

AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA AND IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY

By WILLIAM HEWETT

THIS RETROSPECTIVE article is dedicated to the memory of James Walsh, founder of *The Way* and its editor for many years. I dedicate it to him because he was a very good friend. Moreover he was a very practical encourager; he knew the pains of the pioneer and showed great compassion to those in the throes of attempting new paths and new expressions of old ways. And very practically: he was in at the birth of all my experiments in using communications media.

My first experiment in linking audio-visual media to ignatian spirituality was *Cave of living streams*. It was, like nearly everything else I have done, first published in *The Way*. Indeed by the time the cassette had reached its ten thousand sales mark *The Way* was described (to my amusement and James Walsh's amazement) by one incipient subscriber as, 'Is that the magazine that printed Billy Hewett's *Cave of living streams*?' . . . But of course *Caves*, as it came to be known, was not primarily about the written word, however distinguished the review or wide its circulation: *Caves* was in on the ground floor of the cassette revolution. In fact it started as an LP disc—themselves still relatively novel in the sixties when it first appeared. But the transference to cassette put it on the market. Cassettes are more resistant to rough treatment, light and easy to mail, handy to transport, so easy to play: even pre-scientific antediluvian unmechanicals like myself can usually press the right buttons. The disc—even the LP type—was far more prone to disaster. At worst a cheap tape stretches and wobbles and that only after very long abuse.

What was I trying to do with *Caves*? It was originally an attempt to capture the interest of a lethargic and seemingly irreligious group of well-heeled senior schoolboys in a jesuit college in the North of England. I was trying to come to terms with the inroads Vatican II was making into an age-old recusant tradition. Like all

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SIGLA

OLD TESTAMENT

Gen	Jg	Neh	Cant	Hos	Nah	Bar
Exod	Ruth	Est	Isai	Joel	Hab	Tob
Lev	2, 2 Sam	Job	Jer	Amos	Zeph (Soph)	Jud
Num	1, 2 Kg	Ps	Lam	Obad	Hag	Wis
Deut	1, 2 Chr	Prov	Ezek	Jon	Zech	Sir (Eclus)
Jos	Ezr	Qoh (Eccl)	Dan	Mic	Mal	1, 2 Macc

NEW TESTAMENT

Mt	Jn	1, 2 Cor	Phil	1, 2 Tim	Heb	1, 2, 3 Jn
Mk	Acts	Gal	Col	Tit	Jas	Jude
Lk	Rom	Eph	1, 2 Thess	Phm	1, 2 Pet	Apoc

Exx *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola.*

MHSJ *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu.*

my other attempts at the time (which included lotus postures, headstands and the theology of the Beatles) it was by and large a near total failure with the students. But some parents loved it.

The college authorities did get some accidental mileage out of it. The prize day play, high point of the dramatic year, had to be abandoned at the last week due to the drama director's appendicitis. It was too late for a substitute. Wilfred Usher (*Caves'* composer) and I were asked to put on an audio-visual alternative. With the enthusiasm of ignorance we accepted the challenge. I discovered a latent talent for making slide pictures. Thus the presentation was a moderate success: very big pictures 'illustrating' the well-amplified disc. A goodish show but was it spirituality? And was it ignatian?

Perhaps another way of putting the question would be this: did it in fact 'exercise the spirit'? It evoked feelings, 'touched' people, stirred joyful affections, perhaps mildly challenged some darker ones. It encouraged people to 'symbolise', to see their souls as caves being opened up to the light. The music and the pictures on the screen were in harmony with this process, the music being at the very least not inimical to it. Neither plainsong nor classical—but nor was it victorian-sentimental, pomp-and-circumstance or trivial-simplistic. Many people found it spoke with the kind of direct appeal that authentic traditional folk music stirs. So to this extent, musically, it was at the very least not anti-spiritual and at best conducive to inwardness, reflectiveness, actual prayerfulness particularly when, as in good liturgy, the sights and sounds were interspersed with silence. The words likewise were not merely jejune, though as James Walsh wilyly pointed out, the words 'were not likely to make it into the *Oxford Book of English Verse*'. Some of the rhymes were corny, as my less imperceptive English Literature students pointed out to me. They were meant for the tunes rather than to stand on their own and to express, mainly in universal metaphor and image, leading themes of the *Spiritual Exercises*: 'caves', 'springs', 'roads', 'light', 'darkness' and so on—neither markedly contemporary nor notably antiquated. But it must be admitted the symbols tended towards the pastoral and the naturalistic rather than the contemporary inner city or mighty jet. The Kingdom song did have a stab at something rather more jazzy in words and music: at least it was centred on people rather than on natural pastoral or desert beauty.

This pastoral prejudice became more apparent when we began thinking about a scheme of pictures to go with the songs. We wanted to try to make them mostly local so that the ignatian themes could be seen as relating to the immediate environment, at least by the first local audience for whom it was initially created. So again this put the accent on pastoral beauty rather than inner-city starkness (though I am still haunted by a local rubbish dump and some stark Blackburn backstreets as well as the glories of Lakeland and Ribblesdale). Another weakness was that the pictures were conceived not as sequence so much as separate illustrations. To this extent it could be argued that they tended to trivialise and disjoint what might otherwise—without pictures—have evoked a deeper, more momentous dynamic.

This leads directly to the further question—if at least not ‘anti-spiritual’ was it perhaps anti-ignatian spirituality? At first sight it would seem not. Although Ignatius does not suggest too many images and illustrations in the rather stark and succinct language of the *Exercises*, he very much encourages the imaging-imagining process to be at work in his own creative notion of ‘contemplation’. But many would (I think on the whole rightly) argue that the pedagogical art of Ignatius was precisely to encourage exercitants to be themselves creatively at work in the process of making and participating in their own pictures. To this extent the ready-made variety would be inimical to the process. Indeed the better and more beautiful the pictures the *more* inimical to the ignatian process; the self must be in its own picture-making process if it is to stir, shape and nurture the spiritual life. But again, perhaps there is a right ignatian use of picture in the Exercises that might adopt less literal forms and more subtle ‘sequences’. For the true language of picture is in the sequence speaking precisely as sequence and not as illustration to other words. But this again could also be seen to compound the difficulty; its greater effectiveness could overpower the personal individual creative process.

A great deal more thinking and theorising and experimenting needs to be done here across the all too separate ‘disciplines’ of theology, spirituality, art, psychology and literature. These naive beginnings were remarkable in the way that Samuel Johnson’s dancing bear was: not that it was done well—but that it was done at all. I still have the slide illustrations. I toy with the notion of putting them on video. But already by doing this one is changing the ‘medium’: a slide’s power is its clarity of detail and largeness

of size and slowness of dissolve. A video is small and demands more movement which may not be an aid to contemplation. BBC television did make a half-hour version of extracts which pleased me and many others at the time. Looking back I feel that our mixture of live players (a rather basic group of miming boys, well-behaved but not inspired!) an adequate script and some of the best of the slides would all look rather homespun now. The words and music had a coherence that further additions of picture and movement did not on the whole enhance, though the creative participation of people using their own slides or drawings or movement etc. could make a lot of sense.

Where new winds blow, the successor to *Caves*, followed some years later. Its focus is a mildly charismatic perspective on the first week of the Spiritual Exercises with the emphasis on healing, particularly healing of memories. In fact Wilfred Usher and I created one of its songs, *Memory*, long before Lloyd Webber used the same title for his famous song in *Cats*. Whereas the *Cats* song is frankly (and movingly) nostalgic, my idea of memory and the whole *Winds* cycle was to make a space for the healing of memories in the present: remembering in order to re-member; to let the broken pieces come together. It had thus an implicitly Jungian basis and was an explicit attempt to make a space for grace to build on nature.

I believe this to be a central thrust of ignatian spirituality. If *Memory* sums up the main perspective, another song, *I accept you where you are*, epitomises another Jungian perspective that seemed particularly strong in the wake of Vatican II: the recovered sense of God's unconditional love expressed and affectively appropriated. I believe this is also true of the renewed sense of what the first week of the ignatian Exercises is primarily about: healing and reconciliation through a renewed sense of Christ's personal reconciling love. Thus putting the forgiving words into the mouth of Christ and letting him sing them is only a slight extension of the ignatian rubric (Exx 53).

I had likewise learnt a thing or two about sequences in pictures: letting pictures speak their own *sequential* language; letting the actual process of slide following slide be itself a mode of communicating symbolic meaning. But I still had the sense of overloading: words, music and pictures all together can overwhelm rather than nurture the spirit, dissipate rather than deepen, merely excite wonder *at* rather than *through*. So *Winds* did not and probably will

not become a video-cassette either, though I may yet experiment with a series of silent picture sequences to follow a hearing of *Caves* or *Winds*.

The aim of *Ways of awareness* was more prosaically instructional. Its content was very heavily influenced by Anthony de Mello's *Sadhana*: the book and the workshops. With Anthony's approval I adapted his exercises more explicitly (chronologically) to the pattern of the ignatian exercises, added a few of my own and used an oboist and a plainsong singer both to mark the divisions and to set the atmosphere. Although less ambitious, less original and less personally creative, I think in many ways it was a more ignatian 'right use of the creature' cassette. The instructions are clear and succinct. Their purpose is not to impose structures, thoughts, or images, but to enable the participants to discover for themselves what they are seeking. Better than any other technique I know, this enables the participant to stay with the first vital step in any praying: be recollected, be present, be where you are and use what you actually find there. Building the traditional ignatian structures on this foundation becomes more solid (grace building on nature not bypassing it; getting into the affections and out of the head and therefore at least half-way to spirit—but avoiding the pelagian pitfall from the start). It can even be delightful as Tony de Mello never tires of demonstrating. The value of the audio-cassette over any form of book has often been remarked upon by users the world over: actually to put straight into practice the instruction one is listening to rather than reading is more conducive to full practical concentration. It is very helpful too for diffident or unpractised group leaders. And the precisely and accurately spoken instructions can be heard again and again, for de Mello's methods have both a great simplicity and a great precision. I produced a similar set for Australia which the Australian Broadcasting Company still distributes.

The big work that finally came to birth in the mid-seventies was *Inigo*. This was again a new departure but showing signs of its parent stable, especially the idea of lyrics and songs from the earlier experiments and of instruction from *Winds* but now much more indirect and allusive and to this extent I think more profoundly ignatian. Again, like the charismatic *Winds*, *Inigo* takes its point of departure in a current fashion, the theology of story, but in this case a fashion with even deeper roots in tradition and with much more potential for contemporary development and relevance.

Story is enduring. It also allows for more expansion to the great role of re-mem-bering not only for healing but also for continual nurturing: it is for heathly sinners as well as sick sinners!

I did not think *Inigo* was a big work at all when I started out on it. But because it has become one (in ways which will become apparent as we proceed) I am going to share my indulgence in tracing it to somewhere near its ultimate roots, in my own experience and history. This is the quintessential notion of the whole *Inigo* enterprise: letting *his* story *evoke one's own*—whoever one is.

In retrospect, I must concede that I showed certain ignatian traits from an early age. I never had any difficulty in using my imagination. Nor did I have any difficulty in 'dramatising' my own life story: two interlinked talents, though they were not greatly valued at the time. Only recently have I and others learned to value these abilities and to link them with central ignatian characteristics which are most helpful, for instance, in ignatian contemplation.

I was also fortunate enough to fall under the spell (at Oxford of all places!) of the great Bernard of Clairvaux. This 'wholist', pre-scholastic psychology is extraordinarily contemporary in its insistence on the meaning and value of the *affectus animae*—almost untranslatable so I put it in the original Latin. This is a very rich concept and one that the West keeps losing. It really concerns the deep underlying dynamics of the soul itself. The 'place' where spirituality happens is neither in the head nor in the heavens but in the soul. In this sense the soul is not an abstract wraith, nor imprisoned spirit, nor mere seat of psychological emotions and feelings. The *affectus* is much more than the current usage of the words 'affect' or 'affections' usually do justice to. These *affectus animae* are the deep desires and dynamic at the centre of all of us—the real *Id quod volo* of the ignatian exercises: the true, deep, real, personal desires of the 'hidden self', 'deep self', the self behind the masks. Where I am most who I really am: *imago Dei*.

This phrase *imago Dei* has for me a double converging line of resonance from scripture and from Jung. Again I was fortunate enough to be doing theology when its old forms were beginning to fall apart and enlivening new shoots were peeping up through the cracks. In a seminar I was encouraged to make links between Jung's theory of individuation and the working of grace. I was fortunate too in being in at the breakdown of the old monolithic modes of communicating the Spiritual Exercises and the beginning

of the 'one-to-one' directed retreat. The significant shift here was from superego and ego imposition to true self-expression. Though my director was tentative, to say the least, in his integration of the psychological implications, he was at least open to some of them.

It was against this background that I was able more and more not just to sense the experiencing person (Ignatius) behind the structure of his Exercises. I was also able to value more highly the movement and process of his whole development both as person and as communicator. Hence the life of Ignatius became for me not just a useful bit of background, a peripheral context or an optional extra to the real business of the Exercises. The actual story of Ignatius became central. And since he had in fact taken the trouble in the midst of enormous pressures and failing health to speak it out to his secretary, he clearly thought so too.

It was at this stage that my innate tendency to dramatise along with my great love for (and considerable store of illicit knowledge of) the theatre stood me in good stead. It was so easy to imagine Ignatius on the 'stage' of the red tower room in the residence in Rome reliving his story as he told it, and perhaps adding the telling details and affective overtones that often come in the process of such an enterprise. It seemed to me a pity that the convention of referring to himself in the third person should shroud the originality of this 'exercise'. After all Ignatius's greatest original composition was not necessarily the *Exercises* as such (original enough though they are in their dynamic). What was qualitatively new in the sixteenth century was the sense of the value of personal autobiography. Ignatius's near contemporary Benvenuto Cellini was its earliest dramatic exponent. The sense of excitement in the very process of creative achievement is at the heart of this new emphasis.

Most of us are not so used to seeing Ignatius in this context: the monolithic structure of the Principle and Foundation at the beginning of the *Exercises* too easily hides the more delicate dynamic process of the Contemplation to Attain Love that, while concluding it in terms of its place in the text, should inform the whole dynamic. It is the autobiography that expresses the living process of the Exercises and is a living experience of the continuing contemplation at work in a way far more graphic and moving than any single part of the Exercises themselves. Here I am not just trying to set up one against the other, much rather to show

how they are complementary. But since the autobiography has historically been the more neglected and since its possibilities for the actual process of communicating the Exercises themselves have not hitherto been fully realised, this preamble seems appropriate.

Hence *Inigo*, which is the name I gave this cassette, has proved to be more than just the autobiography put on tape. The very name 'Inigo' is significant; it is Ignatius's own baptismal name, the name people called him by for most of his life, the name he had during his formative years, the name God was calling him. So it is not a gimmick title: it is his own name—the first and more fundamental expression of his true, hidden self, before the later layers were either imposed or chosen out of admiration for the great saint of Antioch. Masks are fine and can even be enhancing—provided we know what and more importantly whom they are masking or enhancing. The name and the title symbolise this first layer, first-person, first-hand experience of being who he is—and being in the process of becoming more fully who he is.

This notion itself sparked off more elaborations. Inigo advises in his Exercises that when contemplating Christ in the scenes of his life we 'imagine what he is saying . . . or what he might be saying . . .' This is a very significant and highly contemporary mode of approach. Contemporary in both senses: contemporary to us who live in the twentieth century. Thanks to Jung particularly but to many others such as Ira Progoff and James Hillman in psychotherapy and the whole school of Theology as Story, we are much more in tune with this creative symbolic approach than our more literalist immediate forbears had a chance to be. Contemporary, too, to Ignatius himself in his own roman renaissance context. The firm evidence of actual connection may be hard to come by but the atmosphere of sixteenth-century, later-renaissance Rome must certainly have influenced him. He met and talked with Michelangelo. He encouraged the use of the visual arts particularly. He must have been in contact with neo-platonist schools and ways of thinking, feeling and dramatising. So, to apply to himself a bit of his own excellent medicine and let ourselves not only know him in his history but imagine him in his 'might-bes' has not only a mannerist playfulness about it but a style suitable to one who lived in the land and tradition that was later to produce Pico and Pirandello. In his own day it had surely already influenced his own imaginative approach to the stirrings of the soul and expressions of

the self as ways of finding God in, as he never tired of saying, 'all things'—including imagination itself.

Hence not only putting his story back into the more dramatically viable first person—letting him own directly what he was saying—but elaborating it a little with the use of my own imaginative talents seemed not quite as presumptuous as might at first appear. It was merely following the hints and directives of the man himself! So to the narrative I added verse and song. The models here were an amalgam of masque, *Godspell*, and 'the one-man show'. But it is initially conceived for and presented on cassette. By analogy therefore the prime model is radio. For radio is easily transferable to cassette and therefore available on the streets as well as in the retreat centre and above all at home.

Inigo therefore takes the cassette seriously as a cheap adaptable mode of communication. It takes it seriously also in the sense of letting it have its own life and style. The cassette is not just for playing music; it is not just for telling stories. The medium if not the actual message should very strongly influence the mode of the message's communication. The cassette is good for groups. It is also good for individuals. And it moves into a third completion of that often arid dialectic: it is good for the individual in the group. In other words making the Exercises the *Inigo*-way takes us to a stage beyond 'preached' versus 'individually-directed' Exercises. The director from outside, the person challenging, evoking by his story can reach us at our most intimately individual. He can, by cassette, also reach us as group—again and again! This is a new kind of mystery presence, at one level very practical and down-to-earth: the man telling his story. But by the magic of modern science and mass production the actual process of the telling is endlessly repeatable and universally presentable. It gives a new dimension to *Inigo*'s own criteria of norms and priorities for the choosing of ministries. He would have seen the point though he might have balked at the possible arrogance of expression, of John Lennon's notorious claim that more people had not merely heard of but heard the Beatles, than had either heard of, let alone heard Jesus. *Inigo* himself would certainly have made reverent and imaginative creative use of the creature cassette.

Of course at one important level it is no substitute for physical, personal presence. But was not that exactly what made the apostles and disciples sad about the physical literal presence of the risen and ascending Jesus? *Inigo* in his story, like Jesus himself in his,

is at least at some authentically human levels shared in common, a 'continuing presence' wherever and whenever the story is being told, the life is being verbally re-expressed, the 'word is being broken as it is spoken . . .' But broken analogously, to evoke the same more abundant life in the releasing of the energies and graces, atonements and loving actions, that all great and real personal stories empower and release. (I am very happy to admit of course that the story of Jesus is qualitatively different and anyhow supreme. But elements are common. And saints too in the evocation of their own stories evoke the potential for an analogous realisation of hidden potential in ours.) This is too vast and bristling a subject to be dealt with in any full sense here. But its relevance to the Inigo evocation process is worth underlining.

For this is the heart of it: Inigo's story can evoke yours. Inigo's story evokes yours at different times in your life, moods in your day, moments for grace in your spiritual journey, and evokes without imposing. He helps you to discover for yourself. In this whole perspective the cassette as such plays a predominant role and significantly is an audio-cassette. As will be apparent from the discussion above, I find the audio-cassette has certain 'spiritual' advantages over the video-cassette precisely because the word alone evokes the good use of our own innate imaging powers. This is itself an exercise of one of the soul's great spiritual powers—as Augustine and others have constantly taught. Understanding and will can perhaps manage without too much imagination. Memory never! And memory ('re-membling') is at least as important a power as the other two. Indeed it could (and has) been argued that it is in remembering that the indwelling Holy Spirit is most actively and immediately at work in the individual (and perhaps the collective) soul reminding us of all the things that Jesus said and did. Thus it is the Spirit that shapes and forms our own salvation history in the light of and in connection with that of Jesus.

So Inigo points to the real actual Jesus through and beyond himself. This is a very fundamental meaning of his *magis*: not so much the Jesus who is more than human but the Jesus who in the supreme richness of his humanity is always seeking to be more incarnate in more zones and areas not only of the human personality and its power of expression but in the continuing process of

the whole world in its history, (particularly where there is brokenness and struggle and a sense of powerlessness, for that seems to be a privileged place of God's entry into our lives).

Inigo's life evokes all this. But because you need to live with it over a long time and probably to have a certain type of creative imagination to begin to see it this way, further means and media are needed to communicate it. Which is how the *Inigo loose leaf companion* came about. This is a kind of work book to enable anybody who will to try to be in the same kind of process as Inigo was in his life: letting God be increasingly involved in the very unfolding of our lives in all their variety, joy, pain, delight and sorrow. *Inigo* assists the presentation of the ignatian tradition and christian spirituality. It enables the participator to get inside the actual 'ignatian' process by going to the primary source. It is thus available to a very wide variety of people: everybody can grasp a story. But to get the most out of it, a pedagogy is needed, that of Inigo the personal storyteller.

Another again specifically audio experiment following both the lines and even the format of *Inigo* and incorporating some of the lessons of the latter are the Mary Ward tapes. What I have said above also applies to this presentation but there are significant differences. First and most importantly this story is told from a woman's perspective not a man's and very rightly 'orders' some of the potentially liberating richness let loose in the feminist movements. Another difference is that the story is starker in that the lyrics and songs do not punctuate each section. Rather, they are relegated to a separate tape altogether but can easily be linked with the narrative in different ways, with the help of the booklet that accompanies both cassettes. There are also sequences of slides that can be used with the cassettes in various ways.

Anyhow this further project has led me even deeper in, and I am now working on *the* story, the supreme archetype, to try once again to present Jesus in a form that will communicate to the age of Aquarius more fully than we have for the most part allowed him. He links more with the many and less with the monolith.

NOTE

With *Inigo* too I received much help from the Way Community, notably Michael Ivens S.J. and Kathleen McGhee S.N.D.