"Spring is perhapsing": Acts of Remembering Richard S. Kennedy (1920-2002)

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1.

in time of daffodils(who know
the goal of living is to grow)

"When I finish my Browning biography," Dick Kennedy informed *Contemporary Authors* in 1996, "I plan to write about Thomas Henry Higginson, an abolitionist and man of letters who served as a colonel of a black regiment in the Civil War and who later became the mentor of Emily Dickinson and the editor of her posthumous poems" (249).

Kennedy had, in fact, been close to finishing his book on Browning at the time he died, on December 29, 2002, in Bryn Mawr Hospital, following a stroke he had suffered at home just days earlier.[1] What impresses one about his statement above, however, aside from the range of interests it suggests—striking in itself—is the creative passion of the man: Kennedy, at seventy-six, anticipating his next book even as he's expending enormous amounts of energy on the Browning work, his projected magnum opus.

It could be said, looking back, that 1996 was just another of those robust, vital years of continued creative production and achievement following Kennedy's 1988 retirement from Temple University. True enough, but the '90s for their greater part had been something of a reprieve for Kennedy. Diagnosed early in the decade, the lymphoma he successfully kept at bay for a good eight years had finally, by decade's end, begun taking its toll. By chance, fellow Browning scholar Donald S. Hair, also by decade's end—indeed, during the several years before—had become a best friend and invaluable colleague.[2] Hair, professor emeritus of English, University of Western Ontario, is currently at work on the final chapters of the Browning biography, which he expects to complete by fall 2005.[3] As Hair explained:

> The book was three-quarters finished when Dick died. He had written twenty-seven of a projected thirty-five chapters. Dick first broached the subject of my finishing the book in November of 1999, when he sent me two central chapters he had written; I read them and at Christmastime agreed to complete the book, if need be. .... [T]he surgery and the chemotherapy which he had suffered through the previous year were very much on his mind.[4]

Kennedy of course finished many a manuscript during half a century of published writing, begun in 1950 when still a teaching fellow at Harvard. "Thomas Wolfe at Harvard, 1920-1923" appeared in the Spring and Autumn issues of the *Harvard Library Bulletin* that year, marking the beginning of Kennedy's groundbreaking Wolfe scholarship, the centerpiece of which remains his definitive critical biography, *The Window of Memory: The Literary Career of Thomas Wolfe*, published twelve years later, in 1962. But his scholarship on another extreme individualist who fascinated Kennedy concerns us here: E. E. Cummings, whose death had occurred that same year, 1962, and whose poetic experiments became, a year later, the subject of an honors seminar Kennedy taught at Wichita State University. As we know from Kennedy himself, ideas for another biography took root in that Kansas classroom (*Dreams* ix). And while neither access nor financial support for the Cummings research was easily obtained, Kennedy never faltered. Enduring periods of interruption and setbacks—not unlike what had tried his patience earlier regarding Wolfe's literary estate—he finally finished writing the book in May 1979. *Dreams in the Mirror: A Biography of E. E. Cummings* was published eight months later, in January 1980.

"Kennedy's chief gift to readers of Cummings was and is his indispensable biography of the poet," wrote Michael Webster, shortly after the biographer's death.

> For Cummings, writing and self were never very far apart. As he put it in his *six nonlectures*, after "a certain wholly mysterious moment which signifies selfdiscovery . . . the question 'Who am I?' is answered by what I write—in other words, I become my writing"(4). It was Kennedy's great achievement to show us the self of the poet within the writings, as well as the self that existed before or behind or beyond the writings.
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> Without Kennedy's research, many aspects of Cummings' self and writing would remain obscure. To cite just two examples: in the acknowledgements section of his edition of the correspondence of Ezra Pound and E. E. Cummings, Barry Ahearn writes: "Without the existence of Richard S. Kennedy's *Dreams in the Mirror* . . . , I would not have been able to undertake this project" (x).

Similarly with the Cummings Society web site: "Without Kennedy's biography," Webster writes, "there would be no Chronology page, and the notes on Cummings' poems and prose would be much less rich in detail."

A quarter century after its completion, Kennedy's *Cummings* not only "must"—but in fact still *does*—"proceed": to inspire new generations of researchers and enthusiasts, whose scholarly and performatory inspirations alike abound in at least six languages and twelve countries, as attested to in the pages of the journal conceived the same year that *Dreams in the Mirror* was born. [5]

2.

forgetting why,remember how

Spring was like a perhaps good idea in December 1980, and Kennedy had more than a hand in it. The inspiration was his—on the third of that month, in Manhattan, over lunch with David Forrest and Norman Friedman. Reading from the April 1981 first issue of *Spring*, Forrest recounted his report of that Wednesday afternoon for those gathered in Temple's Kiva Auditorium for the Richard Kennedy Memorial Service, March 29, 2003, organized by the department of English. "The three of us met at Dave's office at West Sixty-Eighth Street and Broadway and made our way across Amsterdam Avenue, assaulted grievously by the pale club of the wind, to Sweetwater's for luncheon from 12 to 2," Forrest began.

> Dick's biography came up for the first of many references to it. Norman, having just read it, remarked how much he had been moved, often in personal ways, because Cummings had been an ideal for him as a young man.[6] Dave echoed these feelings. Norman said that Dick knew more about Cummings than anyone, and that *Dreams in the Mirror* was a landmark work of scholarship in the field of Cummings studies. … Dave proposed an E. E. Cummings Society that would strive to promote a balanced view of the poet, and the idea was received positively by Dick and Norman. (6)

A second proposal—which took the form of an observation, really—followed forthwith: "Dick said that he had found, for example in the Thomas Wolfe Society, that the crucial element for the survival of a society was a newsletter." Agreement was instant. Forrest would be the editor; Kennedy and Friedman, the members of the first editorial board.

A certain joie de vivre shared by the three still glows, inextinguishable, in the closing sentence of that April 1981 first issue—an observation about the journal's eventual name: "Perhaps it was auspicious of our title as well as the beginnings of our Society, that as we three made our way back across the Avenue from Sweetwater's against the freezing invisible foe while trying to set the time of our next meeting, Norman shouted 'Spring!' "

3.

in time of lilacs who proclaim
the aim of waking is to dream,

"Throughout my ten years of editing *Spring*, Dick was countlessly the resource we resorted to, and we relished his presence with Ella at so many of our events,"

Forrest said, concluding his tribute at the Memorial Service. "This wonderful gentleman and scholar, as careful and fair as he was brilliant, was delightful to know and learn from, and we shall miss him."

Norman Friedman, who in 1992 followed Forrest as editor of *Spring* upon its becoming a scholarly annual ("New Series"), attended the Memorial Service as well, afterwards offering his impressions of the event, along with sentiments in praise of Kennedy. But first, some historical background.

Whereas Friedman and Forrest had both known and corresponded with Cummings personally, Kennedy never met him.[7] As a teaching fellow (1948-50) studying for his doctorate at Harvard, he did once attend a reading by Cummings, but the reception—if one occurred afterwards—was probably for faculty only. Chances would seem to have improved for Kennedy with his appointment, in 1953, as an assistant professor at the University of Rochester, where Cummings soon afterwards gave the only other reading Kennedy ever attended. Being "only" an assistant in rank, however, not an associate or full professor, Kennedy found himself among those *not* invited to the reception afterwards—"a clear example of what is often wrong with academia," as Forrest wrote in *Spring*, having heard Kennedy tell of it during a 1985 meeting of the Society ("The Seventeenth Meeting" 4).

Forrest's 1981 synopsis of the earliest interconnections of the four—Cummings, Friedman, Kennedy, and himself—is a gem of background data, written from the temporal perspective of the (once again) December 3, 1980 meeting at Sweetwater's:

> Dave had met separately for lunch with Norman and Dick on August 6th and 7th [1980] respectively, meeting Dick for the first time and renewing his friendship with Norman that had begun through correspondence in 1960 when Cummings had been alive and had included a meeting together with George Firmage in 1964. Norman and Dick had met twice before, once in 1979 at Temple University when Norman had been invited by Dick to speak on Cummings' letters and the intertwining of his and Cummings' lives, and once some 30-odd years ago at Harvard, when Norman spoke on Cummings in H[oward] M[umford] Jones' American Literature Class in 1947 [1948]. ("First Meeting" 2)[8]

Kennedy and Friedman had been among the great number of returning veterans of World War II who immediately exercised their options, under the educational provisions of the 1944 GI Bill of Rights, to begin or resume their college or university studies at any institution of their choosing.[9] Friedman arrived at Harvard in '46, Kennedy in '47, each having served as officers in the Navy (Kennedy overseas, where he participated in the Normandy Invasion and, nine months later, the Crossing of the Rhine). Each was also married (Dick and Ella in '43, Norman and Zelda in '45),

Figure 1. New York City, March 31, 1943: Ensign Richard S. Kennedy and his bride, Ella Dickinson Kennedy, exit the side chapel of Riverside Church, the first of many couples married that day following the newly-commissioned officers' graduation from Midshipman's School, Columbia U. Shipped overseas in July, Kennedy served in the European Theater, earning a Bronze Star and Purple Heart as a lieutenant in command of troops during the March 1945 Crossing of the Rhine. Two months later—just days following Victory in Europe—he was back home, in Los Angeles, reunited with his bride. The two were never again apart during their marriage of nearly sixty years.

as were a great many others in that huge and sudden influx. Kennedy and Friedman pitched their tents, so to speak, not on the grounds of Harvard, but some thirty miles northwest—in "Harvardevens Village," created by the University on a large area of Fort Devens to house married students and their families, whose numbers had overwhelmed the residential space available around its Cambridge campus. Fort Devens, of course, was the very same Camp Devens where, a generation earlier, Private "Eddie" Cummings, after being drafted in July 1918, had spent six months doing "squads right" (Cummings, *SL* 53).[10]

Kennedy and Friedman each spent about twelve months living in the converted army barracks off campus while commuting almost daily to Cambridge, their schedules of study and recreation overlapping just enough, in both locations, that they did cross paths at least twice—once in the H. M. Jones class at Harvard, and once in the area around the swimming pool in Harvardevens Village, where, according to Friedman's best recollection, they struck up a conversation after Kennedy recognized him as the student who had lectured on Cummings in Jones's class.

Thus it was Friedman, not yet Kennedy, who in the summer of 1947 had already been doing scholarly work on Cummings (and earlier that year had begun corresponding with him, later being invited to visit Estlin and Marion in their Patchin Place apartment, on Nov. 23, the first of many meetings). Thirty years would pass before Kennedy and Friedman sought each other out, in 1979-80, to reconnect around their scholarly writing on Cummings, the two by then equally imbedded in the field of studies they themselves had—paradoxically but in truth—separately created together. Friedman a man of few words, Kennedy a man of many, their friendship grew over the ensuing decade as did the number of those around the table at Sweetwater's. By 1990, the conference rooms at the annual meeting of the newly created (1989) American Literature Association were supplying the bigger tables needed to accommodate the growing number of those wanting to join the conversation and contribute to the bold era of new scholarship underway.

What Kennedy himself brought to that conversation can be felt in the words of Friedman, composed for Zelda and himself on March 30, 2003, the day after the Memorial Service at Temple. Norman is both observer and participant in this warmly laconic dispatch for the readers of *Spring*. "[The event was] well attended by members of the Temple faculty, friends, students and former students, and family," he began. "Various speakers were announced on the program, and afterwards the floor was open to others who wished to speak." The "focal points" of the many tributes and comments were Kennedy in his roles

> as a teacher, colleague, scholar, friend, and family man. Striking was the agreement about his unique blend of exacting and learned scholarship with his personal warmth, humanity, and good will.
>
> As a biographer, in his work on Wolfe, Cummings, and Browning, his

interest always included the quality of the person and his lived life as well as the genius of the work. We at the Memorial, speaking of remembering Dick, experienced that same fullness as well as how the relationship between Dick and Ella touched and informed everything that was said.

In particular, three members of the Cummings Society . . . attended. David and Norman spoke of Dick's enormously helpful biography of Cummings, *Dreams in the Mirror*, of his help as a founding member of the Society and sometime participant in the American Literature Association's annual Cummings panels, and of his contributions to *SPRING*, the Journal of the Society. To paraphrase Cummings:

dick was a man
grinned his grin
done his chores
laid him down.

Sleep well (*CP* 568)

Kennedy himself quotes the entire poem (to Sam Ward) in *Dreams in the Mirror*, and if there are indeed any heavens for Kennedy to have one, he surely laughed his joyful laugh at this final bit of Friedman's tribute. But as a man who had long identified his religion as Unitarian Universalist (*Contemporary Authors* 249), Kennedy actually would have related even more to—and in fact did comment on—a "simple" pronoun that appears four times in several lines *preceding* those above.

:sam was a man

[...]

how be you

(sun or snow)

gone into what
like all the kings
you read about

[...]

yes,sir

what may be better
or what may be worse
and what may be clover
clover clover

(nobody'll know)

"Cummings created a unique modern elegy," Kennedy writes, "making use of a very Unitarian concept of the afterlife, calling it 'what' " (402-3).

On April 20, 1988, Kennedy's explicating eye, focusing on the text of his own life, clarified further his religious sensibility, which by then everyone knew who had ever been a student of his: "I think of the love of literature as my religion" (Collins, "Temple" 2). He had just received one of Temple University's first-ever Great Teacher Awards, a tribute upon his retiring that spring after twenty-five years in the classroom.

4.

remember so(forgetting seem)

"The act of remembering is our tribute to Dick," Donald Hair said at the Memorial Service, "a tribute of admiration, affection and love for a gentle, generous, cultivated man, an award-winning teacher, and a scholar with an astonishing range of interests and sensibilities." A distinguished Victorian scholar and author of the award-winning *Robert Browning's Language* (1999), Hair proceeded to characterize Kennedy's scholarship as a biographer.

> First, certain assumptions about texts and authors. In these days of counterintuitive arguments, when the question "Is there a text in this classroom?" is a serious question, and when the puzzle "Does this text have an author?" is a serious puzzle, Dick Kennedy never assumed anything but the existence of texts, which he loved for the sake of their language and their aesthetic powers; and he never assumed anything but the existence of flesh-and-blood authors, who have a vital relation with their creations. . . . [N]ear the conclusion of his book on the literary career of Thomas Wolfe, Dick summarizes his aims, which are to show "how a man wrote the kind of books he did and ... how those books took on their published form*" (The Window of Memory* 411). Similar statements later appeared in his biography of E. E. Cummings, where he defines his task as "showing why an author wrote the literary works he did and how his peculiarities of style and structure came to be" (6-7).
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> Those statements might suggest that Dick's agenda was to show a logical

relation between the life and the works. . . . But the artist does not exist to be explained, and Dick knew that. In spite of his "why's," his dominant method was not that of the analyst but that of the artist: instead of appealing to the logic of cause and effect, he appealed to the logic of incident and image, with their affective as well as their cognitive influence. Oscar Wilde once complained about the Browning Society, saying that they "spend their time in trying to explain their divinity away" ("The Critic as Artist," *Intentions*, 106)[11] Dick's explanations were never like that. His divinity he called "genius," and, he said, a critic "can only chart the course genius took and describe why some of the changes and developments happened on the way" (*Dreams in the Mirror* 6). As two of his divinities, Dick chose the undisciplined genius of Asheville, North Carolina, and the poet-painter genius of Cambridge, Mass., and he treated them with an unusually rich sense of their time and place—the second major aspect of Dick's critical spirit.

When I was an undergraduate [in the 1950s], English literature was a fine abstraction. . . . None of us had ever been to England, and the images we had of such places as Tintern Abbey or Shakespeare's London—or indeed anyone's London—were vague and fantastic at best. The idea that literature could be grounded in something we could actually know and experience was simply foreign to us, yet to Dick that idea of texts as rooted in a particular time and place was central to his critical imagination. Perhaps it was his experience of Cambridge, Mass., when he was a graduate student at Harvard, which fostered that sense—Cambridge, with all its rich historical and literary and academic associations. In the Cummings biography, Dick lovingly names streets and byways and houses and open spaces as familiar to the poet as they were to his biographer. . . . I'm suggesting that Dick was engaged in a version of what we would now call "cultural studies," though without the current preoccupations of such studies, and I think he might insist on a label with more of an aesthetic bent, and perhaps use the word "appreciation." ("Tribute")

The difficulty in identifying some version of "cultural studies" that might encompass Kennedy's approach (to elaborate a bit here on Hair's suggestion) can be traced largely to his intellectual influences, not discounting the expansive personality and aggressive curiosity that *engaged* those influences. As John L. Idol reports, in his comprehensive, critically valuable entry on Kennedy for the 1991 *Dictionary of Literary Biography*,

> The intellectual atmosphere at the U. of Chicago [where, in 1946-47, Kennedy earned his M.A.], as inspired and led by Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, showed Kennedy that "literary study has its place in the march of ideas down through civilization." Writing of this period, Kennedy says, "I developed a kind of intellectual megalomania: I wanted to know every-

thing."

Believing that Chicago's Ph.D. program in English was, at the time, too specialized, Kennedy moved on to Harvard for further studies. The breadth he sought in his studies grew fuller under the tutelage of Douglas Bush, whom Kennedy came to think of as "the greatest scholar of my time for his mastery not only of the whole sweep of English literature but of classical literature as well," and Howard Mumford Jones, "whose enormous range of knowledge encouraged me not to limit my studies to a 'specialty.' " (Idol 119)

Kennedy's career followed that early encouragement not to specialize, unless one wants to call 19th-century British (Victorian) literature and the entire sweep of 20th-century American literature his "specialty." His more than sixty published articles and books alone (1950-2001) include, as their subjects, no less than Dickens, Melville, Hawthorne, T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley, and Joyce Cary, in addition to, of course, Browning, Wolfe, and Cummings; others works—having to do with Thomas Hardy and Walt Whitman, for example, and of course Higginson (the Civil War being a passion of Kennedy's)—were on backburners at one time or another, in various stages of culinary completion. But these are just the names, not the vivid interplay, the panorama of literature and lives that constituted Kennedy's "astonishing range of interests and sensibilities," in Hair's phrase.

The confluence of those interests and sensibilities "gathers to a greatness" in the pages of Kennedy's biographies, the "shook foil" of his own growth as a writer. "Although I was trained generally to be a scholar and a critic," he wrote, in 1996, "it took me a long time to realize that I could use these skills to write narrative and that biography was the best form for me to spend my energies on" (*CA* 249). Not too long a time did it take, as we have come to appreciate. And at least in the case of Browning, not too late, either.

Donald Hair suggested above that instead of "cultural studies" to describe what he was engaged in, Kennedy might have insisted on a label with "more of an aesthetic bent," perhaps the word "appreciation." I paused at that point not only to supply some helpful biographical context via Kennedy himself, but also to give at least some readers time to recover from Hair's use of the "a" word—an unnecessary delay, it turns out, for Hair's own recovery is instant and incisive:

> "Appreciation" currently has a bad reputation in academic circles, because it suggests that literary criticism can be made up entirely of exclamations of delight, sighs at the ineffable beauty of the work of art, of languid waves of hand dismissing all attempts at analysis. Dick's appreciation of his subjects was always down-to-earth and firmly historical. His archival research was careful and thorough; he read letters and notebooks and papers fair and

foul; he conducted interviews with those who had known Wolfe and Cummings; and he edited for publication large amounts of those materials, with all the patient plodding, the attention to detail, the concern for accuracy, that are the marks of the good editor. For him, there was no appreciation without perspiration. ("Tribute")

5.

in time of roses(who amaze
our now and here with paradise)

"Probably I have the distinction of having obstructed Dick in his work more than anyone in this room, although I did not know I was going to do it," begins the most surprising opening to the many stories shared by those gathered for the Memorial Service, the words of David Forrest that preceded his account of the founding of the E. E. Cummings Society and its journal. "The story begins in 1964," Forrest said, having first pointed out that he is a clinical professor of psychiatry at Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, in Manhattan.

> Cummings had died two years earlier—I had known him and his wife, Marion, from 1960, when I wrote a [senior honors] thesis about Cummings with his help—and Marion, going through Cummings' papers, had come across 441 pages of his self-recorded dreams from his two Freudian psychoanalyses. I was a 4th-year medical student heading into psychiatry, and Marion offered them to me to analyze. I examined them cursorily on the spot; they were full of all the things one should find in a good analysis, an Oedipal complex bigger than a circustent, and much much more about himself and others. Both of them had lived bohemian existences, and despite his carefully crafted persona, Cummings had preserved all without censorship. Marion, herself a theatre person and not overly concerned about conventions, seemed unperturbed about any revelations. I told her that she should sequester them for, say, 25 years.

In the "Bibliographical Essay" appearing at the end of *Dreams in the Mirror*, Kennedy, writing in 1979, more than a year before meeting Forrest for the first time, says: "At Marion Morehouse's request, the diaries are sealed until 1991. A few similar batches of personal notes, such as records of his dreams while he was in psychoanalytic consultation with Dr. Fritz Wittels, fall under the same restriction" (488). Forrest continues:

> In judging my advice, you might consider that those of us who come from the medical and psychoanalytical worlds try to protect confidentiality, in direct opposition to every instinct of biographical scholars to preserve and

publish personal material. I lost track of what happened though we kept in touch, and Marion died in 1969, when I was in Vietnam with the medical corps.

Skip ahead to December of 1980, when Dick met with Norman and me for the first time all together, which led to the founding of the Cummings Society. [At this point Forrest reads aloud the same passages from the first issue of *Spring* that I quote earlier in this essay.] Dick had just published *Dreams in the Mirror*, a remarkable, comprehensive psychological biography—and he did it without access to the dreams.

It turned out that Marion *had* sequestered the dreams and much other personal material at the Houghton Library at Harvard for 25 years, and when they emerged in 1991, Dick was there to dig them out, as was I soon after at his cheerful, and I might say forgiving, encouragement. ("Tribute")

After all the digging, the amount of damage the "obstruction" had cost turned out to be little, for most items sequestered had already been read by Kennedy either before they had fallen under restriction or, inadvertently, afterwards, the result of exigencies of cataloguing and the biographer's good luck. Not so the dreams, however—all 441 pages of them, typed. Kennedy was seeing those diaries for the very first time. In the end, though, it would be Forrest who got on with the immense task of exploring these excavated dreams in depth, mostly because it became evident upon detailed reading that their analysis would require (as Forrest had first glimpsed in 1964) professional expertise that Kennedy—with all his psychological astuteness (the first edition of the biography had already been critically praised by reviewers on that score) [12]—did not have. Even had he possessed such specialized knowledge and clinical experience, however, it's not at all clear that he would have had the time—nor perhaps, even more importantly, the personal inclination—to proceed at that point on such a complex project.[13]

Browning was deeply underway, and the Cummings Centennial year of 1994 would see, among other fruits of Kennedy's work, the publication of *E. E. Cummings Revisited*, "a critical study of [his] work, with emphasis on his poetry," a kind of "supplement" to his 1980 *Dreams in the Mirror*, as Kennedy explained (xi). (As is well known, he had conceived and begun writing a two-volume biography before publisher restrictions forced upon him sacrifices of content—especially affecting the number of works able to be critically examined.)

Kennedy's completely deferring to Forrest's prior publishing interests in the dream diaries may itself account for the absence of any specific mention of them in his preface to the 1994 (emended) edition of *Dreams in the Mirror*. The time for public disclosure and discussion of that trove of highly personal material—in whatever form, and forum—was left to Forrest's own choosing. And choose he soon did—

with Kennedy's full interest and support. "When I presented an analysis of the dreams at the Association for Psychoanalytic Medicine in 1994," Forrest said, "Dick was there, with Norman, as a discussant. Actually, Dick came *twice*. The first time, a huge winter storm came up between the time he left Ella [in Philadelphia] and arrived in New York—this was the era before cell phones—and the talk was postponed for eleven months" ("Tribute").[14]

In the time between those two trips to New York, Kennedy's *E. E. Cummings Revisited* appeared in print, its dedication evoking whistles far and wee—

For Norman Friedman
and David Forrest,
Balloonbringers

6.

forgetting if,remember yes

"Spring is perhapsing," reads the opening sentence of a letter Kennedy composed on the first day of spring, 1985. The biographer's splendid quip is a tribute to Cummings that trumps the hand that fed it, so to speak. (Indeed, in none of Cummings' poems does "perhapsing" ever appear—somewhat surprisingly, for its "sing" registers a palette of possibilities that Cummings would surely have enjoyed exploiting; its absence in Cummings marks Kennedy's "perhapsing" as all the more spontaneous and inventive.)[15]

But another image—that of Kennedy himself, in a bookstore sixteen springs before his writing that letter—is what stirred my recollection of Kennedy's sentence in the first place. Of three memories of Kennedy that he shared on March 29, 2003, Miles Orvell, professor of English and American studies, first recalled an episode from 1969.

> [It] was an encounter in a used bookstore in Harvard Square, probably in the spring before I came to Temple. I'd had an interview in a hotel room somewhere a couple of months earlier, the way hires were conducted in those days, and Dick was among those interviewing me, although given the angst of the moment I'd not noticed it at the time. But he recognized me, and greeted me in that bookstore with a warmth and good humor that everyone knows who knew Dick. What stuck in my mind, though, was how intently he was browsing, browsing greedily on his lunch hour, I assume, taking a break from library research (probably this was Spring break

and he'd journeyed up to Cambridge for a week of work), and looking very thoroughly at every book he picked up.

Orvell's second memory is a winter's tale, from February 1980, drawn from what he calls "my academic Profiles in Courage":

> Dick had recently published his magisterial biography of E. E. Cummings, . . . a book that is the foundation for all subsequent Cummings criticism. It was, and is, an important book, and Dick had the good fortune to be reviewed in the *New York Review of Books* by Helen Vendler, the doyen (rather fearsome doyen) of poetry criticism, and as it happened Vendler didn't like the book and wrote an excessively and gratuitously nasty review. (The review was also nasty in response to a new book by Marjorie Perloff, an esteemed critic of modern poetry.)
>
> I was imagining, all that week, how Dick might be feeling, thinking that this would be a depressing week, when, shortly after that, I ran into him in the mailroom. (This was when we had a mailroom where people had room to run into one another.) Was Dick gloomy? No, on the contrary, he was his usual absolutely cheerful self, beaming with good humor and irony, alluding to the Vendler piece as one might refer to a bothersome gnat. And here's the letter he wrote to the New York Review in response: "Helen Vendler, in her mean-spirited review of my biography of E. E. Cummings, *Dreams in the Mirror*, and Marjorie Perloff's *Frank O'Hara: Poet Among Painters*, declared at the outset that 'The only form inherently more unsatisfying than literary biography is its macroform, literary history' (*NYR* February 7). To give these books to a reviewer with such notions is like feeding a donkey strawberries, as they used to say in the English music halls—or, more to the point, casting Perloffs before swine."

Seven years before *Dreams in the Mirror* was published, Vendler had written: "For some reason, one a biographer may eventually reveal, [C]ummings violently mistrusted mixed feelings, or mixed ideas. Ambivalence was not a possibility to him, and everything had to be all or nothing" ("Poetry" 414). When a biographer came along who did in fact reveal, suggest, and explore in admirable depth and detail such reasons—obviously more than *one*—the decidedly lowercase doyen who greeted him showed she could not overcome an all-or-nothing attitude regarding her own critical assumptions about the writing of biography, nor transcend a hermetic privileging of her own personal taste in poets and poetics.

As Norman Friedman remarked, "It is with great despair that I read certain reviews of this book in some of our more prominent journals, for there again I saw that unbelievable condescendingness, that absence of any real awareness of what they were talking about, that completely missing the mark and significance of Kennedy's

extraordinary research" ("Recent" 29). Fortunately, other reviewers (such as Bayley, Davenport, Ludington), unlike Vendler—whose virtual dismissal of the biography even includes a gleefully essentialist citing of R. P. Blackmur's "Notes" of 1931—accorded both Cummings and Kennedy the more serious, measured treatment readers rightfully expect.[16]

The unforgettable image of Kennedy that concludes Orvell's third story could easily double as an apt finale to the above account, too, given that episode's overtones.

> My third memory is from an evening some years ago, how many I can't recall exactly, when I was over the Kennedy house for dinner and had brought with me a friend who was visiting town at the time, an artist and teacher. She had quizzed me earlier about who our hosts were to be, and I mentioned Dick's academic interests. At some point in the evening, my friend asked Dick, with open-eyed curiosity, "Why have you written on Thomas Wolfe??" Dick was startled by the directness of this question, which was coming from someone *not* an English professor and took nothing for granted. It looked like, for a moment, he was thinking how best to answer her, when suddenly he rose from his seat, stepped into the center of the room, lifted his arms above his head in a kind of mock dance, and said, with exuberance and enthusiasm, "Because I am Dionysian!!"

7.

in time of all sweet things beyond
whatever mind may comprehend,

In 1970, as a graduate student in Temple University's "Religion and Literature" program—an innovative degree option in those days—I was fortunate to have Samuel Laeuchli and Richard Kennedy, of the religion and English departments respectively, as advisors for the M.A. thesis I chose to write on Christ-language in the poetry and prose of E. E. Cummings. My theoretical approach had largely been decided by a Wittgenstein seminar in the spring of that year, taught by Paul M. Van Buren, and earlier by two courses on the linguistic dilemma of Christianity in the Early Church, taught by Laeuchli. But it was Kennedy, the authority on Cummings, who offered to assume the role of primary advisor—a generous commitment, for I had not previously been a student in any of his classes. And of course he was very busy. The two volumes of *The Notebooks of Thomas Wolfe*, edited by Kennedy and Paschal Reeves, had been published that same year. Kennedy had also by then become very absorbed in his biographical work on Cummings, the research for which, supported by a grant from Temple, he had begun "in earnest" at the Houghton only the summer before, in 1969, just after Marion's death (*Dreams* ix, xiii).

What I valued most about Kennedy's guidance during several conferences over the next eighteen months was his genuine openness to my ideas and approach. The collegial, exploratory style of that openness mattered as much; and even as his observations and questions in those several meetings challenged me at every step, his deliberative, confiding tone inspired a trust in the process. Such memories are echoed in the May 2003 newsletter of the Society for the Study of Southern Literature, in a tribute to Kennedy by Mary Aswell Doll, whose name at first glance registered no familiarity.

> . . . I remember how very courteous and welcoming he was to me when I first joined the Thomas Wolfe Society, when the meeting was held for the first time at Harvard [1982]. His shepherding of scholars young and old was a trademark of his; and I suspect many like myself continued their membership in the Society because of Dick's influence and kindness. I was particularly grateful to him because he had received sorry treatment by my father, the then-executor of the Wolfe estate, who had refused Dick, the young graduate student, early access to the Wolfe files at Houghton. My father set back Dick's career with Wolfe, but fortunately not for long. Knowing that history between Kennedy and Edward Aswell, I had occasion [in 1986] to apologize on behalf of my father to Dick. We were walking together across the Brooklyn Bridge in another of the famous Wolfe Society outings when I brought the subject up. He was witty and wry in his remembrance to me, just as he was in his talk on the subject at another of the Society meetings. Dick Kennedy, you were the best: a scholar, a weaver of words, and a consummate gentleman. (5)

Though accepted for doctoral studies in philosophy at the two universities to which I had applied, financial and family consideration precluded my starting either program (my first child had been born in September 1971, only weeks before I defended my thesis). I lost contact with Kennedy for about six years as I spent the decade doing psychiatric social work for a living. By 1978-79, however, we reconnected over Kennedy's guest-editing of the E. E. Cummings Special Number of the *Journal of Modern Literature* and his completing *Dreams in the Mirror*. And inspired by his brilliant foreword to the 1978 typescript edition of *The Enormous Room*, I decided—with Kennedy providing some crucial logistical help—to travel to Rockport, Mass., to interview and photograph William Slater Brown. It was Kennedy, too, who supplied me with the name and phone number of the couple living in Concord who had recently purchased Joy Farm, in Silver Lake, N.H., thus enabling me to obtain their permission to visit the property and house (unoccupied at the time) and make photographs, which I did in October 1979, two months after visiting Brown.

By June 1980 I had left social work to do writing and photography full time, and

by decade's end had authored two books in the field of social documentary photography while teaching part-time at several colleges. Only rarely did Kennedy and I see each other (he had been producing much important Wolfe scholarship during the decade), but I'll never forget reading about him in the fall of 1986. An article about a news story I had been following appeared on the op-ed page of the October 26 edition of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, below the heading "Walkout at Temple Demonstrates Growing Militancy of Faculty Union."

> "Give me a *verbum*," said English Professor Richard Kennedy. "Verbum!" roared several hundred striking faculty members at Temple University. "Give me a *sapientibus*," said Kennedy. "Sapientibus!" roared the faculty. "Give me an *est*," said Kennedy. "Est!" thundered the faculty. [17]
>
> With that—a Latin cheer that roughly translates into "A word to the wise is sufficient"—Temple teachers ended a membership meeting one day last week with a pledge to remain on strike until they achieve their salary demands in a new two-year contract to replace a pact that expired June 30.
>
> The strike, which enters its third week tomorrow, is the first by faculty members in Temple's 102-year history, and it demonstrates the new-found militancy of the school's faculty union—the Temple chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

Kennedy a *militant*—striking over salary alone? There was more to it, of course, and once the further details were supplied by *Inquirer* staff writer Huntly Collins, the image of Kennedy reaching for a bullhorn no longer seemed incongruous.

> [U]nderneath the faculty unrest about pay is an even deeper resentment about the university's spending priorities. Whether correct or not, faculty members across a wide range of disciplines believe that [the president] cares more about the school's football program, public relations and the construction of new buildings than he does about education....
>
> For the first time, faculty members who never thought they would walk a picket line are doing their picket duty with the fervor of striking steelworkers.
>
> Richard Kennedy, for instance, who has taught American literature at Temple for the last 22 years, said he has never taken an active part in AAUP activities—until now. Today, the 66-year-old professor is walking the picket line at 7 a.m. and serving as strike coordinator for the English department.
>
> "University faculties don't go on strike," Kennedy said. "Faculty members feel an obligation to their students that makes it different from being an electrician or an automotive engineer. But the Temple faculty feels that the president is only interested in sports and public relations."
> ("Walkout")

Two years later, on April 21, 1988, the *Inquirer*'s same staff writer reported on Kennedy's receiving one of Temple's first "Great Teacher Awards." The five awards (to be granted annually) carried a $10,000 prize for each recipient.

> It wasn't excellence in athletics that won the honors yesterday, but excellence in teaching. . . .
>
> [T]he winners, all full professors who were selected by a university–wide faculty committee, were lauded as among the most passionate, dedicated and effective instructors on Temple's 1,670-member teaching staff. . . . Although they represent a mix of academic disciplines, the winners all said in interviews that they tended to adopt a Socratic teaching method and that they maintained a constant vigil to improve their teaching.. . . . Kennedy, 67, . . . tape records class sessions to hone his teaching skills.. . . ("Temple")

In August of this year, eighteen months after his death, and before I had ever seen the above article (which surfaced online in September while I was retrieving the original text of the "walkout" article), I was going through the contents of numerous boxes and file drawers of Kennedy's papers and documents at his home, in Merion, Pa. One of the boxes turned out to be full of audiocassettes—dozens of them. Then another box. And a third. Examining the labels on the tapes produced a puzzled disbelief, which Ella—just then arriving with a tray of tea and cakes—immediately clarified for me.[18] Thirty-three years after first meeting him, I too would get to experience the joy—even as I felt his absence more pointedly than ever—of being a student in a Kennedy classroom.

The same opportunity—and access to so much more—will soon be available to students and scholars everywhere. For not only these classroom lectures and other tapes, but all of her husband's papers and documents related to the biography and works of Cummings have been donated to Temple University, the gift outright of Ella Dickinson Kennedy.

8.

remember seek(forgetting find)

"I wanted to tell you that my Dutch students really loved Cummings," Kennedy wrote to Forrest on May 7, 1989, a year after retiring from Temple.

> They are very fluent in English and thus can even understand his word play. In class [at the Katholieke Universiteit] we studied about 30 of his poems, many of them in some detail. Among their favorites were "l(a", "plato told", "Ugudh" [ygUDuh], "anyone lived in a pretty how town", and "my sweet old etcetera".

> Later I gave a lecture to the American Studies group here in Nijmegen on "E. E. Cummings and the Modern Movement in the Arts," and they all were equally enthusiastic.

Even *more* equally Kennedy himself, undoubtedly, who was enjoying a Fulbright (Teaching) Fellowship, University of Nijmegen, for 1988-89. Eleven days later (May 18), Kennedy was again writing to the editor of *Spring*, this time from Belgium.

> I must report to you that I gave a lecture at the University of Brussels at a meeting of the Belgium and Luxembourg American Studies Association on "E. E. Cummings, Modern Poet and Painter." The program was on "20th Century Literature and the Arts"; other papers were on "Helmut John and Post-Modern Architecture," ["]Charles Ives: The Pastoral Strain," and "Sam Shepard on Film." The audience really responded fully to Cummings and I was really glad that they allotted me 50 minutes for the lecture.[19]

Kennedy was back in the States by mid-July and at work on another lecture, one for which only the standard wedge of time for panel members at conferences would be allotted—twenty minutes. Nine months later, Kennedy squandered not a second of his time in making the case for his provocative, not to say controversial, critical pronouncement regarding Cummings' status as a poet. The setting was the Bahia Resort Hotel, San Diego, May 31–June 2, 1990; the occasion was the first annual conference of the American Literature Association, of which the E. E. Cummings Society—in the person of its official representative, Norman Friedman—had been a founding member in 1989. Friedman, who chaired the Cummings session, had organized the panel "with a view toward inaugurating a reassessment of Cummings from the fresh perspective of almost thirty years after the poet's death" (Friedman and Forrest 5). In addition to Kennedy, the panel members presenting that Friday morning, June 1, were Milton A. Cohen and Linda Wagner-Martin.[20]

The "reassessment" of Cummings took a surprising turn when Kennedy offered a nondiachronic, straightforward *assessment* instead, first acknowledging a frustration dating from a decade earlier: the want of an apt construct in terms of which his ambivalent feelings about the poetry could be organized and articulated. He had since found—quite literally—the desired analytic frame. "In a review of my book *Dreams in the Mirror*," Kennedy explained, "... a British critic referred to Cummings as a 'major minor poet.' "

> I was struck by the phrase, which seemed to me very apt, for during the work on the critical biography I had been torn between the feelings, on the one hand, of admiration for his distinctive, original achievement in modern poetry and, on the other hand, of disappointment for his lack of percep-

> tion that much of what he published was ephemeral stuff. . . . When I read the phrase 'major minor poet,' I began to meditate on what the terms 'major' and 'minor' really mean in literary history and what critical evaluations contribute to such terms.
> ("E. E. Cummings, A Major Minor Poet" 37) [21]

Kennedy's deliberations on the distinction were followed by an analysis of Cummings' "limitations that restrict him to the rank of minor poet," then:

> What we must [also] be aware of are his strengths and virtues—his extensive poetic output, his development of an original poetic style, and his continuing to publish works of distinction up to the seventh decade of life. Taken together, these constitute a unique and valuable literary achievement that make him a "major" minor poet. (40)

Kennedy delineated these "strengths and virtues" via a number of representative poems before proclaiming, in the last sentence of his paper, that these poems

> and others in his eleven published volumes add up to a huge accumulation having sufficient variety, so that with the dazzle of his unique style and the balance of his wit and sentiment, E. E. Cummings will always be included in anthologies of American Literature and of Modern poetry, and will continue to provide his readers with intellectual provocation, delight, amusement, titillation, emotional thrill, and occasionally that serenity of feeling that is the true, harmonious aesthetic response. (45)

Reporting on the panel several months later, in the October 1990 issue of *Spring*, Friedman summarized the content and impact of Kennedy's paper, first pointing out that the "audience, which numbered about 30-35 … was very appreciative and responsive."

> In particular, Dick's challenge was taken up and dealt with. His point was that Cummings was a "major minor" poet rather than a major poet, because he didn't create a sufficiently impressive and/or large body of major works—whether major lyrics, as with Keats, e.g., or major longer works, as with Browning, e.g. Surprisingly, he cited Dickinson and Melville as also being "major minor" writers, and my own feeling was that, if this be the case, then Cummings is certainly in very good company and no one had anything to worry about.
>
> Perhaps Dick was being deliberately provocative and spoke partly with tongue in cheek, but he was no doubt treating a serious concern as well. The effect was to spur the audience and the other panel members to come to Cummings' defense. . . . ("California" 27)

Tongue in cheek or not, Kennedy never again used the phrase "major minor" of Cummings—at least not in print (nowhere in *E. E. Cummings Revisited*, for example, which was published in 1994). As a result of the Society's not issuing *Spring* in 1991—the year of the journal's transition from a newsletter-style format ("Old Series," 1981-90) to a scholarly annual ("New Series," 1992-current)—the "major minor" paper itself was not published until October 1992, a full two and a half years after Kennedy's presentation in San Diego. The theoretical underpinnings were summed up and analyzed two years later—and the issue mostly put to rest—in an essay (published in *Spring* 1995) by Webster, who problematized the "major /minor" distinction itself, even while acknowledging that *if* one granted Kennedy's premises (which Webster largely did not), "[he] was correct on Cummings" ("Cummings, Kennedy" 76).

As one would be correct, too, on many others poets (Friedman's "good company"), given the same assumptions. Gerard Manley Hopkins, for example, has been so considered (whereas Kennedy calls him "major" [37]), and American poets such as John Crowe Ransom, Robinson Jeffers, and Allen Ginsberg, not to mention Theodore Roethke, Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop—and Billy Collins, the 2001-2003 poet laureate.[22]

After his 1990 paper, Kennedy never presented again at an ALA conference, nor attended any.[23] Hardly surprising, for not only was Kennedy busy studying Greek,[24] he was in fact engaged in the most prolific period of his career. Between 1991 and 1994 he turned out *six* books,[25] and by 1995 "the indefatigable researcher" (in Friedman's phrase)[26] was working with unprecedented focus on his biography of Browning. And making, as we have seen, his chance first acquaintance with Donald Hair.

9.

and in a mystery to be
(when time from time shall set us free)
forgetting me,remember me

(*CP* 688)

The last time I saw Kennedy was on March 24, 1995, the day he gave the Cummings lecture and reading that brought to a memorable conclusion Community College of Philadelphia's yearlong series of centennial events.[27] For several faculty members who had not seen him in years, it was a warm reunion with a beloved teacher and friend, whose rendering of "ygUDuh" (*CP* 547), one of sixteen poems he read, was as convincing as ever, thus sustaining his reputation as a superb performer of the

more vernacularly challenging of Cummings'poems.[28]

During a few moments alone with him later that afternoon, I asked Kennedy whether there was, as with me, one poem of Cummings that resonated more deeply with him than any other. There was. And a smile, one of sweet confirmation, followed instantly the twitch of disbelief on my face as he named it: "in time of daffodils."[29]

Dick Kennedy was a passionate exemplar of how the goal of living is to grow, of how it is never too late to start a new project, or finish an old one. Always, somewhere, "spring is perhapsing" in the world. And somewhere, always, because of Kennedy, perhapsing too in the lives of those who knew and loved him. The work and the man will endure. It remains for us to go about what we mistakenly call our separate lives, in the mystery that is now, forgetting him, remembering him.

—Community College of Philadelphia
November 2004
bstehle@ccp.edu

Notes

1 In August 2002 Kennedy fractured his neck in a freak accident at home, a devastating injury from which he was still recovering at the time of his stroke four months later.

2 "I first met Dick at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, in the fall of 1995 (I think) when we were both working at the Armstrong Browning Library," Hair explained (E-mail to the author, Sept. 2, 2004).

3 "[W]ith his characteristic generosity and magnanimity, [Dick] gave me complete freedom to finish the book as I see fit, to use my critical judgment to change whatever I thought needed changing, but I told him I wasn't going to do that, and that I very much want to honour the work he has done. Yes, there are going to be two voices in the book, Dick's voice and mine, and if the dialogue is like our conversations in Waco, it will—I can say with some confidence—be worth reading. So I am looking forward to finishing the book in the spirit with which Dick has begun it" ("Tribute").

4 E-mail to the author, Sept. 1, 2004. In his tribute to Kennedy at the Memorial Service that took place on March 29, 2003 at Temple University, Hair spoke of their first meeting, at Baylor (see above, note 2): "I do not think that I have ever had better or more sustained literary conversation with anyone. And, in the curious and fascinating way in which chance works in our lives, those two weeks in Waco led me to a meeting of the New York Browning Society [of which Kennedy was president 1991-96], a delightful dinner with Dick and Ella, and, most important of all, agreement to collaborate on a critical biography of Robert

Browning, if the need should arise. Sadly, that need has arisen" ("Tribute").

5 Most recently and dramatically, for example, October 12, 2004 marked the appearance in bookstores of Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno's *E. E. Cummings: A Biography*, published by Sourcebooks, Inc. (Naperville, Ill.). Writer-in-residence at M.I.T., and a poet and biographer (of Paul Bowles), Sawyer-Lauçanno acknowledges the "substance and value" (vii) of Kennedy's biography and seems, indeed, to depend quite heavily on it in both organization and content. (Time constraints have disallowed my giving Sawyer-Lauçanno's work more than this brief mention.)

For the 2001 yearbook of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Forrest and Friedman composed "The E. E. Cummings Society" entry (appearing for the first time), in which they point out, in regard to the Society's international reach: "Yasuo Fujitomi of Tokyo is on the editorial board, and contributors to the journal include poets and critics from Japan, Spain, Finland, Germany, Hawaii, Canada, France, England, Austria, Switzerland, and Australia" (441).

6 Three years later (1984) Friedman would write: "I cannot convey what a profoundly moving effect Kennedy's *Dreams in the Mirror* (1980) has had and no doubt will continue to have on me. And I don't mean merely by way of nostalgia—I mean by way of revealing Cummings to me in many new lights" ("'so many selves' " 144).

7 Not to Kennedy's disadvantage as a biographer, according to Friedman. "Written in the objective mode, [*Dreams in the Mirror*] gains rather than suffers from Kennedy's never having known Cummings personally..." (" 'so many selves' " 144).

8 In "Knowing and Remembering Cummings" (1981), an essay initially written "as a talk in 1979 to be given at Temple University by invitation of Richard Kennedy" [*(Re)Valuing* 129], Friedman writes: "[By] early 1948, I had graduated [B.A.] ... and was taking my first graduate courses. One of these was in American literature with Howard Mumford Jones, and when this eminent professor made some less-than-enthusiastic remarks about Cummings in one of his lectures, I respectfully but determinedly approached him after class and suggested that perhaps there was more to be said on the subject" ("Knowing and Remembering" 133-34). Jones asked him to give a lecture to the class, which Friedman did. Kennedy was part of that 1948 (not 1947) class.

9 In each case, of course, returning veterans had to meet standard entrance requirements for admission to the institutions to which they were applying.

10 To his mother, from Camp Devens, Sept. 11, 1918. The full context is as follows: "The artist keeps his eyes,ears,& above all his NOSE wide open,he watches,while others merely execute orders he <u>does</u> <u>things</u>. By things I do <u>not</u> mean wearing gold bars or pulling wires or swallowing rot-in-general or nonsense-in-particular. I mean the sustaining of his invisible acquaintance with that life which,taken from his eyes,makes itself a house in his very-brain-itself. On the pergolas of that house his soul will lounge gorgeously while his arms & legs do squads

right" (*SL* 52-53).

11 Hair's page reference is to vol. 8 of the standard (15 vols.) edition of Wilde, edited by Robert Ross. In Ellmann's (ed.) selection of Wilde's critical writings, the full sentence, in context, reads: "Nowadays, we have so few mysteries left to us that we cannot afford to part with one of them. The members of the Browning Society, like the theologians of the Broad Church Party, or the authors of Mr. Walter Scott's Great Writers' Series, seems [sic] to me to spend their time in trying to explain their divinity away. Where one had hoped that Browning was a mystic, they have sought to show that he was simply inarticulate" (Wilde 344).

12 For example, Richard Holmes, in *The Times* (London): "[Kennedy's] warmhearted and psychologically acute biography ... leave[s] the larger literary questions alone, and locate[s] Cummings vividly within his American inheritance"; Joseph McLellan, of the *Washington Post*: "... Kennedy handles [Cummings] with an understanding and sympathy that could not be automatically expected. Besides providing a wealth of previously unpublished biographical detail, he ventures discreetly and convincingly into psychological analysis...."; Robert Kirsch, literary critic for the *Los Angeles Times*: "Rarely have I read so convincing a biography of a writer, going from life to work, from personality to style, from poetry back to life" (6); and Milton A. Cohen: "[Kennedy] is best at revealing Cummings the man and in charting the relationships that shaped—or twisted—Cummings' personality: those with his father, with his three wives, and with his daughter" (419). (Regarding Cohen, see also Note 16.)

13 By training and in his parallel career as a gestalt therapist, Friedman has long had both the personal inclination and professional expertise to explore the poet's "so many fiends and gods," which he does in depth in *(Re)Valuing Cummings*, the pages of which are replete with penetrating insights that only one who has dealt with his own demons could possibly offer into the life of another.

No small portion of the psychological wisdom we find in those pages—especially the essay on *Dreams in the Mirror*—is inspired, indeed provoked, by Friedman's "reading" of Kennedy's Cummings, a subject deserving of an essay unto itself.

14 "A First Look at the Dreams of E. E. Cummings: The Preconscious of a Synesthetic Genius" was published in the 1993 issue of *Spring*. (At least one supplement to this initial study by Forrest remains forthcoming in the journal.)

15 Interestingly, "perhapsing" (sans "is") appears a single time in Joyce. See *Finnegans Wake*: "all-a-dreams perhapsing under lucksloop at last are through" (597, l. 20).

16 When Friedman decided to reprint his long article "Recent Developments in Cummings Criticism, 1976-1980" in *(Re)Valuing Cummings*, he distributed various sections of the article in different parts of the book. For whatever reason, the sentence quoted here was dropped from the book. For other reviews of *Dreams in the Mirror*, see Holmes, Kaplan, Kirsch, and McLellan. And even where Cummings scholar Milton A. Cohen (see Note 12, above), in his review in *The New England Quarterly*, takes Kennedy to task for the paucity and quality of his

treatment of the poet as painter, his criticisms are neither mean-spirited nor unreasonable. It must be said, however, that Kennedy, restricted beyond his control to a one-volume work, never claimed to have attempted the far reach and substantive treatment of Cummings' painting that Cohen—and all the rest of us—would naturally liked to have seen. Perhaps it is indeed beyond any one volume, or any one man, to do so. (Kennedy, of course, did not have the benefit of Cohen's two definitive books on the subject, both of which appeared after *Dreams in the Mirror* had already been published: *E. E. Cummings' Paintings, The Hidden Career* [1982], and *Poet and Painter* [1987], the latter very favorably reviewed by Kennedy [1988] in the pages of *Spring*.)

Wistfully pertinent here is the final sentence of McLellan's review, shortly after the biography appeared in print: "... *Dreams in the Mirror* should be the basic reference on Cummings until some publisher is found who will be adventurous enough to put out the two-volume version of this carefully planned, useful and highly readable study."

Regarding Blackmur, Vendler writes that his "Notes on E. E. Cummings' Language" is "superlatively unanswerable" (12), a preposterous claim in light of Friedman's analysis twenty years earlier, *E. E. Cummings: The Art of His Poetry* (1960), which deals superlatively with the quite answerable Blackmur: "Intelligibility ... is an individual matter with each poem and cannot be decided in advance merely by reference to a theory of the history of language" (62).

See, also, Friedman's 1983 essay " 'Epiphanies Are Hard to Come By': Cummings' Uneasy Mask and the Divided Audience," in *(Re)Valuing Cummings*, where (91-92) he discusses Blackmur's own later "revaluing" of Cummings.

It is ironic that in Feb. 1980—simultaneous with the appearance of Vendler's lauding of Blackmur's position in *NYRB*—David Forrest, in *The Journal of Psychiatry*, was taking issue with it (23-24) in his essay "E. E. Cummings and the Thoughts That Lie Too Deep for Tears: Of Defenses in Poetry."

17 Italics mine. If in fact Kennedy boomed out only three words, he more than likely called for "*sat*" (sufficient) rather than "*est*" (is); the aphorism most often appears as *Verbum sat sapienti* (or the plural *sapientibus*, as here)—the *est* unexpressed. Cummings himself would often simply write or say "*Verbum sap*."

18 "When asked how he had become such a popular teacher, Dr. Kennedy said, 'I've tried to be diligent in preparing for classes. I'm just not one of these people who can get up and talk' " ("Richard Kennedy"). More than a hundred tapes testify to that preparation. It is ironic that for all the recording of his own voice, however, Kennedy did not similarly record even one of the many interviews he conducted for *Dreams in the Mirror*. Ella, who was present for most of those sessions over the years, says that he didn't want the distractions of a mechanical device—suddenly having to change tapes, for example—during such meetings, which he always conducted in a probing but gentlemanly fashion that elicited trust.

"He was taking notes all the time," she said. (More than a thousand pages of such notes—even at first inventorial glance—confirm that.) "I was just

listening. But Dick and I would talk it over afterwards. I was able to fill in things he hadn't noticed—or give my opinion, anyway." No tape recorder, but stereophonic listening. An arguably sound choice on Kennedy's part, given the results.

But that's not the end of it. Kennedy wouldn't use a computer, either, even after Ella eventually talked him into purchasing one. As a matter of fact, Kennedy hadn't ever got around to using a typewriter. Handwritten pages only. In the collaborative spirit that marked their lives together, Ella would supply from his final-draft manuscripts the typed pages needed for submission to editors and publishers. (See Idol's superb 1991 *DLB* biographical entry on Kennedy, where he provides readers with holograph ms. reproductions of two first-draft pages of Kennedy's introduction to *Dreams in the Mirror*.)

19 Since neither "E. E. Cummings and the Modern Movement in the Arts" (letter, May 7) nor "E. E. Cummings, Modern Poet and Painter" (letter, May 18) shows up under the title searches I've done, each may well be versions of the essay Kennedy published in 1991 under the title "E. E. Cummings and the Modern Movement in Literature and the Arts." Regarding the papers by unnamed authors that Kennedy refers to, I have no bibliographical data.

20 Both Wagner-Martin's paper ("Cummings' *Him*—and Me") and Cohen's ("E. E. Cummings and *The Dial*") were published, along with Kennedy's, in *Spring* New Series 1 (1992).

21 Kennedy nowhere names this "British critic," nor has my own research yielded the author of the phrase "major minor poet" in respect to Cummings. I would appreciate hearing from anyone familiar with the source.

22 For Hopkins, see Gerry Murray (who reverses the usual order of the terms as he wonders if Hopkins should be considered a "minor major poet"); for Ransom, Jeffers, Roethke, Moore and Bishop, see Richard Tillinghast, whose list of "great minor poets" is headed by Ransom; for Ginsberg, see Roger Rosenblatt; and for Collins, see Richard Alleva.

For a discussion of Hopkins and Cummings, see Friedman ("Hopkins, Cummings, and the Struggle of the Modern").

23 As far as Friedman and I can remember. I had anticipated seeing Kennedy at least sometimes at ALA, for in 1991—the year I took his advice to meet Friedman and get involved in the Cummings Society—I became, at age 49, a full-time faculty member at Community College of Philadelphia; that made it possible for me (via faculty travel funds) to attend each of the yearly conferences thereafter, where I made a number of presentations on one or another of the Cummings panels. I had hoped, of course, that I might one year have the pleasure of sharing a spot with my former mentor.

24 Sometime during the winter of 1992-93, as I recall, Kennedy and I had one of our chance encounters on Temple's campus. We chatted for an energetic moment before Kennedy, glancing at his watch, declared he had to rush off. "I don't want to be late for class!" *Class?* "Yes," he said. "I'm studying Greek!" And off he went, as eager a student as I've ever seen.

Kennedy had long felt that until he understood the Greek of the *Iliad* and of Sophocles, he could not be considered a "true" scholar, explained Ella, when I spoke to her of this exchange. But only after he retired in 1988, she said, did he actually get to study it—and then immediately, taking his first class in 1989 (thereafter in 1991, 1992 and 1993, according to records at Temple). "He got to the point where he could read ancient classics in the original."

25 *Seven*, if one counts the emended, centennial edition of *Dreams in the Mirror*. (Of the six books, three had to do with Wolfe, two with Cummings, one with Browning.)

26 *(Re)Valuing Cummings* (146).

27 "E. E. Cummings and the Modern Movement in Literature and the Arts," a version of which had been published in 1991 (cf. Note 19).

28 I had first heard Kennedy's rendition of "ygUDuh" in October 1992, when the two of us were among fourteen readers gathered in the Jefferson Market Library for "A Pre-Centennial Poetry Reading" (sponsored by *Spring* and the E. E. Cummings Centennial Committee).

29 Kennedy and I were further astonished to discover next, that given the whole of lyric poetry in English, it was Hopkins' famous lyric "Spring and Fall: to a young child"—with its ominously innocent opening lines: "Márgarét, are you gríeving / Over Goldengrove unleaving?" and stark concluding ones: "It ís the blight man was born for, / It is Margaret you mourn for."—that each of us prized the most.

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RICHARD S. KENNEDY

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* produced for *Spring* by Marc Miller, Columbia U.

The Richard S. Kennedy Papers on E. E. Cummings

Conwellana-Templana Collection, Temple University Libraries. Temple University, Philadelphia. [Gift of Ella Dickinson Kennedy, Oct. 2004]

The archive includes the published and unpublished draft mss., letters, documents, photographs, audio cassettes, etc., related to Kennedy's distinguished careers as teacher and editor/author of texts on the life and works of the poet.

Note: Additions, corrections, suggestions regarding this bibliography are invited for inclusion in any revised versions as may appear in future issues of *Spring*. Please contact the author.

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