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Cover by Dan Nelson
Dear Editors:

This letter is written in reaction to the article entitled “Re-take” in the February issue of Dialogue.

In the first paragraph of his article David Faber states that those who objected to the showing of A Clockwork Orange would do well to communicate their reasons for this objection “more responsibly.” I naturally expected that the rest of the article would state, responsibly, the reasons that the film should have been shown. I was disappointed. Instead of constructively instructing the reader of the Christian and educational value of the film, Mr. Faber strongly criticized those whom he considers to be his opponents and his intellectual inferiors.

Throughout the rest of the article Mr. Faber continues to accuse these people of acting irresponsibly. This simply is not the case. Those who were opposed to the film believed they were correct in their stance just as strongly as Mr. Faber and those who agreed with him felt they were correct. They did not “piously ignore” the issue as Mr. Faber claims. On the contrary, they stood up and declared their belief.

The responsible response on Mr. Faber’s part would have been not to accuse those who disagreed with him, but to instruct them as to why the film would glorify God and build up the body of Jesus Christ. If this had been done then I am sure that many would have abandoned their opposition.

However, I have yet to read or hear a satisfactory Christian and educational reason for showing the film. One of my professors was quite upset about the cancelling of the film. Since he had seen the film several years ago, I asked him to tell me what the value of the film was. All that he could tell me was that it was a well made film! There are plenty of those to go around.

Returning to the beginning of the article the reader finds that the people who were opposed to the showing of the film “would seem to believe that they have a special calling to warn our community about corruption.” Don’t they? Aren’t all Christians called by God and enabled by Him to see and speak out against sin? Of course they are! Even though they are not able to do this perfectly, they are supposed to try. If every one of us were obliged never to say we believed this or that action to be wrong because we would be interfering with the next man’s individual conscience, then even the very Word of God could never be preached. Our tongues would be silenced, and our effectiveness as Christians would be practically nil.

If instead, this controversy has caused those on each side to approach God’s throne of grace in diligent prayer, to read His Word, and to search hearts humbly and honestly concerning this matter, then the Kingdom of God is better off because of it. If this has not happened as a result of the controversy then Mr. Faber is correct; we may as well close our mouths.

In the final paragraph Mr. Faber informs us that “those who do not responsibly enter into evaluation and discussion of the films do not earn the right to object to them.” The right to object to that which we believe to be wrong is not earned. It is also not a right. It is rather an ability that is given by God. Only when our eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit can we see evil properly, and the Holy Spirit is certainly not earned.

At the conclusion of his article Mr. Faber quotes Flannery O’Connor, and makes it rather obvious that he feels all who opposed the film showing to be ignorant, and even further, to be wielding this ignorance like an axe, “with moral indignation.” I presume that the opposite is true of those who desired to show the film. In other words they are the possessors of knowledge. The following is a quote from I Corinthians 8:1-3: “Now about meat sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God.”

Our present controversy over the film can be likened, according to Mr. Faber, to the controversy concerning meat sacrificed to idols in I Corinthians 8. He states that Paul did not side with either the group who said it was acceptable to eat the meat or the group that said it was not. He claims that Paul leaves it up to individual conscience. This is not the whole truth. Paul does not leave it up to individual conscience at all! He states that it is not a sin to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols. But he is quick to point out that many do not realize this fact. Thus the warning: “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, won’t he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall” (I Cor. 8:9-13). We are not to pursue that which our own individual conscience allows us if it will cause even one brother or sister in Christ to stumble. We are all one in the
body of Christ. We are each only a part of that body. Every action we take necessarily affects the body, and so by our actions we either build up or tear down life within the Kingdom of God. We are supposed to do our best to do nothing that is not edifying to the Church.

In light of this passage in 1 Corinthians 8, which is the very passage with which Mr. Faber himself compares the current controversy, I think that the decision to cancel the movie was the correct one. Not because of the content of the film, but because of the social context within which the controversy took place.

Christians are called by God’s grace to live new lives in Christ, which are manifest by obedience to Him. He has commanded that we love one another. Let us, therefore, out of grateful hearts instruct each other constructively, carefully, and to the best of each one’s ability, in the light of God’s Word, so that the Kingdom of God may be edified. We must strive to be more patient with and more merciful toward one another. And our daily prayer and constant desire should be that we may all “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3: 18a).

Yours in Christ, Wayne Leigh

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Irvin Kroese, Ph.D., has been a member of the Calvin English Department for nine years, teaching film courses since 1970. He has been involved with the film arts at Calvin for several years and is a member of the Film Arts Evaluation Committee formed this past January at President Diekema’s behest. Dr. Kroese has written several articles on film for the Banner.

"...though lack of student interest in film education has been the unchanging ‘given’ for over ten years, we keep acting as though we need not face the fact. We’re going to educate students on weekends, whether they like it or not!” (Dialogue, February 1977, p. 12).

And we do—either by default or by design, because the films themselves educate, whether here or downtown, and whether we like it or not.

"And I’ve been puzzled for years at the apparent inability of the Film Council to see to it that the Grand Rapids Press removes our films from its weekly review in the Entertainment (!) page” (p. 13).

Movies belong on the entertainment page. All the arts ought to appear on the entertainment page.

"They [the majority of students] attend films because they want something to do, but for reasons completely different than the Council plans for the program” (p. 13).

If it has not always been the Film Council’s primary purpose to show films for what films themselves actually offer, then it is now time for an adjustment of its purposes. For it is surely true that those who come to see the films come quite correctly for what films, as films, have to offer.

"Now, one may lament or decry the fact that most students are not looking for an education in films on weekends, but one cannot deny it!” (p. 12).

Why should one lament or decry the fact that the students have a proper understanding (whether or not the rest of us do) of what movies are for?
What are movies for? They are for the same thing that the other arts are for. What are any of the arts for? What is art?

Art is what an artist as an artist produces. What an artist as an artist does is to re-enact (recreate, transform, transmute, many other terms will do) human experience (perceptions, thoughts, actions) in patterns of images (a term broad enough to include dramatic actions) to give pleasure and, by inquiring into the nature of that human experience, to reveal its meaning and significance.

On a thumbnail: the artist pleasurably re-enacts life in its meaning.

The success or greatness of a work of art depends most on integrity in every sense of that word. A work of art may be judged according to a multitude of determinants: unity, density, coherence, completeness, “seriousness,” “authenticity,” “force.” But one indicator of excellence seems invariably to be the degree to which pleasure and revelation (of meaning and significance) are inseparable. One mark of great works is that the pleasure and revelation which they offer are identical.

There is no question that the arts educate (educere: to lead forth). They all educate, and they educate more effectively than what we usually call education because they fuse revelation with pleasure and they do it experientially or dramatically. This kind of education tends to be minimized on campus because it does not square with what is too often taken to be education—the delivery of articulated concepts. Yet on a level deeper than articulated concepts most of us do recognize the “leading forth” of films. Indeed, nothing else explains the relentless demand for “education in the film arts.” The educative properties of films are recognized—and are assumed to be harmful. The feeling, whether brought to consciousness or not, is that films must be counter-acted by “education.” The emphasis of film education as we have been confronting it in recent years is therefore not proof that the film arts have been accepted. The opposite is probably true. Those who most emphasize “education” in film may be most fundamentally suspicious and fearful of it.

The emphasis on education in the film arts could be looked upon more positively. One could say that the recognition of film as a legitimate art form has naturally led to the desire to incorporate it into a Christian world-and-life view. One could take that sanguine point of view if it were not for the fact that rarely do the other legitimate art forms on campus receive the same solicitous attention. Musical concerts, dramatic productions, and art exhibits all go virtually unencumbered by “education.”

How do you act on the recognition that films by themselves educate? Do you, for that reason, accompany film showings with education? No. To do so is fatal to a proper understanding and appreciation of art. Rev. Pekelder’s article is an eloquent chronicle of that kind of mistake. Yet it is true that film showings on the campus of Calvin College should be attended by education—not because a film’s “leading forth” may be harmful (anything genuinely harmful should not be shown) or even misunderstood, but because Calvin College is an educational institution. That Calvin College is a Christian institution alters the nature of the education but not its motivation. There must be education, but the education must be motivated by a proper understanding of art. It must at very least be in keeping with what movies are for.

From the beginning the Film Council itself has reflected the prevailing attitude toward film—that there is something about movies themselves that demands their being accompanied by “education.” How could it have been otherwise? Film found its way on campus dressed in the clothes of education, not art. And how could it have been otherwise than that the education which the Film Council assumed it had to provide was to be articulated concepts packaged and successfully delivered to a majority of viewers? As Rev. Pekelder has pointed out, the Film Council has never really succeeded at that kind of education, though there has been far more effort (and perhaps more success) than Pekelder seems to be aware of. (Pekelder also seems innocent of the fact that few educators even in the classroom succeed at that notion of education—unless a captive audience itself is somehow proof of success.)

Students come to the movies for pleasure, not education. They are right to do so, since that essentially is the most immediate appeal that any art makes. Some come for the revelation which they know to be pleasurable, but they do not and should not be expected to come for “education.”

If there is something for which Film Council needs to be ashamed, it is not its failure to provide Pekeldarian education, but its having fallen in with a bad concept of art and a bad concept of education. It ought to have developed educational means that were not at odds with the reason people come to the movies. Indeed, it ought to have won for itself the right to provide less “education” (the less which is more)—the kind of education which might do no
more than prompt the Christian viewer to put his Christian head to what he sees.

Similarly, Film Council may have erred in its reluctance to show films meant only for fun. The onus of "education" has sometimes weighed too heavily on selection. Of course, great films, even if "heavy," should be represented in a college series, but popular entertainment—light, slight films—should also be acceptable so long as a thoughtless viewing of them is forestalled.

Pekelder urges us all to admit failure. All right, we have failed at packaging and delivering, failed at parcel-post education. Now what? What, after our confession, is to be done?

Pekelder has nothing to suggest. Just as the Student Religious and Social Activities Committee had nothing to suggest when it tossed the ball to the Film Council in 1967. Just as no one has anything to suggest who doesn’t quite accept film as a legitimate art form. For twenty years the whole college has been talking out of two sides of its mouth. It has wanted film education, but it hasn’t really wanted movies.

I repeat: the call for education in the film arts does not necessarily indicate acceptance of the film arts. It may indicate rejection. But I am convinced that whatever is done to advance film appreciation at Calvin College must be motivated by an acceptance of the art of film and not by a desire to provide protection against it.

Our acceptance of film as a legitimate art will probably entail our making provision for, paradoxically, both more education and "less"—more in the sense that we may find ourselves committed to greater prominence of film in the curriculum, and less insofar as we revise our concepts of education particularly in connection with films shown in an entertainment series. I am anxious that we have a view of art and of education that allows us to see the less and more as parts of a single venture—an educational venture in which we never forget what the arts are for.

I am far from advocating an entertainment film series free of any educational goals. The college may do nothing that encourages minelessness or moral abdication. It may not show movies so as to imply that they have no bearing on our lives, that they may be watched thoughtlessly or as though without consequence. Neither, however, may it show films so as to imply that there is something about this particular art form which must always be guarded against.

The college’s irreducible responsibility is to remind young Christian viewers just who, when watching films (or doing anything else), they as Christians are. It should even remind them that they are aesthetic beings—beings who, whatever else they take from art, find pleasure in it.

If such fundamental reminding can be done at all, it can be done without any unpleasantness or any contradiction of the appeal of a work of art. The natural question, of course, is how can it be done? What sort of educational devices should be employed in a film series whose appeal is essentially entertainment? I’m not coping out when I say that these devices must be developed by those responsible for the series. But anybody who thinks for a moment will get ideas, and the Film Council (or the Film Arts Committee, as it is now called) will eagerly receive suggestions. I have begun a list of my own, which anyone is welcome to. It includes some of what the Film Arts Committee does now. Parcel post is not all bad.
Richard R. Tiemersma, Ph.D., has taught English at Calvin since 1955. During that time he has served on the Educational Policy Committee and the MAT Study Committee and has worked on curricular matters in numerous other capacities.

When, a few weeks ago, I previewed the proposal for a program for continuing education at Calvin, I was reminded of the sporadically continuing debate on campus over the best way to achieve the educational objectives set down in C.L.A.E.,¹ the document that since its publication has been the "bible" for our educational policy. The trend in continuing education, I infer from this proposal, is toward the pragmatist approach—¹—the study, not of the subject matter of disciplines per se as defined in C.L.A.E., but of various phenomena, problems, or sore spots in the body politic or social, aiming at "the solution of the practical problems facing contemporary men" (p. 41).

If Calvin's continuing-education program follows this trend, it will be adopting as basic policy a philosophy, if not of education itself, at least of educational methodology, that has at-
tracted educators ever since the days of John Dewey and has had able proponents on our own campus. Although continuing education is designed for people other than the typical 18- to 24-year-old undergraduate—retired folk, business and professional persons who feel the need for broadening in areas other than their particular vocations, men and women whose educations were cut short of the A.B. degree, parents whose children no longer occupy a large portion of their time, and the like—the impact on undergraduate education of such a program is bound to be felt, perhaps increasingly as the rate of 18- to 24-year-old enrollments declines. It seems appropriate, consequently, to review and briefly evaluate some of the options that our academic community has in formulating a curriculum.

Three such options were presented at a faculty seminar a few years ago: the disciplinary; the pragmatist; and a third, so novel as to be still unlabeled and so unorthodox as to leave some of us convinced that the proponent was playing devil’s advocate and did not expect to be taken at face value.

Let me begin with the third of these, since I, at least, should prefer to think that its proponent could not expect his colleagues to take him seriously and since, in consequence, the proposal can soon be dispensed with for our purposes. The approach, as I have said, has no name—at least none that I can recall—but it may be described (somewhat pejoratively, perhaps) as doing on a psychological level what if done on a physical level would lead to arrest for indecent exposure: a kind of psycho-spiritual “streaking” or “flashing,” it seemed to me. The central thrust (again, as I recall at several years’ remove from a mind-boggling experience) was that liberal education, especially Christian liberal education, ought not to concern itself a great deal, if at all, with the subject matter of the various disciplines but that, rather, the Christian pedagogue should be concerned with showing the student what he (the pedagogue) is.

Now, no one, I trust, would deny the importance of a teacher’s demonstrating the influence of his discipline on his own life. “Physician, heal thyself” comes immediately to mind; and I should hesitate, for example, to enroll in a rhetoric course taught by someone who consistently confused grammatical cases and numbers. Similarly, I should be extremely reluctant to seek psychological counseling from a clinician whose own life was a case study in abnormal psychology. On a broader scale—though here one ought to remember John Henry Newman’s warning that a liberal education does not guarantee a moral life—one has a right to expect of a liberally educated person, regardless of his disciplinary specialty, at least some of the marks of the educated mind. On a more significant level, one expects of the Christian pedagogue at least occasional evidences of the fruits of the Spirit, even though the process of sanctification may be woefully incomplete.

But to grant all this is neither to grant that psycho-spiritual show-and-tell is liberal education nor to affirm that subject matter is unimportant in a liberal curriculum. I cannot, I repeat, believe that the proposal could have been made other than tongue in cheek as a stimulus to discussion, however hypothetical; and I introduce it here only as an example of the kind of Wordsworthian “strange fits of fancy” that occasionally occupy the academic mind.
The other two options—the disciplinary and the pragmatist, or problem-solving, approach—are, however, worth serious consideration. Indeed, unless the course Christian Perspectives on Learning has changed significantly in the past few years, the options were very likely presented to a substantial number of our students during the recent interim semester.\(^3\)

As an unreconstructed adherent of the classicist view, I regard the disciplinary view as the better of two less desirable alternatives; and it is for this reason that I urge constant surveillance of the proposed program for continuing education, lest the pragmatist view gain by way of a fire escape the access denied it through the front door. I say “the access denied it,” for the pragmatist view was, at least theoretically, as conclusively rejected on philosophical grounds as was the classicist view, when a majority of the administration and faculty elected to adopt the disciplinary view as the basis for Calvin’s curriculum.

Unlike the classicist view, however, the pragmatist continues its attempts to creep and intrude into the fold, and from time to time it succeeds. There are a number of reasons for its survival even under official interdict. It is possible that its defenders are more numerous, more articulate, or more zealous than the classicists on campus. A further possibility is that, in its attempt to combine the best of the classicist and pragmatist worlds in a single—the “disciplinary”—view, and in keeping with the activism of the late sixties, the Curriculum Study Committee produced an embarrassing hybrid that more closely resembles the pragmatic than the classical. Indeed, for all its praise of a “discipline” as “the disinterested [italics thus] theoretical study of some aspect or segment of reality” (p. 49), C.L.A.E.’s ideal reflects a sort of Christianized pragmatism in its emphasis on the practical application of learning.

It appears, then, that the door has not been quite so tightly shut on the pragmatist as on the classicist view, that perhaps C.L.A.E. has not really discarded the pragmatic but has merely dressed it in Christian robes and admitted it in that guise. But theoretical pronouncements on philosophical matters are probably not very effective in the long run; they tend for a short while to attract lip service and, from then on, to accumulate dust on neglected shelves.

A more likely reason for the continuous lure of the pragmatic among us is the inherent attractiveness of the view itself. Americans, in general, are a pragmatic nation; “Yankee ingenuity,” “can-do,” and similar expressions in our vernacular attest our belief in ourselves as a nation of doers. Furthermore, although some of us are by now several generations removed, the majority of Calvin’s constituents, faculty, and students are descendants of immigrants who came to this country for primarily economic reasons; and the immigrant drive to “get ahead,” to achieve some tangible results of their efforts, is still strong. The question most often put to Calvin students in their home communities is probably still “What are you studying for?” And the expected reply is more likely to be “Teacher,” “Minister,” “Doctor,” “Lawyer,” or the title of some other professional than, to quote C.L.A.E., “To be patterned by objective reality, by all of it, not just physical reality” (p. 44). I dare say that very few of us came to Calvin with this latter objective in mind. We came to be prepared to do things that our parents, for lack of a formal education, could not do; or we came to maintain the economic, social, or professional—perhaps in rare cases, cultural—advantages that our antecedents had achieved. And it was only after having been exposed to the liberating effects of education that some of us began to see education as a good thing in itself, even before it began to produce its more tangible results.

Calvin College, I am happy to affirm, continues to nurture students who recognize the validity of knowing for the sheer joy of knowing and, thus, of developing at least one aspect of the image of God in which we were created. But the “disinterested” pursuit of knowledge calls for sacrifices that not all students are willing to make, or perhaps are capable of making. It calls for a degree of self-motivation that is not required when one has as his more specific objective a lucrative job, a career in an honored profession, or even a life of active Christian service. It calls for the mastery of aspects of “objective reality” that, at the time, may be exceedingly distaste-
ful. It calls, above all, for the ability to postpone gratification of our natural desire to achieve immediate results. The disinterested pursuer of knowledge will often feel like the student who finds that one-third of the notes he has so diligently amassed are irrelevant to the thesis as finally defined.

But to say that one-third of one's notes are irrelevant to a given thesis is not to say that they are irrelevant. From a short-range perspective, they may become the basis of the very next paper that the student is required to write, although the odds, in a fallen universe, are probably quite large against such a happy circumstance. From a more far-reaching perspective, they may contribute at least something to the student's becoming “patterned and disciplined to objective reality.” Still, the accumulation of knowledge to no immediately discernible end can be a discouraging business. One comforts himself with John Henry Newman's assertion that there is “a knowledge which is desirable, though nothing come of it, as being of itself a treasure and a sufficient remuneration of years of labour.” And one draws further solace from the conviction that a liberal education, “if it refuses the foremost place to professional interests, does but postpone them to the formation of the citizen, and... prepares also for the successful prosecution of those merely personal objects, which at first it seems to dispare.

Nevertheless, such a long-range view requires faith. Meanwhile, there are such pressing problems, personal and worldwide, as sex and the adolescent, the generation gap, the right of the state to tax or draft its citizens, and the right of the citizen, on grounds of conscience, to refuse to be taxed or drafted. Precisely; and it is at this point that the pragmatist view most alluringly sounds its siren song. For it promises, if not immediate solutions, at least a head-on attack on these problems, a fighting chance of solving them, and, perhaps most importantly, the gratifying feeling of doing something about them.

The pragmatist approach is, to borrow a modern commercial term, a pre-packaged approach. Like the T.V. dinner, it is tremendously attractive to a “now” generation. It eliminates arduous hours of preparation, it presents its substance in manageable individual-sized portions, the customer gets only what he wants to supply his immediate needs, and there are no annoying leftovers.

Is the student concerned—as he ought to be—about the tension between state authority and individual conscience when, as sometimes happens, the dictates of the two are at odds? Let us summon representatives of a variety of disciplines to package an approach to a solution. One of the literature departments can present Sophocles' view of the problem as articulated in Antigone. Religion and theology, perhaps in conjunction with history, can draw on the experience of the early Christian church under similar circumstances. Political science or economics can invoke John Stuart Mill's On Liberty. Psychology and sociology can examine the phenomena that spark individual and communal resistance to outside pressures. And so on—all neatly packaged, all sharply focused on the immediate need, and no leftovers to muck up the pantry.

I have basically two objections to this formula. The first is that there are “no leftovers.” A student of literature, for example, will have learned from Antigone what Sophocles had to say on the subject, or, if not from Sophocles and Antigone, then from what numerous other great writers have to say—not only on this specific subject but on the rather broader and more significant subject of authority in general, as well as of man's proper reaction to authority on a variety of levels. Shakespeare's Richard II, King Lear, and The Tempest, Milton's Paradise Lost, and Shelley's Prometheus Unbound suggest themselves immediately as available in the English Department's offerings alone; but there are countless other sources in the literature of all languages, any one of which could illuminate this subject as well as could any other that the pragmatist package would be likely to include.

The point is that, in gleaning from these works whatever may be relevant to the problem of state vs. individual rights, the student will also have encountered many aspects of “objective reality” that, although irrelevant to the topic under immediate discussion, are nevertheless invaluable ingredients, husbanded in his intellectual storehouse, for an approach to a totally different problem. Richard II, for ex-

who recognize the validity of knowing for the sheer joy of knowing the image of God in which we were created.
ample, has some valuable lessons to impart about self-control, as has King Lear. Lear, in turn, offers some penetrating insights into parent-child relationships, as does The Tempest, which also makes some pertinent observations on the transforming power of romantic love and the need for repentance before reconciliation can be achieved. And all of these will have taught the student a good deal about art and aesthetics, an aspect of human existence that a topical approach to state and individual rights would not even touch on, but that may well be as essential to the full-orbed life as individual freedom is.

My second objection to the pre-packaged pragmatist approach is that it demeans the student by doing for him what an education ought to enable him to do for himself. A few years ago, at a C.P.O.L. discussion of the classicist, pragmatist, and disciplinary views, a student objected to the classicist view as “treating us like kids.” His assumption, it became clear as the dialogue progressed, was that the classicist was intent on shoving all manner of “irrelevant” material down the student's intellectual throat, without regard for what the student felt his real needs to be. The inference was that in disregarding his felt needs we were degrading his maturity. I suppose that, in a sense, his complaint was justified: the classicist view (or the disciplinary view, for that matter) does not, in fact, cater to individual “felt needs” and in this respect merely affirms what seems obvious, namely, that the undergraduate is simply not a mature scholar. Educational maturation, one hopes, is an ongoing process. It may be—and sometimes is—rather closely approached by the holder of a valid Bachelor of Arts degree. But the very term bachelor implies an element of apprenticeship (not unrelated to that of Chaucer's young squire, “a lusty bachelor,” who was an apprentice for knighthood) not present in the terms master or doctor.

To suggest to an undergraduate, then, that his “felt needs” do not necessarily coincide with his real needs is hardly demeaning; rather, it seems to me, it is an exercise of pedagogical responsibility, and there is a good chance that the mature student will, in retrospect, be aware of that fact. I am inclined to think that my own education has suffered more from the indulgence of my personal likes and dislikes (which is what “felt needs” very often translates into) than from any potentially inhibiting direction from my instructors.

In another sense, moreover, the protesting student was quite wrong. If there is any demeaning of the student going on in academia, it is more likely to occur in a program that says, in effect, “We really don’t expect you to master the disciplines that will give you the necessary pieces to complete the many jigsaw puzzles that life will invite you to complete. There are simply too many for you to handle. So, instead, we’ll give you a limited number, well marked, a few at a time—not enough to tax you—carefully selected by experts so you won’t have to expend any of your limited powers deciding which pieces belong in this particular puzzle. You needn’t worry about leftover pieces; there won’t be any. If you ever have to complete another puzzle, you might try dismantling those that you’ve already done. Chances are that the pieces won’t do, since no two puzzles are alike. But don’t fret; you can either ignore the new challenge, or you can apply to the management for a new pre-packaged set of well-marked, carefully selected pieces, not enough to tax you, just enough to do this one, with no pieces left over.”

The above is, obviously, a caricature but, I think, one in which the subject is recognizable. We have not reached this stage at Calvin, and perhaps we shall never reach it, despite the superficial attractiveness of the pragmatist view. But, in the meantime, there are those disturbing straws in the wind—C.I.A.E.’s uneasy alliance with pragmatism; the increasing competition for the dwindling 18- to 24-year-old student market with the consequent increasing pressure to give the customer what he wants; the nature of some of our interim courses; and even the laudable desire, as exemplified in the proposed continuing-education program, to extend the college’s services to a larger community.

Possibly the community for which continuing education is designed has already acquired the pieces of a host of jigsaw puzzles and is merely looking for the pleasure of putting them together in a variety of constructs, in company with others similarly equipped. Should this be the case, I have no quarrel with a proposal that lists as possible courses three that might properly be considered disciplinary (music and literary appreciation and theology for the layman—though, concerning this last, one might ask, “Why not just plain, unaltered theology?”) and five (race relations, human sexuality, etc.) of the pragmatist, problem-solving type. On the other hand, it may be that even people beyond the usual college age could benefit more from the guided study of literature, music, history, philosophy, and the natural and the social sciences as disciplines; that their lives would be more bountifully enriched; that their intellects would be at least equally stimulated; and that, in the long run, by acquiring a wide variety of infinitely applicable pieces,
they would be even better equipped to complete the jigsaw puzzles that call for solution.

It may even be that here and there in the world beyond our campus are a few souls searching for release from the provincialism of the contemporary by looking "beyond the transitory features of contemporary civilization to the more permanent features of human existence" (p. 45).

It would be well, consequently, that everyone concerned with the implementation of the proposed program for continuing education guard against further incursions of the pragmatist view, not only in the new program but in our present discipline-oriented undergraduate program. I am heartened by President Diekema's assertion in the opening paragraphs of the proposal that the scope of our services is to be broadened "without diminishing Calvin's strong liberal arts tradition." I hope that I may be pardoned for suggesting that our strong tradition owes more to the now-abandoned classicist view and (though perhaps not as much) to the current disciplinary view than to the pragmatist.

**FOOTNOTES**


2. The terms pragmatist, classicist, and disciplinary as used throughout this piece are, I believe, familiar to the readers of *Dialogue*. Those needing a refresher will find it in pp. 39 ff. of *C.L.A.E.*

3. My omission of still another Christian perspective, the classicist view, is not an oversight. That view was effectively interred at Calvin when *C.L.A.E.* was adopted, and its defenders on this campus have been reduced to engaging in occasional memorial services over coffee cups. For all practical purposes, the classicist view is no longer a threat to the reigning disciplinary view.

4. This is not said disparagingly; I am intensely grateful for the risks my parents took in coming to a strange land and so providing me with material and cultural advantages that I could not have enjoyed as a member of the laboring class in the Netherlands. Nor am I ignorant of or ungrateful for the sacrifices, in the name of education, that have given us an excellent educational system. I merely state what I believe to be a fact: our forefathers, for the most part, came seeking a better living for themselves and their children. Their primary objective was not the establishment of Calvin College as a Christian liberal arts institution.


Scholastic Reform in Germany: Pursuing Alternatives to Tradition

by Wallace Bratt

The fascination which twentieth-century Germany holds for a great number of Americans is readily understandable, since the course of German history after 1900 has been marked by a series of striking, sometimes spectacular developments. Some of these developments have been fraught with nearly apocalyptic potential; others have been markedly hopeful in character. Thus Germany's name, on the one hand, will continue to be indelibly associated with two disastrous global wars and the rise of Nazi fascism. At the same time, the attention she has attracted since World War II is primarily the result of two considerably more constructive phenomena: first, her startling economic recovery, commonly termed the Wirtschaftswunder or economic miracle; and second, her development of a remarkably vital and stable democratic political system. It is within the framework of this latter phenomenon, West Germany's growth as a democracy, that recent changes in her national educational policy have also begun to lay modest claim to our attention.

Wallace Bratt, Ph.D., has been teaching in the German Department at Calvin for over fifteen years, serving part of that time as Department Chairman. His familiarity with the German educational system stems partly from a half-year sabbatical be spent in Husum, Germany in 1972.

Seen from a post-World War II American perspective, the traditional German school system generally has appeared to be harshly inflexible and undemocratic. Americans have been inclined to attribute this inflexibility, in the first place, to the persistent influence of European educational traditions of long standing. We have also tended to identify as a second cause the deep-seated, even obsessive preoccupation with organization and efficiency which presumably has always been a hallmark of the German mentality. The combination of these two factors, in the popular American consciousness, accounts in large part for the stubborn perpetuation of an anachronistic educational system which seems to run curiously counter to the democratic political and social ideals so self-consciously articulated and cultivated in post-war Germany.

However, quite aside from American popular opinion, relatively recent innovations in the German school system suggest that within Germany itself there now have surfaced substantial internal pressures for reform, for the development of educational structures which are intended to conform more closely to the nation's professed contemporary social and political orientation. At the same time, however, it is true that this pressure for reform continues to encounter significant resistance on the part of many German educators and laymen.

Traditionally, all German school children attend the same basic school, the Grundschule, for the first four years. Upon completion of that first phase of his schooling, the child's teachers and parents meet in conference and decide the course of his future education. Should he appear to have superior academic potential, the child is placed in the Gymnasium, the school which provides pre-university training. Average ability normally results in placement in the middle track of the system, the Realschule. Children who qualify for neither the Gymnasium nor the Realschule are enrolled in the Hauptschule, or main school. Customarily these schools are housed as totally discrete units located at separate points throughout the city. Thus, except for the fact that they may ride to school in a common bus or on the same train, there is no real contact in an educational setting between students attending the different types of schools.

This time-honored set of structures tends to elicit in most American lay observers an instinctively negative reaction, since it appears to smack of a kind of elitism and segregation which we in theory, at least, categorically, and perhaps somewhat self-righteously, reject. Since occupational opportunities also are directly delimited and defined by the kind of schooling the German child receives, it also appears to many Americans that the
shape of the child's future is cast at an unacceptably early stage of his development.

In answer to this second objection, traditionalist German educators point out that the system is not as rigid as it may at first blush appear to be. For example, the "late bloomer" who has initially been placed in the Realschule may transfer to the Gymnasium if improvement in the quality of his academic performance warrants such a step, and the student who has completed the course of study offered in the Realschule may subsequently enroll in the Gymnasium, once again if superior achievement in the Realschule makes such a move feasible. In addition, there is at the disposal of adults who later in life wish to improve their educational credentials, and thus qualify for better jobs, a fully accredited night-school program.

However, the first objection, namely, that the system tends to promote class consciousness and an elitist ethos which results in, among other things, snobbishness on the part of gifted school children and feelings of inferiority on the part of slow learners, remains. It is an objection to which a significant number of German parents, educators, and politicians have become increasingly sensitive, and it forms one of the key factors that has given rise to a new structure, the Gesamtschule, or comprehensive school, which has begun to take root throughout Germany since 1968.

Simply stated, the Gesamtschule is a school complex in which all three elements of the traditional German system, henceforth simply to be designated Levels I, II, and III, are located on one campus. Thus the Gesamtschule allows for considerably more social interaction among students with divergent academic ability than does the traditional system, in which the Gymnasium, Realschule, and Hauptschule normally are located several city blocks from one another. The Gesamtschule also makes possible greater curricular flexibility since, for example, a student placed in Level II (which basically represents the program formerly offered by the Realschule) now has the option of enrolling as well in some of the courses offered in Levels I and III, formerly represented by the curricula of the Hauptschule and Gymnasium, should his aptitude warrant such cross-registration. It is also the intention of some of the more liberal advocates of the Gesamtschule to make it easier for all students both to attempt the basic course of pre-university study offered in Level III and to adjust, should it be necessary, to failure, since in the event that the student is dismissed from that particular level on academic grounds, the physical proximity of the facilities housing all three levels at least makes it unnecessary that his moving downward in the system be accompanied by the total disruption of the social contacts he already has developed.

But educational change appears to come less easily in Germany than in the United States – in part, at least, simply because the traditions involved are of such long standing. However, particularly on the current Gymnasium level, could be adversely affected by the new structure, since under the new system presumably it will be easier for parents motivated by either social or economic ambitions to insist that their children be placed in a track for which they lack the required intellect or aptitude. The result, such critics suggest, could be a deterioration in the quality of the education provided, since an influx of less gifted students into the upper two tracks would tend to lower the demands made on all students.

Seen against the background furnished by the contemporary American school system, the reforms represented
by the gradual German trend toward Gesamtschulen do not appear to be particularly radical in nature. Most of us, I suspect, might even find ourselves suppressing a smile at the possibility of anxieties resulting from merely placing all students on one campus. Nor are we generally impressed by resistance to Gesamtschulen which stems basically from the fear of loss of status or prestige on the part of students or teachers.

On the other hand, it would appear that we Americans, for our part, should exercise some restraint in passing judgment or offering gratuitous advice regarding Germany’s current attempts at reform. In any event, few thoughtful Americans, I suspect, would feel comfortable at the prospect of exporting the model provided by the typical American public high school, since our own successes in the areas of both general and college preparatory education have been at best modest.

It remains to be seen whether or not the growth of the Gesamtschule will result in marked deterioration in Germany’s educational standards. If in fact it does not, most of us, I judge would tend to see it as a socially superior alternative to the traditional system. If, on the other hand, the Gesamtschule does bring with it a significant decline in the quality of Gymnasium education in particular, Germany will be forced to decide whether the price paid for its attempt at educational democratization is indeed too high. Regrettably, hindsight in the entire matter doubtles will prove, as usual, to be clearer than foresight.

It seems highly unlikely, in any case, that the reforms currently being attempted will alleviate to any substantial extent the considerable stress under which nearly all German students live today, regardless of the type of school they attend. German universities apparently will remain overcrowded and hence highly selective in their admissions policies. As a result, the student’s successful completion of the Gymnasium or Level III will not guarantee his acceptance by the university of his choice; he will be required to produce clearly superior credentials earned in a school setting that is in itself rigorously competitive if he wishes to continue his education. Students graduating from the Realschule or Level II face a similar plight. Many positions in the labor market formerly open to them as a matter of course now are being taken by Gymnasium graduates who do not go on to the university, and when openings do materialize, they are in an intensely competitive atmosphere caused by the unemployment which has developed in Germany during the past two years. Graduates of the Hauptschule or Level I, who normally enter an apprenticeship at age sixteen, also are vulnerable to considerable pressure; not only are they having increasing difficulty in finding apprenticeship openings, but once having completed their occupational training, they too will continue to be faced by a shrinking labor market which has room for only the most highly qualified job applicants available.

Cynicism regarding another country’s honest attempts to deal with social or educational problems is never in order. Nevertheless, it is ironically possible that the premium placed on mere employment itself in a context of substantial unemployment may well contribute toward removing deeply entrenched distinctions between more “respectable” and relatively “undignified” types of work, and thus in itself promote the process of social democratization which is one of the chief aims of today’s German proponents of educational reform. In the meantime, ongoing observation of developments in Germany should continue to provide absorbing material for both social historians and educators in America and elsewhere.
Campus Art:

current: *Fibers into Form*
College Center Gallery
*Painting*
Fine Arts Center, west

coming: *Senior Art Exhibit*
College Center Gallery
*Fine Arts Festival Exhibition*
Fine Arts Center

Art Museum Show:
*The New Decade, through April 17*
"The childhood shews as morning shews the day."
I see the man,
and I say...

Peter Sieno

Laura Slager

Kimberly Adams
Twenty-five to thirty percent of Calvin's graduates go on to post-graduate studies. Graduate school presents them with an academic and social environment significantly different from our close, and distinctively Christian, community. The following are brief essays by Calvin grads on life in the brave new world.

Joel Carpenter

Joel Carpenter graduated from Calvin in 1974 and has completed two years of graduate study at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland. He is currently teaching in the Calvin College History Department.

One of the most frequent questions professors at Calvin College ask their former students when they return to the alma mater for a visit is, "Did we prepare you adequately for grad school?" Whenever I field this query, I usually answer with a qualified yes. Any Calvin student who has ambitions of pursuing an academic or professional career can build an excellent intellectual foundation here for further study elsewhere. Probably very few former Calvin students ever drop out of graduate studies because of inadequate academic preparation. If success in grad school depended solely upon intelligence or undergraduate training, only a minute number of people from Calvin would ever experience difficulty. But graduate education can prove particularly trying for a Christian from a Christian college for reasons only tangentially related to academics. The secular academic environment is probably no more challenging to Christians than any other segment of the world in which they find themselves, but believers are often unaware of the special problems they will have to face there. Perhaps some of my experiences can help brief you prospective academicians on what to expect when you enter a university.

The Christian faith is not environmentally determined, but no one can deny that people reared in a Christian community have received powerful social support for their faith. What happens to our faith and our calling when we find ourselves in a setting that is not nearly so supportive? Hopefully, we find that our God is One who transcends particular places and cultures. We find that His will for our lives remains constant, and His care continues. I confess that this became overwhelmingly true for me in the past two years, but not before I went through the experience of rootlessness and cultural shock.

The Johns Hopkins University, like any secular university, is a very different place than Calvin College. The Calvin community likes to think of itself as a place where Christians can boldly confront the ideas and attitudes of the non-Christian world and critically evaluate them. That is so; relatively speaking, Calvin performs this task well. But Calvin is a nurturing institution also; students are usually supported in their faith and spared much of the day-to-day assault on their beliefs that goes on in a secular milieu. In contrast, probably no social institution in America today is any more consciously secular than the university. There is a consensus at Calvin; she is uniformly Christian in her outlook. There is very little common feeling in the atomized atmosphere of the university. A vague humanism is the only ruling climate of opinion there. People pursue knowledge for any number of reasons: for personal gratification, for power, for its own sake, or for the sense of contributing to human progress. No one there can authoritatively answer the question asked by sociologist Robert M. Lynd in the title of his book: Knowledge—For What? (New York, 1938).

Into this situation strides the young Christian who (in my case) aspires to be a historian. He has the blessings of his parents, an A.B. from Calvin, the encouragement of his friends and teachers, his own ambitions and the notion of a calling. He finds that under the pressure of the daily grind of graduate study, and in the absence of the supporting presence of family, friends, and a Christian community, he spends some lonely nights asking himself what in the world he thinks he is doing in Baltimore.

Tidings from Calvin Grads at
The young scholar begins to sift through his reasons for being there. He thought he had liked history. And the academic life appealed to his tastes. His professors were confident that he could become a competent historian. His old girlfriend had been very proud of his high aspirations. His parents, who were worried about where the money would come from and whether he was suited for the scholar's life, felt a bit more secure now that he had a fellowship to a prestigious eastern university. Yet all these things are behind him now, and his fuzzy sense of vocation seems less credible in such an alien setting. What, after all, does Zion have to do with this strange land? Grand Rapids, Calvin College, and the Kingdom of God mean nothing to most people here. Even his own ambition, once separated from the desires of others on his behalf, comes and goes in fits of manic energy, mental exhaustion, doubt, and then recovery.

A roller coaster ride best describes the course his emotional state followed in the first year at graduate school. Weeks of excitement and joy in the task of learning history were followed by periods of weariness from the drudgery of sitting at his grim gray carrel between the library stacks filled with the books he must read. Matching wits in seminars and rushing to meet deadlines kept his nerves ragged. His colleagues seemed so much brighter, more sophisticated, and better prepared. They had credentials from Columbia, Dartmouth, Radcliffe, Penn, and Harvard. As a Midwesterner, he felt brow-beaten by that peculiar eastern provincialism that tries to make provincials out of anyone from West of the Alleghenies or South of the Delaware. Historians are generally a congenial and unpretentious breed, but the student felt inferior just the same. Constantly he was reminded in both subtle and overt ways that Christianity was not intellectually acceptable. Anxious days were followed by nights of countless cigarettes and magazines until weariness finally conquered insomnia. Could all this grinding work and unrelenting pressure really have a purpose? He had his doubts on many a long night.

Gradually, the student found resources about him that bolstered his faith, his confidence, and his calling. His fundamentalist friend from Michigan who shared his apartment displayed an unshakeable faith in God's providence. A warm, loving Southern Baptist congregation nearby offered sorely needed fellowship. He found other Christians on campus who had the same burdens and the desire to witness to the healing power of Christ. Even his non- and lapsed Christian colleagues challenged him in conversations, for they were searching for meaning, too. He remembered the hope he had within him, and in telling them about it, he strengthened his own convictions. Finally, this student was blessed with a Christian professor for his mentor. That man constantly encouraged him and exemplified bold Christian scholarship despite peer pressure and often hostility. The young scholar used to deprecate human supports for faith as mere tribalism, but now he realized that they could be a genuine blessing.

Most of all, the student found the Lord to be a constant personal source of comfort and strength. His fundamentalist rearing and his newly-acquired Reformed perspective stood him in good stead. From the former he remained convinced of the personal love of his Lord for him; from the latter he kept the inescapable conviction that somehow what he was doing had meaning. He took special comfort from this promise: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of spirit; and your soul will find relief. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11: 28-30). Though he often forgot this promise for the moment, it always came back to him, and Jesus never failed him.

There is much more I could tell you by way of details to give you a feeling for the day-to-day experience of studying in graduate school. Such things as departmental politics, the professorial pecking order, the shark instinct that often goes by the name of “critical insight,” or even the joys and frustrations of research and writing—these all deserve mention. Admittedly, this essay has been experientially oriented: it resembles a Baptist “personal testimony.” I hope this confession has not taken on too pietistic a flavor to suit good Calvinist readers. Actually it has a very Reformed intent behind it. Once one is fully aware of the nature of the challenge the university offers and finds the grace to persevere, he can boldly set out by the power of God to give witness to Christ's redemption.
Sue Orlebeke

Sue Orlebeke graduated from Calvin last year. She is a first-year law student at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

I entered the doors of Georgetown Law Center last fall with all the eagerness and apprehension of any college freshman: eager to enter a new and different phase of my education; apprehensive about that infamous, make-it-or-break-it first year of law school. Just what do you do in law school, I wondered, that makes it such a grueling experience? Would I be able to handle the pressures, away from the reassuring familiarity of Dutch names and professors who knew me as the daughter of a faculty colleague?

It was difficult, at first, to adjust to the academic changes that I encountered here. I came mentally prepared for a much less challenging and broad-minded intellectual experience; after all, law is not philosophy, and though I believed that I should become a lawyer, I knew that it would narrow my focus and threaten Calvin's efforts to give me an integrated and comprehensive perspective on life. To a certain extent, my fears were well-placed: I had no idea how irrelevant and boring "future interests" and the Statute of Frauds could be. But at the same time, I am slowly acquiring a certain respect for the law as an essential, and at least in the abstract an equitable, element of our society. In part, that respect comes from concerned professors, who realize that some sort of perspective on first year law study is essential for students to retain their sanity. And as I gain confidence in the methods and goals of law, I hope to integrate this knowledge with the broader liberal arts perspective that I gained at Calvin.

Georgetown has forced me to adjust to a new anonymity, a minority status, that is directly opposite to the comfortable familiarity at Calvin. I can't count the number of times I've tried to explain what a "Calvin College" is, and no, it is not Calvin Coolidge for whom it is named. Cornell, Harvard, and Penn grads abound, both among students and professors. Profs shy away from my name, while the Polish and Jewish surnames roll off their tongues. That, combined with the realization that my classmates are a brighter, more determined, and more competitive bunch than ever surfaced at Calvin, makes learning a little more intimidating than I found it as an undergraduate.

A unified approach to life and its goals and a feeling of community with fellow Christians are gone at Georgetown. It was a little unnerving for a Grand Rapids Calvin grad to discover that Christians, and especially Calvinists, are not dominant here. Students come from many different backgrounds and lifestyles, and each one has a markedly different reason for attending law school. I found it disillusioning to find that a significant percentage of my classmates are admittedly in law school to earn those "big bucks" for which the profession is infamous. Dedication to any goal other than a secure and economically profitable career is hard to find; an underlying commitment to God is virtually nonexistent.

These attitudes are reflected in actions. For example, a special seminar on programs for the poor in the Washington area drew about fifteen students out of my class of 125. And in a heated discussion with a friend after the seminar, I was met with disbelief and disgust when I suggested that lawyers should donate some of their costly time to those who have neither the money nor the knowledge to consult a lawyer.

Experiences such as this have forced me to recognize my separate and unique status as a Christian at Georgetown. While I sometimes long for the security of Calvin, I am glad to be thrust into a position where complacent Christianity is virtually impossible, and the responsibilities of being a Christian are painfully obvious. I'm eager to learn and to grow in this different, more challenging, and potentially more rewarding setting.

Paul Faber

Paul Faber, a 1975 graduate of Calvin, is a second-year graduate student at The University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana.

My second weekend of graduate school was eventful. My roommate, who, like myself, was a philosophy student, decided to pack up and go back to Ann Arbor. He was not homesick or anything; he just found that four or more years (minus two weeks) of being a full-time philosophy student did not look like four years of satisfying searching into the most sublime depths of Western thought. It did not look like too much fun to me, either. But I decided to stay. Of course, since then I have talked myself into finishing a paper by assuring myself that it would be the last one I ever wrote, and I have more than once questioned the difference between learning to find one's way around in a system and being co-opted by it. But I am still here, showing others the landmarks now and pointing them down the narrow and
twisted pathways.

We were all forewarned that the chances of receiving fame, glory, and honor along with a degree are not good. Even tinsel is hard to come by. And I understood that there is not much available in graduate school for those who fancy themselves mild social activists (at least in intent). But there are two aspects of my experience here that I did not quite expect: the pressure toward flattening out one's personality, and the "institutionality" of philosophy, which is, after all, the "love of wisdom."

There is not much time for reading novels and magazines, going to movies, and otherwise remembering that man (at least those men who are not graduate students) is a social creature. Living in a world extending only from Library of Congress designation B to BD, though also including BJ, can be oppressive. Roots gives way to "Problems in Metaphysics Z, Chapter 13." And due dates, as anyone knows, can block out the sun if one does not keep on top of them.

Furthermore, graduate school is not as much a search for truth as a training ground for success in the profession. The various stages of progress toward full-fledged membership in the American Philosophical Association are stressed enormously. "This is a good course for the comps" is heard when one might expect "Welcome to Notre Dame." It is quite easy to turn the study of philosophy into a task rather than the calling it should be.

Nevertheless, if one overcomes these hurdles with what is, in fact, a small step for mankind, graduate school can be one giant leap for a man. I had to realize that one sooner or later has to limit oneself, painful as it may be, and dedicate oneself to serious study. (The Peace Corps brochures still look mighty good.) I had to understand that "much study wearies the body" and otherwise cuts one off from other people. I had to remind myself that the truth I am looking for is not the truth about tenured positions at relatively prestigious universities. And now I have to thank God for the opportunity and ability to join with others—within philosophy and without, at Notre Dame and elsewhere—in searching for the living in His truth.
Don Hettinga

Don Hettinga, a 1976 Calvin graduate, is studying English at the University of Chicago.

Look at objects as events. Say that the object itself prehends form from other forms with the maker as mediator. You see, then, that the object is an event, that the energy of which it is composed will someday be in other form. This, really, is a strange synthesis of Whitehead's Process and Reality and the way in which Charles Olson saw the world. It is important, say, for differentiating between the concrete objectivism of William Carlos Williams and the abstract objectivism of Charles Olson. For it is thus, in Olson's mind that objects and historical events are related—in essence! The distinction is merely between objects which are defined primarily by time and those determined for the most part by space.

I realize here, of course, the great injustice of making this whorish transferral of ideas, but in this way too is a degree an object. We are interested in that object not primarily as a concrete object, but, rather, as an historical object. In either case, we are more interested in the fact that there is a process of energy moving to form its significance, a process that will, we hope, move beyond it. What should be realized as an undergraduate is that already you are in the process of the movement of that energy—that is, you are participating in the historical event which is your mind. If you are interested in academia, this is where you must begin to act as mediator of energy, to shape the form of your mind. Graduate studies are process, but undergraduate studies constitute a preparation process which is not emphasized often enough. In a graduate program your total energies are demanded; your life is warped somewhat—in that it is twisted from the work world norm—but it is directed for a purpose, the purpose being a honing of the mind. It is in this intensity of the learning process that its value lies. Here you begin to channel mental energy into intellectual forms of your own.

But the movement must begin as an undergraduate. I have said that a graduate school is a place where you can come to create new forms. Coming, then, to such a place with a B.A. degree that is a low energy object—that is, a record of an historical event in which you participated in only a perfunctory way—is utter foolishness. A mere B.A. from Calvin College is not adequate preparation for graduate work. Classes are never enough; they are, in fact, to be only catalysts to energize the student to react with established ideas and to make new forms.

This talk of learning as a process of energy may be misleading, however. It is, of course, not always explosive; in fact, it rarely is. What is important only is the movement. What is important is a continual synthesis of the philosophy and ideas which you hold with new compounds confronted. Whether it is in the writing of a paper or in the discussion of ideas in or out of the classroom, it is this head-on motion which is important. Graduate school is but a structure, as is Calvin College, in which this movement is to occur. Learning is rarely dramatic on a large scale; rather, it is more often like this image of the turtle in Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. The important action for the student is to refrain from retreat to the shell and to move ahead, with humorous eyes:

And now a light truck approached, and as it came near, the driver saw the turtle and swerved to hit it. His front wheel struck the edge of the shell, flipped the turtle like a tiddly-wink, spun it like a coin, and rolled it off the highway. The truck went back to its course along the right side. Lying on its back the turtle was tight in its shell for a long time. But at last its legs waved in the air, reaching for something to pull it over. Its front foot caught a piece of quartz and little by little the shell pulled over and flipped upright. The wild oat head fell out and three of the spearhead seeds stuck in the ground. And as the turtle crawled on down the embankment, its shell dragged dirt over the seeds. The turtle entered a dusty road and jerked itself along, drawing a wavy shallow trench on the dust with its shell. The old humorous eyes looked ahead, and the horny beak opened a little. His yellow toenails slipped a fraction in the dust.

There will always be bureaucratic and establishment truck drivers who will go out of their way to try to crush the seeker's progress. This happens at Calvin and at every school. What is important is not to get discouraged but to know that in every situation energy is transferred, seeds are inadvertently planted which will continue the cycle. Excuse my didacticism, but it was requested.
I think it was the strong smell that I noticed first as I stepped into the lobby and the glass door closed behind me with a muffled thud. The air hung thick and hot and heavy, and the odors of ammonia, antiseptics, and sickness hit my nostrils and struggled with the remembered sweetness of the October breeze outside. I could feel my heartbeat through my whole body, and the queasy feeling in my stomach intensified, along with my anticipation and dread.

I was sixteen, and this was my first job. Prodded by Mom and Dad, as well as by my own vague urge to "help people," I had applied at the nursing home some weeks before, had gone in for an interview, and now here I was, in my canary yellow uniform (that was how the J.C. Penney catalog described it) and shiny white shoes, ready to report for duty as a "Traypasser-bedmaker." I was to learn in the coming months that such titles fail to take into account all the other people one ends up being while working in a place such as this—friend, psychologist, mother, granddaughter, teacher, pupil, and, above all, listener.

I walked into the office and greeted my supervisor, Mrs. Meyer, the woman who had also given me my interview. She was probably in her mid-thirties, with streaky blond hair, and as she led me through the corridors, occasionally stopping to pat some old person on the back, I noticed that she looked drawn and sad, as if she had some great sorrow. I thought at the time that working in this place very likely made one age more quickly. We reached the coffee-shop, and I was introduced to the other "yellow girls." Our job was simple, really: we were to pass out ice-water until the supper trays were ready, pass the trays, and pick them up again when the people were finished eating.

Lynn Klamer is a freshman from Racine, Wisconsin. She plans to major in special education.
I filled a yellow plastic pan with ice, put it on a metal cart, and started down the hall. I went into each room, filled each pitcher with water from the bathroom tap, put in some ice from my pan, and set the pitcher back on the bedside table—a tedious process that eventually became almost automatic. I came out of one room to find a woman in a wheelchair busily scooping up ice into her Styrofoam cup. She paused to look up at me, and her blue eyes, magnified by thick bifocals, became even larger and rounder. "Why, WE'VE met before, HAVEN'T we!" she explained, and one bony hand gripped my forearm. "Yes! JOHNNY was there, and you KNOW what he SAID...." She chuckled loudly, and I felt her fingernails on my arm. The gray head nodded, and the whiskered chin went up and down as she went on about some Johnny that I had never heard of before and cared very little about at that precise moment. Finally, I gingerly disengaged my arm and continued my rounds, while the woman continued to talk to the empty air where I had been standing a moment before.

I had made my acquaintance with Louise Kearns. Louise was typical of many of the old people in the home: talkative, senile, and obsessed with the past. I never did meet "Johnny," but I gathered that he was her only son, and the joy of her life. Louise was inclined to be dramatic; she gesticulated constantly, and her speech was punctuated with capitals. One day I walked into her room to find her sobbing wildly, hands in front of her red-rimmed eyes. "... and they took our blessed LORD, and they NAILED him to a CROSS,"—her right index finger made stabbing motions into the palm of her other hand—"... and I will NEVER forsake the Catholic RELIGION, no, NEVER, never never never...." No amount of soothing or coaxing could lessen the real pain and the present sorrow she felt over those events which had happened 2,000 years ago.

Bill, like Louise, was known around the home as a character. He, too, was senile, but one could never guess from his dapper appearance. His red-and-white checked golf cap, which he wore constantly, gave him a jaunty, Bing Crosby look, and his manners were courtly and genteel. In his younger years he had been one of the most highly respected lawyers in the city, and now it was not unusual to come upon him in serious discussion of a case—with my metal cart. He would gravely look down at the gleaming aluminum, listening to voices that only he could hear, and then give his replies, which sometimes grew quite heated. He was also known for his habit of walking up and down the hall late at night, completely naked. But I learned to love old Bill. He always addressed me as "my dear," and let me take his hand and lead him back to his room after I found him trying to get into a bed that he had mistaken for his own.

Josie was everyone's pet. She had round, chubby cheeks, dimples, and a wispy gray ponytail tied up in a big blue bow. One of her arms always clutched a baby-doll, and she was much like a baby herself. Many times when I passed her, I would reach out to stroke her cheek, and say, "Oh, Josie, you're so cute," and she would giggle and squirm with delight, for all the world like a little girl. She would find a phrase she liked and prattle it over and over again, lisping all the while: "... now WHERE'TH my thupper, WHERE'TH my thupper, WHERE'TH my thupper," or "Come ON and get it, come ON and get it...."

Sylvia, one of Josie's roommates, was definitely not a favorite with the staff at the home. She never spoke, but often opened her mouth wide, stuck out her tongue, and emitted the most horrifying shrieks I had ever heard; I nearly dropped the loaded tray I was carrying when I heard her for the first time. No one ever had time for Sylvia, but often when people were fussing over Josie I would see Sylvia watching them, almost hungrily, her eyes pleading: Spend a little time with me, too, please? I found that Sylvia only screamed when she was being ignored or teased; at times when I was busy in her room, I would talk softly to her, and she would be quiet, listening. Sometimes, when I looked at Sylvia's anguished eyes, I would imagine that inside her was a beautiful, laughing, free spirit that wandered alone in the dark, forever trapped by a body that refused to obey her, and a mouth that struggled in vain to express her deepest thoughts.
It was "the kids" who helped me get over much of my stupid squeamishness, a carry-over from my fairly sheltered background. "The kids" were five women, ranging in age from twenty to forty, who had the mentality of infants. They were undeniably odd-looking—twisted bodies and vacant eyes were things I was not used to, and unconsciously I shrank back from them. Once I happened to be in their room as they were being wheeled back after taking their baths. As one of them passed me I must have flinched, for the aide wheeling her looked at me and said sharply, "They don't bite, you know." That shocked me inexplicably, because it made me realize that I had been treating them as if they were gruesome oddities, and not human beings. After that, "the kids" became my babies, and I would visit them when I had a little free time. Susie was my special love. I would wind up the pink musical mobile that hung over her bed, and watch her slow, toothless smile, and her eyes, which became bright, although they continued to stare into nothingness. One time I was leaning over the side railing of the bed, watching her, when Mrs. Meyer walked in. I straightened up, guiltily, because I was supposed to be making beds at that moment. But her expression did not change; she only looked at me, not unkindly, and walked back out of the room. The more time I spent in that room, the more I learned the importance of physical contact—a simple stroke across the forehead, a gentle "I'm here" squeeze on the arm was sometimes all it took to drive the goblins out of little Susie's head.

An incident at the home that I recall most vividly occurred one afternoon when I was, as usual, passing out ice-water. I breezed into Jean's room, which was darker than most of the others because the curtains had been drawn against the hot afternoon sun. Jean, who had been blind since birth, spent her days in an easy-chair, rocking back and forth in a constant rhythm. She knew the names of all the traypassers, and had a ready smile each time we came into the room. On most days Jean and I would joke with each other, but today we were quiet, and the only sound in the room was the clink of ice against the sides of the pitcher as I filled it. Suddenly, Jean leaned forward in her chair, an expectant expression on her face. "What—what does water look like?" she asked eagerly.

I couldn't speak. Jean was asking me to be her eyes for a little while; she was asking me for a simple description of water, that most basic and elemental of all substances known to man—and I couldn't give one to her. How could I begin to describe that liquid I had seen countless times: flowing in rivers, pounding against the shoreline, and trickling from the kitchen faucet dozens of times a day? "It's... well, it's clear," I began lamely, but how does one explain "clear" to someone who had never known anything but darkness? For some strange reason, I cried about that for a long time when I got home that night.

The months wore on until it was May and time for me to leave. I was going out of town for the summer, and I had handed in my resignation some weeks before. Now, as I walked down them for the last time, the halls were quiet, and I could hear some of the sounds of the individual rooms: "Come ON and get it, come ON and get it..." and, yes, and a scream from Sylvia... I had said goodbye to "the kids" and the rest of my friends before, and now I went to the office to pick up my check. Mrs. Meyer was working there alone, and the window behind her desk showed the street lights glowing golden through the dusky night. Several weeks before I had learned the reason for her melancholy, often weary expression—she had a little daughter with an incurable disease. And yet, she spends so much of her time helping the people here; she doesn't allow herself to be consumed by her own problems, I thought. I realized that, along with many other things, I had learned much about courage in this place. Mrs. Meyer flipped through the stack of envelopes, located mine, and handed it to me. "Thank you for working for us and, if you can, we hope you can work here again sometime." She looked up then—and smiled—at me.
Let us suppose, just for the sake of argument, that the events of my life are of interest to anyone outside of myself and my mother. This being the case, I would certainly want to tell you that one of the most significant things that has ever happened to me was turning seventeen and realizing that in a year I would get drafted to fight in a wholly unjustifiable war. But the draft was cancelled, and my draft-dodging schemes were discarded. The importance of all this was that for the first time in my life there was an urgent impulse toward doing some serious thinking.

Now serious thinking is not quite an honorable way to pass time, since it tends to open up any number of very questionable cans, as it were, of worms. This proved to be the case. I soon discovered that there were three things I didn't want to be. The first was a Christian, the second was a poet, and the third was a person who was sentimental. Naturally, I set out to reform my personality, and, while I certainly succeeded in eradicating sentiment, I failed miserably in my attempts to avoid becoming a Christian or a poet.

Let us also suppose, for the sake of the same argument, that poetry has its origin in the subjective experience of the poet. This seems reasonable enough, and I would expect the majority of students at Calvin to support such a supposition. But such a point of view is in no way tenable, and I offer you my own subjective experience as a counter-example. The poet, like the Christian, enters into a certain kind of spirituality (I take the ceremonial similarities of such poems as “Take, drink” and “Singing the Cat to Sleep” to be an indication that only one spirituality is involved here, not two). This is the spirituality that I have no desire for. Obviously the impulse to this spirituality comes from outside of my own personality, and I can draw no other conclusion than that my own perspective is simply beside the point.

I would hope that this whole argument smacks of a C.S. Lewis-like perversion of logic. It does, precisely because it is wrong to suppose that poetry must fight its battles on a plane decidedly inferior to itself. (My apologies to Jack Hickman, who will probably write more sensible literary criticism someday than I am usually inclined to think possible.) Consider, for example, the difference between “Baboon” and “First Meditation,” both of which are simple poems, solidly constructed of a variety of sensory stimuli. What distinguishes G.J.’s poem from Jack’s is the lack of any obvious unifying element. At best, the wistful tone of Jack’s poem could be called subjective, while the entire structure of “First Meditation” would appear to be objective. But if there is nothing that links the details of G.J.’s poem together, then any computer programmed with a sufficient number of “poetic” details ought to be able to write poetry. This is only a logician’s quandary, not a poet’s. As eminent a scientist as C.G. Jung postulated the operation of a linking principle other than causation because he was convinced of the divinatory efficacy of the I Ching. It is this a-rational principle that makes G.J.’s poem a poem.

From time to time someone will go out of his or her way to point out to me what a snob and/or fool and/or etc. I am. Now I’m as paranoid as the next person, probably more so, but that’s all beside the point. It doesn’t matter in the least whether or not I am fond of gin or whether or not I am in the habit of walking on frozen lakes with someone named Katie. What matters is the poems: the rhythms, the sounds, the music. Perhaps G.J. does take morphine, perhaps Evelyn’s father is a minister, perhaps Jack does know a baboon. So what?

David Westendorp
Take, drink

On his knees
in the small dark hallway
my father slides back the wood panelling
and reaches for his gallon
of homemade apple wine.
it is eleven o’clock, the news
is about to begin.
my mother sets the glasses ready
and brings out a saucer
of pickled herring.

my father pours the wine slowly.
spilled drops mingle with our
maroon tablecloth.
he holds one glass up to the light
to watch it sparkle
"look how beautiful it is,
how clear!"
my mother smiles and rubs his hair.

we sit silently the next day in our pews,
watching him hold the wine again.
it is a silver beaker, and
the light is too dim to see it sparkle anyway.
there are no drops now
on the linen white tablecloth.

Singing the Cat to Sleep

What can I trade you for heavier bones,
for a health that is not so brittle?
The yarrow stalks the finger paths,
cripples me carelessly,
like a child.

So precisely gin and Katie.
When we walk on the frozen lake,
brush the snow away,
spell out the fractures in the ice.
"This is the character for ‘David’ " she says.
"And this means ‘Bird.’ "

The glittering sentence
that holds the bones together
or makes them fly apart. The groan of tiger
and how it is inflected.

Sun-breathless with the drunk,
a heavy drunk,
cat blood and tonic.
The lovely flight of the brain to the glass
how it nestles in the star and purrs

Evelyn Kuntz

David Westendorp
Baboon

A baboon stares through the afternoon with eyes that do not blink or shift with limbs that keep silence in the "fever tree's" shadow.

And the opal eyes lie dull in mist as if in struggle with some secret pain helpless against some lost knowledge.

If I could summon once more that name uttered in a garden bathed with light I would watch the sun come up in this baboon's eyes.

Jack D. Hickman

First Meditation

Sparrows, dog-fight shrieking
They must be over the sidewalk
a sphere near explosion

Bill in the bathroom
Water over porcelain
Murmurs and farts

Sunlight, falling drunk through the window pulls them both down Anointing my toes

A warmth, a dawn like morphine at the base of the spine

G. J. Van Spronsen
"The bad boy of '60s journalism," Tom K. Wolfe (not Thomas W. Wolfe of Look Homeward, Angel), is still writing in the '70s though he's not causing quite the stir of ten years ago. His latest book, Mauve Gloves and Madmen, Clutter and Vine is a collection of eleven articles written between 1967 and 1976—similar in format and subject to his first book, The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby.

The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby was an important step both as a turning point in Wolfe's career and in the rise of New Journalism. Working for the New York Herald Tribune, Wolfe went to California to do a story on the world of stock-car racing. He came back with pages of notes, but was unable to write the story in traditional newspaper format. His editor told him to write up his notes for someone else to rewrite. Those forty-nine pages of "notes" became, word for word, "The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby" (included in the book of the same title).

With this article Wolfe began writing in the style of New Journalism which consists of, according to him, the use of four fictional "realistic" techniques in the writing of non-fiction: point of view, use of detail, realistic dialogue, and the use of the historical narrative. Wolfe maintains that these four devices produce the "emotionally involving quality of the most powerful prose"—fiction or non-fiction.

The first fictional technique that New Journalists experiment with is point of view. Wolfe says that "most fiction writers, without knowing it, [wrote] in a century-old British tradition" in which the narrator assumed a cool, cultured, gentle voice to form a backdrop to the story. By the early '60s, this narrative voice had become like an announcer's voice—an endless droning. The New Journalism's attempt to work with point of view has nothing to do with objectivity. It's a matter of style. New Journalists employ a lot of Henry James-type third-person point of view in order to let the reader get into a character's mind. Furthermore, they break all the "rules."

Wolfe often changes point of view in the middle of an article, a paragraph, or a sentence. He uses what he calls a downstage voice—someone downstage from the protagonist does the talking. He may put himself in the third person as a puzzled onlooker or someone in the way. Or he may involve himself as the narrator by insulting or prodding his own characters. But Wolfe's favorite device as a narrator is to pick up the coloration and dialect of whomever he is writing about.

The second realistic device which Wolfe claims New Journalism employs is the recording of everyday details which are symbolic of people's statuses. These details include the whole range of behavior and belongings with which people express their positions in the world (or what they think they are or wish they were). These details are important, believes Wolfe, because a person's personality is inexorably linked to the external clues which surround him and tell him who he is.

Thirdly, says Wolfe, New Journalism uses realistic dialogue—which involves the reader more completely and develops character much faster than any other device.

And, finally, New Journalists tell their stories through historical narrative. This accounts for some of the extraordinary feats of reporting that New Journalists have accomplished. They have to witness the scenes in other people's lives and record the dialogue, gestures, facial expressions, and details of environment in order to reconstruct them in print.

Wolfe calls this kind of reporting "saturation reporting." The reporters stay with their subjects for an extended period of time, from several days to several months—for more ambitious and time-consuming
projects than most other journalists undertake. They ultimately attempt to penetrate a subject's mind and reconstruct his thoughts. They have at times accomplished this so brilliantly that they have been accused of making it up.

Wolfe's combination of techniques is unique. In addition to his four fictional devices, he uses various types of prose (from stream of consciousness to dialogue) simultaneously or within a very short space. Even his typography is obviously different. It is composed of "dots, dashes, exclamation points, italics, occasional punctuation that never existed before, interjections, shouts, nonsense words, onomatopoeia, mimesis, pleonasms, and the continual use of the historical present." Wolfe attempts to capture the rhythm and mood of the situation he is describing. He has been called the "poet of journalists" for his ability to get under a character's skin and transmit the forces that make that person tick.

Wolfe's subjects have been drawn from the whole range of a subculture—from stock car drivers to hippies to Ken Kesey, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* tells the story of Kesey's flight into Mexico. *Time* called it the "keenest look at the psychedelic '60s yet written." It reveals Wolfe at his best—as a pop sociologist. The following excerpt is an attempt by Wolfe to probe Kesey's mind:

2 SECONDS OH CORPSE OF MINE!
SHUDDERS AND GIGGLES SYNAPSES LIGHT LIKE RENDOM BEATLE FLASHBULBS KHEEWWW BLASTING OUT SILLY FROM MOTOR HOMUNCULUS YOU MISSED YR FLASH OH MIGHTY MASTICATOR, SALIVATOR, VOCALIZER, SWALLOWER, LICKER, BITER SUCKER BROW KNITTER LOOKER BLINKER RUBBERNECKER THUMB PRODDER UPYOURS FINGERER RINGBENDER NOSEPICKER WAVER DRINKER ARMLIFTER BODYBENDER HIPSWIVELER KNEER SPRINGER RUNNER ZERO:::::::00000000:::::RUN! Sonbitch! The gears catch at last, he springs up, grabs Cornel Wilde jacket, leaps through the back window, down the hole, down the drainpipe—now vault the wall, you mother, into the jungle floppy—AWWRRRRRRAAMMMAMNNNNNN WHAZATT?

His head is down but he can see it WHAZZAT?
Up there is the window he just jumped out of—BROWN!
He can feel it. There is a vibration on the parasympathetic efferent fibres behind the eyeballs and it hums HRRRRRRRRAAMNNNNNNNNN
Two of them one brown dumpy Mex with gold-handle butt gun one crewcut American FBI bodesnatcher watching him flying like a monkey over the wall into the jungle the brown Mex holds gold gun, but the brown behind that face too brown moldering Mex earth to worry about couldn't hit a peeing dog PLUNGE into the lapping PV fronds bursting orchid and orange the motor homunculus working perfect now powerful gallop into the picturebook jungles of Mexico—

A moment later Black Maria walked into the apartment. She found Kesey gone and the Cornael
Wilde running jacket gone. That trip again. Well, he'll come back when he's ready to, worn out, and things will be cool for a while. Kesey had gotten paranoid as hell, but that wasn't the only thing. He liked this Fugitive game. Man, he'd scram out in the jungle and hide out there for two or three days and smoke a lot of pot and finally straggle in.7

Another especially interesting book of Wolfe's is Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers. It concerns the confrontation between black rage and white guilt. The following excerpt portrays a party which Leonard Bernstein gave for the Black Panthers:

God, what a flood of taboo thoughts runs through one's head at these Radical Chic events. . . . But it's delicious. It is as if one's nerve endings were on red alert to the most intimate nuances of status. Deny it if you want to! Nevertheless, it runs through every soul here. It is the matter of the marvelous contradictions on all sides. . . .

For example, one's own servants, although white, are generally no problem. A discrete euphemistic word about what sort of party it is going to be, and they will generally be models of correctness. The euphemisms are not always an easy matter, however. When talking to one's white servants, one doesn't really know whether to refer to blacks as Blacks, Negroes, or colored people. When talking to other . . . well, cultivated persons, one says Blacks, of course. It is the only word, currently, that implicitly shows one's awareness of the dignity of the black race. But somehow when you start to say the word to your own white servants, you hesitate. You can't get it out of your throat. Why? Counter-guilt! You realize that you are about to utter one of those touchstone words that divide the cultivated from the uncultivated, the attuned from the unattuned, the hip from the dreary. As soon as the word comes out of your mouth—you know it before the first vocable pops on your lips—your own servant is going to size you up as one of those limousine liberals, or whatever epithet they use, who are busy pouring white soul all over the black movement, and would you do as much for the white lower-class, for the domestics of the East Side, for example, fat chance, sahib. Deny it if you want to! but such are the delicious agonies of Radical Chic. . . .

Or—what does one wear to these parties for the Panthers or the Young Lords or the grape workers? What does a woman wear? Obviously, one does not wear something frivolous and pompously expensive, such as a Gerard Pipart party dress. On the other hand, one does not want to arrive "poor mouthing it" in some outrageous turtleneck and West Eighth Street bell-jean combination, as if one is "funky" and "of the people." Frankly, Jean vanden Heuvel—that's Jean there in the hallway giving everyone her famous smile, in which her eyes narrow down to f/16—frankly, Jean tends too much toward the funky fallacy. . . . Felicia Bernstein seems to understand the whole thing better. Look at Felicia. She is wearing the simplest little black frock imagineable, with absolutely no ornamentation save for a plain gold necklace. It is perfect. It has dignity without any overt class.

Andrew Brown
symbolism.\(^8\)

A later book, *The Painted Word*, written as an attack on modern art, reveals Wolfe in a poorer light. His sacrifice of fact in the face of “truth” was quickly seized upon by the critics. His ignorance of art history stole credibility from his point that art has become little more than illustration of an idea.

The greatest input into New Journalism is the rise of realism. Wolfe has high esteem for realism. He places its value far above that of just another literary approach. For him, it is the approach which raised literature to a higher plateau of accomplishment. He compares its input into eighteenth-century English literature with the contribution of electricity to machine technology. He believes that the gripping effect of realism on the emotions is something that was never achieved with other techniques.

Therefore, maintains Wolfe, the novelists who are today abandoning realism for fantasy are settling for technical inferiority. He believes literature cannot be improved by abandoning realism and any more than technology can be improved by abandoning electricity. Wolfe predicts that New Journalism, which has picked up the superior techniques of realism, will emerge as the ruling genre.

He supports it by drawing a parallel to the mid-1800’s when the realistic novel first appeared. Up to that time, poetry had been the ruling genre of literature and its practitioners considered themselves visionaries and myth-makers. The realists who established the novel then rejected the goal of subjective vision and myth and concentrated instead on doing their repertory legwork to get objectively accurate details.

But eventually, after novels had overtaken poetry as the foremost genre, novels too became mythical. The result of this trend, as Wolfe sees it, is today’s puzzling fiction—its characters have no background; they aren’t set in any discernible geographical location; they speak short, mechanical sentences; and they are buffeted by inexplicable forces. In short, novelists have become myth-makers. Wolfe calls them Neo-Fabulists—the writers of “idea” novels (Freudian, surrealistic, Kafkaesque, catatonic).

Novelists stopped writing about the way people live. Yet, according to Wolfe, the most important changes occur in the way people live and the way in which they view life. The ’60’s were a time of tremendous upheaval and the novelists weren’t touching it. Wolfe calls this a cop-out. He insists that the claim of fragmentation is only a guise assumed by novelists who don’t understand their time and therefore don’t want to face the challenge of writing about it. Instead, they adopt a romantic self-image, viewing the novel as a spiritual genre, and their office as prophetic. Inspiration becomes inherent in their idea of the novelist as a religious figure, and irrationality in prose becomes the proof of the novelist’s divinity. Carried to its final implications, says Wolfe, “the novelist replaces a prophet and art replaces God.”

Wolfe points out that a novelist today wants to be known as a mad genius. He likes to be called brilliant and outrageous, and objects to the idea of a theory behind his work. Wolfe calls this pure fabrication. He insists that practically everything in writing is the result of practical considerations: a writer is a craftsman and he should face that fact. Contemporary society, which almost worships ships, simply ignores this. This is a sign, says Wolfe, that the novel’s day is over, just as 100 years ago poetry’s day was over when it too became “religious.”

Like the realistic novelists who ignored the sacred calling of literature 100 years ago, today’s New Journalists are discovering the joys and powers of detailed realism. Again, a lesser genre, perhaps because of its outlaw freedom and innocence, is rediscovering realism, and according to Wolfe moving one step closer to total involvement with the reader.

Novelists, says Wolfe, are far too conscious of literary tradition and their place in it. Journalists, on the other hand, being lower in the literary hierarchy, have the freedom to innovate. New Journalism has no traditions—it can mix devices and improvise wherever it wants to. Its practitioners are not intimidated by the awareness of what other writers have done. However, Wolfe predicts that this isn’t likely to continue. As New Journalism gains status, it too will become “sanctified.” It will gain traditions and become stultified by rules.

Tom Wolfe has both avid admirers and outspoken critics. About the only thing they agree on is that Wolfe is a perceptive writer and a brilliant stylist. His defenders applaud his opposition to the literary establishment and his critics find all sorts of holes in his theories and factual errors in his writing. He has been called a poet among journalists and a proponent of a bastard form of journalism. His writing has been called unmerciful to pretentiousness; it has also been called cruel. Though some have found a voice in New Journalism, others charge that it is nothing more than antagonistic—toward conventional values, authority figures, bureaucrats, and snobs. Support for Wolfe and New Journalism has come from many quarters, including from within the mainstream literary establishment; the largest attacks have come from the literary rearguard—the New York Review of Books and the Columbia Journal Review.

The future of New Journalism has yet to be decided, as have the validity and impact of Wolfe’s ideas. Wolfe himself admits that the time is ripe: the techniques and materials are available, but they have yet to be used to full potential.

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**FOOTNOTES**

5. Grey, p. 63.
7. Wolfe, p. 213.