication of Cummings' *i: six nonlectures* and through his articulate refutation of R. P.

Blackmur that I came to grips with Cummings' growth as a writer, progressing from self-discovery to self-transcendence.

Before I got to know Norman a few years before his retirement from the society's leadership, he seemed to me a transcending critic himself, waving a magic "pen" that opens the "illimitable" world of Cummings, but existing in a realm as both near and as far as Cummings. One afternoon in the year of 2001, the phone at my Virginia home rang. When I picked it up I heard a remarkably gentle voice identifying himself as Norman Friedman—founder of the E. E. Cummings Society and the society's journal, *Spring*, and the nation's leading scholar of Cummings himself—calling to inform me of the acceptance of my first paper on Cummings for an American Literature Association Conference session held in Cambridge that May. It was like a dream coming true to give a paper at Cambridge and to meet the real man, whose writings had initiated me into the love and the study of Cummings. I often thought that if I got to meet Norman, it would be as if I had met Cummings. This is how close I imagined the two of them to be, just like Samuel Johnson could not do without James Boswell. Norman's comments on Cummings' extensive use of the sonnet form, in spite of his reputation as an experimental modernist poet, informed my dissertation study of Cummings' *Chimneys* sonnets as a manifestation of the power of the meta-genre in modernism. The conference presentation led to a publication of my paper in the tenth anniversary of the reissued *Spring* (2001). Norman's promotion of Cummings scholarship among the younger generation made a great impact on me, not to mention my first meeting with a kind, encouraging, gracious scholar and his lovely wife Zelda. My Cambridge experience with Norman and Zelda has inspired my ongoing journey into Cummings' works.

—*University of Virginia's College at Wise*

Norman and the (Aging) Kid

Gerald Locklin

As a Gestalt therapist and scholar, Norman Friedman is actually much better positioned than I to explain the immense difference he has made in my life and to my career. Quite simply, though, Norman validated my writing: my poetry, fiction, criticism, and affinity for models such as Cummings. He understood what I had done and was doing in my work, and where I had

been and was now in my life, not only from the eminence of his vantage point as scholar, critic, teacher, and biographer, but as a human being, slightly my senior, who sensed the parallel course we had run through the ages of a twentieth century male life. I would never have guessed the identification he felt with the personae of my work, had he not made it the culmination of a paper he delivered on a conference panel of the American Literature Association, later published in *Spring*. I had never been so honored by a person of such legendary standing in the academic community. His endorsement made me (and, thankfully, others) see my work in a new light. There has always been a surface comedy to my work (I hope!), and an anti-heroic posturing of the protagonists, but, in middle age, I was beginning to occupy myself more with themes of family, art, music, and mortality, and he accelerated my movement in that direction, while unapologetically granting his imprimatur to my former fun and games (and pain, given and earned, and occasional bellicosity) as well. Such acceptance of the “ages of man” would have been second nature to Shakespeare, Freud, and Jung, but it is a lesson the constant re-learning of which is essential to the struggling writer (and what writer isn’t in a constant struggle with his doubts, subjects, and directions?). To revert to the vernacular, Norman punched my parking vouchers: past, present, future.

Norm, Zelda, Dave, Bernard, Mike, Trish—we are friends and, under the auspices of E. E. (properly capitalized) Cummings, we are family. And we have had, from the start, fun, laughter, repartee, reminiscence, irreverence, and song to keep us lighthearted, to keep the Spring in our tap-dancing steps, as Cummings mandated. And from the day Lincoln Kirstein epistolarily (and wisely) dumped me on the fledgling Society, up through the Cabo Conference, the Long Beach ALA, and all the Springing Forwards of the correspondence and conversations, this Hero and Father Figure has kept the faith in me . . . and, I realize, in all of us. I apologize for the solipsism of my focus—I know he’s made us all feel special to him. But I remain eternally grateful to him . . . and honored beyond human measure.

—*California State University, Long Beach*

Tribute to Norman Friedman

Tom Smith

Norman was my first teacher in college in 1955. We wrote two essays each week. He demanded logic, not wishes, in every essay. The topic was Loyalty in a Democratic state—fifteen weeks' worth.

The final exam would be another short essay not discussed. He said we didn't need it but it was required. I raised my hand from the back row and said he had just subverted the course: no one wanted another exam, and he had folded. I expected a smokescreen response. His reply was: "I have a wife and two kids to feed."

I was struck speechless. He was honest. We became friends, and still are.

—*University of Hartford, West Hartford, Connecticut*

Reading Norman

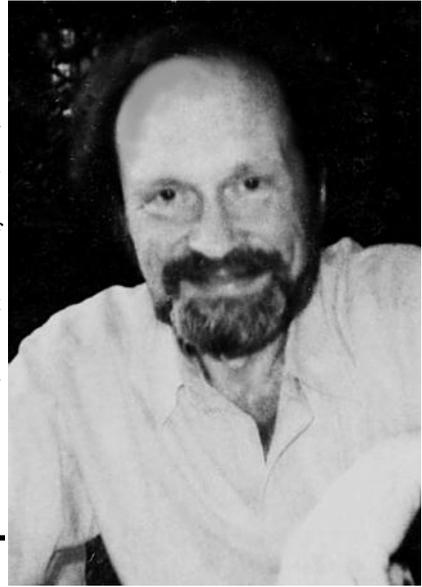
Etienne Terblanche

Reading Norman's work has been delightful, daunting, instructive. It has given me a sense of reading material that actually enters Cummings' poetry with great insight, solidity and economy, without ever forcing issues. Meeting him in Boston has been a highlight of my lifetime on earth. What a marvellous experience to meet two people (Zelda was with him) so at one with themselves and with each other. Receiving his hand-written note to all the participants of that particular ALA session (2001) to congratulate and thank us for our contributions has been a privilege, and in I consider it to be in the nature of a modern rite of passage. I sometimes take this note from its place in my office drawer to find courage and feel proud — here, so far away from the centre of Cummings' world.

Which brings me to something that I've mentioned before, and wish to mention once more at the special occasion of this issue of *Spring*. Prior to that 2001 ALA meeting I was reading Norman's *(Re)Valuing Cummings* with considerable awe. My son, Reinier, always curious about Dad's world as only a son can be, wanted to know what I was reading. I must add briefly now that our home language is not English. Upon returning, he wanted to know from me whether I had met "Uncle Norman Freedom!" And it was with a great freedom and relief of my own that I could answer:

yes (which is a world which is natural which is infinite). My son thus reminded me that children can be so wise by being so spontaneous in their understanding of things. Children and their language somehow are so close to poetry. And something of Norman's wisdom will continue to remind me of this: a sense of what Jungians call the wise child. And like many other Cummingspersons, I am always grateful to him.

—*Potchefstroom, South Africa*



Recollections of Norman Friedman

Lewis Turco

It's amazing to me to realize on this occasion that I have known Norman Friedman and his wife Zelda for over fifty years! That's as long as I've been married to my own wife. During the spring and summer of 1956 Jean graduated from the University of Connecticut—we were married just before the U. S. Navy released me from active duty—and in the fall I entered UConn myself as a sophomore where I took a modern poetry class with Norman. I was a bit younger than he, but not a lot, and I had been publishing poetry in the little magazines for three years by that time, so it seems to me looking back that our relationship was rather more friendly and neighborly than academic, for Jean began working for the university administration as an information specialist and we truly were neighbors in Storrs.

I finished the requirements for my B. A. in January of 1959 and enrolled as a graduate student instructor at UConn for the spring semester, and then Jean and I traveled out to the Writers' Workshop of the University of Iowa in the fall. We stayed in touch with the Friedmans ever after, and in 1984 I was doing the second of four annual poetry roundups titled "The

Year in Poetry” Here is a bit of what I wrote:

“Those who know Norman Friedman's work will be astonished to discover, perhaps, that *The Magic Badge: Poems 1953-1984* (1984) is his first collection of poetry. Those who do not know his work have some fine reading in store. I have quoted Emily Dickinson on how one recognizes a true poem. That shock of recognition occurs again and again as one turns these pages. For Friedman life is a dream, often a bad one. He writes a controlled verse-mode line, and his forms are loosely traditional, but within these structures hallucination occurs, the likeness of reality. Here is ‘The Salmon-Falls, The Mackerel-Crowded Seas’:

Patrolling the breakers with the insistent
intensity of gulls, all these people jamming
the beaches seem younger than I, having
been reproduced at a greater rate, millions
of assembly-line dolls coarsely made,
cheaply put together and as quickly falling
apart, in their shocking clothes and flashy
talk, swarming over the world, chattering,
they skim the coastline in flocks, flooding
the shore, foraging for food, rummaging,
raging for love, each with a frantic heart
as dangerous as mine, genitals as hungry,
genetic package as obsessed, each feeling
as much emptiness, as much right to ravage
the planet, they dive for clams or crabs
to snatch in talon and beak, lift up in
shocks of air, and let flash on rocks to
crack and be torn to glut the glutinous
meat within, scolding and clawing each other,
then jamming once again to swarm the seas
on their frenzied search, muttering nearly
intelligible cries, guttural and mournful in
my tireless throat, toys against the harsh
and unheeding scrutiny of the spoiling skies.

Friedman somehow turns people into birds, birds into the planet made flesh and blood, the planet and its hungers into himself. This is some of the best writing of the year, and of the years during which Friedman has been writing.”

We all know what a fine scholar Norm Friedman is, but twenty-four years later I still think that’s a great poem, as fine as another Friedman poem I will never forget, “An End to No Encounter.”

Just One of Norman Friedman’s Virtues as a Writer

Michael Webster

I first read Norman’s book *E. E. Cummings: The Art of His Poetry* while writing my dissertation in graduate school. This was the first thing I read that clearly understood Cummings the feeling-thinker, an artist who attempted to “feel [his] thought as immediately as the odor of a rose” (Eliot 64), something T. S. Eliot thought impossible in the modern world.

Though Norman is an extremely logical thinker, he constantly strives to present a view of the whole Cummings, the poet who declared that



feeling was first. Norman’s attempts at synthesis and summation are often masterful demonstrations of high order thought. They succeed more often than not because they are based on a diligent, sustained, and detailed reading of every word and punctuation mark.

For example, in the first grand summative chapter of *Growth of a Writer* (titled “The Meaning of Cummings” when reprinted in the Prentice-Hall collection of critical essays), Friedman brilliantly encapsulates the

differences between Yeats and Cummings by suggesting that Yeats “is an Ambivalent while Cummings is a Paradoxe.” He continues:

There is no need to ask a Paradoxe to be an Ambivalent, nor should we criticize a freedom-Paradoxe for not being a discipline Paradoxe. . . . I myself have been in the habit of postulating too clean a break in his work between the ordinary and transcendent worlds. I see now, though, that their relationship is more complex than I had thought. It is, first of all, a discipline to achieve transcendent insight, and here is where the two sorts of Paradoxers meet. For both, renunciation brings salvation, surrender brings freedom—except for the discipline-Paradoxe it is freedom which is surrendered, while for the freedom-Paradoxe it is the ordinary world which is surrendered. What Cummings would have us renounce is not our intuitive life but rather our desire for security, for success, for stability, for comfort. And for most of us, this would be a struggle indeed. (*Growth* 7; “Meaning” 48-49)

In other words, Cummings may renounce the “ordinary world” (what he called the “unworld”) but he does not renounce life. (By the way, if we ask who might be an example of a discipline-Paradoxe, I would answer: T. S. Eliot.) Earlier, Friedman had shown how Yeats is ambivalent on this question: “In one poem he [Yeats] yearns for an escape from the ordinary world, and in yet another he vows allegiance to it” (*Growth* 6; “Meaning” 48). As we know, Cummings is certainly not ambivalent about the unworld of success and progress: he scorns it in poem after poem. But Friedman shows us that Cummings' paradox is that

the spiritual ideal needs the ordinary world as an arena in which to fulfill itself. Not only does love transform unlove; it needs that unlove in order to come into being. In fact, the more powerful the ordinary world happens to be, the more the living ideal becomes itself. (*Growth* 7; “Meaning” 49)

It is here that Friedman also leaves us room to question. We might first wonder what “life” is for Cummings, and how it interacts with the ordinary world. Might Cummings wish to avoid the ordinary world in order to experience what he called “the third voice of life”? There are other paradoxes as well we might investigate.

As Friedman implies, Cummings' “All lose, whole find” (*CP* 556) certainly might be interpreted to mean that by losing the ordinary world one finds the whole: ordinary world and all else besides. These lines may also

be taken to mean that the ordinary world is only “real,” or flat, while life is “actual,” or three-dimensional, whole. (And who was the first to notice and discuss Cummings’ distinction between the “real” and the “actual”?—Norman Friedman, in his chapter on *EIMI* in *Growth of a Writer*.)

As for Norman the man, his generosity to younger scholars interested in Cummings is well-known. Norman has always been willing to entertain, listen to, and publish divergent views of our nonhero, even when he had severe misgivings about those views. May it ever be thus for those who seek to understand and celebrate the work of E. E Cummings.

—*Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan*

Tribute to Norman

Michael Dylan Welch

Like many people, I was first attracted to the poetry of E. E. Cummings in high school, around 1976. Here was poetry that spoke to me as a teenager and young adult, that flew in the face of “tradition” (I’ve since learned how traditional Cummings can actually be). I quickly grew to love many of his poems. For more than a decade, though, I wondered if there might be a Cummings Society, and did much repeated research to try and find out, all without success. This was in the days before the Internet, and even searches of printed directories and other resources at large public and academic libraries yielded nothing. Even numerous librarians couldn’t find out anything for me. I remember an afternoon spent at a Claremont Graduate School library, roughly around 1990, in which I printed out reams of dot-matrix listings of their Cummings books, but finding nothing about a society. A year or so later, I got an email account with AOL (back when there were fewer than 100,000 members), but Internet searching was still in its infancy. Around 1992, in an AOL poetry or writing chat room, I happened to talk with well-known poetry therapist John Fox (we later had lunch together at a restaurant in Palo Alto, California). In discussing our various poetic interests, such as haiku, I mentioned Cummings, and casually said that I was wondering if there was a Cummings Society. “Yes there is,” I remember John saying immediately. He knew Arthur Lerner through poetry therapy, and knew that Arthur was involved with the Cummings Society. After nearly a decade of searching, with one quick online contact, I finally knew that the society existed. And with information that I believe



John got from Arthur, one email message later I had the address of Norman Friedman and finally confirmed that the Cummings Society really existed.

This was not my first knowledge of Norman, of course, as I had copies of his books about Cummings. While various commentators had different and valuable things to say, Norman's commentary had always struck me as most in tune with how I felt about Cummings and his work, so it was easy to appreciate. I don't recall the nature of my first correspondence with Norman, but it was probably overly eager and gushing in my enthusiasm for Cummings. I very soon had a copy of the new series of *Spring*, in early 1993. In the year that followed, I was truly flattered by Norman's generosity in having me present a paper ("The Haiku Sensibilities of E. E. Cummings") at the 1994 American Literature Association conference in San Diego, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the poet's birth. I have since seen his welcoming support of other new and young scholars, even if some of us are much less experienced than he and other writers whose elegant and well-researched prose has graced the pages of *Spring*. I believe this encouragement of new writers and scholars is vital to the continued success of the society, and Norman has shown this wisdom — and generous support — in spades.

In 1995 I started helping Norman with the production and some editing of *Spring*, and I began to see Norman's fine editorial touches on the

papers accepted for publication. He neither dug too deeply nor accepted lack of clarity, and I learned something about organizational and developmental editing, as well as detailed fact clarification and careful typography (especially a concern when presenting Cummings' poems), from seeing Norman's edits and questions as I typed up numerous papers.

I am not enough of a scholar to be able to comment authoritatively on Norman's critical writing on Cummings, but his connection to Cummings scholarship will surely remain solid for as long as Cummings himself is respected, appreciated, and studied. Norman has rightly been called the “dean of E. E. Cummings studies.” I have appreciated his commitment to Cummings scholarship, his passion for his subject (as well as sufficient detachment), and his selfless dedication in keeping the society and Spring going for so many years (no doubt contributing financial support too). It is easy to just receive the annual publication each year, but quite another task to pull together all of the content not only in each issue, but to coordinate the ALA panels from which the essays are frequently drawn.

And speaking of ALA conferences, which I've been able to attend several times in San Diego, San Francisco, and Cambridge, I've always enjoyed seeing Norman at these events with his wife Zelda. They have struck me as still deeply in love with each other, sparkling even like newlyweds, with a warmth and affection that I hope I can match with my own wife in my golden years. Surely Zelda has played a significant role in supporting Norman and his writing over so many decades — not just in connection with Cummings, but with Norman's Gestalt studies and his therapy practice. Members of the Cummings Society are deeply in the debt of Norman and Zelda for their public and private support of E. E. Cummings. Together, both Norman and Zelda have been a bridge directly to E. E. Cummings himself, yet even without this connection, it is an honor and pleasure to know them both.

— *Sammamish, Washington*

Tribute to Norman

Bernard F. Stehle

My gratitude and deep respect for Norman Friedman as scholar and human being—and in neither category is he exceeded in excellence by anyone—can best be stated (most succinctly, in keeping with his own laconic style, and most poetically, in keeping with his befriended nonhero's

style) by quoting the opening lines of Norman's favorite poem of that same nonhero.

Any departures from the exact wording of the original are of course strictly in keeping with our purpose here!—to acknowledge and celebrate Norman's illimitable contribution to Cummings Studies:

since friedman is first
who pays any attention
to the Cummings of things
will ever wholly read him

Congratulations, Norman, from one who's glad to continue "wholly to be a fool" as long as you are in the world! In friendship, Bernard

—*Community College of Philadelphia*

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