

THE THREEPENNY REVIEW

Letters to the Editor

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Letters to the Editor

January 8, 2003

Kay Ryan's tribute to Borges (Winter 2003) is an epiphany of the first water. Thank you!

—James O'Donnell
Sebastopol, California

January 20, 2003

I understand how all these factors [mentioned in a recent renewal letter] have affected your publication.

In that vein, I am renewing.

I am 77 and I might kick off before the *Review* does!

I treasure each day and consciously enjoy all sorts of things—my children, my VHS movies, newspapers and magazines, the panoramic view of Boston from my sixth-floor windows and the view of the moon and stars during my insomniac hours.

I wish you an improved bottom line and good health in 2003.

—Rita Carney
Malden, Massachusetts

January 24, 2003

In connection with Emil Mayer's fascinating photographs of 1910 Vienna and the information your authors provided [in Winter 2003], your readers may be interested in the following. The Austrian National Library last year published a *Handbook of Austrian Authors of Jewish Extraction, 18th to 20th Century*. This work is presented in part as a form of restitution and also as an account of the lost contributors to the Austrian patrimony. All terms of the title (Austrian, author, and Jewish extraction) are defined in the broadest terms—e.g., for those born before 1918, the territory covered is the entire Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The entry for Emil Mayer notes that he is considered a precursor of press photography. His twelve patents for photographic processes are mentioned, as is his book on one of these. His death in August 1938 is referred to as "Freitodt"—that is, a freely chosen death. A sizable number of Jews in Vienna, feeling trapped with no avenue of escape, committed suicide after the Anschluss. The Nazi-dominated press noted this as a proof of Jewish inferiority, lack of courage and such.

—Erika Bourguignon
Columbus, Ohio

An Open Letter About Iraq

February 7, 2003

If necessary wars are awful (and some have been necessary, in my opinion, like the war against Hitler), unnecessary ones are criminal. I think the upcoming war on Iraq is totally unnecessary and has no justification whatsoever, for the moment. It seems to me a criminal war, therefore.

The idea of a "preventive attack" is crazy, immoral, and extremely dangerous. In the personal field, it amounts to this: if I decide to fear that President Aznar might try to kill me someday, I would then have a right to kill him beforehand, just in case. The reasoning is indecent and tremendously stupid.

Donald Rumsfeld has been saying that "the absence of proofs" (against Iraq's having those terrible weapons) "does not mean there are no proofs." What it certainly does not mean is that *there are* proofs. Again, we have here a perversion of judicial principles. It is not the accused who must prove his innocence (because that is impossible to do), but the accuser who must prove the former's guilt. By the same standards, Mr. Rumsfeld might be accused of having murdered an old lady in a park, and even if there was no evidence that it was he who did this, we might say: "But the lack of evidence does not mean there is no evidence." Again, this is crazy and criminal and stupid.

As Ortega y Gasset, the Spanish philosopher, once said, stupidity is far more dangerous than evil, because bad people take a break now and then in their scheming, but stupid people never rest from their stupidity. I think the present American administration is too full of stupid people: Bush Jr., Rumsfeld, Ashcroft, Wolfowitz—indeed, too many. And, as often happens with stupid people, they do not know they are, and they are ruthless too.

I feel very ashamed of the Spanish government and its decision blindly to follow Bush's policy in this affair, against the opinion of all other political parties here and most of the population. Aznar is acting just like Bush's butler. I feel very proud of the German and French governments, and I wish all European countries had more or less adopted their honorable position.

—Javier Marias
Madrid, Spain

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