A Quadrennial Orgy

The quadrennial orgy of bombastic rhetoric of an election year is, as always, right on schedule. This year a great deal of the virulent “dialogue” is centered around the question of the United States’ role in Angola and the success of our detente policy with the U.S.S.R. It is important that we keep a few ideas in mind over the next few months as we attempt to keep up with and to understand this debate.

It seems to us that in a world becoming increasingly complicated by cartels of resource owners, the proliferation of nuclear powers, and the bifurcation of the world into rich and poor nations, the watchword for United States foreign policy should be flexibility. The Oxford English Dictionary defines flexibility as “Susceptibility of modification or alternation; capacity for ready adaptation to various purposes or conditions; freedom from stiffness or rigidity.” To be successful in the 1970’s a foreign policy must be capable of changing to meet the rapidly shifting demands of the international situation. The greatest obstacle to flexibility on the part of the United States has been its penchant for relying on over-arching theoretical constructs as the basis for its foreign policy. In the last twenty-five years we’ve gone from containment to massive retaliation and now to detente. The formulation of such constructs derives from two sources—the media and politicians.

The blame on the media falls more heavily on the electronic media than on the print media. Democracy demands an informed electorate, but the passivity of most of the American people results in their obtaining most of their knowledge of current events from television and radio. Being a commercial enterprise, the national networks have a limited amount of time and resources they can devote to reporting the news and, therefore, there is an understandable tendency towards simplification and a penchant for clever catch-phrases to characterize government policy. In the last few years the media has focussed on the word detente (from the French: meaning a relaxation of tensions, as with muscles). In the earlier exuberant days, detente was overplayed by the media and the expectations of the American people rose to a point from which they had to fall.

To be sure, the fault is not solely that of the media. After all it was the Nixon Administration that first popularized the word detente. It has not been enough for Nixon-Kissinger, and Ford-Kissinger to be content with improvement in bilateral relations with the U.S.S.R. in certain areas, but rather an entire new policy change was heralded, and the media obeisantly spread the new gospel of American foreign policy across the land. Also, the rise in the number of summit conferences in recent years has resulted in the personal identification of our leaders with certain policies they implement (a fact deplored by perceptive critics of American foreign policy like Hans J. Morgenthau). When Ford shakes hands with Brezhnev in Vladivostok the event is broadcast across the nation, and he becomes personally identified with the policy of detente; consequently, his political existence comes to depend on the success of this policy. Obviously, this is not conducive to flexibility. The theoretical construct has become a trap. Rather than performing logical sleights-of-hand to explain why intervention in Angola is consistent with detente, Ford-Kissinger could do better by admitting that detente is a misconception—that despite our progress in certain areas of our relationship with the Soviet Union, we must still stand firm in opposing the extension of Soviet influence in Third World states by armed intervention.

This would, of course, be easier to do if the implementation of foreign policy were left to the professional diplomats of the State Department, rather than performed in the three-ring circus of summit diplomacy. A precondition of such restraint on the part of our leaders is confidence in the professional diplomatic corps and the ending of the practise of rewarding campaign contributors and presidential friends with ambassador posts.
In the state of anarchy prevalent in international relations, appearances are usually more important than realities. The fact that the United States is the most powerful nation in the world means nothing if the rest of the world perceives a lack of will on the part of its leaders and its people. In the wake of the debacle in Southeast Asia, it is important that the United States prove that it intends to remain a responsible actor on the international stage. The Chinese realize this and expect a continued United States presence in Southeast Asia. Patrick Moynihan, our Ambassador to The United Nations, is correct in his assertion that liberal democracy appears to be on the run in the face of the rise of totalitarian governments. It is important that the United States halt the psychological momentum concomitant with such an appearance—be it fact or fancy. For that reason, the United States should respond in an appropriate manner to the foreign incursions of totalitarian nations, especially the Soviet Union. Arigola may be a place to do so—it is up to the American people and Congress to make that decision.

The importance of appearances in international relations has another more immediate consequence for the Angola situation. It is necessary that the United States use its influence to get the South Africans to withdraw their troops from Angola if we are to maintain any credibility with Black Africa. It is extremely unfortunate that we find ourselves allied with the racist regime in South Africa. That relation is a “kiss of death” for us in our relations with Black Africa. At the same moment that our ambassador to the United Nations is condemning the Anti-Zionists as racist, we are “in bed” with the South Africans. At the very least, the United States must publicly disassociate itself from the South Africans. Had it not been for the presence of the South Africans in Angola, the Organization of African Unity probably would have endorsed a government of national unity for Angola at its recent meeting. The United States was lucky that the OAU reached a deadlock on the question of recognizing the Russian-backed MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola. On the battlefield, time is running out for UNITA and the FNLA, and it will soon be too late for a diplomatic solution. In fact, it appears that the MPLA may soon be victorious. Although this would be a diplomatic victory for the Soviet Union, it may be only temporary. There is a good chance they may find themselves caught in a position similar to that of the United States in Vietnam a few years ago—bogged down in a no-win guerrilla war. Nonetheless, the United States must end its association with the South Africans immediately, if we are to attempt to present a viable alternative to totalitarian governments in Africa.

This year promises to be a difficult year for Americans with the combined hoopla of the bicentennial and the election battering (boring) our brains into numbness. It would be a good time for us to critically examine the indiscriminate application of simplistic theories to specific situations so characteristic of our recent foreign policy, and to concentrate on what can be done—attempting to achieve the flexibility so necessary to meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Mark Van Putten

Tribal Animosities in Angola

In a recent article in Harper’s magazine, columnist Jack Richardson claims that our modern, scientific, technocratic society has not lost its sense of ritualism after all: we now perform our daily ablutions in front of the television set watching the
sacred six o’clock news. Why else would we subject ourselves day after day to this barrage of the world’s ghastly goings-on? What is happening, says Richardson, is that we are turning to the tube in order to get a grip on a frighteningly complex world. In the six o’clock news we can see the world analyzed before our eyes—terrorism cut and dried, plane crashes diagrammed and explicated, and starvation victims telling how hunger feels. It’s all so reassuringly awful that we walk away feeling calmed, in control, and purged of our responsibility.

In the news media’s coverage of the civil war in Angola, the FNLA and UNITA groups have been analyzed as “moderate” and “pro-Western,” whereas the MPLA is described as “Marxist.” The term “pro-Western” is culturally loaded: it might carry such baggage as pro-Chevrolet, pro-Betty Ford, pro-television sets, pro-split-level ranch houses and pro-milkshakes. In short, we might take “pro-Western” to mean “pro-Western (US) values.” Similarly, an American might view the term “pro-Marxist” as meaning pro-Russia, pro-communes and pro-dictatorship. My point is that these labels may imply values that don’t exist in Angola. They are mere artifacts of our consciousness, perpetuated by the mass media and politicians.

Actually the situation in Angola is very complex. For example, recently fighting broke out between the two “pro-Western” groups, the FNLA and UNITA, when UNITA soldiers, primarily of Ovimbundu origin, and FNLA soldiers of Bakongo extraction gave vent to tribal hatreds which had been heightened by a battle in 1961 in which hundreds of Ovimbundu were killed and mutilated by the Bakongo. Although the groups’ commanders meet together to plan strategy, cultural loyalties remain strong; no soldiers from one movement will take orders from an officer of another. Other cultural practices further complicate the picture. In a recently captured village, MPLA soldiers claim to have found jars of dead MPLA soldiers’ viscera which the Bakongo ate in order to make them brave in battle. Clearly, categories like “pro-Western” and “pro-Marxist” are inadequate for understanding the situation.

The three main groups involved, MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertacão de Angola), UNITA (União para la Independência Total de Angola) and FNLA (Front Nacional de Libertacao de Angola) are perhaps not so much political groups as they are ethnolinguistic groups. While nearly all Angolan Africans come from the Bantu-speaking linguistic group, there are many subgroups: The FNLA is primarily composed of Northern, Kicongo-speaking Bakongo tribes numbering about 500,000; UNITA is almost entirely Ovimbundu, or Umbundu, speakers with a population of nearly 1.7 million; and the MPLA is the urbanized group of Kimbundu tribes with 1.3 million speakers. There are about three other Bantu-speaking tribes—Lunda, Chokwe, and Mbunda—and two non-Bantu tribes—the Bushmen and the Hottentots; all have relatively mixed political persuasions, if any. Mutual intelligibility between the major groups is rare, especially between the Ovimbundu (UNITA) and others; and frequently there are intelligibility problems within a tribe. Although the present língua franca is Portuguese, only 20% speak it, suggesting that any attempts at forming a unified “pro-Western” or “Pro-Marxist” government of any sort may have to await linguistic consolidation.

Another bit of cultural baggage which the terms “pro-Western” and “pro-Marxist” carry with them is some indication as to family and social organization. With the “West,” one might associate the nuclear family, and with the Marxists, one might associate communal property and childrearing. However, these labels do not fit if applied to any of the indigenous African groups in Angola. In social structure, all of the major ethnolinguistic groups are very similar, practicing a matrilineal kinship system (where descent is traced through the mother), and patrilocal residence (where mother and children live in the father’s home village).

Such a social system is conducive neither to communal property-sharing nor to the free-enterprise accumulation of wealth through cash. In a matrilineal system privately-acquired wealth is supposed to be used for the kin-group; in the man’s case, he is obligated to distribute his wealth to his sister’s children, who later reciprocate the favor. It works well if possession of personal property is kept to a minimum and there are no serious imbalances in wealth. But since Western, capitalist economies are based on the differential accumulation of wealth, the African system and the Western systems are likely to conflict. On the other hand,
usurpation of the means and fruits of production by the state, as in Marxism, would undercut and diffuse the power of the matrilineal kin group to distribute wealth. It would also create inter-kinship rivalries.

The situation in Angola has its roots in a conflict that began before either "the West" or "Marxism" were clearly-defined concepts. In the one hundred years following Diago Cão's arrival in Angola in 1482, the Portuguese began conquering, or at least bargaining with, the highly-organized African kingdoms in order to get slaves. Some tribes cooperated, others resisted—in spite of bloodshed and suffering, by 1860 nearly three million slaves from Angola had populated the New World. Angola had become an "overseas province" of Portugal, and was ruled with an iron fist from faraway Lisbon. The white men brought with them cash crops, new diseases, notions of racial superiority, and a suppression of any indigenous leadership.

As the Portuguese began to recognize the value of Angola's natural resources, efforts were made to increase colonization. With colonization came industry, and with industry, slave labor. Although by 1900 liberals had voted to abolish slavery, it continued until 1925, and "contract labor" (another form of slavery) was practiced in the late 1960's and perhaps still is. After the uprisings in 1961, Portugal decided to increase aid to Angola, to allow Africans to become citizens, and to step up efforts at "assimilating" Africans into Portuguese "civilization." However, by 1968, less than 1% of Africans had attained, or desired, assimilado status.

The ethnolinguistic group most vigorously opposing the white presence in Angola is the Kimbundu group. Situated in urban Northwest Angola (especially in the capitol, Luanda), the Kimbundu have had the longest exposure to the Portuguese of any Africans. Many are educated, speak Portuguese, and are hated by other Africans for the cultural concessions they have made to the white man. They are skilled agriculturalists, and are among the few Bantu-speaking tribes that do not consider field labor to be women's work. Therefore, many Kimbundu men have gotten jobs on European plantations, and have learned to hate the exploitative practices of the European plantation owners. Their rebellion, organized by Dr. Neto, is the recipient of much Soviet aid, and goes by the name of MPLA, or Popular Movement.

Another ethnolinguistic group responsible for recent uprisings is the Bakongo to the north. Once a proud, unified and powerful African kingdom, the one and one-half million Bakongo have had their kingdom split in half by the Angola-Congo border. As a result, the attempts of conservative leader Holden Roberto to reassert the lost independence and glory of the Bakongo tribe have suffered from organizational problems. In one frenzied uprising in 1961, Roberto ordered all whites, mestizos (half-whites), and "assimilated" Africans murdered. This disorganized massacre involved many members of the Kimbundu tribe, a fact which has not been forgotten. Tribal animosities have led the Bakongo to accept aid from Western governments. The press now refers to this Bakongo group as the "pro-Western FNLA."

The other major ethnic group in Angola is the Ovimbundu. Occupying the central highlands of Angola, they are the most numerous, the most cohesive, and the proudest of the tribes. Although they did not encounter Europeans until at least one hundred years after the other tribes, they quickly adapted to the white presence, actively participating in the slave trade while retaining a strong internal organization. Their territory has recently been encroached upon by the construction of the Benguela railway and marauding MPLA forces, and the Ovimbundu-backed UNITA forces have concentrated on repelling these intrusions. With no particular affinity toward either the MPLA or the FNLA, the Ovimbundu seem to have allied themselves with the FNLA and South Africans for purely practical reasons—preserving their territorial homeland.

With the Portuguese driven out of Angola for good, and the different groups fighting among themselves, it may appear that the struggle now is between competing ideologies: Marxist versus Western. I suggest that this is overly simplistic, a mere creation of the media and politicians and that the conflict of the African groups can be more realistically assessed in terms of the social, linguistic, and historical forces that shaped it. Regardless of who "wins" the struggle for power in Angola, it is important to not allow the ritualism of the media and politicians to mold our consciousness into categories which are reassuringly simple, liturgically satisfying, but desperately unreal.

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Cover by Amelia Harper and Don Hettinga
About two weeks ago, the impossible was performed—The Impossible Possibility, a musical celebrating Calvin College's one hundredth birthday—that is. The musical was written by Calvin professors Stanley Wiersma and John Worst, but many others played an essential role in the successful creation of this musical theatre production. Ervina Boeve designed the costumes and directed the play. Tom Bloom was responsible for the set design and for the lighting and other technical aspects of the production. Finally, Ellen Van't Hof choreographed the play.

With anecdotes and arguments, The Impossible Possibility tells the story of its own creation while simultaneously celebrating Calvin's birthday. It was written expressly for this occasion and could not really be produced again. Its necessarily short life gives the musical its power but also makes it a very unique play. It is valid as a theatre form, but, because of its content, it would never be produced anywhere but at Calvin. It is important, then, for us to be aware of the ritual significance of this musical, as well as of its artistic merits.

In this series of interviews, Dialogue gives a behind-the-scenes look at The Impossible Possibility and tries, also, to get in on the birthday party. What follows, then, may be read as anecdotes, as craft interviews, or as Dialogue's attempt to bring some of the cake and ice cream home.
Playwright: Stanley Wiersma

What is the origin of the idea for The Impossible Possibility—was it commissioned, or did you think of it?

This was not commissioned. John Worst came to me with the idea. He said, “Why don’t we write a musical, the two of us, as a gift to Calvin College at the Centennial. If it’s produced, [the production] would be a gift, and if not, at least we will have had the experience and fun of composing it, and we’ll put it in Heritage Hall.

Did you write the script first?

I wrote the script first... and every time I had a section done I’d show it to Worst. And he would say, “this works well for the kind of sound I could make, this not so well, so would you revise this.” We really worked it out together. I could finally tell the kind of thing he was looking for, and I got the knack better after awhile. But it all went through several drafts because each time he would need it revised before he could feel completely comfortable with it. Finally you can’t tell what’s my work and what’s his.

When did Mrs. Boeve enter in?

When I was in the process of writing it, we sat down with Mrs. Boeve and said, “if we did this, would you direct it?” And finally, when the whole script was finished, and a good bit of the music, we went to the Central Committee and asked if they would mind if we did it.

Why did you pick this form rather than choosing an historical figure to focus on?

Partly because we had to learn how to work together. We hadn’t worked together on anything before, and we had to learn how. It occurred to me that making a musical is really no different from making a school... or making a community, or planning any life for the future. It’s always this process of learning to get along with each other. And, besides, we decided immediately that Calvin would be the heroine at her own show... it wouldn’t be any individuals particularly. It’s one of the nice ironies because really Mrs. Boeve persuaded us that we shouldn’t do a historical play. But in the musical I have Iris Poesy, who was the historical advocate, which is one of the things we kept laughing about. Whenever we would quarrel or argue, we would always end (or the other two would always end) by saying, “well, we’d better be careful or we’ll be written into this thing.”

You’ve compared the structure of the musical to a Sinterklaasfeest, could you explain this comparison?

It’s meant to be a celebration. Its form actually is that of a Dutch birthday party. Do you know the convention of a Dutch birthday party? You never give just a gift. Poems are given to go with the gift, and they are teasing poems... There’s a convention like that too for Sinterklaasfeest on December 6... We said, “wouldn’t it be fun to make it a Dutch birthday party without making it terribly obvious, or to make it like a Sinterklaasfeest, make it that kind of gift to Calvin on her birthday.

Did you feel any particular constraints on either the writing or production of the musical, such as worrying about the response of the constituents?

No, no more than you would with any good friend.... I felt no constraints one way or another. I can hardly tell you what our masques were this year [at our Sinterklaasfeest] because in a way they are too personal. But you have little gipjes and peezies with each other, you air them, you say them all and you laugh like crazy. Which is kind of what I was doing with Synod.... At the Sinterklaasfeest, when you’ve given the gift and the person has read the devastating poem, you kiss him. It’s part of the convention of it. And it’s such a gorgeous forgiving thing. So that immediately... the whole last act has to be the kiss all around, forgiving and saying that we are going to make a community of this. We don’t stop being friends here. But that’s why it has to have bite too. The last part would have come on too sentimental if you haven’t gotten it all out in your nasty little tune; you have to get every smidgen of vexation out. You can laugh at it, but unless you’re annoyed with each other, there really isn’t any point in giving a Sinterklaasfeest here.

Why isn’t the musical performed with Thespians and Capella choir? Why was it produced as an Interim course?

The gorgeous thing about a Sinterklaasfeest poem is that you never expect it to be great poetry; it’s for the sanctity of the celebration that you do it and very few of them make it as good poems. Since it’s this kind of thing, we said immediately that this is not going to be done by Thespians and it’s not going to be done by Capella: it’s going to be done by whoever signs up for this interim course, by people off the street, because if we can do it together, then people off the street can do this thing too. Their pulling together this musical is no more impossible than pulling together the College and Seminary in a hundred years. The whole putting of it—not just the writing of it, but the production—is a kind of metaphor for the other thing.
Did Mr. Wiersma write the lyrics first, or did you write the music first and then he try and fit them?

He wrote the lyrics first. I need words in order to get an idea, so I didn’t give him any prescriptions. I said, “you write what you want to write, and I’ll write music to it.” We had worked before on some things—I had set some of his poems to music—so I knew what kind of stuff he would do. He would come to me with an entire act and I would write the music from there. We did the second act first.

Did it help at all that Mr. Wiersma has a musical background?

Yes. That really was evidenced in the first and fourth acts when he began thinking in terms of dance and thinking more rhythmically.

Are you attempting to accompany the script or interpret it?

I feel that the music in a certain sense interprets, tries to portray, a particular character. Take, for example, the character of Jan, the bouncy, almost flippant, young faculty wife. The music that she sings and dances to is kind of jazzy and bluesy. The accompaniment features a trumpet with a plunger mute—it’s kind of a “waa, waa, waa” effect. On the other hand, the music that Mrs. I. Russel-Van Kamp sings to is very dignified. There are some irregular rhythms which are meant to outline her hesitating walk, her older stiff legs and so forth. But, I think, the music does interpret the particular character.

Did you worry about offending the constituency when you livened up the Dutch Psalms for some of the musical pieces?

It didn’t bother me in the least. I have a great respect for the Genevan Psalm tunes, but I think they are held in almost a reverential awe. I think they’re worth much more than that. I think they’re worth bringing to more experiences than just the worship experience. They’re great tunes in themselves, no matter what you do to them. And I’ve done something different to them. I’ve given them a beat, put some dancing to it. The tunes hold up marvelously; they’re very good tunes, and hold up under all sorts of arrangements.

Do you think that musical theatre is an autonomous genre with an integrity all of its own?

Oh, it’s a separate art form in itself, and it has its own integrity in that it doesn’t try to be opera, it doesn’t try to be an operetta, it’s much different from vaudeville, and it’s more than just a musical program—a group of solos and choruses—it has its own integrity. The musical comedy star cannot sound like an opera star. There’s a quality in the voice. I think that in musical comedy visual aspects, acting, and lyrics take precedence over sheer beautiful sound. . . . Here you’ve got to hear the words; the words are very important.

The makeup of your orchestra seems unorthodox; how did you choose it?

Well, I thought of several things when I was writing the music. First of all, we had to have an on-stage orchestra. That meant instruments that could be transported because the people were going to have to move around. So we couldn’t use a cello unless the cello would be carried. We couldn’t use an electric guitar or an electric bass because of the cord, so we had to use an acoustic guitar and an acoustic bass. Now, fortunately, our bass player is very imaginative; he’s big and strong, so he could carry the bass. And it really is hilarious to see him carry that huge bass . . . . I also had in mind the biting, penetrating quality of wind instruments as opposed to the lush warm sound of strings. Now it probably would have helped the situation if I had added some violins doing accompaniment. I wouldn’t have the problem of overbalancing. Well, the third consideration is that I’m basically a wind player and conductor of wind ensembles, so I knew of good wind players. And I think I wrote it for people who were around. I knew there was a good guitar around; I knew there was a good oboe, bassoon, clarinet, flute, trumpet, trombone, horn— these instruments were represented on campus by good people, those that I knew. Now I wasn’t acquainted with the orchestra, with the string people, so I wrote for what I was acquainted with.
The first thing I want to ask you about, Tom, is your set. I've seen your set, and it's really imaginative. Did you design it yourself?

Yes. It was a real struggle because I had read the play, and I just didn't know what to do. In it there were some directions that Stan Wiersma had written, particularly in the third act, as to how he wanted groups arranged. There were the students, the seminary students, the college faculty, and the seminary faculty. He had a little diagram in his script, and that's really where it all began. We had to have levels of various heights. I started doodling and was just not getting anywhere until I came across one of those "Spirit Moves" programs that they put out for publicity. You know—"the Spirit Moves in the Speech Department," and the "Spirit Moves in the P.E. Department" and all this business, with the little flames on there. Well, here's an interesting shape which is somewhat a symbol of the college, of the spirit of Calvin, and possibly could be used here. So I simplified that down to an elliptical shape, also wanting something that had a lot of rhythm since there was going to be dance—a lot of movement, particularly in act I and act IV. That's how it all came about; that's what inspired it.

Do you see yourself as an artist when you design lights, or do you think of yourself as a technician applying lights to a script?

No. It's not an art in itself at all. By itself, it stands as a craft. As a contribution to the whole production it becomes the art. It's only one of the elements involved.

What special demands does musical theatre, as opposed to other kinds of theatre, impose on you in terms of set?

A greater area of stage space is utilized if there is dancing. So the design cannot be a hindrance to any large chorus numbers, production numbers, and so on. You have to leave a greater area of your stage space open. Also, the design has not only to reflect what's in the script, but also what's in the music. It has to reflect the rhythms, the colors of the music. This is what I've tried to do with the set—to reflect the rhythm of John Worst's music, and also the colors I feel.

The set itself is kind of syncopated.

Yes. Particularly in the third act where everything is in disarray and is scattered around.

How do you reflect the music with the lighting?

Rhythm, pace of the cue, intensity. Let me use an example from the show again. At the end of act II, there is a sextet, I believe, singing. It's very reflective. The actors are reposed. It's not somber, but it's soft. The pace of the music is markedly slower, maybe more lyrical than the rest of the show. We take a long slow fade throughout that scene, for about eight pages. When you have big production numbers, you might have a few actors isolated. I'll take the same scene as an example. Mrs. I. Russell-Van Kamp and Jan DeNeu are at a table stage right, and it's an isolated area; the rest of the people in the coffee shop are just silhouetted against the site. We are just drawing the eye of the audience to this area. This is what you should be looking at. Peter, the snack bar attendant, comes down and makes a suggestion—"let's have an ice cream social." This is the introductory line for a big production number, and all of a sudden everyone is up and the band strikes up, and lights just repeat that. They come zooming up, quick and fast. Brilliant, high intensity—intensity, too, is a consideration. How intense is this music? From that, then—how intense should this cue be, or how brilliant should it be—how much light should be on stage? That's about the basics.

How well do you think Calvin's new Gezon theatre serves you?

Technically, the theatre is excellent. There is probably no better technically equipped performing place in Western Michigan. The Gezon theatre is an open theatre; it's the Grecian concept that the audience arrives at accepting the fact that, "yes, this is a theatre, and we're going to see performers; we're not going to see real live people...." That's the definition of the open stage—everything is visible, everything is in view of the audience.

Set Designer: Tom Bloom
Choreographer: Ellen Van’t Hof

How did you begin?

Well, first of all, I got the written script, and I read that through, and Mrs. Boeve told me approximately when the dance would be coming, but I didn’t get any real ideas then because I didn’t know the time signatures of the different parts. I didn’t know where the steps would be.

Did you hear the music at all?

No, I didn’t until later. Then I got the score, and I choreographed a good deal just to the score, just to the time signature of the score because it changes a lot. Most of the time, I had to choreograph to the score, and then I would turn the music on and try the steps out with the music to see if they worked. So actually, I suppose, the order followed was text, score, and then music.

You worked it all out yourself beforehand?

Yes. At home in my little apartment.

How much of your own interpretation is involved? Were you given free rein?

Yes. Mrs. Boeve and I got together and blocked the whole thing the way she wanted it—we worked out together where people would be coming from, where they would be during each dance section, where they would exit, and so on. I had pretty much free rein as to what I could put in there, to what types of steps to put in and how to get them onstage and onstage.

Have you had any prior experience with musical theatre?

Well, not really. I hadn’t read much about musical theatre at all. Of course, I had done some choreography before, but never to a musical. This was my first experience with it, and, at first, I was a little leery about it because I didn’t really know what they wanted. But once I got into it, I knew what I wanted, and it turned out to be all right. But, no, I didn’t have much background in musical theatre.

Do you take it seriously?

Do I think it is a serious art form? Oh, yes, musical comedy especially, I think, is great fun. I think it can be done artistically, and I hope I’ve done it artistically.

Is that the general attitude of people here?

In this class?

Yes. And also people like Mr. Wiersma and Mrs. Boeve.

Oh, they’re taking it as a serious art form. Mrs. Boeve is trying as hard as possible to get it to be an artistic production, as I am, and I’m sure John Worst is. But I don’t know about the constituents’ reactions. That might be a little bit different.
Do you employ any special type of dance form for this musical theatre?

No. I draw on everything. If you analyze the movements themselves, you will find some that could relate to ballet, other movements that could relate to jazz, and still others that relate to modern dance.

So it's a combination.

Yes, it is. It's kind of a hodge-podge of everything.

How does dance fit into Calvin's tradition?

Actually, Stanley Wiersma told me that he thought it was terribly ironic that in this representation of Calvin's history we would have dance, because there has been no dance in the history of Calvin until just recently. Also, he said to me, "What did you do with the fourth act?" So I showed him the steps, and he said, "Does it look a little bit like a chorus line?" and I said, "Not really." And he said, "I think it would be really funny if it was just a little bit like a chorus line." So I threw in an extra kick, and that was for him.

Have you had any objections to the dance, or have there been any problems from people who might have heard about it?

From constituents? No.

Do you think there will be?

Very possibly. I'm here in a sheltered little environment where everybody thinks it's great. I haven't seen or heard anything about what the other people have said. I suppose I'll get some negative comments, but it's not flashy or suggestive. None of the steps are. It's pretty tame as far as dance goes.
Director: Ervina Boeve

How did the play evolve?

Well, the whole thing started when John and Stanley wanted to have lunch with me. They had this idea that they would like to do a musical about Calvin's history. And I said, “It won’t work.” There really isn’t anything interesting or humorous about history. It’s a thing you write about or it’s a thing you can relate anecdotes about, but I couldn’t think of anything deadlier than trying to pull off a stock history of Calvin. I said, “that’s too much like pageant.” Pageants are dead; they’ve had their time; they were great when you had them, but now, nobody wants to watch pageant anymore. I said, “the only way I’ll work on this musical is if they come up with something that I think deals more with the spirit of the school rather than the history of the school.”

You are not only the director, but the costume designer of this production. What do you think is the role of the costume designer in a production of this sort?

Well, I think it’s important that the eye has something to satisfy, too. As I looked at some of the things in the script I began to feel that they were very prosaic. You know; it’s about a school; it’s about students arriving at Calvin; it’s about a snack bar. How do you really stylize it, or how do you give it spectacle and color and take it away from its realness? So I decided that color was the device I could use to remove it from reality. For example, kids today are wearing a great deal of blue jeans and denim fabric. So I took today’s patterns and transposed them into pinks. I think the third scene gave me the most problem. And all of a sudden it just dawned on me: “why not do it in black and white, because things are never really black and white, that clean cut. Furthermore, one scene in straight black and white would be an interesting contrast and it would take away something of the nature of the reality too.”

What unique demands does musical theatre place on you?

Well, to begin with, it makes a demand because it cannot be real; the story is not realistic, and it is generally pretty trite. There is a kind of romanticization in the whole concept of musical theatre. It’s very much like opera in that sense. The music is different but the stories are similar. Opera stories are trite too. I think that’s an interesting thing about musicals. They bring together the lyricism of European opera and the vaudeville and black jazz idiom from the United States. Another observation I’d like to make about musical theatre is that it’s always extremely topical. A musical is never really the kind of thing you can look at, ten years from now as you can a good piece of drama or literature. When you look at musical comedy in retrospect it has significance in the sense of a certain historical era in the development of drama. But it doesn’t have significance for today.

Do you think there’s any disadvantage in putting on a show that seems to have a very limited value beyond “right now”?

No. When I first started teaching at Calvin, I was very disdainful of musicals. When I taught theatre history classes and theatre introduction classes, I didn’t even spend any time on them. I used to skip the section totally, and said it wasn’t worth the effort. I had a kind of graduate school mentality—I really thought I knew that which was the very best. As I had more experiences with different kinds of theatre, I began to see it just as a legitimate form of entertainment, and that’s basically it. It doesn’t have to carry serious messages. But if people have had relaxation and they have been able to identify more closely, in this case with the school, and feel that some of the ties that they had here were strengthened, it served its purpose. That’s all it is about.

Then it may have a sort of ritual function, helping to strengthen the ties of the Calvin community?

Right, I think that’s exactly it.

How was it for you as a director to work with the writer looking over your shoulder?

I kicked him out!

Pencil: Will you please join us in the last song [To the audience]

There are all kinds of ways of joining in.

Everybody can join us in some way in our last song:

a song about all Calvin College and Seminary, Synod, and the constituency,

you our friends, becoming one body.
The Other Elder

Chris Stoffel
Not for Telling

A secret so well kept that
I have it;
a storm wrapped in a blanket
even the eyes believe in shadows
and do not gather tricks or
pets to reel in like show dogs.
I have assumed something unique
as a snowflake;
Christmas sparkler agog
in agreement with glass and fire angles.
I have taken its bloodless pulse and in it heard
the quiet of slippered halls
where in the center is God
holding his breath.

Night in the Crystal

She listens for silence;
for the barking cold of snow
and its white wheels,
for moths secret and dusty
inside lamp shades.
below her window leaves lie down
aces, an afterbirth irretrievable
as inkblots.
today she had visions:
unthundered grandfather, not
God, spying with eyes speckling
the air.
he knew her then and did not want
to kiss her anymore.
she saw her mother, headlines blurting
at her, demanding as babies, and hearing only pipes
and roots, pushed the blast of papers under the cushions,
shaking, relief coming in faucets.
when she is old she will sweep the floor
sweep the floor until she falls into the basement.

A Long While Since Little Godkin

It has been the light trades;
for moon slice and stars,
the sun trails exchange

—away from bother that scratches upon the door
tosses against windows
lists devils in the stairwells
there are pages of peace
behind lids and shades
and for half of an hour or so
on folded knee
I am as clean as an unvended dime
and it is rare
if eyes give full salute
to dreams and witchwork, to be
an echoer of cricket's jazz and
the bells that rake the farmer's hill

I am no fool of bubble gum fortunes
or one to stare and wait for cues
wearing the window's glass away
(a child of star mentors and prophets
whose words flock from their mouths
like stone birds)

— it now seems true there is little
paraffin iced on the knife
to swab as pearls in raw wells
and stick them in with kiss
and lozenges
—the blue edge, quiet as fire gown
is quick and bleeds rapidly

It has been a long while since
lLittle Godkin
and the skinned knee of a child
who slept in the lap of God
and other strangers.

Kim Gilmore
During the past few decades, pottery has become an art form. Although decorative pots existed in the presence of the wealthy for many centuries, the importance of pottery has always been its usefulness. The craft has become overwhelmingly popular; merchants peddle pounds of baked, glossy clay, and every species of plant emerges from stoneware.

Several Calvin potters have produced pots of note. The pots presented are, in our opinion, interesting and pleasing because of their form and surface or texture. In each work the potters have achieved a balance of simplicity and complexity which results in a striking piece of pottery.

The ceramic works have been photographed as pots alone or in relation to other objects, with special emphasis on lighting and shade.
Liese Brook

Deb Gritter

Nancy Vander Linde

Deb Gritter
Ingenor, his faithful T-square at his side, sat scanning the evening paper after a very thoughtful day at Design, Ltd. His wandering eye was soon drawn to an ad in rather large type.

Lost in the fog, Unity, between the avenues of Faith and Reason, I believe. If found call me at 123-4568, during my lunch hour. Small reward. Philo B. Neat.

All that Ingenor could think was—oh no, not again, why can't they keep it on a leash? Someday, they'll really lose it! He settled back and continued reading when all of a sudden his house shook until the book shelves behind him heaved and rattled. In the midst of all this shaking going on, a slender volume fell off its shelf, hit him on the head, and landed on the floor at his feet. During this commotion, his T-square also clattered to a position flat on the floor. Annoyed, he reached down to retrieve his instrument but instead picked up the offending book. “Hmm,” he muttered, Escape from Reason—the title leaped off the page into his mind and settled down. Remembering that he had just read an ad about “reason” and “lost,” he turned again to it... quickly, he grabbed the phone. Since Philo eats lunch continually, the two were soon talking to each other.

(What follows are the main points in their conversation with the formalities deleted, i.e., hellogoodbyehoware-youetc.)

Philo: You want to what? Talk about a book that recently came to your attention? Escape from Reason? Funny! Other people have mentioned that book by Francis A. Schaeffer in response to my ad. They tell me the story starts with Thomist autonomy.

Ingenor: I know! Schaeffer contends that Aquinas, in insisting upon a division of reality into the provable and nonprovable, has caused men to divide reality into two autonomous areas—the physical and spiritual. This autonomy today implies that there is no relationship between these two segments of reality.

Philo: Sounds like a take-off on the ancient Greeks if you ask me.

Ingenor: Probably true. Perhaps for a proper perspective one ought to feast a bit on some Aquinas—his Summa Theologica, or lunch on The Age of Belief including for dessert the article by Norman Geisler—“A New Look at the Relevance of Thomism for Evangelical Apologetics.”

Philo: Makes me hungry—but enough—enough! Regardless of the culprit, Unity is still lost!

Ingenor: I know! To aid our search let’s get back to Schaeffer. I believe his description of the state in which “modern modern man” finds himself rings true. He suggests that the autonomous division between the upper storey—grace, spirit, faith, and the lower storey—nature, flesh, reason, has brought man into a schizophrenic condition. Let me explain. Without any content from the upper storey affecting the lower, man’s natural state is only that of a machine. Fully determined, there is no freedom for man. He is totally controlled by science and technology...

Philo: Aha! You with the T-square. You lower storey person, you—you have kidnapped Unity...

Ingenor: Names, names. You should talk. To complete the description of man’s schizoid state we must talk about what happened in the upper storey—isn’t that where you live?

Philo: I suppose... but don’t you accuse me of losing
my own Unity!

Ingener: Easy now... let me continue. Schaeffer contends that with no input from reason into your upper storey, much of your spiritual philosophy turned into yoga-inspired, cross-legged mysticism.

Philo: Wait a minute, Ingener, I've got to get into a more comfortable position...

Ingener: ...in fact, Schaeffer says that this lack of integration of the two storeys results in no freedom in the spiritual realm either... unless, as some of your modern mystic friends suggest, you try drugs or insanity. Then, they say, you are free. I'm afraid that my reason tells me that that kind of freedom is only on paper and writing doesn't make it so.

Philo: I have a feeling that Unity may be found yet. But let me review the problem of finding it as we have discussed. If man is to find Unity both in himself and, perhaps, in all of reality he cannot afford to be a schizoid, swinging between a machine and an insane bodiless spirit. In short, he cannot abide the autonomy of spirit and flesh.

Ingener: Well put, my friend. But perhaps this autonomy is true. Is there any evidence that it isn't? I remember that Schaeffer wrote this book to help Christians bring the gospel to those who live lives based on this autonomy and its philosophical consequences. We'll need evidence to prove reality is otherwise!

Philo: Let me think. Evidence? It seems to me that a fruitful area for such data would be in the thoughts of psychologists who deal with mind and body together or apart. I wonder if any of them have something to say about this problem of a dichotomy in reality?

Ingener: Hey! Thanks for the memory jog! I seem to remember that Jung, in his book In Search of a Soul, makes the point that mind and body are not totally separate, but each is understood in light of the other. On page 124, Jung says, "The equal balance of the flesh and the spirit is not lost to the world."

Philo: Wow! What a memory! But that's helpful. I mean at least the concept of Unity is not totally lost. It gives us some faith to continue our search. Any other tidbits of information?

Ingener: Maybe. I would suggest you peruse an article in Science—the journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Philo: Never touch the stuff!

Ingener: I think you're part of our problem!

Philo: Please continue...

Ingener: Anyway, take a look at the article "Limits to the Scientific Understanding of Man," in the March 21, 1975 issue. Here, Gunther Stent proposes the idea that man as man cannot be described totally using scientific concepts and language—i.e., as machine. Or, Schaeffer might say, information from the upper storey of faith must be added to the reasonable data of the lower storey in order to completely define man. Stent also says, "Human sciences face an impasse since their central concept of the self is transcendental... (and)... it is important to give due recognition to this fundamental epistemological limitation to the human sciences." I suggest he is saying that man (and perhaps all of reality) cannot be bottled as only natural or spiritual. To understand man and reality we must unite in some way faith and reason.

Philo: Well, at least we have some hints that man is struggling against the autonomy of spirit and flesh—the unseen and the seen.

Ingener: Yes! And Schaeffer contends that man struggles because he is made in God's image. All men bear that image and through common grace they seem to sense that Unity which at the same time seems to elude them.

Philo: Interesting! Schaeffer has probably read a bit of Calvin.

Ingener: I suspect he had dined often on the Institutes.

Philo: Have you?

Ingener: Well, sometimes I teach at Calvin.

Philo: Naturally.

Ingener: What did you expect? But anyway we must continue if our problem is to be solved. Our thinking to this points is as follows: "Modern modern man" lives with the tension of being a machine (no meaning) or of being insane (meaning?). A spark also burns within man saying it isn't one or the other but, somehow, there is a relationship between flesh and spirit which, if found, could provide meaning and restore Unity. Somehow, somewhere, there exists a kind of gestalt—a pattern or contour of man which, by incorporating both aspects of reality, describes the whole man. Schizophrenia would disappear, and Unity would provide man with a meaningful security.

Philo: Right on! Continue.

Ingener: Let's see. What about the solution. I've got to do some thumbing through here. You know, Philo, many writers love to state problems and then leave it up to us to find the answer.

Philo: Modern relativism.

Ingener: Right. But, oh, here we are! Schaeffer asks us to go to the Bible as seen through the eyes of the Reformers. I'll send you a copy of the book so you can read what Schaeffer says.

Philo: You mean I have to wait?

Ingener: Well, I suppose we could look at the Bible ourselves. Do you have one?

Philo: My work doesn't require one.

Ingener: Pity... well let's see. Hmmm, oh yes, look at... oh I forgot... anyway what about Hebrews 11? I'll read a few verses... can you copy it down?

Philo: That I can do!
Ingenor: Good! Let’s see . . . hmmm . . . I’ll read verse three first.

By faith we perceive that the universe was fashioned by the word of God, so that the visible came forth from the invisible.

Philo: Got it!
Ingenor: Now here’s verse one:

And what is faith? Faith gives substance to our hopes, and makes us certain of realities we do not see.

Philo: O.K., but so what?
Ingenor: Don’t you understand? Here’s the answer to finding Unity. We’ll use this feedback loop!

Philo: A what? Sounds suspicious!
Ingenor: Typical reaction! But let me explain. When engineers design a solution to a problem, they test the design to see if it works or not. If it does—a rare event the first time—fine. If it doesn’t, the experience of failure is fed back into the design process so that the design is changed in the direction of proper solution.

Philo: Hmmm . . . you’ve lost me.
Ingenor: Don’t be so defensive! I’ll tie this in with the solution to our problem of finding Unity. I would propose the hypothesis that faith and reason are “tools” for discovering Unity in the natural and spiritual aspects of reality. Schaeffer, I believe, is not too clear on the distinction between tool and reality. Anyway, I suggest that the spiritual is a segment of reality to be understood and faith is a tool to do so. The same idea holds for physical reality and reason. The former is that to be understood and the latter a tool. But, I must hurry on to the design process to illustrate what I mean by feedback in light of Hebrews 11.

Philo: Yes, you are getting somewhat long winded!
Ingenor: As usual, but . . . moving on. Suppose man has the problem of finding meaning in the natural world. One solution design would be to apply reason alone to discover such meaning. But alone, it doesn’t work. The design of reason only brings us to the conclusion described by Schaeffer—nature is a machine running by itself, and man, if reduced to pure stuff, is also a machine with no individual freedom. This solution to ultimate meaning is no meaning at all—not very meaningful—in fact, a design failure. We need to feed something else back into our original design.

Philo: I’m waiting for the good part!
Ingenor: Here it comes. Let’s reach into our Hebrews tool box and inject (or feed back) a little faith into our original design. It works! Reason did give us the “what” of the natural world but faith gives us the “why” and “where-from”—hence real meaning. Read the first verse I quoted to you, Philo.

Philo: That part about the “visible coming from the invisible” could bear a little more thought on my part but I’m following you.

Ingenor: Good! Now suppose we turn to the world of spirit—the unseen. Here the idea of a supreme being turns over and over in the mind of man. Does it make sense? Is it reasonable? Do we have to accept it on the basis of faith without reasonable substance? It would seem that pure faith or pure reason is inadequate in the design to solve this problem—one only has to think of the problem of evil related to a supreme being!

Philo: I can see that nothing hides under your rug!
Ingenor: I’ll just move on. Philo, read over the second verse I quoted.

Philo: O.K., . . . hmmm . . . let me try a little of your language. Maybe what this verse says is that God is a spirit, and the problem is how to make that spirit sensible or reasonable to us. Faith feeds back substance from the lower storey into the upper storey design process producing a certainty—that God exists—a meaningful solution to our problem here.

Ingenor: Bravo, bravo!
Philo: Shh . . . let me continue. I’m really catching on. Man cannot understand reality and himself only in autonomous pieces. Reality is understood by applying a kind of wholistic thought process utilizing feedback. The analytical aspects of reality, i.e., mind and body, nature and grace, flesh and spirit, and, ultimately, God and man are synthesized into a whole by using faith and reason back and forth, each yielding insights the other reinforces. That I can see is the feedback process you see in Hebrews.

Ingenor: Philo, I believe you and I are now on the same drawing board!
Philo: My eyes indeed are now truly open. In fact, I notice out my window that the fog has lifted and I can now see that the avenues of Faith and Reason are just two different sides of the same street. Wait a minute! Two trucks are coming down the street. Men in the first truck are removing the Thomist double yellow lines using . . . it seems they call it a Schaeffer eraser. Hmmm . . . the men in the next truck are putting up a sign just outside here. It says, “This road is now one way to Unity.” Well, Ingenor, to whom goes the reward I offered for Unity? We seemed to have found our way to it together!

Ingenor: Perhaps I have the answer to that. But first I must confess to you the piece of evidence that really put me on the right track to Unity. That piece of data is the Incarnation. Let me quote another verse.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth. John 1:14

Philo: Now my eyes are wide open! But the reward . . .?
Ingenor: Perhaps we ought to take our cue from Revelation . . .

Worthy is the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain, to receive all power and wealth, wisdom and might, honour and glory and praise . . . Praise and honour, glory and might, to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever . . . Amen.

Philo: Amen!

1 Mentor series on Philosophers.
Second Movement

Dan Nelson
Dialogue recently came across the following letters written by Carl Byker and Don Hettinga. They both had apparently been reading several of the novels of Hermann Hesse and had been writing back and forth, trying to get down on paper what they thought about Hesse. While letters are a form of writing which usually only appear after a person dies, Dialogue decided to attempt to break this precedent in order to allow our readers a chance to read these letters which we thoroughly enjoyed. Mr. Byker and Mr. Hettinga both agreed to allow their letters to be published, suggesting to Dialogue that they do quite often feel intellectually dead and that it might, therefore, be appropriate for the magazine to publish them.

Dear Carl,

I wish both of us had time enough to sit down with a beer and really get into talking again. I really miss those sessions of bouncing ideas back and forth; these days whenever we run into each other, it seems there is only time for "How are you doing?" or "What've you been up to?" Well, perhaps I should drop this line of thought before I become maudlin, but I do hope we can get together soon.

I've been re-reading Hesse and have been traveling to places that I haven't visited in years. There was a passage from Steppenwolf that really came alive for me again. It's that scene where Harry, the steppenwolf, is attracted by the vestibule of his boarding house with its green plants and its odor of polished wood—"the very essence of bourgeois cleanliness, of neatness and meticulousness, of duty and devotion shown in little things"—and is, at the same time, repelled by its comfortable mediocrity. Do you remember those nights in the upstairs apartment on Wealthy Street when we would sit talking madly late into the night with the energy and intensity that occasionally comes with a lack of sleep. We couldn't get over the profundity of that passage Hesse quotes from the Romantic poet Novalis, "Most men will not swim before they are able to," followed by Hesse's explanation: "Naturally they won't swim! They are born for the solid earth, not for the water. And naturally they won't think. They are made for life, not for thought. Yes, and he who thinks, what's more, he who makes thought his business, he may go far in it, but he bartered the solid earth for the water all the same, and one day he will drown." Wasn't that sense of romantic tragedy appealing? With that, everything seemed to fall quite simply into place.

We were the thinkers, the artists (even though we were producing nothing then). We knew the empty facade of the bourgeois, and we were of a consciousness that went beyond it. Yet, when I now read Hesse, these distinctions seem too simple. A new look at these books reminds me of the old Dylan line which goes, I think, "Ah, but I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now." Perhaps these differences, these dichotomies, between working people, bourgeois people, and artists or intellectuals, or even between intellectuals and artists as in Narcissus and Goldmund or in The Glass Bead Game are real, but I doubt if they are as black and white—as intense—in life as Hesse presents them in his novels.

While looking over the canon, I recognized a number of dichotomies which Hesse attempts to define. In the early novels which have youthful heroes—I am thinking especially of Beneath the Wheel, Demian, and A Child's Heart—Hesse confronts these young men with definitions of good and evil which make them feel disjointed. Each is aware of the moral system, yet each feels that the system is somehow extremely fickle or arbitrary, that it excludes from what is proper things which he feels to be perfectly normal. It is this perception of incongruity in the mind of the hero which produces the amazing feelings of guilt which weigh so thematically heavy in these novels. I think that this is probably what young Goldmund feels after running away from the cloister school and making love with a woman for the first time. He thinks to himself about how fast things happen, about how a sin could make someone feel so good. He doesn't have a troubled conscience but "rather a feeling of guilt for some crime one had not committed but had brought along with one into the world." Goldmund here is really nearing a second level of consciousness which raises him above the guilt-laden Hans of Beneath the Wheel and the first person hero of A Child's Heart, who felt overwhelmed by sin and guilt. But the significance of his guilt is the very insignificance of his sin—a rather innocuous lie made to his father.

Incidentally, have you noticed that, like Goldmund, a number of Hesse's characters obtain at least a temporary transcendence. The things that each transcends may vary,
but it seems to me that these characters make similar progressions. This is really where the major splits can be seen. In each novel there is a bifurcation with platonic overtones. Hesse makes a split between the ideal and the real, the aesthetic and its opposite (what ever that might be—perhaps the bourgeois) the ascetic and the sensual, and the responsibilities of the individual and those of a society. Siddhartha follows the path of a bodhisattva on the way to enlightenment; Harry, the steppenwolf, realizes the tension between a cultural life and that of a bourgeois society; Narcissus and Goldmund are portrayed as opposite types representing the intellectual and the aesthetic respectively; and The Glass Bead Game raises the question of the ascetic and bourgeois roles in the context of societal responsibility.

I'm probably dragging this out, but I want to emphasize that Hesse defines these dichotomies and that certain characters make a progression from one side to the other. Harry, Demian, and Goldmund obtain a temporary transcendence from whatever world they wish to escape, but, for them, the move is not permanent. It seems to me, however, that there is a third class of characters which obtain enlightenment—the most, according to Hesse, a mortal could ever hope for. Siddhartha becomes a buddha. The immortals in Steppenwolf have no constraining contact with reality. Similarly, Klingsor in the novella Kingsor's Last Summer is able to escape the temporal world near the end of his life. He lived, finally, in the world of his painting, at the highest level of consciousness.

Well, Carl, to get back to my original point after this incredible digression, none of this seems simple any more. Are there really these sharp dichotomies and that certain characters make a progression from one side to the other? Harry, Demian, and Goldmund obtain a temporary transcendence from whatever world they wish to escape, but, for them, the move is not permanent. It seems to me, however, that there is a third class of characters which obtain enlightenment—the most, according to Hesse, a mortal could ever hope for. Siddhartha becomes a buddha. The immortals in Steppenwolf have no constraining contact with reality. Similarly, Klingsor in the novella Kingsor's Last Summer is able to escape the temporal world near the end of his life. He lived, finally, in the world of his painting, at the highest level of consciousness.

Hello Don—
I was pleased to receive your letter on Hermann Hesse. It seems like a long time since I have read and we have discussed his works. Curiously, I was thinking about my separation from Hesse and his apparent fall from vogue several days before I received your letter. At the time, I decided that it was the result of my busyness with courses at Calvin and Calvin's lack of courses dealing with German authors. Now, after further reflection, it seems to me that I should add another factor. I once read an article which asserted that Hesse was unapproachable for American readers because he stepped outside of the materialistic concerns which pervade every facet of American life. The author of the article believed that Hesse's emergence in the sixties as a guru for the American young resulted from the unconcern with which that segment of society regarded material matters. If this author were to write again today, he might propound that Hesse's drop in popularity is the result of a return by the new generation of adult Americans to placing material considerations first. From my own limited observation of the moods of those around me and from my still more limited observations of the country as a whole, it appears to me to be true that the younger people in our country are becoming more docile and less interrogatory. Depending on your own point of view, this may be good or bad, but it does seem to have a bearing on the place of Hermann Hesse in the minds of Americans.

Another question about Hesse which is related to what I have just said and to what you wrote me is one dealing with the dichotomies which he apparently draws. The natural question to ask is if the bifurcations drawn by Hesse are valid. However, perhaps another, and as difficult, question should come first. Is Hesse the one defining bifurcations? My own answer to the question is no. It seems to me that Hesse is not trying to project the phenomenon of certain dichotomies but, rather, is attempting to deal with those projected by the civilization in which he lived. Possibly the essential separation in Hesse's works is, as you noted, between good and evil. However, in Western Civilization another dichotomy is often listed as preceding that one—the separation of body and soul. In whatever manner one sees this dichotomy as having become dominant in the West (Plato via Descartes is one often mentioned possibility), it has encompassed the great majority of thought in the Western world including its major religion. In this context some philosophers have seen the body representing evil and the soul representing good. Most of the other bifurcations with which Hesse deals can also be understood in this light. Although it may be somewhat glib, I see Hesse's major dichotomies as good vs. evil, art vs. intellect, the ascetic vs. the social-political, and bourgeois vs. intellectual. In my
scheme, the value judgment evil, art, social and bourgeois are loosely grouped under the heading physical; and good, intellect, the ascetic, and the intellectual are grouped, in the same fashion, under the heading spiritual. If we examine the novels which vaguely correspond to each of these dichotomies, I think that we can discover Hesse's attitude towards them. Demian, it seems to me, deals best with the problem of good and evil. One of the major figures in the novel is the god Abraxas, who unites good and evil, God and Satan into one being. Narcissus and Goldmund can be confidently paired with artist and intellectual. However, art and intellect in their representative incarnations are not at odds but, rather, form a particularly compatible relationship. Bourgeois and intellectual come to life in the person of Harry Haller, the steppenwolf. Harry's struggle in the book is to unite or to, at least, accept these elements in his own personality. The Glass Bead Game was a particularly interesting study of ascetic vs. political aims, and the protagonist ends by trying to form a synthesis. What I am trying to show by this tedious listing is that Hesse is trying to have his protagonists transcend dichotomies which he has observed in the world. This theory corresponds with Hesse's often mentioned three-tiered vision which he has observed in the world. The child enters the world with a unity. Once he is taught about good and evil and many other dichotomies, he becomes separated from himself. This is the state in which most humans exist. Occasionally, a human has an epiphany, as with Demian, Goldmund, and Harry. Finally, a few, such as Siddhartha, break through permanently to the higher level. Siddhartha, seems to me, is the best example of Hesse's attempt to transcend the dichotomies of the modern world.

Often when I read Hesse, Don, and find myself attempting to understand his thought in philosophical terms—i.e. the consideration of his revolutions of dichotomies above—I begin to wonder whether or not I am approaching his works in the right way. While Hesse's thought is, for the most part, interesting and coherent, it does not seem to me to be the factor which makes him a great writer. Hesse's ability to create and sustain a mood throughout a novel as in Steppenwolf and Siddhartha, his skill at description and parody as in Narcissus and Goldmund and the Glass Bead Game, and his aptitude for projecting the thoughtful, individual into a particular society are the elements of Hesse's work which lead me to consider him a consummate artist.

It is not my intention to denigrate Hesse's thought to ever being anything worse than, at a second level, a noteworthy accomplishment in twentieth century writing. Perhaps a line from Hesse himself can best explain my view of his work. If "...we may justifiably regard the three lives he did complete rather as the creations of a poetic spirit than the works of a scholar. In saying this we do not think we are doing them an injustice." This comment is made by the narrator of Magister Ludi in reference to the three literary lives created by Joseph Knecht. When I first read it I applied it specifically to Narcissus and Goldmund. Now with a little hesitation, I regard it as describing the corpus of work by Herman Hesse.

I have to knock off now and leave for school. Hope to hear from you soon.

-Carl

Carl—

It's good to hear that you're doing Hesse a bit again. I'm glad you could scrounge up the time to react to my letter. It's getting increasingly rare that any of us have time to write substantive letters anymore. I'm really feeling drained by the reading I've been doing for my Hemingway course and by all this Dialogue business, but I'm also really eager to keep this discussion of Hesse going.

I think that you are basically correct in your assessment of the mood of the country. Liberals and radicals find it difficult to discover causes to fight for. The conflict in Southeast Asia was the catalyst of the sixties, but for most Americans, the Vietnam War is becoming a rapidly fading flash of history—only slightly painful to the memory. We seem to be collectively settling back into our comfortable dens of materialism. Individualism—which, incidentally, it seems to me was a theme of Hesse's novels which appealed to many people in the sixties—has become so popular that the concept has lost its meaning. Everyone has been absorbed into a pattern of individualism which has, because of the great numbers of people involved, become the norm. Furthermore, there seems to be no compelling social reasons—such as war (which was a factor in Hesse's life and in life in the sixties)—to provide deep dissatisfaction with or discomfort in these values. We are becoming too comfortable in our material and television dominated world to be interested in real romantic individualism; instead, we settle for the package type we find in our cigarette and beer...

Furthermore, there seems to be no compelling social reasons...
I'm afraid I'll have to quibble with you on your next point, Carl. But before I air my quibble, I'd like to qualify it. In my earlier letter I didn't mean to postulate that Hesse created a world which was always bifurcated. I'm sure—and it seems to me that this is what that epiphanal experience which occurs in *Demian*, *Siddhartha* and other novels and which you mentioned in your letter is all about—that Hesse believed that for man to reach his highest level of consciousness, these various dichotomies must be united.

Now, my quibble is with your statement that we must put Hesse's philosophy in the backseat when looking at his novels. I, too, find that Hesse can well sustain a mood throughout a novel and that he is particularly brilliant in his descriptions of dreams, but, to me, his characters—although they most certainly undergo psychological changes and therefore cannot be called "flat"—are generally types. Typically the "hero" is a romantic individual who overcomes the division of his universe, thereby attaining a transcendent level of consciousness or experience. This, I believe, is close to being the essence of Hesse's philosophy. I would also expect that this philosophy is the greatest factor both in his popularity and in his lasting value. I find no startling literary developments in the Hesse novels but, rather, almost stock romantic literary forms. Therefore, I think that as the popularity of "the individual" rises and falls, the popularity of Hesse will become greater or lesser in a direct proportion.

I've got to get to a writer's guild meeting yet tonight, but I'd like to make one final point. I hope that I don't appear to contradict what I just wrote, but I, too, feel that Hesse was a great artist. He had an incredible ability to create moods, as well as an amazing sensitivity for the bases of human action. We Calvinists can see portraits of ourselves in the moods of guilt Hesse frames. We know the fear of being punished, the fear of the young man in *A Child's Heart*. We know the conflict between mores and guilt which tears young Goldmund of *Narcissus and Goldmund* and Hans of *Beneath the Wheel*. We all must be steppenwolves as we grow older and graduate from idea to idea, from value system to value system. Hesse has a great talent for creating characters that people can identify with. I agree, he was an artist. Still, his characters were thematic types, and I'm sure that their flatness is a major factor of their appeal. The individual who overcomes or, even, who fails while inducing a strong feeling of tragedy is extremely appealing.

This is probably the core of Hesse's genius. He realized that art comes out of tensions; that is, it arises out of the cracks between conflicting philosophies or life styles. Wallace Stevens once wrote that "Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her, alone, shall come fulfillment to our dreams/ And our desires." Goldmund, the artist, can only create after he has been confronted with pain, separation, and death, and this, I think, is also Hesse's situation. He needed to create these dichotomies, these tensions (or to, at least, perceive and define their existence) in order to produce these novels which are, in effect, brilliant psychological paintings.

—Take Care,

Don

Hey Don—

Your return letter on Hesse was unexpected and appreciated. Although we have talked about these subjects various times, it's nice to see your thoughts down on paper, especially in letter form. I particularly enjoyed your poem at *Daedalus* about the cabin because it created the tone that a letter like that should have and reminded me that even the most scholarly thoughts, when expressed in a letter, take on a definite personal aspect. Hence, it might be interesting sometime to examine the differences of opinion we have about Hesse, and see if our views match our personalities.

Speaking of differences, it seems that we do have one on the role of individualism in Hesse, but before picking up that thread, I want to reaffirm, in the light of your response, my thoughts on the nature of the American people and their reaction to Hesse. My Poli-Sci theory course last semester opened with a discussion on why Americans rarely study historical political philosophy. Apparently, our society is so firmly founded in Lockean consensus politics that major political questions go unnoticed. In a similar vein, our religion—a mixture of the civil and the sacred that serves the god, materialism, so well—allows us to ignore major metaphysical questions. It is hardly surprising, then, that unless aroused by a catastrophe like the Vietnam war, the American public ignores Hesse. Hesse is a writer of conflict and sometimes of resolution. He deals with the basic questions of existence and more importantly creates moods of searching metaphysical anguish with which the "Christian"
American must find it hard to identify. I fully realize that consensus politics offer great opportunity for action, but it also seems to me that, as we have seen recently, it offers little opportunity for the kind of existential self-analysis and criticism about which Hesse writes.

Now, to pick up that thread of disagreement on individualism and Hesse, if individualism is to be called a theme in Hesse, it is a theme which cannot be understood outside of its opposite, the communal. So perhaps our difference is one of emphasis. Now we’re back to Hesse’s dichotomies. Although the majority of Hesse’s protagonists are on the surface individualists, their inner conflict often stems from their desire and inability to be part of a greater whole. Joseph Knecht is one of the best examples. His struggle in *The Glass Bead Game* is whether to remain part of a society which encourages anonymity in its members or to go into the bourgeois world and, as an individual, help it to solve its problems. He finally opts for the latter but not until after a great deal of conflict. *Siddhartha* relates the successful attempt of an individualist to lose his individualism and to become part of a greater whole. There are more examples, but my point is not that individualism should not be listed as one of Hesse’s themes, but that it must be seen in the context of community.

I wonder, Don, if what I mentioned above about the connection between our personalities and our views of Hesse has anything to do with our disagreement about the value of Hesse’s philosophy. It seems to me that his metaphysical views function well within the context of each novel, creating a world into which each character can be thrust. In these worlds, Hesse is able to use his greatest talents, developing characters and establishing moods. However, when I attempt to abstract Hesse’s philosophy from the novels, I do not find that he is a great thinker. Once again, I want to emphasize that he is rarely a bad or shoddy thinker. Hesse, as you say, generally uses the motif of the protagonist trying to ascend to a higher level of consciousness. I assert that the greatness of Hesse’s novels comes not from the actions and thoughts of the protagonists which define a particular reaction to the human condition, to one of the dichotomies or from those which delimit a particular philosophical system which will lead to that higher consciousness, but, rather, it comes from Hesse’s ability to draw a portrait of a man in conflict, from his skill at creating an atmosphere in which the actual deliberations of the characters can take place.

That Hesse was an artist rather than a scholar or philosopher seems evident from his work and appropriate to his talent. His protagonists are generally artists, and when they are intellectuals, as with Joseph Knecht and Harry Haller, he centers on their psychological reactions rather than their thought. When I read the preface to *Narcissus and Goldmund*, I must admit, Don, that I was more interested in and was hoping for an exposition of Narcissus, the scholar. Instead, the novel focused on Goldmund, the artist, and, within the context of Hesse’s corpus, that is as it should be—regarding Hesse as an artist rather than a scholar. I disagree with your view of Hesse’s literary merits. Instead of stock romantic literary forms, I view *Narcissus and Goldmund* and *Magister Ludi* as excellent examples of Hesse’s skill in the field of parody. Your phrase *psychological paintings* describes Hesse’s novels better than anything I can think of. The skill which he uses to produce those paintings is shown in the easy identification which Hesse’s readers make with his characters, who still retain personalities of their own. Hesse’s protagonists are not only prototypes but are, as you say, individuals. If I try to recollect each of Hesse’s novels separately, I do not remember a train of thought or philosophy expressed but a mood. Each of his novels contains, for me, a distinct atmosphere or feeling. In a test of synesthesia, I think one would find surprising agreements between Hesse’s readers as to what color, sound, etc. describes which book. This seems to me to be Hesse’s great accomplishment, an accomplishment which makes him, as we both agree, a great artist.

I have thoroughly enjoyed discussing Hesse with you, Don. It seems that he really has fallen from vogue among the young, which may not be all that unfortunate. I have often wondered why *Steppenwolf* became a successful cult book, considering its stinging attacks on the shallowness of the pop culture. Hesse has never been in vogue among the American literary-intellectual, a fact which could easily be demonstrated by a count of the number of Hesse’s books read by the staff of the Calvin English Department. Perhaps his unpopularity with that segment is a result of his popularity with another. In any case, I think both of us have relished many hours of reading and talking about Hesse and would not hesitate to recommend his work to anyone.

Hope to see you soon,

Carl
what I've learned

Mama taught me
to sit quiet
hands folded and knees together
face pleasant

Mama taught me
not to make quick judgements
to believe
in kind people and Jesus

Mama also taught me
to be patient
to give without asking
to be a lady

I learned her lessons well

Daddy taught me
to need men
and to be
alone

I learned his lesson better

M. Edmund

faithless rosaries

We wore rosaries then
and sometimes
prayed, our eyes meeting silently
together we knew
the meaning of life
and found our destinies fulfilled
in rumpled beds
and whiskey before noon

We lived as artists, happily
immersed in poetry and paint;
did not ask questions,
but were glad when answers came

now it is quiet
I have lost my sense of time
and my brushes lie untouched

I turn my head
close my eyes
fumble for the beads again
When she entered the room he was seated cross-legged under the window, a black-eyed, oddly humped Indian, grasping a shiny metal jar cover and gazing dully at the kaleidoscope of light reflected from its surface onto the ceiling.

She hesitated at the desk where Mrs. Garvey sat surrounded by a garden of pop-out pumpkins, black paper cats, and grinning plastic skeletons.

"Please take him, Laura. He's been licking the windows again, and I have all I can do to manage the other kids when they know they're having music today!" Mrs. Garvey was a little irritated by the noise of the other eight excited children while she was trying to cut smiling ghosts out of her white construction paper.

"Danny, come," Laura said softly. Although he didn't move, she knew that he'd heard her. She walked right up to his brown, raised face and repeated, "Danny, come." This time a little wet smile appeared on the corner of his mouth, and Laura smiled, too. "He knows it's me," she said to Mrs. Garvey, and Mrs. Garvey said, "Yes, at least he's come that far."

The teacher watched, interested in spite of herself in seeing what Laura would do next. There was something about Laura that calmed and reassured even a teacher. She spoke quietly and slowly and never seemed to need to assume a fake gaiety or brightness in order to capture the children's attention. Now she knelt by Danny's huddled form and gently caressed the palm of his hand with the tips of her fingers. "Let's go, Danny."

Danny clumsily but obediently uncrossed himself and waddled out of the room, clinging to Laura's hand.

Mrs. Garvey breathed a little easier whenever Danny was
gone. One never knew when Danny would decide to throw an enraged tantrum and lie screaming on the floor, or moodily sit and stare at the floor for hours on end. Of all her children, Danny was the most frightening because she could never make him smile.

With the other children it was almost too easy. “Do you know what we’re going to do today? We’re going to go to the foodstore!” Mrs. Garvey wheeled in a small shopping cart full of empty cereal boxes, milk cartons and canned food containers, and the eight children screamed with delight. When she passed out the play money, twelve-year-old red-haired Billy couldn’t sit still any longer, and gave the student teacher a big kiss. Ten-year-old Beth, beaming from ear to ear, was so excited when it was her turn to be “storeperson,” as the student teacher put it, that she had to squeeze her legs together to keep from wetting her pants. Mrs. Garvey and the student teacher found themselves, as always, quickly unwinding and letting themselves become almost as silly as the children.

“ZOOM, ZOOM, let’s run this cart back home so we can put our milk in the refrigerator.”

The penciled silhouettes of the children’s profiles hanging by the window were chillingly grotesque in comparison with the smiling ghosts and toothy witches of the season. Mrs. Garvey remembered bringing her two small children to the classroom one day after school was out. They had been disappointed at not being able to see the children about whom they were so curious—morbidly curious, Mrs. Garvey thought. Still, four-year-old Lisa had gasped and clung to her mother’s hand when she’d caught a glimpse of those black penciled heads in various distorted shapes, all of them depicting characteristically open mouths. Brother and sister had become very still. Perhaps she should have had them see the children themselves first. These silhouettes showed only the ugly outside shell of them, the part of them Mrs. Garvey had been frighteningly conscious of only on very first sight. After two months of knowing them she could say she felt attached to all of them—except, perhaps, for Danny.

Danny came in now, as haltingly as he could.

“He wanted more, I think,” Laura explained, pleased. “I gave him all kinds of tactile stimuli—practically dusted him with pieces of leather, cotton, mohair, burlap . . . maybe he won’t feel the need to do as much window licking after this.” She pressed his hand. As she walked out of sight he became sulky.

“Hey, Danny, would YOU like to push the shopping cart for awhile?” the student teacher asked, but Danny plopped himself darkly on the floor.

“Just ignore him,” Mrs. Garvey whispered. “Now children, we’re going to have show and tell. Who has something new today?”

Dave’s normally dull face lit up, and his arm almost shot out of its socket.

“Dave has something? How nice! What will you show us, Dave?”

His hand reached slowly into his pocket, and drew out a smooth, hard, black nut. He held it carefully in the palm of his hand, as if it might break, and gazed at it with pride.

“What a beautiful nut. Does anyone know what kind of nut that is? No? I think it’s called a chestnut. Can everyone say that? Chestnut.”

“I think it’s that! Do you know what it is?” Mrs. Garvey whispered to the student teacher. “Oh well. These kids won’t remember what I called it anyway.” The two women laughed. Just then Mrs. Garvey felt a tug on the leg of her pants and a wet mouth on her knee.

“So you decided to join the party after all? OK, sit on my lap if you have to,” she groaned, helping Danny to awkwardly pull himself onto her knee. He was content then, and his eyes assumed a pleased vacancy as she silently stroked his arm.

“Now, who else has something new to show us?” Mrs. Garvey continued. She felt slightly ludicrous with such a big boy on her lap. Danny was twelve, and his body was developing though his mind was not.

“That’s a very nice new coat, Annie,” the student teacher put in. Danny began thrusting his face against the teacher’s neck and rubbing violently.

“Good heavens, he’s so affectionate!” Mrs. Garvey laughed, a little frightened. His hands clawed her back and he clambered on her knees until he was straddling her. Danny rocked back and forth with a look of ecstasy on his face, grunting and clenching Mrs. Garvey’s neck fiercely. The scene could have been comical, but on the student teacher’s face there was a look of uncertainty, almost of fear. Mrs. Garvey forced a laugh.

“Oh my, he’s really getting loving! Aren’t you, Danny?” Her words were muffled by his rubbering head. Then a stream of thick yellow snot spurted from the boy’s nose onto Mrs. Garvey’s blouse. As the boy peered with bewilderment at the yellow stain, she firmly detached herself from his embrace. The student teacher jumped up with a Kleenex for his nose and then pulled him to a chair. Mrs. Garvey weakly wiped the mucous off her blouse and said, “Well! That really was a beautiful new red coat, Annie. And now, class, do you know what time it is? Time for music!”

The children jumped and cheered as she hustled them out the door towards the waiting music teacher. Danny was the last to go, coaxed and pulled by degrees from the leg of Mrs. Garvey’s pants to the orange and black Halloween desk to the door of her room. His grunting protest and angry eyes struck her conscience. It was with mixed emotions that Mrs. Garvey sank into a chair.
Hearts and Minds, the controversial film directed by Peter Davis, won an Academy Award as best documentary of 1975. However, many critics have asked whether this obviously anti-Vietnam war film can be classified precisely as a documentary. These critics point to the film’s startling and sometimes sensational editing and contend that this kind of editing shows the director’s undisguised bias and rules out objectivity. Realizing that it is impossible for a director to avoid any hint of subjectivity, they nonetheless claim that the merit of a documentary can be judged primarily by its disinterested view of the subject.

The documentary filmmaker faces the same problems as the historian. Faced with such objective data as the dates of specific events and the names of those nations and peoples involved, they ask whether it is possible to establish an objective record of what really happened. The number of different theories on, for example, the causes of the Civil War, suggests that what the historian presents is not a computer printout but a personal and creative interpretation. Like the historian, the documentary filmmaker also places an interpretation on certain historical events. However, the degree of personal bias allowable in the presentation is a difficult matter. A viciously racist account of the Civil War would not be, to say the least, scholarly: the prejudice of the historian would lead him to ignore conflicting facts and fit the rest into the narrow structure he created. The historian and documentary filmmaker must strive for the delicate balance between individual prejudice and personal interpretation. Like the historian, the documentary filmmaker also places an interpretation on certain historical events.

However, the degree of personal bias allowable in the presentation is a difficult matter. A viciously racist account of the Civil War would not be, to say the least, scholarly: the prejudice of the historian would lead him to ignore conflicting facts and fit the rest into the narrow structure he created. The historian and documentary filmmaker must strive for the delicate balance between individual prejudice and personal interpretation. Like the historian, the documentary filmmaker also places an interpretation on certain historical events. However, the degree of personal bias allowable in the presentation is a difficult matter. A viciously racist account of the Civil War would not be, to say the least, scholarly: the prejudice of the historian would lead him to ignore conflicting facts and fit the rest into the narrow structure he created. The historian and documentary filmmaker must strive for the delicate balance between individual prejudice and personal interpretation. Like the historian, the documentary filmmaker also places an interpretation on certain historical events.

Thus it can be argued that those critics who held that Hearts and Minds is not a documentary are looking for a lecture film, not a documentary. Yet, the charge is still levelled that Hearts and Minds does not attempt to instruct, as a documentary should, but instead tries to manipulate. Walter Goodman objects to the “point-pounding mode of Hearts and Minds, which . . . divides humanity into good guys and bad guys and quashes all difficult questions before they are asked . . . .” To judge if this criticism is accurate and if such bias, if present, is justifiable in a documentary, it is necessary to take a look at certain film techniques.

Basicall, Hearts and Minds is a throwback. Its central technique is montage, the movie version of the metaphor.
Developed by early directors like Griffith and Eisenstein, montage consists of juxtaposing two seemingly unrelated images; from the placement of these images, the viewer infers some connecting meaning between them. Charlie Chaplin used a montage technique for laughs in *Modern Times*: in the opening scene we see a herd of sheep, shot from above, bumping mindlessly along; next we see a crowd of men, also shot from above, emerging from a subway station. As André Bazin defines it, montage is "the creation of a sense of meaning not proper to the images themselves, but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition." Most contemporary directors no longer use montage as much as did earlier directors. Director Robert Flaherty and the later directors of the New Wave in France chose instead to use longer held shots and less noticeable editing. They made popular the tracking shot, in which the camera follows its object around in a long unbroken movement, as if the camera were an unobtrusive companion. Modern directors find more subtle means of making editorial comments than through the use of montage.

The bold uses of montage in *Hearts and Minds* are thus doubly effective; we are not used to such forthrightness on the screen. The director shows us a frenzied scene in a football locker room, the coach screaming at his boys to kill the other team, and immediately cuts to a scene of our boys in Vietnam all fired up to get some Viet Cong. The audience draws a parallel between the all-American, Vince Lombardi spirit of competition and the sickening war games of Vietnam. Right after General Westmoreland calmly states that the Oriental has no respect for life, we see a Vietnamese family crazed with grief, weeping over the coffin of the husband and father.

The editing of *Hearts and Minds* has been called dishonest and cheap. Some claim that the director sets up straw men by showing the most unflattering footage of the supporters of the war; and it is true that Walt Rostow does come off rather badly. Then critics ask why Davis includes only scenes of American brutality and not scenes of Viet Cong terrorism, which would explain part of the anti-Vietnamese sentiment among American servicemen. A better film, they say, would have shown us both sides of the story.

However, perhaps the bias of *Hearts and Minds* is the means the director chose to instruct the viewers; by calling the film *Hearts and Minds*, Davis lets us know that he is not making a documentary on solely the Vietnam War, but that he intends to study the effects of the war on our national consciousness, our collective hearts and minds. The choppy, startling editing with its polarized images is a metaphor for the divisiveness and polarization that threatened to tear apart American society during the war. The uncomplimentary portrait of Walt Rostow, in which he appears insufferably arrogant, recalls for us that this was the man who gave us much of our information about the war. We realize that the voice of the interviewer represents our voice; when Rostow treats the interviewer like a stupid child, we also feel patronized. For a long time, our perception of the war was very one-sided. Our news was cautiously filtered and filled with deception. We lived in ignorance for many years and only gradually came to realize the horror that was Vietnam. *Hearts and Minds* forces us to relive that painful journey and even takes us farther along by re-introducing us to our deceivers and making us remember how easy it was to be deceived once upon a time. No one, not even the director himself, escapes the collective guilt for the sins of Americans in Vietnam. In one scene a farmer points to the cameraman and says, "First they bomb us. Then they come and film it."

It seems that the director's purpose was not to make a film about a small Asian country caught up in a civil war in which both sides were aided by foreign powers but was, instead, to show the terrible moral devastation wrought in the lives of the American and the Vietnamese people. *Hearts and Minds* is a documentary which, in Grierson's words, seeks to give us a living conception of the psychological effects of a ravaging war; it is a creative treatment of an awful actuality.

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