

Five Memorials

Michael Webster

In this issue of *Spring* dedicated to Norman Friedman, we remember also the passing of five dedicated Cummings Society members and admirers of our non-hero. While some are probably unfamiliar to many readers of *Spring*, these five were influenced by Cummings in their lives as musicians, poets, and translators. We print here memorials to Stephen Scotti (1935-2013), Dinu Păulea (1947-2013), T. P. Perrin (1934-2014), Bob Grumman (1941-2015), and Christopher Mulrooney (1956-2015). While our teeming world continues with its buying and selling and bloodletting, it is good to remember that all of these artists kept working and creating—despite receiving little recognition and scant remuneration.

Stephen Scotti (1935-2013)

Stephen Scotti was a musician and composer who set many of Cummings' poems to music and organized a musical review of his settings called *ViVa Cummings!* [later revised and retitled as "*E. E.! (Viva Cummings)*"]. In 1990, at the end of the run of the old series of *Spring*, Scotti wrote of his work on *ViVa Cummings*: "I was overwhelmed with joy . . . with all the *feeling* that was in the Mazur Theatre that night brought about because of the love we all have for this most remarkable of men, E. E. Cummings. . . . I put this work together out of love for this poet. I had no commission or underlying motive to put in the amount of time it took to realize these songs and [arrange] the order of the poems to create the experience of the spirit of the poet as if bringing him back to life in a darkened theatre" ("Scotti Discusses" 12). David Forrest's review of that performance amply supported Scotti's feelings:

The twenty or so of us from the E. E Cummings Society who heard and saw VIVA CUMMINGS! . . . were unanimously enthusiastic and praising as we met afterwards with Mr. Scotti and the actors. We especially appreciated the great care that had gone into the order of the poems. The first act deals with Cummings' bawdy and political satire, the second with the big themes of love and death. The three actors were brilliant, effective, and creative. (10)

Throughout the review, Scotti performed at the piano, giving, Forrest reported, “virtuoso renderings of many of the most sardonic dialect pieces, such as ‘next to of course god america i.’ The rendering of ‘Jimmie’s got a goil goil goil,/ Jimmie’ in successive versions in the style of the 20’s, 30’s, 40’s and 50’s, with everything from Durante to rock, torch and double-time, was a crown jewel of the evening” (10-11). Forrest added: “Every college English teacher should have as a fondest wish that students see this production” (11). Forrest’s review concludes: “this night nothing disappointed, and the production set a standard showing what such musical settings can do when the composer is at one with the lyrics and the poet’s spirit. I shall always hear some of the poems Mr. Scotti’s way” (11).

Stephen Scotti was born in Somerville, Massachusetts, raised in the North End of Boston (where he learned to play piano and accordion), and educated at Rindge Technical School in Cambridge and at Boston University, where he received a degree in music. His obituary in the *Gloucester Times* reports that “Mr. Scotti taught music at the Hotchkiss School in Connecticut and also the Lawrence Vocational School of Lawrence, Mass.” Scotti later became a piano technician and tuner, a job that allowed him time to pursue his vocation as a musician. After tuning a piano, Scotti would often sit down and play. In her memorial piece on Scotti, Gail McCarthy quotes Gloria Stanton: “he . . . started playing these incredible pieces of music. I came out of the kitchen, and what he was playing brought tears to my eyes.”

In addition to the poems of Cummings, Scotti also set to music the works of William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, and Bertolt Brecht (Goodwin 163). In *Spring* 5 (1996), Rufus Goodwin reported that:

Scotti has performed his arrangements of the poetry of William Butler Yeats and the lyrics and limericks of Edward Lear in England, in St. George’s Hall in Glastonbury. . . . Also in the ’80s, Scotti performed the Irish poet’s poems at the Yeats summer school in Sligo. He had to tune the old German grand piano at the annual summer program himself. (163-164)

Scotti also wrote and produced at least one other musical revue, *Songs and Stories of Cape Ann and Cape America* (McCarthy). He also set some of his own lyrics to music, among them a little ditty called “Burn All the Flags,” the chorus of which goes: “Burn all the flags / from here to Xana-

du / Undrape the world / to free me and you” (qtd. in Goodwin 164).

As noted in Norman Friedman’s bibliography in *The Theatre of E. E. Cummings, ViVa Cummings!* was first presented in Gloucester, MA, October 1984, with direction and choreography by William A. Finlay. The review was also performed at the Provincetown Inn, May 1990, and presented by the Blue Heron Theatre Company at the Mazur Theatre in New York City, October 1990, as well as on tour in April 1992 in Bogota, Columbia, and Caracas, Venezuela. To Friedman’s list, Rufus Goodwin adds performances on Martha’s Vineyard and at Boston University in October 1994. Goodwin also notes that William Finlay directed a “circus” version of the show, including “trapezes, clowns, and stilts,” produced “for summer theatre at Union College, Schenectady, New York, in 1995.” Finlay reported

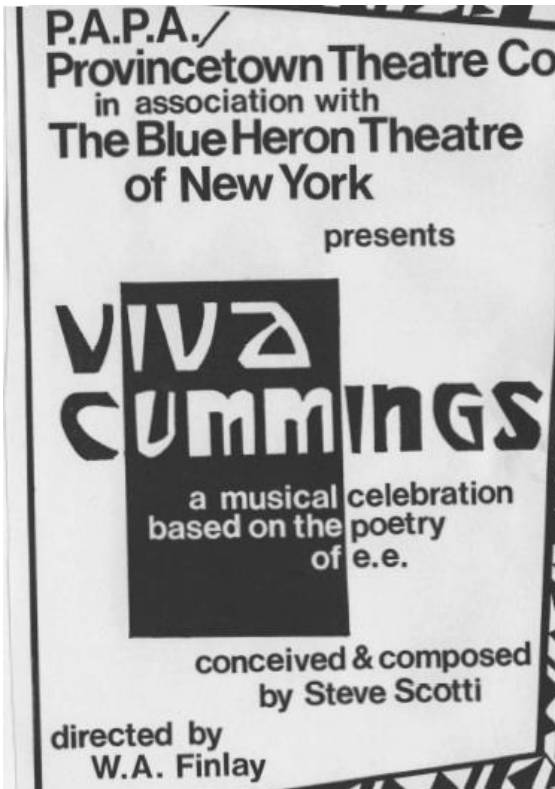


Figure 1: Cover of Program for the Provincetown Theater Company production of *ViVa Cummings!*, May 1990. ([Complete program may be found online at the Provincetown History Preservation Project.](#))

that the circus version was “even ‘more magical’ than the concert version” (Goodwin 163).

In *Spring 8* (1999), Forrest reviewed a new production of the slightly renamed *E.E.!* (*Viva Cummings*) performed in April of that year at the Blue Heron Arts Center, New York City. Forrest noted that Norman Friedman “greatly enjoyed” the performance, while also pointing out in typical Norman fashion “that Scotti’s selections emphasize Cummings’ earlier works, especially the lyrical and satiric ones, which lend themselves to theatrical presentation,

at the expense of the philosophical” (180). The “News, Notes, Correspondence” section of *Spring* 11 (2002) reported that “Stephen Scotti and Kristine Stott gave a very successful concert of Cummings poems set to music at the ALA Conference in Cambridge, MA, May 24-27, 2001” (228). Like Forrest, I vividly remember the performance of “Jimmie’s got a goil” (CP 233) in the successive pop styles of the ‘20s, ‘30s, ‘40s, and ‘50s. In 2006, Kristine Stott recorded a CD of Scotti songs, including some Scotti originals, eight Cummings songs, and two settings of Dorothy Parker’s poems. (Among the Cummings songs on the album are “May I Feel,” “Maggie and Milly and Molly and May,” and “Jimmie’s Got a Goil.”) Although this CD is out of print, one can listen to each track individually on You Tube. Or the entire CD may be downloaded electronically from Apple iTunes, Great Indie Music, or CD Baby.

As I reported in *Spring* 17 (2010), Scotti sent me a homemade CD of his own performances of settings of three Cummings poems: “O the sun comes up-up-up in the opening” (CP 773), “(of Ever-Ever Land i speak” (CP 466), and “i thank You God for most this amazing” (CP 663). These three tracks long remained unplayable on any device that I possessed, but now that technicians at my university have restored them, we can hear Scotti’s own (somewhat scratchy) performances on the *Spring* web site on the “Notes for Cummings” page at the entries for these poems. I hope that, despite the imperfect restoration of the three songs, one can hear in them what Rufus Goodwin called Scotti’s “showbiz sound, as if Scotti were an old hooper, a tap dancer, a former carnival man, maybe a barker” (165). In a note to me that accompanied the three-song CD, Scotti wrote:

I learned everything I know about Cummings from Slater Brown who lived in Rockport, MA with his amazing wife. I performed “i thank You God for most this amazing / day” at his memorial service in Rockport. He asked me to sing it for him before he died. (169)

In the manner of Cummings, Scotti’s circus-jazz-vaudeville style could serve serious purposes as well. Goodwin quotes Scotti as saying: “To me, the song . . . is the distillation of truth with the right selected words and the right selected melody. This is reality. The rest of the time is unreal” (161).

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Dinu Pătulea (1947-2013)

In this issue, we mark also the passing of poet, critic, and translator Dinu Pătulea (1947-2013). Dinu was a long-time subscriber to *Spring*, who (as we interpret the Google translation of his Romanian Wikipedia page) was an advocate of "direct lyricism," which promoted a "desolemnized" poetry purged of excessive rhetoric. Pătulea also advocated the use "of words and concepts that are not part of the usual poetic apparatus." Besides translating Cummings, he also translated Bertolt Brecht, Sylvia Plath, Guillaume Apollinaire, Eugenio Montale, and Salvatore Quasimodo. Among his books of poetry are *Prier* (1988) and what is variously translated by Google as *Criminal Bullshit* or *Criminal Widgets* (1993). (Either is a great

title.) According to his Wikipedia page, a volume called *Selected Writings (and Other Misfortunes, Other Imperatives)* is in preparation.



Figure 2: Dinu Pătulea, *Self Portrait*

On Christmas Day, 2009, Dinu sent me a translation of “a thrown a” (CP 632), Cummings’ poem about a thrown-away Christmas tree with a mysterious “wisp” of an icicle still “pr / -ettily” clinging to it. Dinu said in his e-mail that Cummings was translated “in all European languages—[but] not in Roumanian!” Well, he remedied that lack with at least one poem. Here’s Dinu’s translation:

o pasa

departe e ceva
argintiu

stralucitoarea /mister/

o pasa departe
X
/ioasa/ suvita

A gloriei

de pom agatata

usor

T. P. Perrin (1934-2014)

T. P. Perrin was another long-time subscriber to *Spring* who contributed poems to *Spring* 16 (2007) and 18 (2011). My favorites among these poems are “After Thanksgiving” from the former (121) and “Translating Cummings: *Into Birdspeak*” from the latter (117). Perrin’s standard author’s biography, found at several places on the web, reads as follows:

T. P. Perrin, trained in classical music (composition), has worked as an editor, art critic, school administrator, producer of concerts and — probably his happiest job — giver away of money for a government arts agency. His poems have been published in *The Wallace Stevens Journal*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Sow’s Ear Review*, *The Listening Eye*, *Puckerbrush Review* and elsewhere, and online at *Poetry Daily*. A number of his translations of 19th Century German poetry can be found at *The Lied and Art Song Texts Page*, and his long prose article on painter Alfred Jensen is permanently posted at www.alfredjensen.com. Mr. Perrin’s rhymed and metrical translation of *Rilke’s Sonnets to Orpheus* is looking for a publisher. A resident of Manhattan for as long as he could remember, he now lives in Binghamton, New York.

According to the obituary posted on legacy.com and published in the *Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin*, Peter Anthony (T. P.) Perrin died on January 5, 2014, twelve days after his elder brother William Burton Perrin passed away. The elder brother worked at General Motors and played the saxophone; the younger “founded the Alliance for American Song and was an accomplished writer, poet, musician, and world traveler.” Two of



Figure 3: T. P. Perrin
(photo by Justine Hand)

Perrin’s translations of Rilke’s *Sonnets to Orpheus* can be found published in the web journal *Barefoot Muse*. The author’s note for this publication reads in part: “His first verse play, *Next Night*, will receive a workshop performance in the Bangor Opera House in late June 2009.” No doubt this is the play mentioned in the blurb for Perrin’s book *Snarge* (2011):

Snarge is a collection of contemporary lyric poems on subjects of nature, men and women in nature, music, American history (including a one-scene verse play with Thoreau as protagonist), modern technology, and humor including parody. Poems by the author, T. P. Perrin, have been appearing in various magazines in the U.S. and Canada for the past eleven years. This is his first book-length collection.

In a review of the book on the blog *Boston Area Small Press and Poetry Scene*, Mary Rice wrote that “*Snarge* is the best kind of experimental poetry: imagination seeking forms to fit it.” At the end of her short review, she quotes from the final section of the poem “Three Brags”:

You’d have us believe Laird Cregar
standing in Betty Grable’s doorway,
his face half in shadow, half in

light (effect Ed Cronjager
took a whole hour’s shooting to get right),
will be more evil, scarier, even more real,

if the shadow is purple,
and the suit he wears is brown,
and his necktie green? What are you, nuts?

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Bob Grumman (1941-2015)

Bob was a poet—a champion of what he called “Otherstream” poetry, and the inventor of a genre called mathemaku poetry (combing haiku and mathematics). Bob was many other selves as well: a substitute teacher in Port Charlotte, FL, an incorrigible blogger and speculator on the nature of

poetry, and an academic outsider who was much given to defining new genres and coining new terms to describe the formal misadventures of all sorts of poetry. One can find such interesting concepts as “visimagery,” “verosophy,” and “reducticeptual or sciencetceptual awareness” in his *Po-eticks* blog at <http://poeticks.com/>. (Unfortunately, at this writing, the blog has disappeared from the web. I have written to his literary executor, Geof Huth, to see what can be done to restore Bob’s blog—no response as of yet.) While discussing such matters as poetic continuums and why delight is far more important than instruction in poetry (and in life), Bob’s last few blogs also chronicled his illness, which seems to have been poorly (or simply mis-) diagnosed. Throughout these last entries, Bob showed a fine humor and brave spirit in the face of debilitating pain and what must have been a great deal of uncertainty. His last entry on March 25, 2015, was posted just eight days before his death on April 2nd. The post is about reading an article in *The New York Review of Books* and deciding whether or not to subscribe to a paper that “occasionally had good stuff in it in spite of being a standardly totalitarian leftist rag.” (Bob’s politics were eclectic: in the post before this one, he listed what he saw as “three greatest faults of American conservatives,” one of which is “ignorant philistinism.”) In the end, he decided to subscribe to the *NYRB*, showing that, despite his pain and uncertain diagnosis, he fully expected to recover from his illness and continue his life of “plurexpressive” writing.

Bob lived quite a bit of his life online, so I think that he would have loved the idea of a Cummings listserv. Had he lived, I am sure he would have contributed many items. On March 24, he wrote a response to Cummings’ “Spenserian Stanza” (1913), reprinted and discussed in William Blissett’s article in the last issue of *Spring*. Bob found the early poem to be excessively sentimental and “overly derivative,” but he asserted that the poem “has his eye, and ‘untranslated stars,’ which show up toward the end, and is, in my mind, terrific. I will only say that ‘untranslatable stars’ would have been interesting but, for me, annoyingly untrue.”

On Monday, November 10, 2014, four months before he died, Bob Grumman wrote Entry 1627 in his blog, titled “Norman Friedman, RIP”:

A day or two ago I got the sad news that Norman Friedman died on the 6th of November. He for many years was probably the foremost critic of E. E. Cummings, one of my three favorite pre-1960 American poets. Certainly I learned more than a little about Cummings (and poetics)

from his writings over the years. He was also a very nice man, as I found out when I met him at a literary conference where I presented a paper on Cummings several years ago.

A keen user of and writer for Wikipedia, Bob looked for an entry on Norman there and was shocked that none existed. He then reported that he was reading Friedman's "E. E. Cummings and His Critics" (1962):

In his essay, Friedman is making an excellent case for Cummings as what academics should consider a serious poet—i.e., one with a serious outlook on life that he expresses in his poetry. I suppose he is right, but for me, "all" Cummings did was celebrate existence, using all the verbal means he could think of in order to be able to do that maximally.

Oh, sure, he was diverted from this central concern to take on collectivism (which I applaud) and science (which I don't applaud) but at his best he did the only thing I believe poets should do, which is use the whole of their language to celebrate existence—which I think requires them at the same time to show by contrast what's wrong with it. I think what I mean is that a poet should side with, and celebrate, beauty in his poetry, which he can't do without opposing, and condemning, ugliness (at least implicitly) as when Basho celebrates the beauty of existence's best moments in his old pond haiku, while at the same time he implicitly rejects—and I should have used "rejecting: instead of "condemning" earlier in this sentence—existence's lesser moments, the ones with only the present in them, or—worse—only some solely intellectual or solely unintellectual present in them. Or nothing at all, unless the nothing that includes "all" isn't what many of the greatest minimalist poems are about. (Yeah, I'm going a little over-mystical there.)

You're in luck. I don't have time right now to knock out several thousand words on the poetic moment I'm talking about. The traditional haiku moment is an instance of it, but only one instance, whatever the wacked-out anti-Western idolizers of the Far East maintain.

What Grumman called his "most insane hobby" was the amount of time and the number of words he spent refuting those who think that Shakespeare did not write Shakespeare's works. He wrote a book on the subject called *Shakespeare & the Rigidniks: A Study of Cerebral Dysfunction* and blogged extensively on it as well. An entire section of his blog was devoted to what he called the "SAQ" (Shakespeare Authorship Question).

Bob published in *Spring* as well: the conference paper for Norman became “The Importance of Technical Innovation in the Poetic Maturation of Cummings,” published in *Spring* 13 (2004). In 2005, Bob sent me a 20,000 word typescript with approximately 25 illustrations titled “E. E. Cummings and the Mimeostream.” It was about the influence of Cummings on Otherstream poetry. (Bob dated the appearance of Otherstream poetry to the advent of the mimeograph machine in the early 1960s, which made reproducing multiple copies of typewritten texts cheap and easy to do.) Of course, this typescript was too unwieldy to publish, but in it Bob’s passion for Cummings shines through. He maintains that “Cummings pretty much single-handedly invented American Visual Poetry” with poems like “in Just-” and “Buffalo Bill ’s” (2). According to Bob, Cummings’ three most important innovations are “visiophors” (visual metaphor), “sprungrammar,” and “infraverbal” effects that occur “below the level of the word—something involving one or more textemes within a word: repetition, rearrangement, alteration or replacement” (4-13). In his essay in *Spring* 13, Bob terms these devices “visiophor,” “transgrammaticism,” and “infravisation,” which he defines as meanings achieved “with elements smaller than words—that is, with letters and punctuation marks and related symbols” (74-75).

In this issue of *Spring*, we publish Bob Grumman’s last poem, a “final final mathemaku” called “[Homage to Gomringer](#)” (23 March 2015). In his blog post about Bob and the poem, Geof Huth remarks that:

The mathemaku is beautiful, doing all kinds of things. Bob’s handwriting—sometimes in cursive and sometimes in curly printing—is expressive and important in this poem, just as is the reference to Eugen Gomringer’s “silence” (or “silencio”), the haiku about Bob’s childhood, and the cryptographiku Bob slips into the poem.

The poem is all Bob: he was always a lyric poet, never strayed from that even as he made visual poetry, and the poem is a lyric poem; he always wrote about the joy about mathematical poems (poems that work via metaphoric mathematical operations), and this long division poem is just that; he is all about memories of his childhood, and this poem is filled with that, including a reference to boy’s play with cryptograms.

So Bob has slipped the cryptogram “gbfsfbjuz” into the poem, one so obvious that I almost immediately recognized it as a word he used often in the last years of his poemmaking: “fareality.”

Here is another poem about Bob's childhood, one influenced by Cummings. It was first published in a chapbook called *poemns* (1966), and it is about children sheltering under a forsythia bush in a misty rain:

2

children's

rained-
around (dry
spot with
in forsy)t
hia

Bob wrote that he considered this poem to be “a near-perfect example of what I try for as a poet, which is simply to render, in as few words as possible, an image that will cause others as much pleasure as possible” (*Haiku* 119).

My Poetics (56 Word Essay)

Better the undomesticated reasonings of a March/April meadow than any garden's serenity, and much more than an order of magic higher than its flowers' fulfilled wishes, even in their rarest coloring, yet no more than equal, at best, to the radiance of “ndbepx.” in its ascent beyond blood and sight into a mind's final regnancy.

—Bob Grumman

A Very Abbreviated Bob Grumman Bibliography

[**Note:** A more complete bibliography of Bob's poetry publications may be found on his Wikipedia page. Besides his *Poeticks* blog, Bob wrote 16 entries of his “M@h*(pOet)?ica” blog for *Scientific American*. After the blog was canceled, he added two more entries on *Poeticks* before illness dampened his enthusiasm for the project.]

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Christopher Mulrooney (1956-2015)

Christopher Mulrooney was a poet, translator, photographer, film aficionado, and musician. We published quite a few of his poems in *Spring* 13 (2004). In the last couple of years, he sent me more poems that somehow never found their way into the journal. In this issue, we publish three of these poems, “Redoubt,” “poco Ramses,” and “a walk in the park.”

Mulrooney was well-known in Los Angeles poetry circles. His last book, *reservation*, was published by Hesterglock Press. Mulrooney’s companion of 30 years, the artist Heather Lowe, sent a note to the press remembering Mulrooney; and she kindly allowed us to quote some excerpts from her letter:

I first met Christopher at Santa Monica High School in California. He was exceptionally brilliant, read everything, frequented plays, concerts, museums, and had a fine sharp wit. During the seventies he was steeped in music. He played the French horn and piano. He loved Schoenberg, Webern, and Boulez, among a million other composers. He also began composing his own music. Some years later (mid-eighties) he set a piece of music to one of Samuel Beckett’s poems—I believe it was from “Ill Seen, Ill Said”—He had sent it to Beckett asking for permission to use his words. Beckett wrote back: “Permission Granted.”

After attending Long Beach State, Mulrooney traveled in Europe, re-

turning to L.A. in the late eighties. It was then, Lowe notes, that “he began his work, writing all day and every day. He wrote poetry, plays, and some prose at this time. He was also very active in corresponding through any means he could to voice his opinion about Los Angeles culture. He cared deeply for this city. He fought long and hard through the demise of what was once a unique culture of great architecture, musical life, visual art and film making. It is important to note that his work reflects this long history and although it encompasses more than one city or idea, sometimes the reference can be very specific. . . . Mulrooney spent hours perfecting his craft.”

Mulrooney published many chapbooks with small presses, among them *notebook and sheaves*, (PublishAmerica), *rimaldi* (FowlPox Press), *toy balloons* (Another New Calligraphy), *alarm* (Shirt Pocket Press), *Rimbaud* (Finishing Line Press), and *Buson orders leggings* (Dink Press). A large number of Mulrooney’s poems can be found on his website *pix*, along with his photography, film writing, and a daunting number of translations. His translations are collected on the site under the rubric *Tongues* and feature a wide variety of writers (mostly poets), including Apollinaire, Baudelaire, Borges, Brecht, Breton, Celan, Char, Cocteau, Jarry, Kafka, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Tzara, and Verlaine. One of the short collections on the site is a PDF file of a 13-poem pamphlet called *Western Motel* (a title that refers to an Edward Hopper painting). Here is the title haiku:

Western Motel

across the U.S.A.
its trackless wastes
our tracks

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