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# ROOSEVELT BOROUGH BULLETIN

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ROOSEVELT, NEW JERSEY

DECEMBER 1988

**XVII**

## MEMORIAL ISSUE

from the writings of

**Mary Jane Gray** • **Peter Berlinrut**

Summer drew to a close. Cait came home and returned to school full of the new importance of being a high school student. Matt's ribs had knit, the dirty-yellow residue of his bruises had vanished, and he now felt ready to go back to work. Unfortunately there was no job immediately available. So he roamed aimlessly about the place, his air of abstraction thickening as he waited for calls to jobs that didn't come.

*Mary Jane Gray, continued on page 4*

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### *in this issue*

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Mary Jane Gray	
<i>I Can Remember Tomorrow...</i>	1
Peter Berlinrut	
<i>The Colloquists</i> .....	10
<i>Meditations of Mayen</i> .....	15
Arts in Roosevelt .....	20
Letters .....	21
Supporters and Contributors .....	22
Classified .....	23
Community Calendar .....	24

**The Borough Bulletin is mailed free of charge to Roosevelt residents. Out-of-town subscriptions are \$5.00 per year.**

## Editor's Note:

We are pleased to turn this special issue over to the Roosevelt Arts Project. We remember well the contributions of both Mary Jane Gray and Peter Berlinrut to the community and to the *Bulletin*, and are proud to lend our pages to a memorial.

The *Bulletin* will resume normal publication in January.  
Happy New Year.

—Mark Zuckerman

## About this Issue...

These excerpts from the writings of Mary Jane and Peter Berlinrut represent a small project underwritten by the Roosevelt Arts Project to illustrate some of the literary efforts in our community, as well as a tribute to the lives of the authors.

Many thanks to those who helped us bring this sampling of the writing of Mary Jane Gray and Peter Berlinrut together, making selections and contributing introductory notes: Mary King, Irvin Stock, and Connie Herrstrom.

We also thank Josette Altman and Louise Roskam for allowing us to use the portrait of Mary Jane Gray and the photograph of Peter Berlinrut, and Mark Zuckerman for typesetting and help with layout.

**I Can Remember Tomorrow**, by Mary Jane Gray, and **The Colloquists**, by Peter Berlinrut are available on request from the *Roosevelt Borough Bulletin* or the Roosevelt Arts Project.

—David Herrstrom

—David Keller

Offer me heaven without a Bill of Rights and I answer; keep it: heaven without a Bill of Rights becomes hell. On the other hand, hell *with* a Bill of Rights can set about transforming itself.

—Peter Berlinrut

*A Talk with Trotsky*

**Harper's**, February 1977

## ROOSEVELT BOROUGH BULLETIN

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It saves us a lot of work if we get articles and letters in clean, double-spaced typescript (produced on a typewriter or daisy-wheel printer), or in the form of files on IBM-compatible 5-1/4" diskettes. We can accept ASCII files and output from the following programs: Microsoft Word; Displaywrite 2, 3, & 4; Multimate; Samna Word III; WordPerfect; and WordStar. Please identify program and version.



portrait of Mary Jane Gray, by Josette Altman

Mary Jane Gray's book is a compassionate and objective account of a colorful life overtaken by Alzheimer's disease. **I Can Remember Tomorrow** details her husband Matt's deterioration and describes its impact on his wife and daughter through his wife's eyes. Perhaps the most startling element of this book is Mary Jane's willingness to tell the story of her husband and family with all defenses down.

# I Can Remember Tomorrow

# I Can Remember Tomorrow

Our financial straits again grew critical. It was clear that something had to be done and that it was up to me to do it. I had always worked, one way and another, but for the period of Caitlin's babyhood. Right after she'd been born and I'd retired from my city job, my energies and concentration had been entirely taken up with baby, house, and grounds, a halcyon time. But more money was always needed, and once she'd grown old enough to go to school, I'd taken part-time jobs in the village or nearby towns. The money I brought in wasn't very large and the jobs themselves were all but invisible: I left after Caitlin did and was home before her, and I was always there when Matt got home. That I'd been away for four or five hours barely showed, except in anecdotes about the day's encounters. Hence Matt never looked upon these jobs with any seriousness, in fact he honored them hardly at all, considering them only something I did to please myself. So he paid little attention when toward the end of that convalescent summer I began to talk of taking a job again. But he objected vociferously when the job I found turned out to be a full-time clerking job in a factory twenty-five miles away. This meant I had to be up and off before Cait left for school and wouldn't get back till six and after. It meant, too, nearly all my free time, evenings and weekends, was taken up with chores or making ready for the next day's round, and I had little time left to spend with him, just sitting talking over a cup of tea as he had come to expect me to do during those long summer months. The basis of his objection was, he said, that the job was unworthy of my talents and the money insufficient compensation for the disruption of our affairs. It wasn't that he and Caitlin couldn't manage, not at all. A job, some job, was a good idea—he appreciated my willingness to leap into the breach—but did it have to be that one? were things that bad? (they were) couldn't I wait a little longer? they were bound to call him any day... Thus it was borne in on me to my amazement—amazement because I never thought it mattered who did what as long as both of us worked toward our common end—that he was terribly affronted. Here was additional proof that he was being thrust aside by life, that he was washed up, useless, obsolete, an old man.

So added to the strains for all of us of adjusting to these new routines, there was now the more difficult one of shoring Matt up. He was home all day alone. Occasionally he'd take to his car to do an errand or drive around heading nowhere and seeing no one—he drove as if he had blinkers on. But mostly he just stayed home. He'd putter around but not accomplish anything, he'd read, he'd sleep, he'd pace. In sum, he waited—waited for the phone to ring, waited for the time to pass till Cait and I came home again. Above all, he brooded always returning to the accident and his inability to remember. His anxiety about this seemed to permeate his life in all directions. For instance, he had great anxiety about me and would call me at the office, something frowned on in the reaches I inhabited, just to be sure I'd got there and was all right. He especially feared I'd have an accident with the car, unused as I was to the heavy commuter traffic. If rain or snow or fog threatened, he'd call me and beg me to leave at once so as to get home before dark fell. He worried too about Cait if she didn't return at the usual time. No matter that he had been told she'd be staying late for one reason or another, he always forgot. Or if he was to pick her up—and he remembered—he'd go collect her long before the appointed time. His tension mounted as the day grew older and only when we were both finally, safely home would he relax, turning on all the lights and bolting the door against the night and other unknown terrors. With drink in hand, he'd lean against the refrigerator as I got dinner and query me about my day. No smallest detail seemed insignificant and in the real dearth of anything much to tell, I took to enlarging every little thing that happened. As a result, dinner was always very late—unless I had been foresighted enough to plan something Cait could start, she was very willing and quite capable—but that didn't matter to him. He had become less and less interested in food as such, a meal was only something to mark the

passing hours, and dinner just something to be got through before, exhausted by his anxiety, he could go to bed. Sometimes if dinner took too long in coming, now comforted, he'd lie down and fall asleep and skip it altogether, only to wake a few hours later, get up, undress, and prowls a while.

Was this unusual behavior for Matt? Unusual to the degree that we could have suspected something more was wrong than met the eye? Not really. He'd shown all these characteristics in the course of the years, some of them developing so gradually as to be hardly noticeable as they emerged. Now, in the grip of unsought, prolonged idleness, they coalesced and so were highlighted. But it does lead to the questions I so often raised later, once his illness had become an indubitable fact: How do you tell? What's the line beyond which eccentricity becomes aberration? When does normal anxiousness spill over into sick anxiety? Ever since the war, he'd suffered episodes of anxiety, some quite normal, others of an intensity way beyond what was implied in their causation. And those of the latter sort, when they came, were crippling, distracting, blinding him to some simple thing that lay right under his nose.

...

His memory grew worse all the while as did his ability to think or follow what was said to him. Whether it was anxiety over all this eating away at his interior or something more tangible than that, I didn't know. I did, however, persuade him to go to the psychiatrist again, which he continued to do every two weeks over a period of two-three months.

At the end of that time, the psychiatrist called me in. I don't remember his exact words, as I so unfortunately didn't in many of these crises, only their impact on me. Shock or confirmation of one's most hideous fears tends to sponsor a physical reaction rather than a mental one. I remember feeling sick, sick at my stomach, and trembling violently, at the same time I felt I'd been doused with ice water. As best as I can recover what he said, it was this: your husband's mind is going, it will gradually get worse, though probably not become critical for a good while yet; you must prepare yourself to do all the thinking, make all the decisions; better not to ask or expect anything of him at all... If this sounds unprofessional, somewhat beside the point—what could, or should, be done for Matt—it must be remembered that these are my words, a distilled, essential residue representing the net portent of what the doctor said to me that lingered in my tissues long after the actual words were said. I think we did also discuss the desirability of further tests but came to no decision at the moment, there being no emergency. What I most wanted to do then was get away from there, from him—the doctor, agent of this terrible news—and from Matt too; to crawl off, like a mortally wounded animal, with this ghastly knowledge to some hidden place where I in solitariness could lick it, taste the blood, look it squarely in the face and so subdue it. One thing I did hold fast to: that nothing was really changed by this pronouncement. Then, in that present, Matt was still Matt, in trouble obviously but still more or less the same as he had been for a long time. Days would go by in which everything seemed quite "normal" and he was able to function in old established channels.

...

The end—the end, that is, of this waiting, hanging-back time—came not long after that. A call came for a two-day job in New York. Matt had answered the phone and responded automatically agreeing to come as a matter of course—he never could turn down a job. While he was on the phone discussing it, he sounded fine,

I Can Remember Tomorrow

# I Can Remember Tomorrow

better than he had in a long time, perfectly capable. (Was it an invention of my fevered brain that he wasn't?) But as soon as he hung up, panic seized him. He shuffled through the papers on the desk, unseeing, trying to sort out what he'd written down: the name of the man he was to meet, the place and time. His handwriting, never good, had become an all but illegible scrawl which, especially without his glasses, he could not decipher at all. Stalling for time and for the knowledge to come to me from somewhere as to the right course to urge, I copied his notes. Aided by what I had overheard him say while talking on the phone I was able to make some sense out of them and printed them large and clear. He, unable to match my copy to the original, was certain I hadn't got them right. With this beginning, I was sure he would not be able to do this job at all and finally urged him to call back and say he couldn't make it. This he wouldn't do. He assured me he'd be all right once he got the information straight, once he got there, this last a thing I strongly doubted he could do this time. I could, of course, have refused to drive him to the station but he would then have gone off by himself, his frenzy fed by rage at my refusal to help. So in icy chill, I went through the required motions: checked train schedules, wrote them down on the card with all the other information about his destination, got out and brushed his jacket, putting the card in his breast pocket. I helped him dress, did up the buttons and cuff links that defied his trembling fingers, while I still played for time, still hoped to dissuade him from going. On the way to the train, he had me several times go over the particulars, describe how to get from train to studio, how to get back to the train again. But how will I know what train to take, where will I find you? Appalled but carried forward by his momentum, I drove on, summoning to my voice and face such calm as I could muster. It's all written down, I said, on that card in your pocket (I was afraid he'd lose it or destroy it in the many times he took it out and put it back), take a taxi at the Port Authority to the studio (that seemed preferable to trying to chart his course by subway and bus)—the address is written down there, take a subway back to the Port Authority when you're finished, bus and train times are written on that card; and my office telephone number—just call me when you know what train you'll be catching, or if you haven't time, when you get to the station here; I'll be there just as soon as I can get there after your call...

The most marked quality of those years of his decline—from the beginning, during their course, even after he'd finally been hospitalized—was the incredibility of it all. Even after complete and thorough certification as to the fact and nature of his illness I still couldn't *believe* it. And then, on the way to that train, it was even more impossible to believe this desperate, distracted, fumbling person was the Matt I knew, the same Matt who, confident and debonair, had set out upon this work all those years before undaunted by his lack of knowledge of it. Surely it must be me that had gone mad, me that was trapped in some incredible nightmare from which I must assuredly wake soon.

As we neared the station I tried again to persuade him to give it up. Appealing to whatever shred of ability to reason he might still have, I said it wasn't worth it—for just two days pay?—to put himself through this. He agreed it did seem so but that wasn't the point... He insisted on going. His call came at three that afternoon, he was at the station but where was I? It took me just ten minutes to get there from my office but when I arrived I found him frantically pacing the parking lot, sobbing and shaking. Shaken myself, I told him to get in and drove around for a while to give him a chance, us both a chance, to pull ourselves together, to give him a chance to talk about it if he wanted. He didn't. He never said anything about what had happened, nor for that matter whether he had gotten to the studio at all. And he was never called for a job again.

...

A deep red winter twilight still glowed between the distant hill and the advancing black night sky above when, having dropped Cait back at school, I reached home. Always before on returning to our hilltop from whatever the day's needs had enjoined, even in times of stress, I'd always paused to look up at the sky, to breathe deeply and let the renewal and surcease to be found in the constancy and beauty of the natural world lap over me. Sunlit or star-studded, clear or threatening, the vast arch of the sky over our personal world had put things in proportion. Not so this night when the essential symmetry of our world was shattered beyond rebalancing. The house was a cold dark smudge against the gorgeous stain along the horizon; the message in the boiling clouds was ominous. Four small smudges that were the animals—a dog and three cats—detached themselves from the greater smudge that was the house and came running up, whining and mewling accusingly. With them tumbling against each other and my legs, I hurried to the house and let us all in. I fed them, turned on all the lights, shook down and stoked the furnace, trying in ministering to their and my creature needs to bring a measure of warmth to my numbed veins. A chill December wind blew gusts of dry leaves against the window panes and rattled down the chimney. With my coat still on, I sat down with a drink trying to think. I felt utterly alone.

It's all very well for me, years later and possibly having achieved some insights along with the years, to sit calmly talking about facing facts, about a seventeen-year-old's facing facts. What can one do with a fact but face it? A number of things. One can, for instance, bury it. Or put the confrontation off. What Cait would do was yet to be revealed; myself I found doing the latter. In the still emptiness of that unembodied house my mind, like an animal in a cage, began to twist and turn and try every corner of the obdurate fact that imprisoned me for some undiscovered avenue of escape. Finally I felt I had to talk to someone, not so much looking for alternative as simply needing to hear another human voice, to reestablish a sense of myself as part of a world of rational people. I called a friend, the one who had visited on Thanksgiving as being the only one I had who had any recent or direct experience of Matt in his illness. She even more than I was unwilling to accept the doctor's statement. Her husband was a doctor, a medical man as differentiated from a psychiatrist. He felt that while psychiatry was all right so far as it went, and in its place, what was needed here was something more solid, less "imaginative." I really had full confidence in the doctors at the psychiatric hospital, in all the doctors we had seen. And I really did not question the finality of their findings. My hesitancy had to do with timing: had we in fact arrived to the moment when the only course left was to "put Matt away"? Talking with my friends fortified my own reluctance, and by the time I hung up I had grasped at the hope in one more try: I'd take Matt to the neurological center in New York.

...

It was impossible to believe that nothing at all was happening in his head, that the person he had been had vanished utterly without leaving any trace upon the mass of cells that was his brain.

Oddly enough one tangible trace that did linger was his linguistic response. As with the operational difference between intellect and intelligence, many of the words he used instinctively should have been indicative of conceptualizing processes at work, whereas they were in fact free-floating, unhooked from the understanding his use of them implied. The distortion of their meaning as he used them only served to heighten the feeling that he must have had something *in mind* in using them at all. A case in point: One day we were strolling through the gardens; as we entered a rose garden—the special care of one of the men who cared for it

I Can Remember Tomorrow

# I Can Remember Tomorrow

exclusively and called each rose by name—I exclaimed to Matt who stood beside me: How beautiful... Coming to himself from, it seemed far away, he said: What is?... The roses, I said, aren't they beautiful?... I can't see them, he said... You can't, I answered in some alarm, why not, they're all around us... I can't because I'm seeing into myself, he said...

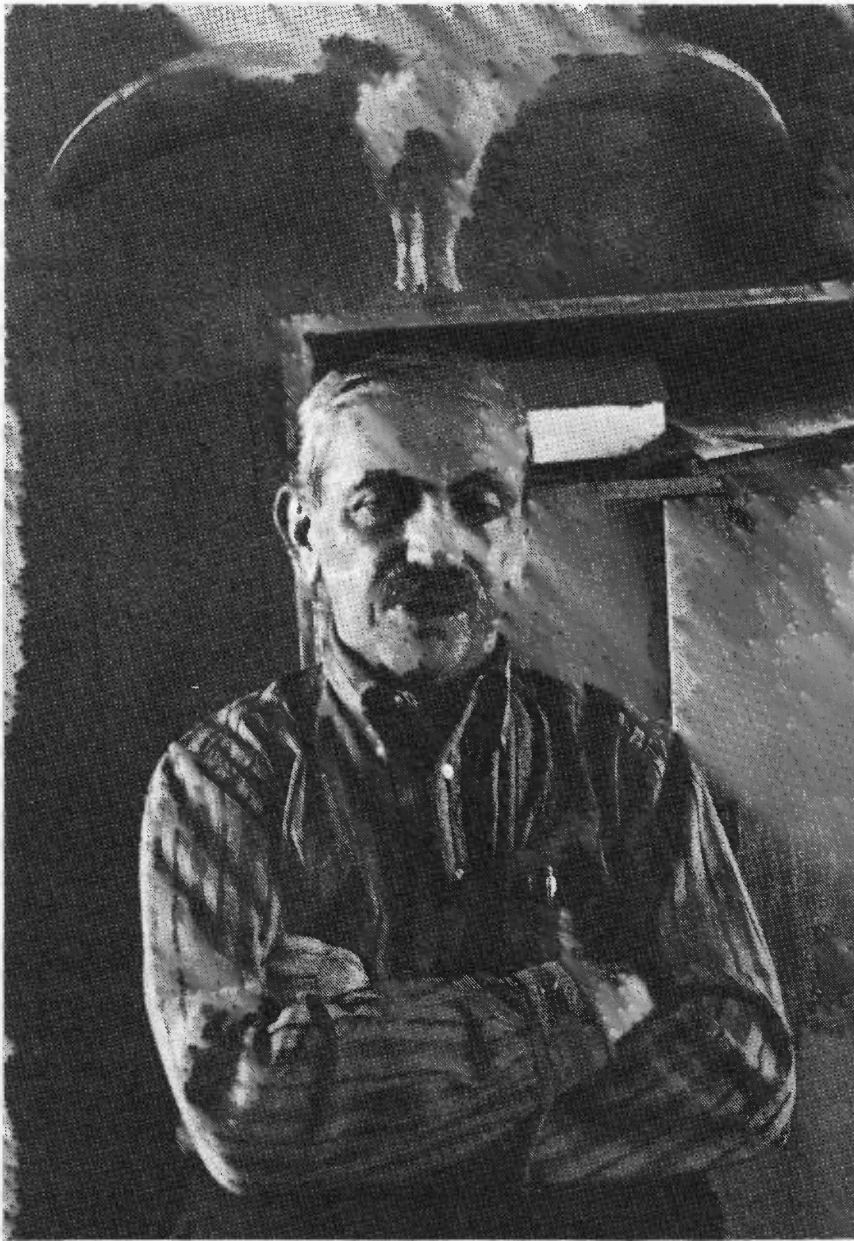
Another time we had been talking about something he had forgotten, joking lightly about his forgetfulness. I remember lots of things, he boasted, better than I used to... What, for instance, I had asked... Tomorrow, he replied, I can remember tomorrow and that's better than a lot of people can do...

This kind of thing which was to crop up often was fearfully unnerving. It seemed to give the lie to our evaluation of his condition. Surely he must be more in contact than any of us believed, and we out of some horrible misconception or miscarriage of judgment were confining him without just cause. But then he'd slip away again to his private unlocatable place. Attempts to expand an idea or follow up a scrap of memory brought a troubled look to his eyes. He'd turn his head away and say: I don't recall...

Loneliness. I had never thought I could be lonely. People who were I'd looked upon as intellectually sterile and emotionally dead. Whereas I had so many things I wanted to do, skills and subjects I had laid by against the day I'd have the time to discover them more fully. People were important to me, more so than either ideas or proficiency in a craft, but I didn't need to be with people all the time—my years on the mountain had proved that. Furthermore, relationships with people, I always thought, are often made the richer for a bit of distance through which the wind could blow to aerate them. But now I came to know what loneliness meant: that no matter how intellectually engaged one was, how pragmatically occupied, no matter how many people one might be involved with in the course of the day's occupations, to have no significant other to share one's bread and thought with as one, in turn, shared theirs, that's loneliness and it's paralyzing. Plain busy-ness and socializing were no safeguard. Lacking that other to care and share with, loneliness seeped through my tissues like a dirty stain even as I went about the things I had to do and robbed me of the will to do or be anything else when they were done. Better to sit on a beach with one who cared even if that other was no more than a vestige of an echoing consciousness. I talked to Matt of my job and house, of difficulties and successes. He didn't register most of it but it didn't matter; what mattered was that, lonely too, he cared and responded in an uncognitive way. His mood reflected mine. If I told a funny story about the misadventures of the one cat I had brought along to this new environment, he laughed; if I was puzzled or weary he sighed too. In some area beyond words and things and facts, we met and flowed together in mutual affirmation. We had at this time as nearly a complete union as any we had ever known.

§





photograph by Edwin Rosskam

*The key to Peter's nature and distinction is that he achieved early a vision of what human life can and ought to be. To get to the bottom of that vision and to share it with others became the real vocation of his life and the obsessive theme of his writing.*

**The Colloquists** is an account of how that vision was born and developed and how it can be of service to others. This book is a philosophic dialogue—like those of Plato—rather than a conventional novel; its story is the unfolding of an idea in a weekend of profound conversation. The book's protagonist is William Fanbitt, a writer "pushing 70." Fanbitt has been meeting periodically with two old friends, Martin Hurwitz, a retired English teacher, and Philip Voudray, a retired air force general. They meet this weekend to discuss what Fanbitt himself calls "the foundation of my life."

**The Meditations of Mayen** deals with pilots being trained in the southwest to operate troop-carrying gliders during World War II. The protagonist, Joe Mayen, is older than the other trainees in his group, and the book follows his experiences.

The bass drum boomed, the feet heaved in rhythm, the uniforms didn't have much braid or buttons or color or fit, but the men wearing them stepped along brightly enough. Above all, there were the Mexican eyes with their huge dark irises that seemed to wring the last bit of seeability out of everything.

*A Talk with Trotsky*  
**Harper's**  
 February 1977

# The Colloquists

FANBITT

But I want first to rephrase my theorem a bit. You recall it? Given: myself as I am at the moment of birth with an inherited nature preponderantly fixed but incidentally variable; required: so to act on the typical and representative necessities that govern my life that I not only discover my nature but succeed in achieving the exact shade of requitement required by it for me to declare: life is good, life is tremendously worth having. Now I am not at the moment asking either of you to accept or share this theorem but I do ask you to give it enough sympathetic houseroom to examine it as to whether it embodies the sense that you can intuit I want to embody in it...

HURWITZ

No argument. I merely shudder at all mention of theorems. Euclid was my enemy even in high school. I was always caught in the squeeze of his angles, it increased my sorrow.

FANBITT

This theorem should not increase your sorrow. You also recall that datum I described from which to go about demonstrating the theorem. The datum is: me as I was that deathless summer day in 1925, riding on the tailgate of a Mack truck headed west out of Newark toward Berkley Heights, searingly at one with creation, suffusively happy and delighted to be alive. I call it a datum deliberately. I don't want it to be considered a matter of youth, of a passing subjective state, of an optional or wispy luxury, or some atypical good luck. No, definitely not. I want to think of it as an object. Only that way can I call upon science to attest to it. I want you to think of it as a thing. I want to observe and master its properties as if it were a relatively unchanging, stable, permanent thing, like Lake Huron or Mt. McKinley or the human appendix or cortex or the molecule of water. The reason I want to make an object of it is not out of some grotesque self-abasement but because science cannot study anything but objects. Science cannot study anything that is changing every instant of time, especially in unpredictable ways and directions. It has to arrest a moving, changing thing and fix on it in a series of halts in order to understand it. And I want it to understand me, to verify the typicality of the datum, all with the purpose of helping me to demonstrate the theorem: life is indeed good, *quod erat demonstrandum*. I want no more talk of science which on the one hand studies verifiable things and values which on the other uphold nice but intangible things. A pox on that! I want science to come out of its cramped quarters to which it confines itself in order to be allowed to function at all, and I want values to reverse the process, draw in upon themselves and reemerge after ascertaining they are born out of a core of actual or desired experience. Then perhaps the two can meet and be such marvelous friends. You deny me the trustworthiness of my datum, you say it is born as a peculiarity of my poetic nature? From where you sit, that is a possibility and I love and respect skeptical people. Good.

VOUDRAY

First, is it really true that good experience or even blissful experience as you put it, has more adhesive or staying power than bad? I question that. Can't the bad have more staying power than the good? That may be my trouble.

FANBITT

Yes, it can, Voodie. The bad can have landed in our psyches with more force than the good. But I was talking of sapient memory, memory in the service of innate sapience. I can burn my finger by touching it to a hot stove so severely that pain is all I can remember whenever I look at my finger or a hot stove. But gradually and with added experience my memory takes note of the fact that people seem to handle hot stoves without burning themselves necessarily and also that my finger has other possibilities than registering pain in connection with a hot stove. And there is something else. The memory that can take note of the corrective inferences that bear upon earlier bad inferences, is not a neutral thing. It is very much a mooded thing. You've heard me say it before and I say it again: our consciousness at any one moment is not a blank witness or registrar, not a scale out to weigh experience with its pointer resting on zero. It is always in a mooded state, sleeping or waking or inbetween. It always occupies a station or a degree in our ontological range. Which is to say the more steeped it is in good experience, the better it can factor the bad experience in behalf of sapience. The deeper the bliss that the human being has ever met, the better is his or her normative power to resolve the bad. That was what I meant to say.

VOUDRAY

I suspend all opinion on that. I go to something else that sticks in my craw a bit, perhaps not in Marty's. Did I understand you to say that we recall things only because they left a mood in us in the course of their happening? That memory is a kind of surfacing of an affect?

FANBITT

Yes. I stand by that. There is no event of a past so neutral or abstract or intellectual that you can recall if it didn't leave some affect as it was happening.

VOUDRAY

Will, I question that. I question it seriously. Listen, I hate to bring blood and drama into this but I recall an afternoon in Korea when I stood on an observation point and saw most of the men in one of our batteries wiped out one by one. Only a few crawled out. The North had mortar fire and snipers well entrenched where we couldn't possibly get at them either with our artillery or counterattack. The point is that I watched all this happening as you might watch pins being knocked down in a bowling alley. There wasn't a thing I could do about it, not a thing. And the fact is I didn't feel anything too special about it, perhaps a mild regret of some casual thing gone wrong. Perhaps I even deliberately told myself this was nothing to grow to exercised about. I realize this must sound terrible and make me out a bit of a zombie but that's how it was. And I recall it now only because I asked myself to recall something that actually had no importance or affect while it was happening in order to refute your idea. I don't think I would have recalled it otherwise.

FANBITT

Voodie, I'm sure you realize that almost answers itself. The fact that you had schooled yourself to deny any important affect to such an event and to suppress any feeling that it was a terrible even, doesn't mean that your psyche assented to it. What we judge important or unimportant on the conscious level is one thing, what our psyches register as important or costly is quite something else. I believe modern psychology has a thought or two on that subject along the lines I suggest.

The Colloquists

# The Colloquists

And the fact that you seemed able to recall the episode casually and at will, may be deceptive. Not every mental object we clutch when we stretch out our hand to grasp anything at random is there as a matter of chance or objective statistics. Some are there because our subjective fate has put them there.

VOUDRAY

I'd like to think you were wrong, friend. I'm not sure.

FANBITT

Let me pursue this subject of mooded memory a bit further. Voodie, do you recall the first time the three of us met?

VOUDRAY

If I do, it's too hazy to be of use. I'd have to say, no...

HURWITZ

I think it was in the Newark Library, wasn't it. I was quite overwhelmed.

FANBITT

Yes, it was in the Newark Library. Now if there had been a man with a camera there and taken a number of pictures as we stood there and talked and showed them to us now, what do you believe might be the result? There's a good chance we would not recognize ourselves or the event. There before our eyes would be the physical evidence of an event that had taken place yet we would have no recollection of it. But now if some patient and painstaking investigator were to play a tune that was popular then or bring forward faces or events of the time that were steeped in a strong mood, our synchronous memory would be kindled. And we would come into conscious possession of that afternoon when we stood at the foot of that majestic marble staircase, talking. Even the smell of the cleaning fluid they used to clean the marble steps might do it. I can almost sniff it now, that and the scent of books in drying wooden or metal shelves. I can almost hear the scrape of shoe soles on the marble steps as people went up and down. What I am saying is that we fashion a record or a memory of a moment in progress not by retaining traces of sensory data but by a certain essential affect that we generate out of our ontological gamut. Stir that affect to life and you get the sensory or intellectual data which is carried within it. Leave it inert and it is like wafting a perfume under the nose of a man with a bad head cold or showing pictures of home and family to a man in a coma or catatonia...

Take the mood out of memory and what you have left is a waste product, quite unreliable, quite uninformative if not downright deceptive. It's hard to reconstruct an image of the living tree from the dead leaves at its foot where they fell three years ago.

...

The men walked to the elevator and were hoisted in its wobbly track to the fourth floor. They parted and went to their adjoining rooms. Fanbitt's mind was abuzz and he put the light on just long enough to see what was where, then he put it out, drew a chair up to the window and sat down. There were street lights below, low roofs across the way, amorphous sounds from roundabout and the rest in the keep of dark and quiet. He sat there twenty or twentyfive minutes, letting the

energy trapped and confined in his mind for the task of forming and voicing in ideas, escape. It didn't happen smoothly or gradually. It happened in spurts, jumps, tumbings, in guilt for hasty and botched improvisations on truth, for exaggeration, for poor and patchy sense. He almost repented for having spoken at all. By and by he stopped worrying about what he had said or hadn't said or might have said and was left in the exhilaration of having used himself warmly in ways native to him. he began to feel more and more in harbor, home safe from distant and heavy seas. He go up, put the light on again, fetched the canvas overnight bag Eleanor had packed for him, went to the bathroom and washed up. He got into his pajamas and wandered a bit aimlessly about the room, in some moral and intellectual ritual of getting reacquainted and reinitiated into the world of fixed and solid things. He beamed approval on the chest of drawers exactly in the same place he had seen earlier in the day when he registered. Everything else his eye fell upon, was itself, the solid things he remembered. That was good. He had been far far away in an order of life where everything was snatched from its time and place and set free and whirling and up for grabs by an interpretation willing to claim it for its wild idea. Now that was over. Things were not rematerializing as themselves and falling back into their time and place. It was indeed good. The landscape print of a painting on the wall was itself again, the chair was the chair, the bed was the bed and it felt good when he stretched out on it. The September night was mild and the blanket wasn't needed, the sheet was enough. The bed light out, the room was again in dark. It was a benign dark full of intimation that all the objects in it, everything was properly present or accounted for. That vague burbling now was probably Voudray's radio or Hurwitz's or somebody's but nothing to worry about. Absolutely nothing to worry about, everything in its place present or accounted for.

...

FANBITT

What I was trying to say was that the pressing need to launch a true valuing process does not depend on some advance assurance of success. Or on some predetermined historical outcome. The valuing process is a bit like the biblical wind that blows where it listeth, no man knowing where it may end but with fair assurance that the good holds up as good. I look at the age and I see a real possibility (and I am not prepared to argue how strong or wide or deep it is, only that it is a genuine possibility) for a time that has never yet existed in history. A time that I would designate as the AGE of the Normal Human Being. Which has never yet been. I don't mean the average or ordinary or common human being, I mean a normal human being, which is to say, that person who lives by the norm of his human nature as embodied in a value feeling or in an experienced bliss of life. There was nothing that special about me back in 1925 when I sat on the tailgate of a truck as on a throne surveying the boundless splendor of my realm, nothing that prevented anyone from occupying a similar throne right alongside me, nothing that barred any number of such thrones for as many human beings as wanted to occupy them. I am well aware there are many subtleties and intricacies that govern the process whereby a human being can live out the phenomenal necessities of his life the while he rests his experience on its true seat or norm: a value feeling. They may add up to great difficulty but I believe they are soluble. Who would want it any other way? It is impossible to recognize and acknowledge the good without comparison with what sets it off dramatically: the bad. I would be bored blue just as you two would be by any kind of nevernever utopia. That could never come about anyway. All I am talking about is that order of life in which the human being is in contact often enough and long enough with his valuing state to establish it as the valid and true norm of being. Which is neither utopian nor perfectionist nor too far fetched. Instead of letting it happen as an innocent and chancey process I would have it as highly intended, highly conscious development and evolution.

# The Colloquists

# The Colloquists

VOUDRAY

Do you really think this could happen in our industrial hell-hole?

FANBITT

Well, I shall say it in a timid and most uncocky whisper but I do. I think I know the industrial hellhole in war and in peace, in all its deformations and bruising and contusions and I still whisper, yes, we can get hold of it and trim it to human size, at least enough so that it doesn't overwhelm us any more than an external environment has in times past. Providing. Providing we begin with a true first principle, which is that at the heart and core of human nature is a potential for great valuing, for the experience of a bliss of life. That would bring us to the true confrontation: I refuse to shape or abort my life in order to fit into a productive system which dangles all sorts of fragrant little carrots in the form of gadgetwealth. Sorry, no dice. Of course we have to be sure that what we are trimming the productive process to is the true value feeling, the inexorable norm of life and not some self-indulgent or evasive or narcissist daydream. All three of us know that tomorrow morning the wheel of life has got to turn on its physical axis, that the grain has to be harvested and milled and baked, the artifacts have got to come out of the factories, the children have to be inducted into the disciplining knowledges and skills, the ill have to be looked after, the dead have to be buried and mourned. That can't always be a gentle process, to make the safest statement of the millennium. But it can't be allowed to abort the other and more fundamental process, the process in which the human being knits his deep longing for value into the actions of his life so that he gets the fulfilling experience.

HURWITZ

William, why can't you please widen that just a little more and allow that we can turn away from life in all its institutionalized expression and find that fulfilling and honorable? You are real to me, Philip is real to me, a face here, a mind there, a word once read or heard, a certain smile, all that adds up to what I accept as real. I don't know how to drive an automobile and it isn't real to me. The Federal Reserve Bank isn't real to me, the Gross National Income isn't and so on. You say the wheel of life must keep turning on its physical axis but isn't it a fact that human beings have survived as well as they have simply by ignoring it? Or am I becoming an unalleviated spiritual reactionary?

FANBITT

I'll meet you half way, Marty. I will allow that a human being can honorably turn away from his responsibility to the physical shell of life providing—and it's a very difficult provision to meet—providing he does so in behalf of thoroughly probed, thoroughly ascertained value, not in behalf of some jejune nihilism or callow despair or juvenile sloth, laziness, self-indulgence and so on. Not that I am going to read anybody out of the human family who tells me he or she is slothful and evasive but that is the condition for his continuing to live and to love life. No. But that isn't the philosophic beau ideal. I do thoroughly respect and honor the person who says, I affirm my failures and disregard of all practical life in behalf of affirming the purity of my valuing life. I hold that view because I think in the final analysis, we are more indebted to human beings who cling to their valuing status than to those who offer their helping hand in practical life, dearly as I may cherish the latter.

§

The time was 1939 shortly before the war broke out, the place was Schwaben Halle in Newark, the occasion was a meeting of the German American Bund, the featured speaker was a Colonel Hiram Madison (Madison, no less!), U.S. Army, retired. The subject as listed was Racial Mingling, Racial Suicide. Joe Mayen was familiar with Schwaben Halle as one of the fixed benign points in the geography of his youth. Often on summer days he would pass it to and from grammar school and see beer delivery wagons at the curb and watch kegs of beer hustled through the open doors into the bar just beyond. The aroma of malt and hops would float into the street and there would be a quick glimpse of paunched men with open shirts and rolled sleeves exposing muscular forearms. There had even been times when pushed and dared by a nervy friend, the boys entered the place and asked the bartender for ice water. On a warm afternoon in July, there was nothing greater, nothing to be more treasured as a gift of god than ice water. Goaded and taunted by his nervy friend to prove he wasn't yellow, young Joe Mayen would look up at the awesome bartender and say as calmly as he could manage, "Hey, mister, can we get a drink of ice water?" The bartender looked at him with laserbeam menace raying from his eyes, said nothing but brought two glasses of water, drops of condensation on the outside to prove and sing out how cold the water was, and handed them to the boys. Mayen gulped his down before fate changed its mind and sentenced him to something horrible, but his nervy friend insisted on savoring the cold elixir, sucking it, swirling it around in his mouth, snorting in luxury and even enjoying Joe's discomfiture and eagerness to be out before their audacity got its punitive come uppance. There was a small room in the back of the Hall where a local chapter of the National Turn Verein worked out, a miniature gymnasium where members lifted and pulled weights or tumbled around horizontal bars or parallel bars, sweating and building chest development and bigger muscles. The larger room in the back served as a meeting hall where trade unions held sessions or beerfests, where there were private parties or gatherings of one sort or another.

This was where the Bund meeting was being held. Joe Mayen had decided he wanted to know what went on in these occasions. It was a long long interval since his boyhood days and he had never been inside the meeting hall even in that long ago. Nor would he have recognized it as the same place even if he had. In those days it had been a place celebrating gross incarnate but innocent life, not the hall decked out with swastikas teemed with malignity and peril. The scare he felt as a boy drinking ice water in the bar was innocent and naive, now it was only too knowing and too justified. The two toughs with Sam Browne leather belts and swastika arm bands standing at the entrance looked at him closely and suspiciously. He wasn't a regular, they didn't recognize him, but he looked Aryan enough to pass so they let him through. One modest American flag stood on the small stage, the one concession to the host society where all this pageant of swastikas was taking place, with strong intimation it wouldn't be too long before even this concession wasn't necessary. Mayen sat there waiting, stealing looks at the people filling up the seats, trying not to be too conspicuous about it lest the swastika banners flapped out a thunderous shout, "There is a Jew in our midst, get him!" The grim hard faces around him looked capable of dealing out firmest justice, most of them young, a few middleaged, all of them flashing as physical bodies to which minds were attached but incidentally.

Finally the reigning fuehrer decked out in the standard costume, gray shirt with shoulder straps, leather belt, swastika arm band, walked out on the stage. He said he was proud to see so many people here tonight ready to pay attention to the race problem that was ruining civilization and that was why he was proud to present the speaker who had an important message, "Colonel Heeram Madison." From his seat the colonel smiled and corrected him, "Hiram." The presiding fuehrer said, "Excuse me, Colonel, Hiram." The colonel arose and walked to the center of the stage, looked around him for a moment and said: "Yes, my friends, the good people today, the Christian people today are asleep at the switch, they don't know what

## Meditations of Mayen

# Meditations of Mayen

is going on and if they ever wake up they're going to find out it's too late, the wrong people will be in the saddle and we all know who they are."

The colonel was not exactly a bristling military figure, he had more of the dignity of a retired undertaker who all his life had aspired to mastery of language befitting solemn occasions and never made it. The moments dragged on. The audience sat quiet, rigid, listening to a message they had heard many times already and already knew backwards. Mayen speculated the colonel was out of the National Guard where he had been a quartermaster in charge of the care and distribution of band instruments. The colonel worked hard to develop some idea that the admixture of Jewish blood with Christian blood (forgetting his audience believed in Aryan blood, not Christian blood) was pulling civilization down brick by brick. Ideas were not the colonel's long suit and he could begin voicing an idea only to come a quick expositional cropper and then fall back on some colloquial cliché.

But fate was kind that night. Fifteen minutes after he began and earned no more than a few perfunctory handclappings from the tight, stolid audience, fortune smiled. The colonel began a sentence stating that Jewish influence had infiltrated the whole civilized world so much that . . . that . . . that . . . He struggled for words that would convey the terrible degree to which this had happened, got nowhere for a second or two, but then had a stroke of genius. He said that in a few years we will all be sitting around wearing dirty little yarmulkahs. He bent forward to become a stooping Jew and he covered his head with his hand to suggest it was dripping dirt. There was an outburst of laughter and handclapping. It caught the colonel by surprise but in a twinkling the surprise turned to pleasure and delight. That moment he knew he had struck ore. He went on, "We will all be forced to live like the Jews and did you ever notice a Jew picking a herring out of a barrel?" They liked that even more and laughed harder. Ho ho ho, hee hee hee, hoo hoo hoo. Again he brought pantomime to enhance the image of a Jew hoisting herring from a barrel. They loved it. The colonel became a performer drunk with the headiest wine of owning his audience. He went on, "You know the kikes don't have a language of their own, so what do they do? They take German and make a mess of it and they get Yiddish, and did you ever hear Yiddish, what it sounds like?" He made some weird guttural sounds and twisted his mouth and cheeks into grotesque shapes. Ho ho ho, they roared, they reveled in it, they lapped it up in gobs of screaming relish. They couldn't beat their hands together hard enough or loud enough. The colonel went from éclat to éclat, from triumph to greater triumph, he became the performer frenzied and possessed. Schwaben Halle rocked with laughter and applause, Schwaben Halle had never seen anything like it.

Neither had Mayen. The euphoric frenzy of the audience became an asphyxiating frenzy within him. The walls of the place decked with swastikas bulged with malignity, gone orgiastic with mockery, derision, insult. He sat there beside himself, burning up inside, knowing with intolerable lucidity that if he jumped up and shouted what was in his flesh to shout—you goddamned godforsaken louts, you contemptible human bastards, you miserable riffraff and feces of the devil—he would be beaten senseless in no time and possibly dead. It would be a crowning note to the jubilation of the black mass they were celebrating to beat, strike, kick, stab, mutilate, maim. They were up for it. When he had entered the place and looked around him, he had seen machinists, masons, factory workers, draftsmen, sign painters, store keepers, representative people trapped in allegiance to a reactionary idea. What he saw and felt in their presence now was something different: depraved devils, swine of Satan. The colonel had stumbled into the Circemagic, turning them into swine or subswine or something that violated the most elemental condition of their being human. Or perhaps that was claiming too much for that envenomed halfwit, more likely they had come in all primed and ready and asking to be so transformed. They had sat quiet and rigid and semi-catatonic with their malignity all bottled up inside them chafing their tissue



intolerably, needing desperately to vent it. Laughter would do it for them providing they could get the right cues for it. The colonel had supplied them: vilifactory derision, abuse, mockery, insult, all accompanied with pantomimic capering. The hall buzzed with a burning glow of malignity freed and inspired to spend itself on its object as everybody walked out. Mayen didn't so much walk out as put one foot forward, find something firm enough under it to justify putting the other forward, thus moving through space not so much with any intention or involuntary reflex as being floated out by a hot sea of malevolence. And at every step until he was outdoors, the swastikas on the walls kept emitting this malignity until they lost all vestige of being a geometric shape or sign and became actual objects emitting death rays.

...

Moving railway cars, locomotive, dark smoke, a blue sky, flaming sunlight, it all promised to fall into place as a true reality on one condition: that it be cherished. No problem, thought Mayen, no problem at all, I cherish it. It kept its promise and seemed to become so manageable, so available to him. All he had to do was lower the cabin window, reach out and pick up the locomotive and say to whomever: you want a nice old locomotive? Here is a locomotive. You want a flatbed car? I give you a flatbed car. What else? Beautiful black smoke ascending to blue sky? You have it. Sunlight? A planet? A creation? I own it all, I like you and I give it to you.

He headed back to the airport, hard put to it to know just what had happened, perhaps even reluctant to think about it considering he was so rich a beneficiary.

Perhaps there were certain waters it was better to swim over than to dive into. Or why look a gift horse in the mouth, especially when it is Pegasus? But there was a call from somewhere in the blue sky or a summons from the blazing sunlight or from his interior clamoring, name it! Define it! Because nothing really exists until it is defined! He wasn't worried about being a little late back to the airport, no one was waiting for the airplane. If he missed the truck going back to the hotel, he would hitch the seven miles back one way or another. The long freight train was now out of sight, gone north, gone forever but the world below and the sky above were still in splendor. How had it hatched? Out of what? Forgetting all about cause and effect, what aspects of the past had given birth to this present? He had shocked his nervous system in getting into and out of the spins and as the shock subsided, it stirred some recessed core of his nature and lo! the light of the world beamed on him. It was the same sorry sad world he had met in the newspaper two hours ago waiting in the operations shanty. Now it was all around him as glory and blessing, no *ignis fatuus*, no kind of tricky thing done with mirrors or chemistry or incantations. Bona fide glory, bona fide blessing. It might not last long, it might end as soon as he was close enough to the airport to turn the engine off and squeeze his way into a safe deadstick landing watching closely with popped eyes for the two or three other airplanes trying for the same thing. But for the passing moment, it was all there, it was real. Mayen mused, I meet with my own human nature, my own humanity wherever I go. *Humanitas, humanitatis, humanitati, humanitatem, humanitate*, as long as we live we parse the human sentence, we conjugate its verbs and decline its nouns, only instead of doing it with changes in sound or spelling or inflections, we do it with actions, with exaltations, with deeds, with suffusive goodfeeling, with excruciations...

The airport was now no more than a mile away. He was approaching it from the northwest and he caught sight of another airplane coming from the southwest. I see you, brother and I trust you see me. He changed his mind about how and where he would land, decided he would hug the northern side of the field and leave the southern side to the other guy. He veered to the left, made a steep turn and cut the engine just as he came out of it. Now lined up with the northern edge of the field

# Meditations of Mayen

Meditations of Mayen

for a long approach leg, he still had too much altitude. He dissipated it with a side slip and made an acceptable three-point landing. He sat back and exhaled seemingly for the first time in hours and days. The quiet was shocking. There was never, no time, no place an outbreak of quiet like that in the wake of stopped engine noise and vibration. It could be cut with a knife. It was almost an element, perhaps secondary and derived but powerful. The molecules of sound having ripped everything to shreds, now banished like venomous screaming birds, gave life back its true shape and feel. It was a bad slip in the Bible failing to mention that on the same day the Deity created light, He also created quiet. Ah, lovely quiet, a condition in some unclear way affirmative to *humanitas*, blessed, beloved quiet. He had to sit and wait what seemed a long time but was no more than five or six

...  
Finally it was done, the clump of cloth stuck in a corner and some item (a Gibson Girl? a Mae West? the heavy bag for the camera?) found to weight it down and hold it blocked.

He now had no parachute and this was something for the pilot to know about, so he pushed the button on the intercom and called: photographer to pilot, come in, come in. Silence. Again: photographer to pilot, come in, come in. Still silence. The intercom was out of wack and useless. Then he heard a zing! and he knew another bomb had been dropped, so he pushed away one worry to take on another: getting a film record of it. He picked up the camera, stuck it through the hatch and waited to set the film rolling. He wrote down the circular error and went back to the previous worry: letting the pilot know he had popped his parachute. It seemed mortally important and he did something zany, absolutely zany. It was not out of any death instinct, Mayen having no more death instinct than a horseradish instinct, having worked out a degree of peace with both. The bomb bay doors were open and he began to clamber along the five or six inch longeron up front toward the cockpit. He could reach out and hold to the shackles of the bomb racks but below him was ten thousand feet of space to the ground. If the plane had swerved or dropped, he could not have held on. It didn't, he obeyed his command not to look down and he made it to the cockpit. The pilot greeted the news that Mayen now had no parachute quite calmly and said with a mild unperturbed grin: "Well, we'll have to get you back in one piece." Mayen asked him to close the bomb bay doors, highly uneager to do an encore of his feat. The man obliged, letting the bombardier know of his intention. The plane was already in another bombing run and therefore under the bombardier's control.

The mission took a little longer but they finally made it back to Kirtland Field and Mayen went through the tedious ritual of returning all the equipment he had drawn—the Mae West, the oxygen mask, the headset, the camera, the clipboard, the flashlight, even the bombsight. The latter had to be carried to a concrete shack set inside two or three perimeters of barbed wire, for security's sake. That was always a labor but this night it was something more: something out of eerie unlikelihood, something ghoulish done behind the back of sanity.

...  
Dino: "Please. Please."

Joe: "A couple of friends and I were driving up to Maine and we stopped at a grocery store in some little town in upper New York State to buy some materials for lunch. My friends went inside, I stayed in the car and they lingered in the store fifteen minutes or so. There was a young kid outside, he couldn't have been more than three or four, and he was building something of wood, working with saw, square and hammer. Something about him caught my eye and my interest. He was

going about it with a strange kind of deliberateness and using the tools with an even stranger skill and grace. I was then and still am a pretty good carpenter and rather a connoisseur about it. And I was fascinated by him. It isn't stretching the bow of truth one iota beyond its natural pull to say he was acting out a poem. He was in a state of reverie as if put there by music issuing from somewhere that I couldn't hear. He sawed a board along a line he had scribed with expertness, balance, grace, he set the saw down carefully on the paved apron not to nick any teeth, he picked up the hammer, swung it naturally and so on. It was something to watch, something to behold. In a minute or so something odd began to happen for me. Everything around him fell into rhythm with his measured action. The sunlight, the hush of noon, the storefront, nearby trees and the shadows they threw, everything. It was a tricky piece of dialectic. By his slipping into rhythmic action, he seemed to have invited all the environment around him to join him in it. Including the very sky above. It became a spell and I hoped my friends wouldn't come out of the store to break it.

## §

There were days like the one in which I stood in the Palacio de las Bellas Artes and mused on the mural by Orozco, the one in which human life was a wild river of guns, bayonets, exploiters, and scoundrels, whirling into oblivion. ....I stood there until I felt I had absorbed its message, then went outside to walk it off. One of the first things my eyes fell upon was a woman vendor selling corn on the cob on a nearby street corner. She didn't so much sell corn as dispense largesse in a ballet of consummate grace. The business of reaching into the boiling water for a cob with an improvised pincers, handing it to a buyer in a leaf wrapping, taking money and making change, putting charcoal in the brazier was a flow of movements reminding me of a gifted organist seated at a great console and using hands, feet, eyes, mind, memory, soul to work the keys, the stops and the pedals involved in a well-known and well-loved piece of music. I was quite enthralled and I stood there thinking, that should be us, presiding over our lives come hell or high water. The effect of the Orozco mural began to lessen.....I had been trying to set down on paper where and when as a boy I first came to believe in an eternal and ongoing first day of creation and I wasn't doing too well.

*A Talk with Trotsky*

**Harper's**

February 1977

## Delicacy is My Name: Bernarda Bryson Shahn

by Bob Mueller

When a consummate skill and craft marries a great human sensitivity, true art is born. Add an unending wit, a deep sense of social awareness, and an absolutely immaculate grasp of form to this monumental technical capability, and you arrive at Bernarda Bryson Shahn's works now on view at the Trenton City Museum.

This was an overwhelming show for me. I knew Bernarda was a wonderful artist, but I didn't know she was a great artist. In fact, I knew very little of Bernarda's art—a few reproductions, drawings in *Scientific American*, a book illustration or two—but not this art. Her work must be seen to be believed!

This is a rewarding show, displaying the artist's great drawing skills and her deep sense of humor and wonderment at the human condition.

The earliest of Bernarda's pictures on view dates from 1929. Although one suspects they are student works, they already exhibit a profound sense of humanity and a true eye—*verocchio*. Small egg-tempera paintings and lithographs from that year explain her entry into the Social-Realist school. For example, the lithographs *Dust Storms*, from the Frontier Series, and *Arkansas Sharecropper and Wife*, from the Resettlement Series, are strong emotional statements—one wants to see both series in their entirety. A small study for a mural entitled *Building America* suggests what Bernarda would have done had she been given a wall of her own on which to paint a mural during the Works Project Administration, in which she was an active participant.

As you progress through the years you see Bernarda honing her line, developing an imaginative sense of color and a near-surreal storehouse of imagery—yet not surreal because it is so healthily grounded in fact. Oh, there is fantasy, all right, but a fantasy of startling beauty and imagination.

The sheer gentleness of brush stroke in her paintings, and near-fastidiousness of line in her pen-and-ink drawings, is beyond comprehension—what patience! Her wonderful control of the most delicate line possible for the unaided eye-hand is best manifest in her book illustrations for **Wuthering Heights**, done in 1961. Look at them closely and you see floods of linear textures and sensitive washes of lines that create tones and masses of incredible lightness and refinement. Her sense of humor is illustrated by *Eggs Over a Little Italian Town*, a small oil that is literally what its title says, and her *Adventures in the Skin Trade*, a bald-headed Moonie sitting cross-legged with nothing on but remarkably-designed globular earrings.

Refinement is a key word for these pictures. Refinement of taste and image, thought and production. These "fragments of imagination," as she has written, are more than super-realism because they penetrate into the heart of reality itself. Take a look at her large *trompe-l'oeil* oil *The Parian Vase* and compare it with the actual vase upstairs, and you will see what I mean. This painting is not just an accurate reproduction of an intricately-wrought vase; it is a statement of the sheer virtuosity of the human hand frozen in Bernarda's presentation of its consciousness. She writes that "the process of work is attended by a constant stream of ideas—all of those notions and beliefs, accumulated ideas, literature, and philosophical ponderings which constitute the kind of person that one is." In the light of her pictures, this is actually an understatement because she seems to transcend the personal and reach beyond the human into the heroic.

Her latest images are heroic indeed: derived from wooden studio mannikins, in pictures like *Melancholia* and *Narcissus* one discovers the suffering of humanity. Bernarda says that we are all moving and tragic figures, caught in wooden shells, crying to be released from our absolute loneliness.

The Trenton City Museum at Ellarslie in Cadwalader Park can be reached by taking Route 29 north of Trenton, and turning right at Parkside Avenue. Go up under the bridge two blocks and turn left into the park. The show will continue until January 6. The museum is open 11 AM to 4 PM Tuesdays through Saturdays, and Sundays from 2 to 4 PM (closed Mondays). There is a treat upstairs at the Museum for lovers of ceramics.

## RAP to Present Weiner Play

by Bob Mueller

On Saturday, January 21 at 8 PM at the Borough Hall there will be a reading by Equity actors of a play by Leslie Weiner, *Upside Down on the Handle Bars*.

This event is the next in the Roosevelt Arts Project's series of evenings presenting works by local artists.

A Broadway and off-Broadway playwright, the author of eight plays including *Close Relations*, *In the Counting House* and *An Evening with the Poet-Senator*, Leslie Weiner's trenchant dramas have played an important part of RAP's season, and *Handlebars* will prove no exception.

The play will be directed by Victoria Liberatori, who runs the summer theater program at Princeton's Murray Dodge Theater.

Don't miss this play!

Weiner's new play, *Cash Values*, will have a public reading at the Princeton Arts Council, 102 Witherspoon Street on Friday, January 13 at 8 PM.

## Art Notes

**Robert Mueller's** large woodcut entitled *We're One, We're Many* was selected for exhibition in the New Jersey Arts Annual: Printmaking and Photography. The show, which opens on January 14, is at the State Museum in Trenton. The New Jersey State Museum is located at 205 West State Street. The show will run through February 26.

## — Letters —

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to Ann Baker's assertion that the meeting between Mayor Barth, as reported in the *Bulletin*, and the Switchel representatives was somehow in violation of the Open Public Meetings Act.

As anyone who is at all familiar with the act can attest, what it prohibits is the meeting of *more than half the members of any public body empowered to take action on any matter* without prior notice to the public and, with certain exceptions, without the opportunity for members of the public to be present. It does not apply to meetings of individual officials to discuss public business so long as a majority of the body with power to make a decision are not also present. The evil that it was intended to combat was the then-common practice of having governing bodies and planning and zoning

boards meet behind closed doors to discuss issues and then have a public meeting to formalize the predetermined decisions. Since a mayor cannot amend a zoning ordinance or give subdivision approval unilaterally, the events that transpired in no way imply that "Barth is somehow above the Sunshine Law."

I also note the references made to alleged manipulations by "Switchel's patrons in Roosevelt, i.e. those who would benefit from the sale of the Beer-Kugler tract." So far as I know, the only persons in Roosevelt having a financial interest in the sale are Mr. Sadvovsky and his employing broker, Mr. Adlerman, both of whom appear to be going about their perfectly legal business in a perfectly legal manner. If any financial benefit of any sort has been offered to any other person, let the evidence be presented. Otherwise,

please let us avoid innuendo. Civil discourse is of great importance in a community like ours and it ought not to be lightly cast aside.

Ms. Baker also makes the point that perhaps Switchel would have only paused long enough to get the property rezoned and then would have sold it at a profit. That is always a possibility with any property, since, under our system, people are free to buy and sell their property as they see fit. Any controls that the Borough wishes to place upon the development of any property must be clearly established in the zoning ordinance, or in conditions attached to approval of a conditional use or variance. Decisions cannot be based upon representations by potential developers to which they and their successors in title would not be legally bound.

Michael L. Ticktin

To the Editor:

When that heavy black smoke darts out of the oil-burner room and you can see angry flames in there, it is hard to describe your feelings: are you hysterical or are you alerted as to what must be done to save your life and/or your house. No matter, by reflex we called the Roosevelt Fire Company at 446-2040 and, within minutes, they arrived and saved us.

What a sight to see those selfless people come up the driveway: Kim, Gloria, young Francis, Jack...A wonderful—safe—secure feeling at a time when that is all you want in the world.

What a fine company we have—they did all that was necessary: saved the day, our house and us. "Thank you" seems very small but it covers the heartfelt feelings that Leon and I had that morning. Thank you, thank you, thank you. We are very grateful.

Frieda and Leon Anish

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**Roosevelt Borough Bulletin**  
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**Roosevelt NJ 08555**

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Isn't Here,  
It Should Be  
Send in Your  
Contribution  
Today**


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	Tony & Helga Wisowaty
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# Bulletin Classified

The *Bulletin* publishes classified listings from Roosevelt residents and businesses free of charge.  
 Write: *Roosevelt Borough Bulletin*, Box 221, Local  
 All contributions are appreciated (suggested contribution: \$40 per year, \$5.00 per issue).

<p><b>AUTOMOBILE SERVICING</b></p>	<p><b>HOME IMPROVEMENTS/CONSTRUCTION (CONT.)</b></p>	<p><b>PET CARE</b></p>
<p><b>Roosevelt Auto &amp; Truck Service</b>                  Quality Car Care                  7 AM-6 PM Monday-Friday                  8 AM-3 PM Saturday                  Closed Sunday                  448-0198</p>	<p><b>Custom Plus                  General Contractors, Inc.                  Roosevelt, NJ</b>                   Small Job to Total Construction                   Roofing • Wood Decks • Patios                  Additions • Renovations                  Bathrooms &amp; Kitchens Remodeled                  Custom Closets                  Insulation Installed                  Formica                   Major &amp; Minor Repairs                  References Available • Fully Insured                  Free Estimates • Certified Contractor                  10% Senior Citizen Discount                  448-9136</p>	<p><b>"TLC" Grooming Salon</b>                  Dog &amp; Cat Grooming by Appointment                   No Tranquilizers Used                  Pick Up &amp; Delivery Available                  Call 443-6218</p>
<p><b>BABYSITTING</b></p>		<p><b>REAL ESTATE</b></p>
<p><b>Babysitting</b>                  Rachel Brahinsky • Age 14                  443-1898</p>		<p><b>Adlerman, Click &amp; Co.                  Realtors &amp; Insurers                  est. 1927</b>                   Has Sold More Houses in Roosevelt Than                  any Other Broker                  May We Help You Sell Yours at the Best                  Possible Price?   <b>Roosevelt Residents Serving                  Roosevelt:</b>                  Mel A. Adlerman                  Milton Sadowsky (448-2380)                  Ruth Sadowsky (448-2380)                  Marilyn Magnes (448-6402)                  Sam Adlerman (448-0396)                  Alice Lifland</p>
<p><b>BUSINESS SERVICES</b></p>		
<p><b>Data Processing Consulting</b>                  PC &amp; Main Frame                  Richard Dalin                  448-9399</p>	<p><b>E. Rich General Contractors</b>                   Custom Work • Repairs                  Everything Under Your Roof                   Free Estimates                  References Supplied                   Harry • Edna                  426-4949</p>	<p><b>Grace Kaufman</b>                  Your Roosevelt Realtor Associate at                  ERA Homes Of Quality                  443-1313 (office) • 443-4049 (evenings)</p>
<p><b>HELP WANTED</b></p>		
<p><b>Full &amp; Part Time Jobs</b>                  within walking distance                  Mailing Services • Data Entry                  Advancement Opportunities                  Informal Atmosphere                  MIRA, The Factory, Oscar Drive                  443-4495</p>	<p><b>Gary Edelstein</b>                  Cabinetmaker                   443-3216</p>	<p><b>RESTAURANTS/TAKE-OUT</b></p>
<p><b>Tutors Wanted</b>                  to help with free tutoring program for                  Roosevelt students.                  A rewarding way to help the                  children of our community                  Call Mary King at 448-5096</p>	<p><b>HUMAN SERVICES</b></p>	<p><b>Rossi's Pizza, Deli &amp; Liquor Store</b>                  serving                  Hot &amp; Cold Subs • Pizza                  Calzones • Pasta                  Other Fine Italian Dishes                  Catering &amp; Party Tray Available                  Limited Seating in Back Room                   Open                  Mon. 6:30 AM - 7:00 PM                  (pizza closed on Mondays)                  Tues.-Thurs., Sun.: 6:30 AM - 10 PM                  Fri. &amp; Sat.: 6:30 AM - 11:00 PM                   443-5111 • 443-5522</p>
<p><b>HOME IMPROVEMENTS/CONSTRUCTION</b></p>	<p><b>Attention Roosevelt Students</b>                   Would you like some extra help                  in understanding math, algebra, geometry,                  etc.?                   Free Tutoring is Available                  Call Mary King                  448-5096</p>	<p><b>SNOW REMOVAL</b></p>
<p><b>Air Conditioning • Heating                  Refrigeration</b>                  Tom Hague &amp; Son                  Sales • Service • Installations                  Free Estimates                  Energy Specialists                  Custom Sheetmetal Work                  448-5424</p>	<p><b>MUSIC INSTRUCTION</b></p>	<p><b>Reasonable Prices</b>                  Call in advance for quickest service</p>
<p><b>Complete Bathroom Remodeling</b>                   Tile Installation                   Tal Littman                  448-2221</p>	<p><b>Guitar Instruction</b>                  ages 7 and up                   David Brahinsky                  443-1898</p>	<p>Barry (443-6953) or Dustin (448-0679)</p>

**JANUARY**  
**SUN. MON. TUES. WED. THUR. FRI. SAT.**

1	2 <i>No School at RPS</i>  <b>Deborah</b> Borough Hall 2:00 PM Frieda Rockoff, Pres. (448-0674)	3 <b>Senior Citizens</b> Boro Hall, 2 PM Jeanette Koffler, Pres. (448-2259)  <b>Bulletin Staff</b> MIRA, 7:30 PM Mark Zuckerman, Editor (443-5915)	4 <b>Food Coop</b> Ordering 8 Sch Ln, 7:30PM Judith Goetzmann (443-4948) <b>Planning Board</b> Borough Hall 8:00 PM Alan Mallach, chair (448-4616)	5	6	7
8	9 <b>Borough Council</b> Agenda Meeting Boro Hall, 8:00 PM Leon Barth, Mayor (448-1870) Carol Watchler, Council President (448-5215)	10 <i>Half-Day at RPS</i>  <b>PTA</b> RPS, 7:30 PM Carol Zaleski, Pres. (448-5089)	11 <b>Borough Council</b> Borough Hall 8:00 PM Leon Barth, Mayor (448-1870) Carol Watchler, Council President (448-5215)	12 <b>Board of Education</b> Agenda Meeting RPS, 7:30 PM  <b>Zoning Board</b> Boro Hall, 8 PM Lou Esakoff, Chair (448-3166)	13	14
15	16 <i>No School at RPS</i>  <b>Congregation Anshei</b> Synagogue, 8 PM Michael Ticktin, Pres. (448-0363)	17 <b>Blood Pressure Check</b> Solar Village Community Room, 1 PM-3 PM <b>Food Coop</b> Distribution Boro Hall, 8 PM Bobbi Teich (448-5036)	18 <b>First Aid Squad</b> Drill Borough Hall 7:30 PM Nancy Bauerle, Pres. (448-8275)	19 <b>Board of Education</b> Action Meeting RPS, 7:30 PM Ed Grossman, Board Pres. (448-9385)	20	21 <b>Arts Project</b> Play Reading Borough Hall 8:00 PM Leslie Weiner (448-2358)
22 <b>First Aid Squad</b> Super Bowl Hoagies Borough Hall 11 AM-6 PM Nancy Bauerle, Pres. (448-8275)	23	24 <b>Nursery School</b> Arlene Stinson, Director (426-9523)	25	26	27	28
29	30	31 <b>First Aid Squad</b> Boro Hall, 7:30 PM Nancy Bauerle, Pres. (448-8275)				

There are free exercise classes for residents at the Borough Hall each Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00 AM-11:00 AM  
 The RPS Library will be open each Tuesday and Thursday evening, hours to be announced

Is your organization having a meeting or event? Write the **Bulletin** (Box 221, Local) or call Helga Wisowaty (448-0049)