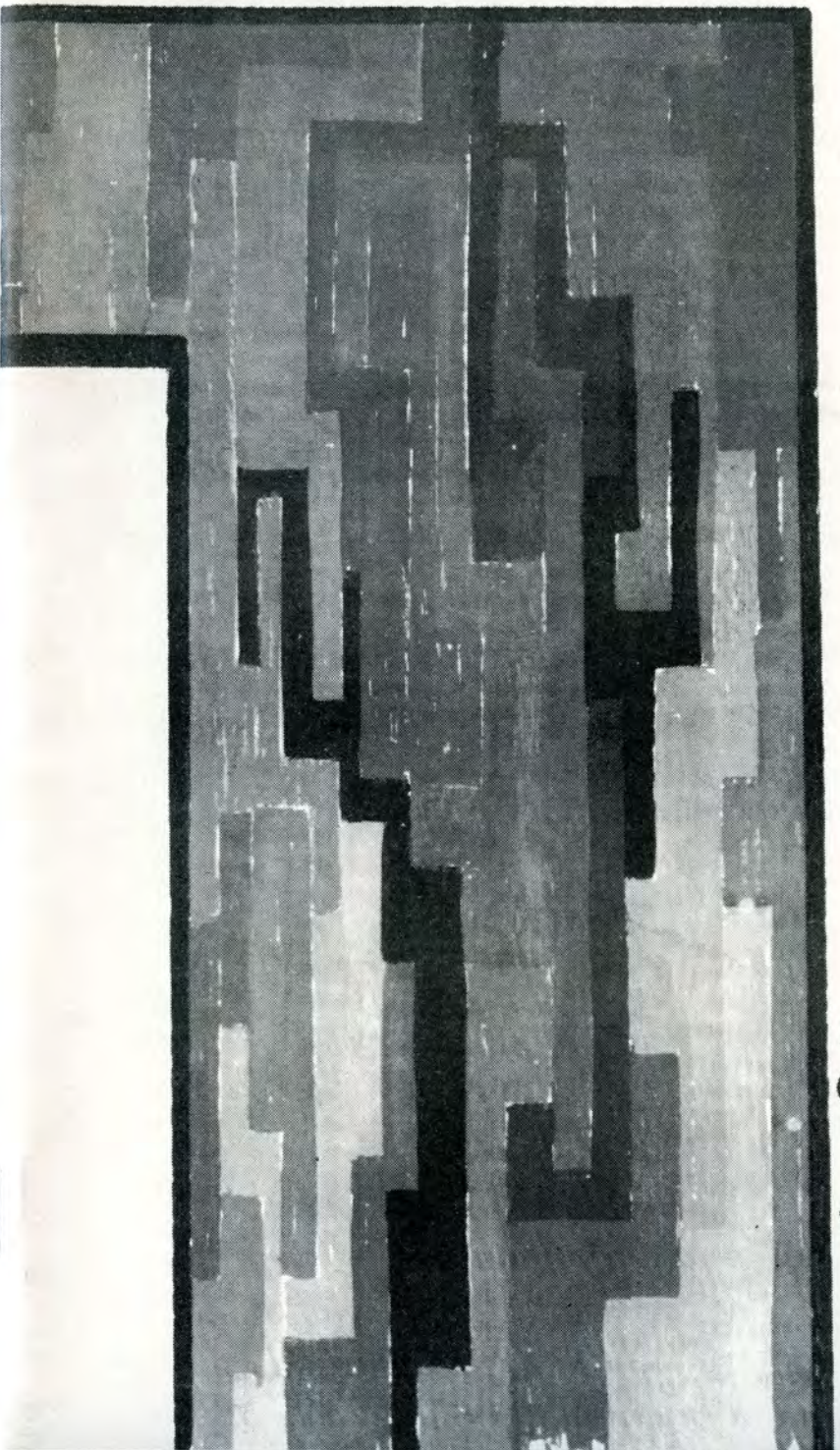
MOSAIC



MARIST COLLEGE

WINTER 1967

Editorial

. . . I hack
This rumpus of shapes
For you to know
How I, a spinning man,
Glory also this star, bird
Roared, sea born, man torn, blood blest.

--Dylan Thomas

In this year of the world's turning, from pole to angry pole -- dawn breaks in New England, all blooming and sensuous, while the bloody sea is loosed upon bleak southern shores -- from the silent sounds of carolling, the gilded chapel bells, from the racket of rushing cities, (from the trumpet of the tawdry campus). . . to blasts of banal bombs, and the groan of the ghetto behind. Yes, Dylan, this is indeed a strange world!

In the ambivalence and ambiguity -- when beauty is lithe and fleeting -- in these strained years of growing, we offer you a literature: yearning, bewildered, and ecstatic.

Leonard Russo, f. m. s.

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WALT WHITMAN JR. HIGH

Sharp March winds
collect lunch bags
and huddled negro boys
in building corners;
middle-aged females
bark civics questions
within the well-screened windows;
erect pickets fence the granite
from a scratchy lawn,
studded with glass and condoms.

The restless truce prevails
for two more hours-
hollowed halls toss
the afternoon's melange:
home ec, Thoreau, the A&P;
gym, driver ed, the GNP.

The curriculum resolves
what Thoreau couldn't:
black and white, god and flag
the stomach and soul -
all screw tight
in a syllabus of citizens,
till the bell springs
an orgy of ironic glee
at three o'clock
when all is ended.

At eight o'clock a porter,
chased by darkness
down the hall,
pushes the day's heritage
to the street;
the great, grey-bearded sky
moves swiftly strangely silent.

- Robert Lewis

ACADEMIC MIGRATION

Regular and sudden as birds,
A busy swarm of Hondas and coughing autos
Droned down highway nine
Under the piled cumulus of hot June skies.

Open-shirted, still white,
They broke the tight mental lease,
Kissed irreverent goodbyes
To academic landlords.

They've swapped their books
For the warm beads of sweat
On thinly tufted chests,
And the blood's quick chugs.

Skulking in the moist night corners
Of July, or on the bright cracked streets of August
Goes, hopefully, the strangeness they heard of
In the scheduled classes of a scheduled year.

In the tossed green of summer days
To lay with an unscheduled love;
To unfold in pungent sunlight
In a warm, unscheduled way.

Bundled in the stale air of cities and towns
Their bodies bake and brown to September perfection;
Only summer, too generous confectioner,
Brings them back - tired, and laughing, and slack.

- Robert Lewis

THE ENCOUNTER

I sit in a big cathedral bench in a station at the metro, my shoulder-blades pinning themselves against the hard-back ebony. The body-frame nudges downward, my two feet stalking forward as the flush incline of each leg spreads apart. A bulging mound above the belt, and pants pinching my groin add to the day's vexing exhaustion.

People, like particles, speckle before me in the criss-cross of the afternoon rush. A negro boy flashes his bright teeth -- "Shoe shine, Mister?" -- and dashes bye: the last trace of the busyhood.

I fold my hands behind my head and take a deep breath of the urban air -- a fabric of cigarette smoke, grey carbon dust and stale odor -- and exhale a long steady stream of the afternoon's activity. My hands plummet to either side and hang over the bench seat.

Hands -- two entities dawdling in space adjacent to the body's terrain. Insensible to their cosmic design in the contour of forearms and shoulders, they loiter unconsciously -- suspending themselves in nothingness.

I gaze down (my head, a sphere of consciousness) and tighten my focus upon them, but I am unable to vitalize these estranged paws.

I never realized how distinct they are: distinct from each other in their tapering yet tensile fineness, and distinct from my own circumscribed awareness. The more I observe them, the more I see them as alone -- and as alien.

Isolated integers in the distance, I try desperately to make them tangible. I clench each fist, only to feel a contrived tautness and the impress of the fingernails quickly fade into oblivion. Gnarled and knob-like, they float away from my sensibility.

Lengthening them acutely, the initial tension gives place to fingers like arrow-shafts, again drifting from my mental control.

Abandoning the mechanics of these methods, I gape at their naked character surrounded by the atmosphere's unbearable quiet. Fingers curl -- almost as if groping to grasp, to hold, to fuse with -- and remain alone, empty, and twitching.

I peer at the animate rudiments of these palpitating hands, their color altering -- a blood-spotted texture. They begin to stagger in the genesis of their own agony. My head, omniscent, casts a rapt glance on one, on the other.

They begin to move; across the terrain they gravitate toward each other. At the pin-point of touch, sentience spans the entire body. Fingers fold, thumbs interlink in the meeting. Each hand is attentive of the other -- and of himself touching the other.

Palms join. The blood-warmth of togetherness flows through the forearms, through the shoulders -- and in the late afternoon my pulsating body is brought into being. The mass of the microcosm is responsive and is aware of two hands joining.

I rise and begin to walk... I return home to my family.

- Leonard Russo, f. m. s.

SCENE 1:
Across my vision flashes
The city,
Groveling upon its
Dirty concrete stomach,
Its neon eyes
Glowering hostility at the world
And---

SCENE 2:
Before my eyes splashes
A cow,
Green grasses
With corn weaving
Its never-ending patterns
To a cloudy sky
And---

SCENE 3:
Through my brain slashes
Painted pictures of
A little town
Nestled within
The hills
And purpled with sage
And---

SCENE 4:
Upon my mind mashes
Faces of People
Standing atop each other;
Whiskey sours and
Cocktails; endless streams
Of words talking, saying nothing
And---

SCENE 5:
Through all the others crashes.
A train
Whose wheels plow
Over the country
With its peoples,
Pushing them out its way
And---

SCENE 6:
Inside of me clashes;
A room, narrow and
Limited by
My horizons
And my voice which
Shrieks in anger and maddness
Louder than it all
"And---STOP!"

EXIT.

- Clifford Melick

I am a firm believer
that blouses were made
to be lifted
and that virgins truly
do not exist and
I am fully
tired of God's
inefficiency and thoroughly
unable to live
without him

I have a feeling that
individual freedom does
not exist and
that there is no
heaven and
I am continually mistrusting
good will among men
or exceptionally large
rosary beads in the
hands of exceptionally old
women

I have been told that
priests are fine
listeners and that the war
is not really a war
but a progressive step
towards human unity
and that all things
are actually getting
much better

I can remember praying
and cannot forget not
really being answered and

I saw our holy father
the pope before vast
audiences and I've seen
sweet pictures of christ
rubbing small heads
and smiling inhumanly
and have heard that
our country helps the
poor and the negroes
and I have not
been moved

In two days and
one night I have
watched death take
an old woman slowly
to the music of
"Heaven is Blessed"

I am the living end
and a pretty wretched
beginning
and I am
very passively
unhappily
observing

- Ray Anello

Our Father who art in (every
hospital night-room soothing
sickened eyes and throats)

Our Father who (is in all our war
trenches kneeling and kissing the
blood from the heads of our
dearly beloved in you)

Father (who does not hide his face
from hate and from the way
Joe my friend hurts my heart)

Our dearest divine mirage

- Ray Anello

THE BEGGAR

Laugh sir
even though your eyes
hang drenched from an inside
life that throbs too much

weep still more
you harmless frown of humankind

(and we the people
in order to form
a more perfect
union
will throw you an orange
daisy)

- Ray Anello

ON CLOSENESS AND PARTING

In our culture even full trees are bought,
Roots trimmed and balled, and set in the ground
In some prepared place to grow because
Time is short: brief benefit must be found
Since there is no pastoral time to pause
For home sown seeds; and this is no inhuman thought.

Urban friendships must grow in some same way
With a person putting roots from his prepared
Parched soul to another to quench some thirst first bared
By perception of that other's finer clay.

And until the shortness shows there is in trees
Or friendships no impermanence; until
The modern motored chain saw rasps dispatch
In a crowd: colorful, looking on, at ease,
Some, others pained to see the toppled kill:
There is nothing but benefit in this timed match.

But then the tree is quickly carted off by truck;
The stump is leveled, graded, grassed, forgot
By the world at large, by most dismissed with a cluck,
Or sigh, but the ground, for the roots do not unknot.

- William Werner, S. J.

WILLIAM

He is an eleven year old who can not
Read the word cat, for whom the letters contain
No mystery. One Thursday I called for him
And we walked in slow spring drizzle from that place

He lives to the gym a block away, I
Silently studying wet brown cobblestones
And William leaning to race, his smile a tug.
He had been suspended from school and when I asked

His teacher what to do she said, "Just be
With him; he's so lonely; he needs companionship."
Another time she told me he was her one
Favorite. She told me many other things.

How William cries when they get measured; "When
Will I grow?" How his mother beat him the last
Time she saw him. How he's a scapegoat where
He lives. And I told her, "He has so much love

To give," and she agreed. He flew as high
As I could push him on the climbing rope
And in the empty silence of the gym
I heard his hushed, ecstatic laugh.

- William Werner, S. J.

OPEN LINES

I heard a clear flute melody
Which singly wandered through the song
Until it opened into chords
And the borders of my heart broke down;

And I was on an open field
Between high sky and rolling grass
And freshness blew upon my face
And touched my narrow soul.

- William Werner, S. J.

IN MY ROOM TODAY FOUR YEARS AGO

Many days I seem to stumble on my past
In hued accidents of brief old light
Refracted into the present as by this lit
Geranium which conjures Venetian spring,
And an early morning glimpse of pots upon
A crumbling wall outside the window, back-lit
Silver with warmish Italian sun: so real
In different modes and yet I wonder how.

- William Werner, S. J.

PATTERNS

1.

As a young man he drove cattle across stretches of Arizona flatland. He knew the sound of wind and the savor of sand-dust; his hands were leather-worn and his face was baked by the burning sun.

His forearms grew big and sinewy as he pitted his will against the pitch of the stallion. The groaning, the whistle, gallop and snort: these were applause beyond any acclaim. The task was trenchant and the goal was the trail ever before him.

Branding was the boon of every cowboy's labor. One left not only the impress of a hot iron but the mark of his strength on the side of a shorthorn. He loved the roping of a steer, the wrestling, and the running of its nozzle into a rut of dust and turf, til its eyes, like nuggets of amethyst, gaped at him in dark defeat.

At night he sat round the capering fire with experienced cowhands. They told him how he was like the stark sapling in the fields -- molding the bare and virile trunk of his later life. And he slept feeling good.

2.

Towns dotted the trail. He knew their drollery -- the tang and the flutter -- but his own frame sought food that was solid and his heart was saddled in the hustling herd. He worked long hard hours, grew strong, and remained alone until he met a girl who was no girl at all. And he learned that a woman was like a harp to be gently handled.

Together they shared their thoughts. They walked in the woods, passing through endless hills of hemlock and spruce. Their words were spaced in fresh pine scent.

In the spring they were married, and the first flowers were budding from forked branches.

3.

Marriage brought a new meaning to his life. He grew weary of the trail -- its rush and its rigor. The thunder of thudding hooves no longer held the throb of him.

He soon settled a small farm. He fed five round cows with big fat utters, and grew golden corn and barley. And he and his wife worked in the wonder of it all.

They fingered the soil with their own maculate hands and hurled fistfuls of grain to the furrowing winds. The land was live with sound: the hills were rustling and the trees were a mouthful of reeling creatures.

In the evening they stretched before a low fire. And he thought of the farm and his future, and his children running -- flowers and rain -- and he and his wife racing through the high hills...

4.

The lands grew ripe and lusty, and the fields were filled with fragrance. But his thoughts were throttled with fear for a war was storming across sinless meadows.

Reports were raging and rampant. The riot, the squalor, ferment and fury: these were a threat to his own faithful life.

For four days he had been away and he knew it was only a matter of months before he would be needed to fight for as long as the battle was.

He rode home recalling the raw years of youth, and how his wife had changed it all -- sharing the sheer splendor of a farm. He galloped on a stallion, pacing hard and steady. He felt its huge hammering hooves pommel the fallen apples into autumn ground.

5.

He was home again in the late afternoon and his wife came racing toward him. Her skirt whirled up in the billowing breeze and half

her bare thighs were showing.

He held her in his arms and pressed her lithe frame to his own weary body. Vision dimmed and dawn broke in his mind: the lands glistened, the mist dispersed, and the sun rose radiant from its smeared horizon. But war hovered in his thoughts and he was torn in the trembling of the burden.

He gazed at the garden with its swollen blossoms. Some had dropped to the ground from tender stems and lay still in the sands. And he knew how autumn torrents would wash them into the sodden gully.

6.

The hills were browning in brisk October. Blasts of testy wind had stripped branches of their beauty. The leaves, chestnut and saffron, slapped against the barnside and bony sketches remained behind.

He saw the sun, like an angry god, withdraw from sight, and hoary hills shudder in the naked air.

Leonard Russo, f. m. s.

THE 2/4 WALTZ

The savage soil
Screams to be exploited
Unwillingly, my hands plunge downward
Laden with their burden they rise moist.
The pleasure, I marvelled at its mystery!
I returned often to my soil
To taste its musty odor,
To watch the seasons change it,
To watch the sweat of the night vanish in the morning sun.
One day, knowing roots stave erosion,
And fearing loss above all,
I placed a seed within.
I built my home around that seed
And leisurely I tended it,
For with the sage sky dispensing its gifts,
I knew the soil would keep it.

- Fran Murphy

EASTER 1966

The German found the body
And the Pope cancelled Easter
But the chocolate industry protested
So Hallmark made "Spring Bunny Day"
And Jesus saved became the byword.
Other than that, the routine remained unbroken
Except
a few men
stopped
having children.

- Fran Murphy

What life contains such beauty
That pain of knowing peers pain of aloneness?
Ground into our being,
This pain of heart and beauty of love,
Until such day brings an end,
And end becomes beginning.

- E. Rimai Fisher

Gentle the light in vaulted night.
So the clarity of heart.

Earth burned by day,
Scorned and scarred in darkness,
Looked upon with anger and revolt,
The herded rage.

Yet patent answer lies in care of
Man for man.
Strange interlacing, each to another,
To turn dissolution to bond of oneness,
Cover of calm, fabric of repose.

- E. Rimai Fisher

Tonight I write with concern
to temper the severity of recent words,
the vague thoughts of regard so expressed.

It is but my way, to write,
at the quiet end of evening, to rest,
even in the evasiveness of language.

The search is within,
to stay the structures of feeling,
to fabricate in sadness and rejoicing a complex of sentiment,
the search continues.

Words.
They are of foretime and of tomorrow,
warm, close, very alone.
Unused words.
Unspoken words.
Added words to define that which we regard as precious.
Fresh words to order the thoughts we prize.
New words to convey the form of care.
All words to weave the
Unrealities of today's exercises into
the Continuity of living.

So I would write.

Though impoverished manner and indefinite speech
Be symbols of intention,
In understanding
involvement is made competent,
to qualify for friendship.

- E. Rimai Fisher

PETER

I usually begin stories about Peter by saying something like "... and there was this guy on our bus..." I suppose that there really is no other way to do it, because whatever intimacy there was between Peter, Ed Flaherty, and me has long since dissolved, making the memory of Peter nothing more than the memory of "a guy on our bus." Fellows who knew of Peter love to hear Eddie or me ramble on about some of the crazy things he said or did. And, I must confess, I get a kick out of it, too.

Peter was as incredibly small as he was intelligent. He managed to weigh in with double figures while over-cloaked in his brother's baggy clothes, but it has been said that, denuded, the scales would not grant him so much as a fortune card. His skin was of a sickly white, and a good portion of it was stretched over his enormous hooked nose. To and fro on that hideous breathing machine a pair of thick lensed glasses periodically slipped. And no living being has ever seen him exhale smoke through both nostrils at the same time. Now that I think of it, the first time I saw Peter walking through the halls, I got sick.

He walked like Groucho Marx, and he hated John Krull because John was big and John did his homework. "The most despicable thing about him," Peter would snort, "is the part about his doing so much goddam homework. Big guys can always be kicked in the groin. But any kid who thinks he has to do all that work is definitely a mess." Peter hitch hiked to school from West Islip at least three times a week (that's about thirty miles), because he missed the bus. He loved to argue; frothed at the mouth whenever he did; he read, revered, memorized, and applied to me and Flaherty all the teachings of Sigmund Freud; and he took untold pleasure and satisfaction in predicting my future. Quite a few people considered him a loser.

Peter was horribly proficient in bus-ride debates, but his conclusions were always the exact opposite of what they should have been, if not completely irrelevant. He would build a concrete argument, from foundation to climax, and in one gallant sweep of conclusion deny everything he had said. It became impossible to deny his denial with any basis in reason, for his argument being so utterly rational, the only deniable point was the final statement, and all we could ever do was to simply deny it. Peter would be furiously indignant: "What do you mean 'right... right... right... right... right... WRONG'? I spend twenty miserable minutes backing up an indisputable point; you agree with everything I say; and then at the last minute you tell me that I am absolutely wrong! That's blasphemy! How can you do it?

On what grounds... Oh, you blundering fools are wasting my time." Eddie and I would just laugh, and Peter would continue--laughing, himself. "Fools. Fools. Fools. I simply cannot understand how the two of you could be such fools." As he laughed, he would curl up in a wormy little ball like some kind of gnome.

In spite of our failure to "...understand, comprehend, or otherwise 'dig' the absolute logic of any given argument," Peter passed over us in his scorn of homo sapiens. Whenever we disagreed with him, he would scream for a while, but ultimately calm down enough to treat us with the patient tolerance of an intellectual giant--with that oh-well-what-should-I-expect attitude of genius. He even confided in us, to a certain extent, when he told us about his own destiny: "I read The Agony and the Ecstasy last night and decided that Michaelangelo was not as great as William Blake, and my work is infinitely better than Blake's. Ergo, you will boast about having known me."

He was not all talk, though. One fine day, he decided that the hum-drum life of a budding scholar was either too much or too little to endure. So, he left. During the months spent in Greenwich Village, Peter read poetry in coffee houses, burglarized small grocery stores, had a common law wife, and even lived for a while with a homosexual. (Considering the normal developmental progress of legends, half of that should be true).

But Peter was only Peter when he was "the guy on our bus." We comprised one of those high school cliques made up of snide and arrogant little rascals who thought that because they ranked in the upper ninety-eight percentile in the PSAT's, the world was theirs. There, Peter was a monarch among pseudo intellectual sixteen and seventeen year olds. We admired his romantic courage, because we knew no other individual who would have the nerve to be so different. We respected and almost gratefully embraced the fruits of his extensive reading. And sometimes, maybe more than sometimes, we liked him.

He was right about one thing: we do boast about having known him.

- Ed Lowe