



FORUM
Spring 1987

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The Center for the Humanities at Loyola College has funded awards for outstanding writing in the English, Foreign Languages and Literatures, History, Philosophy, and Writing Departments.

Forum is pleased to include in this issue the essays by the winners of the Writing Core Course Essay Awards, Spring 1987: Stephanie Boos, Leo Jacobo, Paul McBride, Cathy Moore.

WHY I WRITE

(Stolen From Joan Didion
Who Stole It From George Orwell)

It is now 8:15 p.m. on Monday evening as I sit on the floor of my bedroom scratching down the beginnings of my final essay for my writing class. I am disgusted with myself once again for procrastinating the writing of this paper until approximately thirteen hours before the draft is due. This is not the first time that I have put off assignments until the "last minute," especially when it comes to writing excursions. A sense of dread fills my mind as I repeatedly attempt to sit down and start on the paper. Today, for example, I did not intend on waiting to write this essay. At 11:00 a.m. this morning, I set up my desk with everything I needed for inspiration to take its course - pens, plenty of blank paper, and quotes that I collected from renowned authors such as George Orwell and William Faulkner. I gazed at the empty pages in front of me for about twenty minutes, uninspired, before I decided to go on to other homework for awhile and return to my writing later. Well, I got so involved in the staircase I was drawing for my art class that I spent the rest of the afternoon completing it; and then I had to eat dinner (or else I simply could not concentrate on my paper.) After I ate, it was back to the bedroom for me where I would begin my essay. But then I saw my Christmas cards across the room, which had to be stamped immediately. And, finally, an old friend from high school called, and I thought it rude to cut her off since we hadn't talked in months. Now, at 8:15 p.m., panic sets in as I realize the unfinished work that awaits me. Yet, seeing how this despair clouds my thoughts about my writing, how can I truthfully say that I enjoy it? Am I not contradicting myself? I don't know if it is a contradiction or not, but I cherish what I have written as much as I despise writing it.

Some writers agree with my sentiments, while others have opposing views. E.M. Forster believed that writing is "pleasant, and I don't understand what people mean by 'throes of creation.'" And James Thurber stated, "When I'm not writing... I'm miserable." But I think I am what Malcolm

Cowley, the editor of the Paris Review, would call a "bleeder." This feeling is best summed up by William Styron, who said, "I get a fine, warm feeling when I'm doing well, but that pleasure is pretty much negated by the pain of getting started each day. Let's face it, writing is hell."

The most difficult and gruelling part of writing for me is simply getting started. By this, I don't mean any research, reading, or pre-work that goes into my writing -- I tend to enjoy that part of the process. Reading about a topic is my "fun," where I get to sit back, relax, and think about what somebody else has written. And freewriting, to me, is "free" from responsibility -- my thoughts just seem to flow, they don't have to be organized or even make sense at all. But getting started is when I have to sit down and organize on paper all the thoughts that race through my head.

The ways in which professional writers start a day's work vary as much as their personalities. Thornton Wilder used to take long walks before he would sit down to write, while Willa Cather would read passages from the Bible. It all depends on what individuals are comfortable with, and different sources provide inspiration for different people. As for me, my procrastination may be a way to avoid what I dread. But it could also possibly be a way for me to clear my mind of other "preoccupations" and ready myself to concentrate on what it is I want to write about. While I am "wasting" time doing Christmas cards and drawings, I am actually subconsciously generating and developing thoughts about my topic. There's no denying that you have to be in the mood to write to produce anything worth reading, and every writer has his or her own way of getting into the proper frame of mind.

What is that "mood" that is essential to good writing? It is inspiration. As Dorothy Canfield Fisher put it so well, it is a "state of generally intensified emotional activity...when events that usually pass unnoticed suddenly move you deeply, when a sunset lifts you to exaltation, when a squeaking door throws you into a fit of exasperation, when a clear look of trust in a child's eyes moves you to tears." I think it is this state that makes writers want to write, painters to paint, and

sculptors to mold their clay wonders. All artists, no matter how they express themselves, must first be inspired to produce their works.

William Faulkner wrote in order to "create out of the materials of the human spirit something which did not exist there before." This view is similar to Francine Gray's when she said, "I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say." Writing allows me to think clearly, to visualize exactly what is in my mind, to find meaning in my thoughts -- meaning that is unique and original, that has emerged from my "human spirit." When I sit down to write, I may have a vague outline of what I want to say, but I never know exactly how I feel until I get it on paper.

Another motive for writing is that it "has the power to outlast the author's life." Many writers feel that writing is, in a sense, "self-centered." To a certain extent, I agree; but I don't think it is selfish to an unhealthy degree. Every human being has the desire to leave their mark on others; writing is one way of doing this. It is more than just a way of clarifying my thoughts. I wouldn't want to clarify them in the first place if I didn't think they needed to be expressed, to be shared with others. E.B. White believes that the writer is "sustained by the childish belief that everything he thinks about, everything that happens to him, is of general interest." And Joan Didion said, "...writing is the act of saying I, of imposing oneself upon other people, of saying listen to me, see it my way, change your mind."

Writers also seem to have a basic love of words which drives them to express their thoughts on paper. "Words are not merely sounds for them, but magical designs that their hands make..." With words, one can create mental images, visualizations, pictures of thoughts. I think this is why description is so important, and why I enjoy this kind of writing so much. By rearranging "sentence structure," an author can emphasize something important, or give meaning to something that would otherwise seem insignificant. In Virginia Woolf's essay entitled "The Death of the Moth," she presents vivid details to draw the reader emotionally into pitying a dying moth (something so common that we usually

don't stop to feel any emotion over it.) But, more than that, she brings meaning forth from this event by her sharp descriptions. "It was as if someone had taken a tiny bead of pure life and decking it with down and feathers had set it dancing and zigzagging to show us the true nature of life."

Writing is thus far more than just a task some lunatic invented to torment students. To those who take it seriously, it is quite spiritual. Through the writing process, I seem to discover things about myself and meaning in my life that I previously would have been unaware of. Although the work is often long and hard, it is rewarding to the writer (and hopefully to the reader, too.) Writing enables the author to express himself creatively --say something personal, but something that he desires to share with others. It is the combination of amusing himself and leaving his mark on the world (self-centered motivation) and the need to find meaning in life that drives the writer on.

Kristy McGraw

WHY WE MUST LEGISLATE MORALITY

Pervading American society today is the humanistic idea that no one is to determine anyone else's morality. "What right have you to tell me what to do with my privacy?" demands the homosexual engaging in sodomy with his consenting partner. "It's my body!" shouts the feminist who lobbies for abortion rights. "The Constitution guarantees me freedom of expression!" says the operator of the peep show on Baltimore Street.

In short, everyone is free to do what he or she wants. All he or she has to do is follow his or her own set of moral principles, no matter what they may be. If Jack decides that he can have sex with Jay just because homosexual intercourse is part of his personal outlook on life, any laws that might limit his freedom to have an immoral relationship with Jay are seen as limits on Jack's freedom. Or are they?

Just this past July, the Supreme Court ruled that state laws prohibiting sodomy between homosexuals were constitutional. This decision sparked a flurry of response from all sides. The gay and lesbian sides denounced the decision as a homophobic response to the "fundamentalists" who see homosexuality as a true threat to American morality. What was really behind such decision, however? Is it an attempt of the "fundamentalists" to save, in the eyes of the homosexuals, "us from ourselves"? Or could it be a realization on the Court's part that the highest aim in life might not be flesh-feeding and pleasure? Are people not really free in that sense, but rather slaves to their flesh?

Says retired Admiral Jeremiah Denton, founder of the Coalition for Decency:

Television shows today offer freedom and happiness through self-gratification, but it is a lie....The majority of television shows promote self-gratification, lawlessness and sexual relationships outside of marriage. All this appeals to one's pride, but such behavior doesn't make a person happy.

While there are certainly more sources than just television which foster this hedonistic mentality, Denton hits upon something which is not necessarily new, yet quite disturbing in its broad acceptance. There exists a "New Morality," which he considers neither new nor morality but an "old immorality," which discards traditional values in favor of hedonism. In fact, he considers the "New Morality" such a threat that "no nation or society can survive when there is a general failure of [the family as a] basic social unit."

It is, therefore, the obligation of Christian men and women to see that true morality is defended in America through legislation. The right of petition to redress is guaranteed all Americans through the Constitution and should be used by Christians more often. But beyond being simply a right, defending morality is a duty because true morality must be affirmed over "new morality."

Naturally, the first question is just what is the root of morality? The answer, which might disturb and surprise civil libertarians and the like, is that morality stems from Judaeo-Christian roots. According to a Gallup poll,

[with] near unanimity Americans say that morality is derived from the Jewish and Christian traditions....There is in fact a shared world of moral reference, a common vocabulary, that can be drawn upon in public discourse.

It is not so self-evident, however, that morality has to come from somewhere other than ourselves. All too often the voices of those without such convictions stress the importance of the liberty of the self. Here is the self-gratification revisited, in columnist TRB's commentary on the Supreme Court's sodomy ruling:

The right to pursue happiness is held as "self-evident." Equally self-evident...is that the pursuit of happiness is not an easy one....That's why if a person, or two people, or three people and a billy goat find a way to be happy that strikes most other people as peculiar, or even revolting, that's hardly reason enough for the government to thwart them. They're only trying to find an answer to

the question we're all trying to answer in our own ways.

This lengthy excerpt demonstrates how self-gratification transcends any concept of morality, be it sodomy, bestiality, or incest. What, then, is to prevent TRB (and judges who may read his writing) from condoning rape or even murder? Maybe the victims aren't consenting, but after all, don't the rapist and the murderer have rights to pursuing their happiness as they see fit? It's their own way, right?

Wrong. If TRB is so familiar with the Declaration of Independence, he should also know that the first "unalienable right" is that of life. What sort of a life is it that focuses self as well?

Indeed, while I may not have to listen to the admonishment of TRB, who, reading this essay, must listen to me? If it were simply my morality which I were trying to defend, it would mean little. I am only reiterating the morality that has already been accepted by Americans with "near unanimity." So, it is not merely I who am trying to make the law support morality.

God gave us humans free will to obey or disobey Him, to be moral or immoral. He does this so we can be forgiven while we see the errors of our ways. Yet we can follow our own path and reject the morals set before us. Many believe, however, that rejection of Judaeo-Christian morality is a creation of their own personal morality. This personal morality is the morality which should not be forced upon others. After all, where did this morality come from? It came from the Garden of Eden where the serpent told Eve, "God knows well that the moment you eat of [the forbidden fruit] your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad" (Genesis 3:5).

The immoral who believe in the concept of a God and His ability to forgive any sin defend their actions by stating, "If God can forgive anything, there is nothing to forgive," giving us carte blanche to do whatever we want under the rubber-stamp of God's forgiveness. God, however, does not forgive us because we are immoral (thus giving Him the

supposed obligation to forgive us always), but rather so that we may "repent,...amend our lives...[and] sin no more." If others choose to refuse this, fine; the Constitution does prevent legislating religious belief.

The Constitution should also prevent the cries for the freedom of the immoral being heard above the cries of the righteous (including non-Christians) who want their way of living protected. If the immoral do not like a certain law, they should fight to have it changed. But they should not expect the righteous to lay down and take their challenge lightly. In the words of Dr. James Dobson, noted family therapist and member of the Meese Commission on pornography:

Society has an absolute obligation to protect itself from material which crosses the line established objectively by its legislators and court system. That is not sexual repression. That is self-preservation.

Frankly, it is about time that Christians in particular felt it an obligation to take up the ethical challenge that the world has offered for so long, but even more so over the past thirty years. Christians should be bold in standing up for what they know is not only moral for them, but for what history and public opinion have proven over the years to be moral for society.

One main reason for this resurgence in standing up for morality is the simple realization that not only is such morality fading away, but it is also wrong for Christians to stand back and watch it fade away. Fear of others' opinions has prevented them from taking a stand. Says Admiral Denton, "We have laws right now...regarding moral matters, and we don't even have the guts to stand up and say they should be enforced." This lack of guts is almost as much a vice as the immorality itself because of the doctrine of qui tacet, consentiret (he who is silent gives consent). The pressure to stand up for what is moral is balanced by the pressure of public opinion. Just ask Pontius Pilate. He had the power to free Jesus but succumbed to the whims of the mob by handing him over to be crucified. But Pilate at least

stood before the mob, if he did not necessarily stand up to them.

Christians should not be easily swayed if their stands do not bear immediate fruit. Change may not come overnight because their pleas, instead of being criticized, may simply fall on deaf ears. What an editor of U. S. Catholic says about the bishops' letter on nuclear war and peace can just as easily be said for those who fight against eradication of morals:

[T]here is no real evidence that the [bishops'] statement has had any effect on American governmental policy.... [w]hile I hope that nothing will discourage the American bishops from making their voices heard strongly in the future, I suspect that other letters from them...[will] be swallowed up in the prevailing mores of contemporary American society.

These "prevailing mores" also swallow any efforts at stemming the tide of pornography, homosexuality, premarital sex, and abortion. No one said fighting City Hall would be easy.

Those who wish to make their case for true morality believable know that the life they lead is tantamount to any success in restoring morality. Two-facedness cannot be tolerated. Pat Robertson, TV evangelist and possible Presidential candidate, believes that his faith in God will only help him in his bid for the White House: "People are looking for someone with strong convictions. My earnest faith would ultimately be a plus rather than a negative." More than just being a Christian, Robertson wants his whole lifestyle to stand out before voters who want someone in the White House who isn't afraid to practice what he preaches.

The failure of Christians to live the life they desire for others is one pitfall they must beware of in the moral struggle. They can be angry at immorality, but it must be a righteous anger. In the recent Maryland Senate election, Linda Chavez's big mistake was not attacking Barbara Mikulski's liberal moral stands alone. Rather, she did so without letting the voters get a clear picture of her moral viewpoint as far as her actions and not just her words.

Instead, Christians should be respectful of the people they contend against, using the principle of "loving the sinner but hating the sin." God loves the immoral too. As the chaplain of the Senate said, "Christians should reflect the love and caring of Jesus Christ in how they say something as well as what they say." Or, as St. Paul put it,

We avoid giving anyone offense, so that our ministry may not be blamed. On the contrary, in all that we do we strive to present ourselves as ministers of God, acting with patient endurance amid trials... (2 Corinthians 6:3-4)

In addition, Christians must respect the viewpoints of others, i.e., their free will not to follow moral precepts. This does not make the person inferior or the Christian superior: "[a]ll...have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Yes, Christians too. That means that they do not have the right to believe they are somehow exempt from the errant ways from which they are trying to get others to turn. That does not mean Christians are the only moral people either.

Is there any hope for restoring America the morals she once had? Or will she crumble from within because of moral decay, as Robertson fears? Lobbying for moral laws is the practical and rightful means for Christians to prevent this collapse. Above that, I have to believe that only through a true witness of lives will Christians be a true light to the world and make others see that more exists to life than just an ego feast in a bedroom. The sodomy ruling and the Meese Commission's report show that many Americans have had enough of the *laissez-faire* sexual attitudes of the 60's and 70's. I hope they will continue to rise up and, in the words of Admiral Jeremiah Denton, "let their opinions be known before they become a minority so that it won't matter whether they express their opinions or not." Silent majorities are difficult to hear.

Paul Turner

FAULTY IMPRESSION

It may have started with the first cave painting to be scratched out by a Cro-Magnon who insisted that the saber-toothed tiger has three teeth, not two; or perhaps it began when the wax of an Egyptian palimpsest was melted because the interpretation of the gods impressed upon it was not the prevalent one. We're tired of the censorship issue, convinced that no one can seriously wish to restrain our freedom of speech or of the press anymore. We now cite the First Amendment as a matter of everyday conversation: "I can say anything I like -- it's a free country."

Kurt Vonnegut, whose book Slaughterhouse-Five has been frequently banned by school boards, even burned in one school in North Dakota, would agree nonetheless that the heyday of censorship is over. He wrote in his autobiographical Palm Sunday that "it may be that the most striking thing about members of my literary generation in retrospect will be that we were allowed to say absolutely anything without fear of punishment." In the main he is right; there has only been the odd book-burning or Moral Majority denouncement of stores carrying Hustler and Penthouse magazines since the days of the Inquisition. Once in a while the flames burn a little brighter, as when recently "offensive" rock lyrics stood trial, though even Frank Zappa, staunch preserver of the rights of rock lyrics to be as suggestive and/or blatant as their authors wish, has wearied of defending albums from the stickers that would serve as a beacon informing mothers that their babies shouldn't listen to this stuff. It seems that the important battles against censorship have been won, but that may be only because the lines of battle used to be clearer.

"As good almost kill a man as kill a book," wrote Milton. "Who kills a book kills a reasonable creature, kills reason itself, kills the image of God." In Areopagitica, his 1644 treatise against censorship, Milton argued against the English Parliament's policy of not allowing any book to be printed and distributed until the bishops of the Church of England, called "Imprimaturs," had stamped their approval onto it.

They used an equivalent to today's rubber stamp, pressing "It may be printed, July 15 -- Friar Simon Mompei d'Amelia" and such into the flyleaf of books considered proper to be read by the public. Areopagitica itself was suppressed by these very Imprimaturs. Milton lost that battle -- or did he? We can now read Areopagitica -- and other once-forbidden texts -- in any upper-division English course at any college. Yet the legacy of the Imprimaturs lives on, despite the apparent erasure of their ink upon the flyleaves. Their stamp made more of an impression, perhaps, on our minds.

Contemporary to Milton was the great scientist and astronomer Galileo, whose invention of the telescope was welcomed enthusiastically and whose theory about the solar system was not. Those who adhered to the Ptolemaic view -- that the earth was the center of the universe -- were not impressed by this new vision. Galileo was persuaded to recant by Cardinal Barberini, an Inquisitor later to become Pope Urban VIII.

Bertoldt Brecht, in his 1952 play Galileo, was perhaps freer to express his somewhat unorthodox approach to the character of Galileo. He was not forced to recant, certainly -- yet he, too, was concerned with censorship. The dangers inherent in speaking out during World War II in a fascist-controlled Europe pressed upon Brecht. His essay "Writing the Truth: Five Difficulties" names courage in the spreading of truth; keenness in recognizing the truth; skill in manipulating it; judgment in who should hear it; and cunning in disseminating it. The most important of these is the keenness to recognize the truth and the skill which, thanks to the Imprimaturs in our own minds, has suffered most.

We all have our own personal "truth," and, if not, we are welcome to go out and choose one; we are even free not to choose one. We are free to talk to each other about our respective truths, even to urge them upon one another. While this may not gain us friends, it will not cause our arrest in most cases, as Vonnegut points out. "When I learned politeness at my mother's knee.. I learned not to offend anyone by discussing excretion, reproduction, religion, of a person's source of wealth. We are free to discuss all those things

now. Our kids aren't crippled anymore by good taste." Vonnegut said this in an address at the rededication of a college library, in 1973. It may have been true then; it may even be true now, although "good taste" was certainly one of the reason why those little stickers were to appear on album covers. I may agree that my 15-year-old brother shouldn't listen to Black Sabbath or Motley Crue, not because the lyrics are offensive to my sensibilities but because the screeching voices and guitar riffs are offensive to my ears. I tell myself that my repeated admonitions to "turn it down," or off altogether, are due to esthetic consideration. If Keats was right -- if "beauty is truth, truth beauty" -- then I am justified in restricting my brother's listening habits. But if Kurt Vonnegut is right, and the truth --anyone's truth, even a 15-year-old's truth -- is not always couched in the prettiest terms, I guess I'll have to learn a sixth Brechtian skill -- the courage, not to speak my truth, but to accept others' truths when I don't necessarily agree. Otherwise I am my own Imprimatur.

At the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, the press were appalled by police brutality towards anti-Vietnam demonstrators and towards the journalists themselves. They reacted accordingly in the media, dramatically and bombastically condemning Mayor Richard Daley and his police force. They were then shocked to find out that what most disturbed Middle America -- the majority of readers -- was not the actions of the police but the actions of the demonstrators. Coverage of controversial issues such as the civil rights movement and Vietnam demonstrations declined sharply after the convention. The media were responding to what the public did and didn't want to hear. They did not so much suppress the truth as omit it, figuratively stamping "Unfit for public consumption -- signed, The Public" onto stories and clips that would never make it into the news.

I had an argument with a friend the other day who was in the middle of writing an ethics paper. His roommate had recommended that he use some books by Ayn Rand, the objectivist philosopher, as a basis for his own thesis about Christian versus secular ethics. He was quite enamored of what he'd read so far; he tried to persuade me to read her,

knowing that I disagreed with what I already knew of Rand's position. I flatly refused. I knew, I told him, that I wouldn't agree with the system of belief she propounded.

Kurt Vonnegut, again in Palm Sunday, described the prideful condemnation of his book by people who hadn't even opened the cover of it. They "say that they have not actually read the books, but that they have it on good authority that the books are bad for children." Imprimatur, at least, had to open the flyleaf of a book before they imprinted or refused their approval of the text. Next time I'm at the library, I think I'll check out The Fountainhead or Atlas Shrugged.

Karen Trimble

THE PAINTER

My mother doesn't usually write me letters, and, when she does, they are often sandwiched between wedding announcements torn from The Boyertown Times and junk mail notices to renew my subscription to Time. She doesn't use the stationery stored in the office closet; she saves that for what she calls "real letters to real people." Her latest thoughts are jotted on an inventory sheet from B & P lamp supply. I notice that nine-inch Tiffany shades are backordered again.

The letter is short; Mom says she hates writing to me because she knows I check for spelling and grammar. "I know your laughing at my grammar," she writes. I kick myself for noticing. She writes of trivial incidences, the things that she knows I miss. Last year I knew that Dad watched "Summer Lovers" on the UHF channel three times because he "liked the soundtrack." I didn't know my brother broke his wrist.

"Aunt Ruth stopped by the studio and bought the rose tea set, then ordered two plates with chickadees," Mom wrote. "She absolutely fell in love with the oil painting in the parlor, the barn above Schlegel's Grove. What do you think? Should I sell it?"

My parents, my brother, and I used to fit in the one seat of our old Chevy truck. The huge cab bulged and I could crawl into the slatted wood body from the outside, stepping from the running board, to the body, the bulging door, to the top of the cab. The body held enough sawdust for forty cows. The gritty orange dust blew in ripples on the hood of the truck, and fiberglass sparkles glistened in the hair on Daddy's arms. He wore a face mask to throw the sawdust underneath the sweaty cows.

It is the swollen hood of the truck that I remember as Daddy downshifted to climb what we called The Spooky Road. Actually not a road at all, but a gravelled horse trail, Orchard Lane wiggled its way past rusty and abandoned trailers, piles of cracked tires, overgrown pastures. Daddy called the entire

area Woodchoppertown, but Woodchoppertown only started on the down side of the hill. People really lived in refrigerator boxes in Woodchoppertown, their empty clotheslines stretched from tree to tree. Dad said there were families in the deep woods operating stills, thinking liquor illegal.

My seat was next to the window of the truck and its rusty lock made a satisfying metallic plock! as soon as Dad turned the truck onto The Spooky Road. I wasn't afraid of old men with beards and shotguns; I was frightened that long snakes would drop from the thick trees and force the truck doors open.

Dad pulled into a ditch at a straight section of the road and crawled from behind the steering wheel to pick red raspberries. My brother and I pulled our shirts out straight and filled the pocket with the berries that we didn't eat.

I never understood why there was no floor in the middle or the rubble of the barn, above Achleget's Grave, but the painting above our mantel reinforces that memory. The oil painting shows two children in plaid pants and turtlenecks, standing in the the middle of four yellow stone walls, the walls only slightly taller than the children. The grass is above their knees.

The barn, just barely visible from The Spooky Road, had been no more than four crumbling walls for so long that not even my father could remember what tragedy had reduced the barn to its present state. Nor could we remember just when and why the old man that my brother called Pappy, Mark's name for anyone over forty-five, moved out of a flat green tar-paper shack and into a one-room smokehouse. The shack had only one floor and reminded me of a garage. It was not entirely green: I could see square patches of black and an occasional linoleum tile. The house looked like a patchwork quilt. The doors were mismatched. One appeared to be a swinging door from a milkhouse. It was the chalky color of whitewash. Another was corrugated metal, the sides extending over the hinges. The tar-paper shack, its windows boarded with BEWARE OF DOG posters, is in one corner of

Mom's painting. A rusty dogchain hangs from a washline, its brown wire grown into a tree.

As Mom sketched, my brother and I crawled around the building, pretending we were archeologists, fabricating stories about the odd-shaped stones we found. A mulberry tree twisted from the rocks. The fruit was seedy, and stained our tongues.

"Why does Aunt Ruth want that painting?" I asked when I called Mom later in the week.

"She has an oil that I did at the same time--the rust pump hanging on the wall of the old pigpen. They're the same color schemes, and the same style. She thinks they'd look good next to each other in her living room," Mom said.

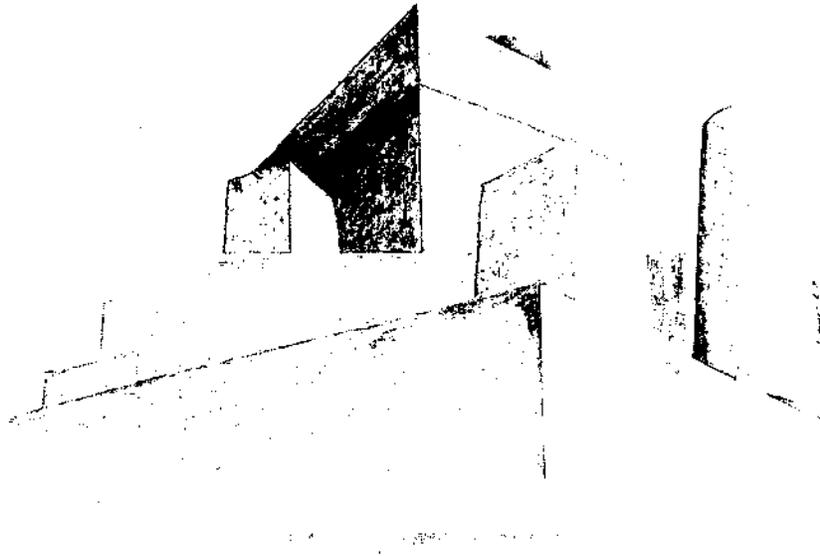
There was a time that Mom painted in the attic above my bedroom, her hair pulled back underneath a blue handkerchief, her fingernails oily brown from the paint. She never held her paintbrush in her teeth.

She kept her sketchbook on the floor, the lines of her drawing feathery; the subject unshaded, incomplete. She glanced down occasionally as she drew the building boldly on the canvas; more often her eyes drifted to the rough ceiling of the attic, checking her memory against her sketches.

Mom painted the skies first, fast thick swirls with a large camel hair brush. Dad said he saw evil faces in the clouds and Mom laughed.

She then moved to the building itself, choosing a thin brush to dot in the uneven stones. She rinsed her brush in oil after the walls were finished, dipped its tip in green, then yellow, and pulled thin tufts of grass around the building's rubble.

Mom pulled her lips tight in front of her teeth, cracking her lipstick. "What do you think?" she asked my father.



"It looks like the place," he said.

The waiting room smells like sterilized needles. Two small boys, one blonde and the other too small for his new teeth, are looking for hidden pictures in an old issue of Highlights. Their mother is smiling over the May Glamour.

A teenager is sitting on a plastic chair next to a musical sculpture by Val Bertoia. The girl occasionally plays the long bars of metal like a harp. She is reading Reader's Digest. She reads an anecdote and laughs. "Mom," she says, pointing at the magazine, "did I say funny things like this when I was little?"

The mother looks up and reads the paragraph. "You said some funny things," she says.

"Like what?" asks the teenager, laying the book on the table. "All sorts of things," says the mother. "I always thought they were so odd I'd never forget, but now I can't remember any of them."

There is a white house next to the tar paper building. A porch stretches the entire length of the house, with rocker chairs and wicker swings positioned between round pillars. The house doesn't have shutters, making the evenly-spaced windows look like sleepy eyes, the corners full of sand.

The night before Halloween is Mischief Night. Teenage boys, sometimes paired with heavily made-up girls in faded denim jackets, mix up buckets of raw eggs and honey to cement toilet paper to car and house windows.

The old man that lived in the white house was nosy and possessive. He chased a band of teenagers, bars of soap clenched in their gloved hands, away from his pickup truck twice and called the Colebrookdale police when he saw four boys lighting a thin band of rubber cement across Orchard Lane. The boys came back and drew snaky lines of paint all over the white house and porch. The sleepy eyes looked

shocked, spray painted lightning shooting from their pane pupils.

The rockers stayed on the porch all winter. The man sat on a rocker well into November, when the tightness in his chest convinced him that winter wasn't just around the corner, it was gushing into his lungs. The squiggly lines remained until the man died and his sister sold the house. I still see the house, the man sitting straight on the porch, the background a field of wrinkled stripes like worry lines.

I found the scribbled paragraph in the back of a flowered photo album. I was surprised; I hadn't known my father wrote anything more than checks and an occasional part number for Mom to get from Erb and Henry.

I'm not lying when I say that her eyes are two reflected lights from the Christmas tree. She plays with the wrapping paper, batting the crinkled ball from foot to foot, laughing when I steal her toy. There is a huge velvet bow in her dark hair. She keeps pulling it off; I stick it back on. She is in the center of attention. This year. In a few days, the tree will probably be droopy and dry (next year I must put the tree farther away from the fireplace), and Sandy will have a baby brother or sister with whom to share her wrapping paper, teaching her to love, teaching her to share.

"When did you write this?" I asked Dad. I no longer cared that I felt like a snoop.

Dad read the looseleaf, squinting at his margin additions, so similar to the ones I insert, and smiled. "I forgot all about this," he said. "But I remember it now. It was the week before Mark was born."

"I didn't know you wrote, Dad. Why didn't you ever tell me?"

"I don't know. You were just so cute that I wanted to remember you at that age, and I couldn't figure out how to use Mom's camera," he said.

Mom says the judges walked through the gallery slowly, jotting comments on their clipboards. One leaned back on one pointy shoe and scored a ten beside emotion. "Linda Moser," he whispered to the brownsuited man standing next to him, "very moody piece. There's a lot in there."

"Yup," said the brown-suited man, fingering the yellow JUDGE ribbon on his chest, "it's going to be a tough decision."

The decision went to Mom, and the blue ribbon hangs in her studio. The painting was auctioned after the competition.

Mom covers her canvases before they are started, rather than after they are complete. She is nervous before she starts a painting. "I'm worried I won't get it right and I'll end up remembering the painting and not the place," she says, mixing her paints on wax paper.

Mom called before Thanksgiving. "I sold a lamp today. It was gorgeous; browns and golds with pinecones, I don't think you saw it while you were at home."

"Aw," I say. "I'm sorry I missed it."

"That's okay," she says, and I can hear her smile. "I remember it, and it was good."

Sandy Moser

THE PENNY

Exiting the mall, on the way to the parking lot, I spotted a shiny, round object on the sidewalk. Curiously, anxiously, I approached it. Much to my dismay, I saw the copper head of Abe Lincoln and I strolled on past it. As I reached my car, I fumbled for my keys, dropping a penny or two on the parking lot. I didn't bother to pick them up. Then, on my way home, I pulled up to the Exxon station to get \$5.00 of gas into my gas tank. And being the careless gas pumper that I am, I accidentally overshot to \$5.03--Oops! "Don't worry about it," the gas attendant said referring to the extra three cents. I handed him a five dollar bill.

A great man once said a penny saved is a penny earned. Back in the eighteenth century, to Ben Franklin and the citizens of his day, it was a wise deduction. I remember watching Laura and Mary Ingles on "Little House on the Prairie," ecstatic and overjoyed when given a penny or two from Pa. They raced down to the town store and, gleaming with excitement, they splurged on mounds of licorice, peppermint, and gumballs. Such was the value of a penny in their day. However, it's a different story today. With the ever-escalating rate of inflation, pennies have decreased so much in value that they are nothing more than a nuisance.

Over the years, pennies have diminished in value and now, finally, have reached the dreaded zone of negative marginal returns. In other words, there are no personal gains with an additional penny to our pockets. Instead, we are troubled with the bulky change that is not enough to purchase anything anyway. Or, in still simpler terms, we don't want pennies anymore.

Pennies buy nothing today. In the span of my own lifetime, I have seen the value of pennies fall into obscurity. I recall a time when I myself could run to the Farm Store and buy three fireballs with three cents and a lollipop for a few cents more. This is not so any longer. The fireballs and Bazooka bubble gums are about a nickel wherever you go, and lollipops are about a quarter. Even at the local grocery,

gumball machines rarely ask for a penny to trade in for the candy inside it.

This leads me to another point. Machines hate pennies. The parking meters, the pay phones, the xerox machine at the library, the snack machines and soda machines all refuse to accept any pennies. If you are brave enough to try to feed a machine a penny, it will either choke on it, or rudely spit it out to you again, feeling insulted. Even the change machines, whose sole purpose is to trade your bill with coins, never excrete pennies. They refuse to carry them in the first place.

I have learned that pennies are an effective source for the ultimate insult for people also. A rude waitress who spilled coffee in your lap and gave you the wrong order can receive the ultimate insult if you leave her a few pennies tip. This meager tip will leave her feeling worse off than if you left no tip at all. This reminds me of the time I was driving in New York City. While I was stopped at a light, a squeegee kid, despite my pleas for him to retreat, continued to diligently work on my windshield. Upon finishing his task, he opened up his palm and all I had was a dime to spare. Angrily, he glared at me and purposely dropped the dime in the street. I shudder to think what he would have done to me if I had given him a penny instead.

People also try to get rid of the pennies in their pockets in as many different ways as possible. Working as a cashier, I encounter people daily who dig into the bottom of their purses or wallets to give me their change in pennies where they can easily give me a nickel or dime. And I have found myself doing the same in their situation. Besides trying to spend them, we have come up with ingenious ways to dispense these pennies. Fountains are built into which we can voluntarily toss our pennies. The offertory basket at Church every week provides us with a positive way to get rid of these copper coins. We must face the fact. Pennies buy nothing and are too bulky to keep around.

However, pennies may be good for a few things. For instance, with three of them, you could play hockey on a table top. Or, if you want to know whether you or your

brother gets the last cookie, flipping a penny solves the conflict. But both these functions could just as easily be performed by a quarter, a dime, or a nickel. I may point out that many of us have the odd hobby of collecting pennies in a dish or a jar or a piggy bank where they sit doing absolutely nothing for years. This hobby is yet another convenient method of keeping those pennies out of the way.

My proposition is simple. Get rid of pennies altogether. Our society will not suffer great losses if pennies are phased out of our coinage system. As a matter of fact, society may very well be rejoicing in the streets. We could feel bad for poor Abe if his copper coin is erased from its existence, but he looks better on the \$5.00 bill anyway.

Thomas Cunningham

"THE BEAR" AND TWO BOYS' GROWTH TOWARD MANHOOD

"The Bear" by William Faulkner is a gripping story about a boy's growing up, not just physically, but spiritually and emotionally as well. The main character of this story, the Boy, starts off as an inexperienced youth who accompanies his father on an annual hunting trip. At first, due to his youth and inexperience, he isn't allowed to participate. Gradually, as the years go by, he is allowed to assume responsibility and to actually hunt. Eventually, after an experience of deep and lasting meaning, he becomes aware of what it is to be an adult. This experience involves the Bear, a creature of the forest that goes beyond anything a normal bear might be expected to be. This bear becomes something almost legendary in its proportions. Indeed the description Faulkner gives the reader shows how truly out of the ordinary this bear is. Faulkner has given this bear a "gigantic" body, with feet "fully. . .an arms width" across, making it completely capable of "carrying off a full grown calf." Throughout the story, the Boy attempts to kill the Bear, yet he never succeeds, though this hunting takes years of his life, from childhood to maturity. The way Faulkner shows the Boy growing up really got me interested in the plot because I found myself drawing parallels between the Boy's and my own life experiences. The story made me wonder if there are some rites of passages that all young boys share in common as they journey towards maturity.

Both the Boy and I had similar experiences in the woods as children. I, too, found myself for the first time in a "Deep, dark, hooded, Wilderness" as a young boy when I first went to visit my grandparents. My grandparents live on a mountain in the Berkshires, and calling their place a "Wilderness" is certainly an accurate description. My grandparents own a deeply forested, vast expanse of mountain, with huge spreading trees--oaks, maples, elms--and great sweeping tracts of dense, curling underbrush, complete with assorted wild animals of all types. People have been known to disappear into these mountains, never to be seen again. My grandparents' land is not a casual "playground for children," as my parents informed me at the onset of my trip. Still, just

as Faulkner's Boy was looking forward to his trip with anticipation, so was I.

Once we both reached our destinations, we shared a common dread, the fear of the unknown. As the Boy listened to the "distant sounds," wondering what was going on and half hoping that he wouldn't have to meet the creatures making these noises, I saw myself at the same young age, listening to similar eerie noises. The sounds of the deep woods at night are like nothing else on earth. What initially sounds like a woman screaming as she gets beaten to death soon becomes recognizable as a disturbed quail. At least there the Boy had an advantage over me; I had never even seen a quail before my trip. Equally disturbing were the "glowing eyes" of animals attracted to the campfire. I, and the Boy, made "shrieks" of terror at this sight until we were calmed. He was soothed by Sam Feathers, the old half-breed Indian guide, and my Uncle Larry calmed me down.

My Uncle Larry, although not as "ancient" as Sam Feathers, is very similar to him, being also a "small man...with a great heart." Uncle Larry, like Feathers, has made the woods his life. Although Larry lives in a house, as opposed to Sam's "earthen hut," they still spend their lives outdoors on the land they love the most, Sam as a guide and Larry as an agent of the New York Game Warden's Office. Both men have a great love for and appreciation of the woods. And both men go out of their way to share this love of nature with a "young tenderfoot." Eventually, under the tutelage of our mentors, we both made our peace with the woods and gradually became adjusted to them and they to us. The woods have a real life of their own, we were both taught, and once you make this realization, as the Boy and I did, you can't wait to return to them again.

The next couple of trips to the woods brought an increased amount of woods lore and experience to the Boy and me. Where the Boy was kept busy tending the "tremendous iron pot of Brunswick stew," I was doing a similar task with baked beans and hamburgers. And we both got the honor of tending the fire on a late-night watch. But yet with the increased responsibility came an increased freedom: the

freedom to go "ranging" out on our own. Together we both became experienced in the "trackless ancient timbers." There was a great deal of similarity in the way we arrayed ourselves for our travels. He carried with him only "a compass and a stick for the snakes." I went a bit further and also had a knife and some ham sandwiches. The knife was more for cutting an occasional vine in the path than anything else, but the stick I carried was far more useful. Both his Mississippi and my New York woods had large poisonous snakes. His woods, being a bit more swampy, had cottonmouths, but we both shared rattlesnakes. Both of us increased our knowledge of ourselves due to a rattlesnake encountered on a walk.

Suddenly the Boy froze, immobile, one foot just taking his weight, not breathing not daring to. It was FEAR, BUT NOT FRIGHT as he looked down on it. It had not yet coiled, and the buzzer had not yet sounded either. . . The head slowly raised but not in FRIGHT, NOT IN THREAT quite yet, more than six feet of it.

Just as the Boy had encountered a snake unexpectedly while walking on the trail, so did I. I had just stepped over a log, and there, not three feet away, was a huge timber rattler. I was so startled I was shaking in a cold sweat, but oddly enough I wasn't frightened. I realized the snake could probably kill me before I made it back home, but I didn't really freak out in fright. I just stared at it for a while, and it stared at me for a while. It had been sunning itself on a rock when I had moseyed by. After looking it over for a bit, I just left. The snake let me cross by unmolested and went back to sunning itself. I learned something important out of this incident, something Sam Fathers told the Boy and something anyone who has ever worked in the wild could tell you: "Be scared. You can't help that. But don't be afraid. Aint nothing in the woods going to hurt you if you don't corner it or it don't smell that you are afraid." I also realized I should look more carefully in the future where my path was taking me. Though I have been near rattlers since then, I have never again been that close. I realized how attuned I



was to the woods by the very fact I didn't panic; I just accepted it.

The Boy and I both seemed to mature in our attitudes towards the woods by our experience. The evidence of the Boy's maturation involves his twice not shooting at the Bear. The first time he didn't shoot was because he "couldn't move" he was "so much in awe of this noble animal." The second time he didn't shoot was in order to save his Dog. The Boy, for the second time, had a clear shot at the Bear: "he was so close any bullet would have to be the last one," meaning the range was point blank and there was no way he "could've missed" killing the Bear. Just as the Boy was aiming, his dog slipped its tether and "ran like the wind itself towards" the Bear. The Boy "threw down the rifle" and ran straight at the Bear, grabbing his dog and holding it away from the Bear's reach "long enough for the Bear to turn and shuffle away." This marks a complete turning point in the Boy's attitude towards the Bear and hunting as a whole. Prior to these incidents the Boy's only view had been to "git that critter [the Bear]." Now the Boy would much rather let the creature "live and live in peace."

My change in attitude was a bit less dramatic than the Boy's. I gradually came to the opinion hunting was a stupid pastime, because it was just that, a pastime. Hunting when there is not a need for it reduces man to the most base of creatures by his killing for sport. The Boy realizes this when he passes up a chance to kill the Bear a first time; he reaffirms and strengthens this view by his active refusal to shoot a second time in order to preserve his dog's life.

While the Boy makes a decision to save wildlife by not hunting any longer, I have done my bit to preserve the great outdoors by getting a job with the Maryland State Parks, Forest, and Wildlife division at Sandy Point State Park. I, like the Boy, now find a great joy in wandering through the woods at peace with them, rather than as an armed predator. We both adopted a much more passive, much more mature way of viewing the woods. By this I mean we both now see the woods as a resource to be protected rather than as a private amusement park of destruction.

I realize I can speak only about my own personal growth resulting from my experiences in the woods as being similar to the Boy's, yet I feel I have had a normal childhood. When I asked other people, I found that they too had had similar expansions of responsibility and maturity to the Boy's and mine while growing up. As a result, I feel secure in saying that, yes, there are common patterns to be found when looking at how young boys grow and mature. Futhermore, I think the Boy functions as an archetype, insofar as he represents all youths, and that the woods can be seen as being Life, with all its "pitfalls and rough spots in the trails."

Paul McBride

MY EXODUS

It was a warm, sunny day in Kiev that June afternoon. The clear, blue, cloudless skies were hovering overhead. I was then eight years old and had just gone through the last day of my first grade. My mother, as always, was waiting outside for me to walk home. The streets of Kiev that day were bright and remarkably clean. We passed a monument honoring the Unknown Soldier of World War II, and I laid down a red carnation, which I received upon graduation, in memory of my grandfather who was missing-in-action at the battle of Stalingrad. We paused for a moment and then left. During our journey home, I told my mother what had occurred that school day.

"Leonid Kazanov," asked my teacher, a tall, cruel man in his early thirties, "Do you have your assignment ready?"

"Of course, Comrade Petrovich," I confidently answered.

"Let me see it."

"Ah, Leonid Kazanov," he replied with a grin, "you have made a mistake."

"What is my mistake, Comrade Petrovich?"

Waiting a few moments, he replied, "You have misspelled one word, but, nevertheless, acceptable..."

I told my mother that I almost lost two kilo's during that moment. She grinned subtly and said, "Well, your summer is now here." We soon reached our apartment building. It was an ominous structure constructed with gothic architecture probably dating to the mid nineteenth century. The entry hall was dark and was always filled with the stench of alcoholics. Finally, after a long climb up the stairs, we reached our apartment. Our apartment was relatively large, consisting of about six rooms. Of course, three other families lived in that apartment as well. My mother opened the door

to "our" room and there I saw my father, red with excitement.

"Son, our VISAs came through!"

I could not understand what he meant. My mother was now pale. My father repeated himself, "Son, we are leaving for America!" That I could clearly understand.

Thus, my odyssey had begun. Within one week, we were on a train bound for Vienna, Austria -- the first free Western city. When we arrived, I began to feel the freedom that was in the air. I saw stores that were filled with many delicious groceries and no lines to accompany them. I saw people going to church on Sunday and not one of them was looking over his shoulder, and I heard my first free news broadcast; although I could not understand German, it was my first real taste of freedom. After about a week in Vienna, we were sent to Rome. There we waited about seven months until the United States government made sure we were not political risks. On January 6, 1977, we finally arrived at the John F. Kennedy Airport in New York.

During my parents' wait for an exit VISA, which took approximately three years, and during the period of adjustment in America, my parents faced great hardships. The difficulties ranged from harassment from the KGB to the ever-present struggle with the English language. My parents left everything behind: their language, their culture, their lives. Why, then, did my parents and countless other families leave the Soviet Union for the United States? This essay will attempt to answer this question.

When an immigrant first arrives in the United States, the most notable immediate feature is economic prosperity. The grocery stores in this country are always fully stocked, and unbearable lines to obtain a loaf of bread are unheard of. In addition, just about every family owns at least one automobile. At first, this appears to be a luxury, but the immigrant newcomer soon discovers that automobiles in the United States are not luxuries but rather necessities. The housing conditions in this country become apparent as well.

Every family either lives in an apartment or owns a home. The apartments are rarely shared with other families, and there are countless commissions and administrations to enforce laws which maintain the living conditions to be proper. In the Soviet Union, by contrast, the situation is totally different. Soviet stores, especially grocery stores, are never stocked, and people usually have to wait many hours to obtain a stale loaf of bread or some meat, which, in the Soviet Union, are very rare commodities. To further illustrate this point, let us consider several examples. Poultry or fruit is usually sold at a market, very similar to Lexington Market but, of course, not as luxurious. However, the prices at these Soviet markets are simply unbearable. A whole chicken, for example, could cost about ten rubles. At first, this might not appear to be an exorbitant sum, but when one considers that an engineer's salary is about 120 rubles per month, the price for one chicken becomes apparent. Fruits are a very rare commodity as well. Oranges are usually unheard of and are mostly imported from other East bloc nations. One could expect, therefore, that the price for these oranges would certainly exceed the earnings of even an educated worker such as an engineer. As much as lines in American stores are unheard of, so are automobiles in the Soviet Union. One reason for this, which is not necessarily negative, is the excellent public transport system in the Soviet Union. The Soviets are very proud of their transport system and, as an example, the Grand Central Metro Station in Moscow is decorated with frescoes and famous art works and is always spotlessly clean. But, when one considers the populations of Moscow or Kiev, the public transport system usually loses its clean decor in a crowded rush. Automobiles in the Soviet Union are in the same price range as that of American cars, usually between seven and ten thousand rubles. But, again, when one considers the earnings of a Soviet worker, one could very well answer the question as to why there are no traffic jams on Soviet highways. But perhaps the most striking evidence against the Soviet economy is housing conditions. Apartments are very difficult to come by and, as shown with my personal experience, are usually shared with many families. For a common worker to own a home in the Soviet Union is simply impossible. Only high echelon government officials and members of the Polit

Bureau have the opportunity to own homes. Thus, one simple reason for emigration is economic.

However, the fact that the economic conditions in the United States are far superior to that of the Soviet Union is usually an insufficient reason for emigration. Since most families leaving the Soviet Union are Jewish, another stimulus for emigration is in the form of extreme anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Russia's tradition of anti-Semitism actually began in the Middle Ages and has never really ended. One of the most striking examples of acts against the Jews began in 1881 with the pogroms. These infamous pogroms were aided by government officials hoping to divert political discontent into race hatred. This action indeed proved successful. More than 600 cities and villages were attacked and thousands of Jews were killed and wounded. But in today's government anti-Semitism has taken new forms and is, always, cleverly hidden. As an example, a Jewish doctor who recently emigrated from the Soviet Union reported that his fifteen-year-old daughter was forced to ridicule the Jewish faith in front of her school class. When she refused, she was expelled, and all appeals to have her reinstated were rejected, despite the fact that she was the best student in her class. From a personal experience, I can remember being tormented by my peers just because I happened to be Jewish. But perhaps the greatest incident involving modern day anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union occurred at the site of Babi Yar. A death pit outside the city of Kiev, it was the site where 100,000 Jews were machine-gunned and buried by the Nazis. It was the site of my great grandmother's death. Shortly after the war, a proposal was made to build a memorial to the victims of Babi Yar. The Soviet government refused and proposed to build a sports stadium on the site. However, torrential rains that ensued caused the Soviets to abandon their proposal. The site increasingly became an embarrassment to the government. Finally, in 1976, a monument was erected to honor the dead at Babi Yar. The monument bears a plaque which states that 100,000 citizens of the city of Kiev were here executed by the Nazis. Nowhere on the memorial is it mentioned that 90,000 of those citizens were Jews. Thus, it is evident that

anti-Semitism is another reason for emigration from the Soviet Union.

And Soviet policy concerning anti-Semitism and Jewish emigration appears to see-saw with their involvement in world politics, which only strengthens the desire for Jews to emigrate. In 1979, three years after my family left in 1976, the Soviets, eager for American ratification of the Salt II nuclear arms treaty, needed a more positive human rights image. That year, restrictions on emigration were lifted, and a record number of Jews, 51,320, were allowed to leave the Soviet Union. By contrast, in the early 80's, as tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union increased, stricter emigration policies, as well as other discriminatory restrictions against the Jews, were enforced. In 1982, only 2,688 Russian Jews were allowed to emigrate, and that figure was even less for 1983. As another example, Soviet attitude toward Jews is also linked to the situation in the Middle East. Traditionally, the Soviets have supported the Arab side of the conflict against Israel. Many experts believe that the current proliferation of anti-Semitic propaganda is intended as a means to gain favor in the Arab world. When the Israelis totally obliterated the Arab armies during the Six Day War of 1967, Soviet anti-Semitic propaganda peaked. It appears, then, that Jews are actually used as political pawns, and the desire to leave their homeland is thus intensified.

Of course, there are other minor reasons for emigration in addition to anti-Semitism and its political role and the economic conditions of the Soviet Union. The freedom of practicing religion is one such reason. Some Russians emigrating from the Soviet Union are Christians. Since the fall of the Romanov dynasty with Czar Nicholas II, the Soviet Union has adopted an atheistic policy concerning religion. The Soviet government contends that religion, including Christianity, is bourgeois, and thus cannot be a part of a communist culture. Agreed, there are many churches in the Soviet Union, and there is a church even in the heart of Red Square. But these churches are maintained only for their image and for the satisfaction of visiting tourists. Perhaps another minor reason for emigration is the "inherent" freedoms of the Western culture. This would mainly include

the freedom to travel. Even inside the Soviet bloc nations, it is difficult to move about. When I was about six years old, my parents visited Bulgaria, but they had to obtain the permission of the KGB just to cross the Soviet border! Since my parents and I are now United States citizens, we have obtained passports. We feel as though we hold a Carte Blanche to visit the entire world--well, maybe not the "entire" world. It was certainly a great feeling to visit Paris without the knowledge of having a leash around our necks.

In conclusion, it is clear why Soviet families leave their homeland. Some families seek better economic conditions, others seek to escape the anti-Semitism of their government, and others just wish to live a free life. As for my family, I think we would place into each of these categories. As for me, I can still remember that last school day and Comrade Petrovich grinning over my paper. I am sure when he found out that I had left for America, he was grinning no longer.

Leonid Kazanov

THE HEALING LANGUAGE OF TOUCH

It meticulously wields the slender brush, mixing vibrant shades of oil together on the textured canvas, creating a vision of classic Baroque beauty.

It elegantly caresses each of the keys delivering the concerto with Mozartian virtuosity.

It gradually connects the various arteries with those of the Jarvik-7, executing the surgery with precision.

It...is the human hand, the most accomplished of all of man's physiological features, able to fashion a painter's dream into an oily reality, to master the composer's dazzling composition, to install life into a dying heart patient. But through my own inquiry and experience, I feel the most important utilization of the human hand is the ability to touch another hand.

What is this thing called touch? As noted by William Masters and Virginia Johnson, touch is a silent voice within us that avoids the pitfalls of words, while giving strengthening and healing confidence to the timid, the sensitive and the weak.

An infant cries out in his lonely garrison, the hospital crib. Days pass. The child repeatedly vomits his required food and medicines for reasons unknown. Within weeks, he loses his adorable plumpness, assumes a fetal position, and dies.

Such was the observation of institutionalized babies by Dr. Rene Spitz. Dr. Spitz, America's foremost "touch" researcher, accumulated the records of the one-third of all institutionalized babies in America whose deaths were connected with touch deprivation. His research reinforced the notion held by other scientists that nurturing human contact is essential to human development. Further investigations cast light on this little-known-about subject and revealed some very sad facts.

Those untouched babies that survive physically, research shows, suffer psychologically instead. They tend to experience loss of appetite, fail to grow normally, test below average in intelligence, and often develop abnormal behavior such as autism, hyperactivity, and violent aggression. Touch deprivation causes an inbred frustration and hunger that persists till death, says Dr. Sidney Simon, a clinical psychologist. Without loving touch, we die. And there is the corollary: Being touched in tender ways can be healing and life-giving. But in spite of the research, Americans continue reserved, "hands-off" attitudes.

An intriguing study by British psychologist S.M. Gerard touches on this harmful reality. Gerard spent months dining at restaurants in all the major cities of the world, noting how many times people dining touched during their meals. With typical restraint, couples in England did not touch at all; Americans did little better, averaging a frigid two touches per hour. The mean in Paris was a hundred and ten touches per hour, and Gerard just lost count in passionate Puerto Rico where meals exceeded one hundred eighty caresses, pats, fondles, and squeezes in an hour. "Hustle and bustle America" possesses a discomfort with non-sexual, caring touch not seen in other, more open cultures. We, essentially, cannot live without touch, yet often it appears we can't live with it either. What has manifested this paradoxical catch-22 situation?

The reasons appear to be many and very complex: The apparent breakdown of America's family unit, a paranoia of being thought homosexual or perverted, a suspicion of the unpopular word, "commitment." But quite possibly a Massachusetts University study provided the most inclusive answer. For so many, there is a confusion between comforting touch and one designed to produce sexual arousal. Physical contact, most notably between adults, produces sexual overtones. Whereas babies can be fondled, a loving caress of a friend is asking for trouble or possibly a slap in the face. The problem starts at a very early age.

So often after junior high, children tend to lose loving physical contact with their parents. Touch deprivation will

yield two types of detrimental behavior among the young.

The first is easy to spot. As a school teacher points out, you can see youngsters with such unmet needs in any school. They're the ones who shove and push, knock each other down the stairs, and slam the locker doors on each other's heads. Dr. Simon theorizes that behind every push and every shove, these children, who no longer hug and touch and cuddle with mom and dad, are crying out their skin-hungry needs. Oftentimes, they will misbehave purposely to get punished; for those starving for touch, even a spanking is better than no contact at all.

Second and more dangerous, youngsters with unmet needs may turn to irresponsible sexual intimacy. According to another teacher who worked with pregnant adolescents, they usually find their sexual experiences unfulfilling and move from one partner to another to attain the satisfaction they hunger for. As these youngsters grow, they soon become tomorrow's parents and a vicious spiral results. We must redefine our common interpretation of touch and overcome the perception that touch is a sexual provocation, and that we must feel guilty or embarrassed about physically contacting someone. The touch I speak of is not a sexual trick and is not illustrated in the latest issue of Penthouse magazine under the title, "Rubbing Her the Right Way." The touch needed in society is the hugging, patting, cuddling activities which have no purpose beyond the mere conveyance of affection, support, love. We must see touch as the tender tool of healing it is.

Science Digest recently reported that touch therapy in controlled experiments unquestionably speeded the healing of fractured bones, arrested cancerous tumors, reduced the recovery time for patients, and dramatically increased the survival rate of premature babies. Exactly why loving touch accomplished such near-miracles has not been clearly determined, but it also reduce tension and stress, slowed heart beat, lowered blood pressure, raised hemoglobin levels, and generally generated a sense of renewal in the patient. Such is the wondrous power of touch.



The non-physiological healing that touching accomplishes is the primary reason it is so needed today.

Touch establishes a healing solidarity between two individuals. It utters unspoken words of compassion to those who speak the language. A warm hug from a parent proclaims to a teen that he is understood and valued. It assures an infant that he or she is loved. Hand clasps tell grandparents, "We still need you." The wounds of society are many. Yet the pain will not be as harsh if we just follow Ma Bell's advice and, "Reach out and touch" with words made flesh, the language of touch.

As we become more open and physically close, we naturally become kinder children, more loving friends, and more successful parents. The ability to heal the wounds of fear, insecurity, and loneliness is right at the end of our fingertips, and it is our responsibility to use it. Touch in the face of fear proclaims, "Do not be afraid." Nurturing physical contact in the face of insecurity declares, "Relax, you'll be fine." A loving caress of a lonely individual exclaims, "You aren't alone." As children, we so often cling to our parents for their physical care. And as adolescents and adults, our need for physical contact does not die as we inherit the responsibilities of the maturation process. As long as fear, insecurity, and loneliness exist, touch will always be needed. Emotional as well as physical healing is the product of loving touch. With it, we can all become one another's caring therapist.

From my inquiry into outside resources, books and experts, I want now to turn to my own experience with the healing language of touch.

Several months ago, I sat in a crowded theater watching a compelling movie, "Children of a Lesser God," which first exposed me to the mysterious world of the deaf. In the midst of this courageous love story between a deaf woman and a speech teacher for the hearing-impaired, I witnessed the strange beauty of sign language. Powerful scenes depicted the struggle of deaf children attempting to shatter their lonely silence through "hand" language. Hands are their

precious key from loneliness in their silent cocoons. Through various gesticulations, these youth expressed their fears, their hopes, their loves.

Similarly, sign language holds a personal message for me, in spite of my ability to hear. There is a precious language I have often chosen not to speak. Like sign language, it expresses feeling in a unique way...and is right at the end of my fingertips. It is the language of touch.

In the final scene of "Children" the deaf woman Sarah and her hearing lover vow to meet in that place where there is, in their words, "no silence and no sound," and quietly join hands. It is from this plane of touch, where there is "no silence and no sound," that I so often run. The absence of the language of touch damaged a very special relationship in my life.

As a child, I experienced many cherished moments. Probably the most cherished of them all would be those moments when my father, forming his words into flesh, lovingly held me. Often, as we left the house together, the winter mornings hastened our journey through the concrete course to Northwood Elementary School for first grade class. My father and I completed this treacherous trek everyday, hand in hand, only separating them for an occasional wiping of a "sniffle" from my reddened, runny nose. I remember fondly my plump, dimple-knuckled hands semiencircling "Daddy's" soothing palm. The chilling frost was made bearable by the warmth generated from his grasp. The experience transcended mere handholding. That hand I held was also my shield; from fear of school, of the cold, of the vast fleet of automobiles speeding by us. At the conclusion of our journey, as the terrifying colossus of the school entrance grew visible, I simply turned around quietly, with rattling Batman lunchbox and Mighty Mouse duffle in hand, and embraced my fellow journeyer, my handholding partner, my father. "Do not be afraid," his hold seemingly said to me, "I'll be back soon." I listened to and learned those unspoken words. But as time passed, I lost sight of their value.

Through the formative years ahead, the language of touch was often spoken by my father; before I ate dinner, at "good-night" time, when my Captain America doll lost his leg, and when I was ill. This abundance of physical affection from my father resulted in my taking it for granted and, eventually, resenting its constant presence.

In third grade, my parents enrolled me at Mt. Washington Military School for Boys where I learned how to become a man. I was popular and enjoyed the comradie of friends. This popularity naturally bred confidence, and I soon felt it improper and effeminate to be hugged, kissed, or otherwise physically harassed. "Come, give Daddy a hug, Leo," my father exclaimed as I entered our dining room on a joyous third grade report card day. Hesitating, I stiffly extended my arms in the same disciplined manner I saluted my first sergeant at school. My father still embraced me with his usual unbridled tenderness.

My pseudo-machismo insecurity with my father's affection was soon more blatant and offending. The specific moment when my discomfort with touching my father grew into outright hostility I cannot recall, although one incident is still vivid memory. My budding interest in athletics, which so often solidifies or supports a father-son relationship, only succeeded in alienating my father and estranging us from one another even more. As an arrogant, loud-mouthed little league baseball player, I once reeled away from my father in complete horror after he attempted to actually hug me in front of my whole Loch Raven Ravens baseball team for earning the coveted "game ball." I reasoned that no Eddie Murray would have gotten hugged for hitting a home run against the Yankees so why should I suffer the embarrassment? This "hands-off" reaction in front of so many people was a powerful catalyst in the erosion of our relationship.

Daddy's courageous efforts to care for me were never more evident than in those situations where his patience overcame his anger. I did, in fact, realize this; yet because of my immaturity and selfishness, I persisted in my cruel behavior. My very first date, with my adorable, chubby-cheeked eighth grade classmate, Angie Loverde, was an

unforgettable experience, primarily because it was the painful turning point in my untouchable relationship with my father. This situation occurred as we, my father, Angie and myself, were crossing a bustling intersection on Belair Road to Skateland. These days, he touched me far less than ever before, but because of the dangerous traffic, he grabbed my wrist to ensure my safety. I gently pulled away. Suddenly, he exploded in a burst of obviously suppressed frustration, and yelled, "You don't like to be kissed. You don't like to be hugged even by your own father! Good, go, you're not my son. You're not my son." I was shocked. This was the first time my father had revealed his hurt. Angie gazed at me dumbfounded. I watched him walk to the other side of the road, alone, as a fleet of automobiles sped by him in the enveloping darkness. He was gone. I could feel the cold. Guilt seared through my conscience.

As I had previously alienated him, so too did he now alienate me. I concluded he no longer loved me. I tried long and hard to ignore my conclusion. It was impossible. No matter how selfish I had been in the past, I had never envisioned this to happen. Even after all my rude actions towards him, I could not help but feel crushed at the notion of my own father not loving me. The lost language of touch coincided with the lost relationship with him. I grew lonely. Like the deaf child who refused to learn the language and communicate, I was alone in my silent cocoon. The last remnants of touch were my father's cold handshakes at "peace" in church. We uttered only superficialities in each other's presence. Our conversations eroded to shallow discussions on rides to school, dinner time, and of course, about grades in school. My father suppressed any desire to express himself through physical affection. The love he had for that language had left only a bitter aftertaste. I listened for signs. I heard none.

Another dramatic jolt sent our relationship on yet a different level. On April 2 of that same year, I attempted to cross a bustling intersection and was hit by a speeding car, shattering my pelvis, suffering a concussion and severe lacerations. In those chaotic moments immediately after the accident in the emergency room, where my school uniform

was caked with blood and torn to shards, pain blinded my tearful eyes. I struggled to open them. Slowly, my heavy lids spread to an agonizing squint. I could vaguely see the medics injecting fluids and painkillers in my shattered lower body. At that moment, I caught a brief glimpse of someone familiar. It was my father. I felt his powerful hand, the hand I had so often shoved aside, supporting my painful shoulder, and once again I heard those words, "Do not be afraid." Even as I was steeped in this extreme emotional as well as physical pain, I longed to tell him my true feelings, to express my apologies, and my love. Yet before I could summon the courage, he held my hand, like days of old, and with words made flesh, said it for me. At that moment, I knew. I knew my father did indeed love me. I shut my eyes from the blinding surgical light above me and relished this moment where there was "no silence and no sound."

It has been four years since that accident which reversed my relationship with my father, and my struggle to learn this healing language of touch continues. My father and I have grown closer, working away, like determined deaf children, to overcome past insecurities and pain in order to become fluent in the language of the hands. With the undying determination exemplified by the young students in "Children of a Lesser God," I sincerely believe the insecurities will, one day, be overcome. It will take time. But when it finally occurs, I will be glad.

The human hand: capable of promoting life through the miracle of loving touch, or of serving death through the withholding of that same gift. We all have this wondrous power to make our lives and the lives of our loved ones richer, happier, and healthier. And it's right at the end of our fingertips. Let's keep in touch, in that place where there is "no silence and no sound," with words made flesh: the healing language of touch.

Leo Jacobo

FARE THEE WELL, SISTERS

When the wind becomes bitter and I am walking along with my hands shoved deep into my pockets, I recall cold sauerkraut and a cold day in January at My Sister's Place, a shelter for homeless women, where I watched a particular woman lift forkfuls straight from the can to her mouth. She was hungry and had bought the sauerkraut to satisfy a craving; I was around as a volunteer participating in a three-week course designed to let students see the less fortunate side of Baltimore. My Sister's Place seemed like a challenge I wanted to tackle--the call for sensitivity and an open mind and a tough spirit. So I went to the shelter as much to find out about myself as to find out about the homeless who populate the streets of Baltimore, and, like cold sauerkraut and a cold January day, what I discovered chilled me.

My days began when I stepped off the MTA bus and walked the hundred feet to My Sister's Place, past a few figures huddled silent and shivering on stair stoops to a group of women gathered at the shelter door, stomping to keep warm. The door locks automatically when it shuts, so I would knock to be let in, already chilled through despite the shortness of my trek. Yet I felt guilty crossing the threshold, for I had just arrived, whereas the women standing outside had been exposed to the harsh weather so much longer than I, some all night, some since the night shelters had sent them forth early that morning.

Throughout my stay, such discomfort became a second self, shed only when I left their strange world to return to my familiar one. An entry in the journal I kept about my experiences at the shelter ends with my writing, on my next to the last day there, that "I still believe I'm outside the window looking in." And so it was; I was an anomaly in the world of homelessness, as much for my youth as for my affluence, yet it never ceased to amaze me how interested the women were in where I went to school and what I planned to do with my life. Though I rarely detected any hostility, one young woman two weeks into my stint told me that almost everybody at My Sister's Place hated me because I seemed to have it all. Perhaps she was reacting to her own situation, a bleaker

future than mine despite her talk about taking vocational courses and entering the computer field. In any case, her revelation served only to heighten my feelings of being misplaced and to rouse feelings of almost-shame.

Since talking about myself made me uncomfortable, I tried to encourage the women to talk about themselves, encountering stiff resistance to no resistance at all. Several women, once asked how they were, would launch into long speeches about their personal problems, eager for a fresh ear to tell their troubles to. During one conversation on my second day at My Sister's Place, I learned of a woman's former mental institutionalization, her drinking and drug habits, her separation from her husband, and her financial status. As I wrote in my journal, "I guess the intimacy of it is not so surprising as their willingness to divulge things in front of relative strangers." I surmised then and still imagine now that this unburdening may become easier when one is exposed so often to a system which pries into personal lives.

Reactions like hers, however, came seldom, so that I could many times be found sitting in a chair reading a magazine. Some women by their body language warned me away, in the lack of eye contact and the closed faces, while still others would respond in monosyllables to a question before resuming their pacing or staring or whatever. Because I wanted to feel as if I was of some help to these homeless women, I felt frustrated by my inability to get beyond surface chitchat, even when it provided such gems as Ronald Reagan's needing to be dumped into a garbage truck. In retrospect, I can see the need for an aloofness and taciturnity among the homeless: they live their lives in public places, never far from probing eyes save for a bathroom stall perhaps. By day many frequent crowded streets or equally crowded shelters; by night many repair to facilities where the set-up is like one big slumber party minus the fun. Faced with so little privacy, it is no wonder most of the homeless want to maintain some sort of social distance, to preserve a shred of dignity and identity.

By maintaining a social distance, the women could control part of a world so much out of their control: always

eating what others have decided to fix, with no room for preference save taking the food or leaving it; always waiting for this or that shelter to open and being asked to leave in the morning even though one might not be fully rested; at My Sister's Place always having to ask to take a shower and having to have others do one's laundry whenever they get around to it. "It must be like being in a holding pattern each day, never being able to land with any permanence," I wrote, yet I witnessed a quiet resignation among the women at the shelter. I saw it in their patient standing at the door until someone opened it and in their orderly and rapid leave-taking at four though it meant being out on the streets the whole night or until the evening shelters opened, usually sometime after the dinner hour. Those who pounded on the door hoping to gain an early entrance or who lingered past closing time despite the protests of the staff were exceptions.

For some, resignation bordered on passivity, a seemingly indifferent day-to-day survival, hours in limbo, lounging in one of the hodgepodge of chairs which fills My Sister's Place. Weariness from constant wanderings and inadequate food and the harsh weather might account for this passivity, but it was frightening nevertheless, for it seemed as if the women had given up on life itself and were merely existing. Those who took an interest in the world around them seemed more hopeful, resigned to their present position but not to life or living. One woman, for example, crocheted granny squares, stitching one only to rip it out again, while another went to church daily and pored over her Bible when not socializing. As someone wanting to help, indifference was even harder to handle than the surface chitchat. If the women who sat around silently all day did not care about themselves, how could I care about them? On the other hand, even when hope touched despair, as when one young woman, pregnant and with her husband in another shelter, cried as she wondered what would happen to her, at least there was a response to life.

The most resigned of the women were the least likely to take the daily showers encouraged by the staff at My Sister's Place; the majority, however, seemed to take pleasure in maintaining their appearances. I had envisioned unkempt,

unclean ladies but found instead ones who wore make-up proudly and often heavily, who sometimes wore high heels despite all the trekking they had to do, who kept the washing machine in almost constant use. The desire for cleanliness and femininity of some sort seems to be limited only by lack of facilities; given the chance, most would do as one woman I saw while manning the clothes room, where those who need to can obtain pants and shirts and shoes. She opted for a pair of lacy underwear over others more her size.

Along with the normal desire to look nice, there was the normal desire to have something they could call their own, and so the women took care to carry their bags of clothes and other supplies with them at all times, or at least to keep a close eye on them. The basement of My Sister's Place is filled with large plastic bags labeled with the names of the homeless and stuffed with blouses and slacks, their own clothes just awaiting the time when they could be placed in their own basements. On my only visit outside the shelter, I went with a staff member to see a woman who had frequented My Sister's Place earlier but who had made the dream of owning her own place a reality. I was forewarned that this woman's place was a dark, dank dungeon in a rundown hotel, but even this warning did not prepare me for the hovel I found: a square no bigger than eight by eight; a dirty window that did not shut fully, letting in little light but an abundance of bitter air; peeling paint and no door knob; barely enough space in which to maneuver; a confusion of clothes and small items overspread by a foul stench. And this hellhole was eating up most of her meager monthly income, costing her three hundred dollars a month and leaving her only some tens of dollars left to buy food and other necessities. Because she had an ulcer on her back, she could not even go outside very often, but still she loved her room, loved it despite the choking smell and the crowded corners and the cold, simply because it was her own, a place she could call her own.

That scene shook me, to think that someone would live in such a state just because it was a form of stability, and so my own stability was shaken. Other realizations drew me up short also, especially when, through talking with some of the

women, I learned a bit about them. A few were mentally ill, released from hospitals without a support system to ease the transition, hence their ending up on the streets. There were those whose marriages had broken up, leaving them lonely and with no place to go, and those who simply did not have the money to pay the rent. Most distressing, however, was the revelation that several of the women I met had some college education yet still had become homeless. And there I was in college

Of course, there were some funny moments amidst the depressing atmosphere of the shelter. One day a woman entered wearing only boots and a short dress ending just below her buttocks--nothing on her legs, no jacket, no underwear. She was oblivious to the cold, crying "Look at the sunshine outside!" And she was equally oblivious to the wondering stares of staff and homeless alike. Though somewhat amusing, it was only so at first glance; upon second thought, it became a rather sad sight, and for me, it got harder and harder to face the sad sights in the shelter. No matter what the true temperature, it always felt colder when I left My Sister's Place than when I entered it, colder because I was shivering on the inside. My spirit was not as tough as it needed to be, my ability to withstand the cold less than adequate. Consequently, my promises to visit the shelter as often as I could during the spring semester resulted in my stopping by just once, a brief stop to drop off the plastic grocery bags so in demand there, a stop too like those who would drop off secondhand clothing--quick, bring it in, and hurry away again. By my avoidance, I think I hoped in some way to forget the inner chill, the coldness of walking in a bitter wind back to the bus, the coldness of sauerkraut lifted in forkfuls straight from the can to a waiting mouth.

Stephanie Boos

REDICULE

There are sultry reds, red heads, sweet smelling red roses, dry red wines, and red hot lovers with ruby red lips wrapped up in scarlet letter affairs; red dice and risky red bets with racketeers in the red rooms; red-eyed, red-nosed men roaming the red light district.

There are cautious reds, red lights and danger red zones, stop sign reds, fire engine reds responding to code reds and red alerts; and red skies in the morning giving sailors warning, red skies at night giving sailors delight, red sails in the sunset and red dot sales.

There are the patriotic reds who fought the red coats, the red, white and blue waving under the rockets' red glare, red-blooded Americans and red necks who'd rather be dead than red.

There are red rages, seeing red with a raging red fury, like a red rag to a bull.

There are famous reds like Foghorn Leghorn (Rhode Island Red Chicken, that is), Red Skelton, Red Buttons, Red Foxx, Red Auerbach, Vanessa Redgrave, Robert Redford, Helen Reddy--and who could forget the famous red head, Lucille Ball?

There are sporty reds: Red Sox, Redskins, the Cincinnati Reds and the Detroit Red Wings, and red-shirted players.

There are shades of red: red rouge, metallic reds, autumn's reds, blood reds, cherry reds, and Christmas reds tied in red ribbons.

There are books that are red: A Study In Scarlet, The Red Badge of Courage, The Hunt for Red October, Red Dawn; red rockers and musical reds: "Red Shoes," and "Under A Blood Red Sky."

There are childish red rovers sending Tommy right over, Red Riding Hood, red tin soldiers, Snoopy's flying Red Baron, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, and little red school houses.

There are red jokes that are black and white and red all over.

Then there's the Lady in Red, and business men in the red, thieves caught red-handed and red-faced fools.

And there too are readers red in the face from reading about red.

From the time of the ruddy fools of the royal courts with their Tom Fool's colors of red and yellow and before, we have been constantly redefining and redressing our renditions of red. Red Amulets and red rubies kept the Ancient Egyptians from fire and disease, while Scottish newborns necklaced in red ribbons bore the luck of the Irish with them. Indians painted themselves in ceremonial reds and the Chinese were wed in red, but Emily Post would have reeled over dead if she caught a bride in red.

Red is the least refracted end of the spectrum, but has the highest energy of them all. It stops traffic, turns coals to diamonds, and reduces towers to ashes. It sparks passion and anger and keeps the heart pounding. It hides in shame and glows with joy. It tempts and taunts and yells beware: a black widow spider, a whore, and a bashful boy.

We can't reduce red to wavelengths or even reduplicate it, hoping to find out what makes red so red; but we can look at what's red around us. From red we build part of ourselves and from us red becomes redder. Red burns desire in our soul and rules us with impulse. To be red is to be ahead of the rest, extroverted and impassioned, someone of vital temperament.

Red is a color of extreme. It is red or it is not. There are no middle reds, no peaceful reds, or roundabout reds, maybe reds, neutral reds, rational reds or unsure reds. Reds

are riotous, ridiculous, radical, raging, repulsive, ravenous,
raving, heartrending, and revising.

Red doesn't end with spectra, it redoubles with tastes,
smells, and feelings. Like a glass of red wine, red has
volume. It's warm with temperature and flaring in
temperament. Red gleams like a ruby and glows like a
lantern. Our memories abound in red and are constantly
triggered by red. Where it loses color it gains in colorfulness.

Surely then there is more to red than meets the eye.

Mark Gloth



2012/06/07

CLOSE ENCOUNTER

When I entered Loyola's art gallery that day in September, one quick glance around the room confirmed my guess that the work of Tom Lewis was unusual. I didn't know much about him, but what I had heard made me curious. As far as I could tell, he was as dedicated to various social causes as to his art, often using the latter to support the former. I knew he'd been jailed for burning draft records during Vietnam, and the biography sheet provided at the door, besides confirming that much of his art was issued-oriented, told me that he'd also been in prison on a number of other protest-related charges. Wondering what such a man's art would be like, I picked up a list of works and began to make my way around the room.

I had gone less than half way when I saw the three-panel work entitled "Self Portrait of the Artist with Friends." Its unusual composition appealed to me immediately. The three frames held a kind of collage or "scrapbook" of newspaper clippings with names, dates, and phrases superimposed in paint, an innovative depiction of a man through his eventful life.

I paused before this work of art, letting my eyes skip around, noting headlines here and there. And then suddenly one of them brought me up short. I mentioned riots in Baltimore, and, even as I thought, "Were there others besides the ones after King's assassination?," I moved closer to read the date. April 8, 1968. The question mark in my mind exploded into exclamation points as my half-formulated guess was confirmed.

The article I was staring at told the story of an event that was part of my own life, my own self portrait! April 9, 1968 was my first birthday, and, since my family lived in Arlington at the time, the riots that tore through Baltimore and Washington are inextricably linked to that personal milestone. We spent that weekend packed, ready to swing wide around D.C. and Baltimore to reach my grandmother's house, well north of the two cities, if the riots spread across the bridge into Arlington. My uncle, a fireman, had provided us

with buckets of sand -- the best defense against gasoline fires -- just in case there was any violence in our neighborhood without enough warning for us to get out. With suitcases and buckets standing all around, my first birthday must have been celebrated in much the same manner as the first Passover! I don't remember it, of course, but, like most people, I've grown up hearing stories about that party. But my stories deal with more than the mess I made with my cake (though I've heard all about that, too). They hold echoes of the tenion that gripped my parents as they waited for the violence to subside, wondering if we would have to leave our home.

And now I was staring at this piece of my life in someone else's art -- worse, in someone else's self portrait! For a moment I was simply stunned; then I became aware of a kind of anger -- something akin to resentment -- building up inside me. I felt as if my privacy had been invaded, leaving me exposed and vulnerable. There was certainly an undercurrent of plain and simple surprise, but that virtually disappeared under the full force of my indignation. My response may have been, objectively speaking, childish, but, after all, a piece of my childhood was at stake.

I had always considered, not just my birthday, but its setting to be, in a sense, my private property. I can't defend that position logically, because logic had nothing to do with its formation. I think I just tacitly assumed that the whole experience belonged to me (and my family), and, since the setting was part of the experience, it must be mine, too. Putting that idea into words reveals its fatal flaw: The setting isn't "part of" the event that occurs within it in the sense that my explanation implies. But that explanation is far more a verbalization of a feeling than an expression of rational thought, and feelings are rarely bound by the rules of logic.

I think we all tend to be possessive about the circumstances of our lives until some situation makes us realize that we share them, and the nature of that situation strongly affects how we feel about sharing. Sometimes it can be quite pleasant, like when I meet someone else from North Carolina --we're few and far between up here! I find it a bit exciting,

and I always feel as if I'm sharing something rather personal with someone who is, in fact, almost a total stranger to me. But, since I have no reason to dislike such transplanted Tarheels, I don't mind the fact that our backgrounds overlap. Other times it can be very annoying, as it was the time my Mom and I watched a Scoutmaster and his troop being rescued from their canoes -- which were caught in the tops of trees inundated by a flooded river. After almost a month of rain and several days of flood conditions, the boys' leader hadn't had enough sense to cancel the planned outing. "How could anyone be so stupid?," my Mom and I demanded angrily. My Dad and brother are involved in Scouts, and we were both embarrassed and annoyed that someone that foolhardy was connected to the same organization as our family. As a Scout leader, my Dad would have been even angrier if he had watched the newscast, because his connection with that idiot was even closer. When I encountered that picture in the gallery, I was not predisposed to like Mr. Lewis. I have an aunt (a nurse) and an uncle who served in Vietnam, and I'm not inclined to sympathy for those who refused to do the same. Beginning from a potentially antagonistic position, I didn't take kindly to having to share something that personal with him.

Tom Lewis forced me to acknowledge that my birthday weekend had public aspects and therefore couldn't be entirely my own. Having to accept this from someone I saw, however vaguely, as opposed to my family was not particularly pleasant. However, because of the way I first reacted to the idea of telling other people how I felt, I think what he really did was force me to admit to something I already knew was true -- at least for other people. Frankly, as much as I wanted to talk about my experience, I was nervous - mostly because I was afraid that no one would understand what I was trying to say, that people would think I was trying to dress up a moment of surprise at a coincidence. This was not unreasonable in the case of people who hadn't known me that long ago. They could conceivably have trouble relating to my experience without lengthy explanations, so they might not understand, unless they'd had some similar experience. But I felt the same apprehension about discussing the issue with my Mom. Thinking back, I believe this was because I knew

intuitively that my parents, having lived through the weekend and the party as adults, would have a different perspective on the whole situation. They must have known many other people who were deeply, personally affected by the riots, so they would never have developed the degree of possessiveness about those circumstances that I did. This was an admission that the weekend had public, shared aspects, since I knew that my parents knew that already.

So, in one sense, Mr. Lewis didn't teach me anything I didn't already know (except, incidentally, how well I can blind myself to any fact I fear will be unpleasant). But, in another sense, he taught me a great deal. I discovered that, while it may have been bitter going down, the long-avoided fact that the unusual circumstances surrounding my first birthday had also surrounded special events in other people's lives and therefore could never belong to me alone -- well, it wasn't so terrible after all. For right behind the reluctant admission that my private claims didn't have a leg to stand on came a comforting reassurance: No one can ever participate in my personal experience of the event except through me. The circumstances were (and are) public, but the way they connect to my life remains private. Tom Lewis still has nothing to do with my birthday. The connections between each of us and that one event are like private streets, perhaps with gates like the ones all over campus. They give us, as other people's give them, access to the one central event, the riots, in this case, but no one can wander at will from this central point down other's roads to their own experiences. You can only get through if the "owner" gives permission and raises the gate. As proof, need I say more than this? I still have absolutely no idea why Tom Lewis put that clipping in his self portrait; I only know why it would have been in mine.

I was startled into probing the questions of property and privacy by my confrontation with Tom Lewis, and, on the whole, I find my conclusions encouraging. We often share parts of our lives with other people, and often we don't mind: people we went to school with, who were born on our birthdays, who bear our names -- we don't mind them at all. Generally, we only seem to mind when we, for some reason, dislike the persons we're in the position of having to share

with. I minded very much this time, and, having been shocked into looking closely at what was actually happening, I found that I had lost far less than I feared. This was a very reassuring discovery. In the end, I will gladly surrender the settings or circumstances of even my fondest memories to the public domain, for in return I have gained the assurance that the experiences themselves are unassailably mine.

Cathy Moore

THE ROOFWALKER

Was it worthwhile to lay,
with infinite exertion,
a roof I can't live under?
--Adrienne Rich

The midnight air seduces me and I find myself standing on top of the roof of Wynnewood Towers apartment building. Alone and apart from everything: this is a fine place to hide. The shiny black polythene cushioning softens the sound and feel of my footsteps. I run across the roof and up the small stairwell to the monstrous heating vent. I can see so much. No one can see me.

"Que sera, sera...Whatever will be, will be...the future's not ours to see...que sera, sera..." It is January, and the quiet snow that drops upon the rooftop is so lovely. I imagine I am The Snow Queen from the Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale. But we are out here at two a.m. in the morning, singing Doris Day songs at the top of our lungs and toasting Richard Nixon.

"They should have dances up here", I yell to him from behind the heating vent.

"They can't" he shouts. He is jumping and running and sliding all over. "People would get drunk, and fall off."

I hide behind the heating vent and call out to him:
"Yeah, people like you."

Our eyes lock.

He makes a small snowball from the white flakes that are beginning to carpet the rooftop. He hurls it at me, and misses. I run to get snow from the ledge where it seems to be collecting the most.

"I'm going to pick you up and throw you over," he says from behind me.

"You'll kill yourself", I laugh.

It is too close to a challenge for his ego. Before I know it, I am off my feet.

I am too surprised to struggle. Maybe I'm too frightened, too.

"Put me down!" Am I joking or not?

It's snowing harder now. The once black rooftop is almost completely white.

"ONE...TWO...", he is swinging me back and forth over his shoulder. He never makes number three. The roof is slick and he has on tractionless loafers. He slips and falls. I fall with him.

For a moment I cease to exist.

I am teetering on my hips. The top half of my body is over the edge. I am too afraid to scream. Cold Spring Lane looks much too close from here.

He grabs the neck of my jacket and yanks me up.

I can feel his breath against my cheek.

For a full minute, I can't breathe myself. It feels like we're sitting there forever. When I do start to breathe, I starts to cry, too.

"I'm really sorry...I didn't think--"

"I think I cut my neck." I touch the spot that the warm sting is coming from and rub the blood between my fingers.

"You okay, Mimi?" He is as frightened as I am.

"I don't know..." I want to look at him, but I'm afraid. I stare at the snowflakes that one by one float to the ground.

"Let's go inside," I say.

We go down to my kitchen and drink coffee, nervous about our encounter.

I am strung out on caffeine and I need to escape. Earth is nine stories down; sky is only a flight away.

I choose sky, and begin the ascent to the roof.

It is dusty on this unused stairway, and my footprints make tracks in the plaster coating the steps. There is no heat and the dying gusts of winter push through the crack of the window that opens up to my rooftop. I play with the hinges and crawl through the opening.

Aaahh...the sky is gorgeous. I run and jump and recite lines from A Midsummer Night's Dream. I am Puck, I am Helena, I am the captain of the fairy band.

For the first time in several weeks I am alive and conscious of it. The stars that flatten me against the black rooftop and the blacker sky are sheltering me like a blanket and filling me with warmth.

Then, I see her. The security guard standing at the opening, and looking through the same window I crawled out of.

She scribbles something in a note pad, and mumbles into her walkie-talkie.

I pray that she doesn't see me.

In a moment I am sure she hasn't; she locks the window shut and moves away.

Be careful of what you desire, for you will surely get it.

I am two floors away from any other ear that could hear my cry for help. Stuck outside, the poetic evening air becomes just plain cold.

All those years that I spent staring out through windows and now, here I am, stuck on the outside, looking in.

I am tempted to run to the window so that she lets me inside. But, if I am found out here, I will be kicked out of school, no questions asked. Why should the campus security guard have sympathy for some silly white freshman deliberately crossing her boundaries?

But, if I run to her, knocking and screaming, she will take down my student number, and —

I'm sorry but I'm afraid that you will have to come with me and you see that your student handbook says....

And so it goes...

And so it goes...

And so it goes...

The buzz of the heating vent continues.

I wait until the dark shadow with the walkie talkie disappears.

I go to the window and try to open it, but it is shut tight. I will have to break it to get inside. There are no rocks up here, so I remove one of my shoes and hurl it through the glass, hoping no one will hear.

It shatters beautifully.

Carefully, carefully, I climb through the jagged frame. I slit my finger on the glass. But, it's all right. Every time I leave the roof, I exit bleeding.

The next day, my resident assistant complains about vandalism. But, I don't care. It's all right, because I am.

I am here with "Ariel" in my hand, ready to go picking blackberries. I have read too much poetry. Sylvia Plath seems not depressing, but a real voice suffocated by idealists.

The air is warm and silky, like bathwater. I go to the ledge and dangle my legs over the side. It is early May, and I am tired.

The sky is dark as death, and the stars light up like little windows to other worlds, worlds that I want desperately to reach.

I dangle my feet over the ledge...waiting.

I listen and nod.

I want so badly to shut it all off: the lights, the music, and the smell of my perfume. The roof is quiet and dark. The wind caresses my cheek.

Earlier, sitting downstairs in the bathroom, studying Randall Jarrell, I looked in the mirror and saw crow's feet around my eyes, though I'm not yet twenty years old.

Already it's too late for me.

But not too late to jump.

Reaching the ground only takes a step. I've taken millions of steps in my life. What difference would one more make? (A gruesome sequence plays over in my mind. Someone on the fourth floor sits staring out the window, thinking of how beautiful the moon looks or what the weather will be like in the morning. Suddenly, my body flashes by...falling...falling.)

"A life I didn't choose, chose me." The sound of an ambulance sends waves of shock through my body. It is pulling into my building. (My God, I think, have I already done it? Did I jump off and forget? Am I dead? I scan the ground. I don't see any bodies. I guess that I am alive.)

I start from my position and jump back from the ledge and go through the window and don't stop until I am back in my apartment in bed, soundly tucked away.

This year, there are bars on the windows that lead out to the roof. And, I am glad. The girl with her life hanging off the edge is kept inside, restrained and still.

I am rereading A Clockwork Orange. It is a frightening story, and I feel like locking myself in a closet, or locking the book in a closet, where its ideas and my mind are kept at a comfortable distance.

But, some things cannot be confined.

The voices that called me to the rooftop are echoes, but I still hear them. I run down the street at full speed, but I cannot get to a place where those voices can't reach.

And, I find myself standing at the entrance to the roof and peeking through the steel curtain, imprisoned. The air floats through the empty spaces and I inhale--it is the same air, the same window, and I am only a few feet away.

I won't live under the roof forever. When I leave this building, and its locked exits, I worry that the dust will settle in a thick blanket, smothering the rooftop...smothering me.

(But when I close my eyes, I fly through the metal bars: Nothing can confine me. I am there, I am here. On the edge teetering...wondering...falling into myself. Past the boundaries that I put up on my own.)

Mimi Teahan



INFLUENCES ON PEACE

Thoreau once said, "...the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude." I agree with Thoreau, but in daily living I find it hard not to be influenced by the opinions of others. My perceptions are sometimes distorted by even my own emotions.

I had been observing my crabapple tree for weeks. I was familiar with the green leaves, the tiny orange and gold crabapples with tiny tufts at their bases, the thick gray bark that is peeling off in huge slabs. I watched the new branches, skinny twigs sprouting from the sturdy older branches, grow to a height above my head. I learned not to stand beneath the tree in my bare feet--if the crabapples didn't poke the sensitive arch of my foot, they squished under my heels. For my writing class, I was to observe this tree for three months and record my findings in a journal. These observations were to be the basis of an essay at the end of the semester. I not only learned about the tree, however; I also learned about myself.

My seventh grade science teacher drilled "Observation Equals Examination Plus Description" into our twelve-year-old minds. The sing-songy definition played in my mind when I set out with my notebook to write an entry in my tree journal. I think that Mr. Bruzda's good intentions fell short. He forgot an important variable in the equation: mood. The day I got an A on my theology test, I noticed the gold leaves interspersed with the green ones, the dark color of the fallen apples, the spider web in the crevice in the trunk. I thought the dark red fallen crabapples were prettier than the pale orange-yellow ones still on the tree. I marvelled at the spider web, looking at the glistening threads of the design, awe-struck that a primitive-seeming creature could create such delicate, organized beauty. Looking at the tree one morning after my roommates and I had a fight, I became irritated by a fallen branch that was stuck in the split in the trunk. I dislodged the branch and hurled it across the lawn. Disgusted because I thought the tree looked no different, I wrote "No change" in my journal. Stomping home, I grumbled to myself, "How am I supposed to write an essay when the stupid tree

isn't doing anything? This is the dumbest assignment I ever had...." One Friday afternoon when I was due to go home for the weekend, I "observed" my tree as I walked home from class. I later scribbled "Tree looks the same" in my journal. Of course the tree looked the same--I couldn't notice a change from five yards away.

Usually when I wrote in my journal, I'd stand directly under my tree, scrutinizing the trunk and peering up into the branches. From this vantage point, in autumn the leaves looked mostly green, with some gold and some red leaves. Viewing my tree from my apartment window, the tree leaves looked maroon. On a humid, overcast day, the bark that looked dark gray from the apartment window became a very pale gray upon closer inspection. The bright green moss, unseen from the window, contrasted with the nearly white bark.

One day, my roommate Jane and I were walking to class together. I showed her my crabapple tree. "That's the tree you chose?" she asked. "Of all the trees in Charleston, you picked that tree?"

"Why not?" I replied, puzzled.

Jane look at my tree again. "That's a sorry-looking tree, don't you think?" I looked and for the first time I noticed two sections of dead branches that made the tree look lopsided. The trunk, mottled with knot-holes the size of baseballs, looked bruised.

"I guess I didn't really look before," I said.

Jane's reaction reminded me of Bill. I dated Bill freshman year. I loved his blue eyes and broad shoulders. He brought me flowers at work and called me three times a week. After he visited me at school one Sunday, I eagerly asked my roommates what they thought. Jane asked, "Is he losing his hair?"

Chris said, "He was...nice. Somehow I expected him to be taller." Suddenly my Prince Charming was reduced to a

short balding boy. After that I couldn't look at Bill without noticing his receding hairline.

It is winter now and my tree is stripped of both leaves and fruit. The dead branches that once intruded on the beauty of the tree now balance the skeleton. It finally looks the same as every other tree in Charleston, but now it has no character. I find myself looking forward to spring for my tree to return.

Lisa Calvo

THE PROMISED LAND - REVISITED

Moses was a pretty righteous cat, no doubt about it. He blew a wailin' tenor sax in this band of his called "The Hebrew Machine." They were really good -- played all the hot stuff -- everything from Otis Redding and Wilson Pickett to Steppenwolf and Hendrix. They was good enough alright, and they'd practice at it all the time. Had this old boarded up, busted up Safeway rented out down in the west end by the railroad tracks - musta cost 'em about sixty bucks a week or something like that -- and every Friday night ya could hear 'em gettin' in through the pressboard and two by fours -- practice, practice, practice -- all day, all night, wind or rain, sleet or shine -- practice, practice, practice. They were gettin' good man, but they were gettin' nowhere at all. Y'see, nobody in town would give 'em a gig -- "too loud," they'd say, "too freaked-out," they'd tell 'em, "not our kind of music," they'd explain. They were trapped, man, in a big way, and it was definitely no-win.

So anyway, one night, in, like August I think ('cause it was real, real muggy -- like it was rainin' but it wasn't -- y'know, one of those nights when it all gets kinda still), the band was practicin' like usual, really rippin' things up. What with the organ blastin' away like a '59 Vette and the saxophone screamin' and shootin' off sparks and the guitars steamin' and crunchin' and tearin' and the drums blowin' it all away with the crazy wicked fat beat -- man, on a hot wild night, there wasn't one thing badder in the whole damn universe than Moses and the Hebrew Machine. A tornado in a cage man, that's just how it was. Anyway, like I was sayin', it was real hot that night and with the band blowin' even hotter -- well, my man Moses just didn't think his ticker could stand even one more drop of pure soul, and so, lest he cardiac arrest on rock and roll's best, he called it a night, and stayed behind, polishin' his sax for hours it seemed, in the sort-of darkness after the other guys had all split for home. "Man," he thought, clicking shut the latches on his case, "if we only could get just one little break." And then he saw the headlights.

They were really pretty bright, brighter than most (as headlights go I guess), and they cut through the joints and cracks in those old boarded up windows, and got Moses to wonderin' just who in the hell would be pullin' up to some ratty old grocery store in some ratty old neighborhood at such a ratty old hour. "We're closed, man," he joked, half to himself I guess, as he stared outside, y'know, to sorta check things out. In the parking lot sat a cream puff white '69 Caddy DeVille -- loaded to the teeth -- and Moses, gettin' kinda suspicious now, just sort of crept up to the tinted driver's side window as a white-gloved hand extended from it and, moving only one finger, motioned him forward. "You Moses?" said a voice from inside the car, soundin' like Jack Webb at the bottom of a well. "Uh... Yeah, I guess," said Moses as he fooled nervously with his pony tail. "Here." The voice cut off real short, and the hand with the white glove poked out again with one of those little white business cards. Moses carefully snatched it from the faceless fingers. "If you want a heavy gig," said the voice, "then this place is just for you." And with that, the window zipped up, the engine cranked over, and the white Caddy drove off into the steam, leavin' old Moses just standin' there with a stupid look on his face and the little white card that read:

CLUB SINAI-SOUL CITY
EXIT 52 PARAMUS

Now Moses may have been a little weird, maybe, but he was definitely nobody's fool, I can tell you that. If driving to Paramus mean a gig for the Machine, he was already there. After locking up the store and putting on all his leather and stuff, he hopped on his Harley (a tough old '69 750 with the front end kicked out, duals all around, and a funky custom chrome sissy bar), and headed straight up I-95, into what he was gut-sure would be something big.

Now by this time, it was getting really late, and even Moses was startin' to feel more than just a little wiped out. Seemed like he'd been ridin' for hours when he finally hit exit 52 off of the parkway, and started windin' his way up this big old hill that the joint on the card sat way up on top of. He was almost positive that there weren't any mountains in



Paramus, but he figured he'd think about that later. When he finally pulled into the parking lot of the place at the very, very top, there wasn't a car, bike, girl, or band to be found -- completely dead on a Friday night when at least a few folks should be swingin' around. Nope -- all there was, was a whole lot of nothing -- just a run down old juke joint with this big red neon sign that kept flashin' on and off, on and off-- CLUB SINAI-SOUL CITY - LOSERS ONLY. "Great," thought Moses, "just great." In fact, he was just about to pull that big two-wheeler of his out of there and write the whole damn thing off, when he heard those drums -- played soft at first, but then growing and roaring and booming so loud that it shook that rickety old dive to its very bones. Moses, feelin' kinda rattled by it all, slowly got off his bike and crept real easy-like to the door, with those drums pounding away to the stars like there wasn't gonna be no earth at all when they finally stopped. When he pushed the creaky old door open, Moses just stuck his hands in his pockets, smiled a tiny little smile, and keeled clean over, white as a ghost. On the stage inside, glowin' and gleamin' in the brightest white spotlight of all time, was the granddaddy dinosaur set of skins of all the eons of space -- and then some to boot. Quad bass, triple scale toms, floor roto-mounts, full tilt percussion rack, brass chime bar with overhead lift support, deep-groove snare, more cymbals than in a hundred-million Sousa bands -- this was the one and only -- walking talking death and destruction drums. I guess Moses just couldn't handle the splendor of it all. But, best of all, each gigantic, glossy, monster bass drum head was emblazoned with the name of the wildest drummer Moses had ever heard, written in gigantically chunky black letters as plain as the whole crazy scene itself:

G-O-D

Moses managed to somehow revive himself just as God was rumbling his totally blow-out solo to a close. "Moses," said God, in a real cool voice, like Don Cornelius at 5000 decibels, "I want you to get this straight, man, cause I'm only gonna say it once." "Yes, God," answered Moses, starting to shake a little bit in his biker-boots. "You're the best I've heard in a long time, man, and I've dug some pretty heavy acts. It's all up to you now, to spread the word -- let 'em know it's got

soul!" God paused, wiped his brow with a hanky, and played a quick four beat pattern on his lightning snare. "What word?" asked Moses, almost whispering. God answered quietly, like a great engine racin' with the farthest horizon, and slid into a baby blue jazz beat with just his brushes whisking and his cymbals riding -- "Let my people rock, baby -- that's all they gotta know." Moses could still hear him playin' cool as he kicked-started his bike and howled off the mountain, grinning from ear to ear.

Michael Smith

