

# Values in Illusion

That this will be the last editorial from this editor and at the same time just about the last action of his career in education is a coincidence that prompts some wry reflection. It occurs to him that editing and teaching are not unlike, in that no one can ever be sure what if anything has actually been accomplished in either of those activities. Each depends, for any more than illusory effects, upon someone else doing something a good deal more significant and essential - by writing or by learning - than whatever it is an editor or teacher thinks he or she is doing.

This is not to say that writers and learners do not have their illusions, too, about how things are getting done. So that if indeed there is a sense in which a work of editing or of teaching does achieve something in the way of an ascertainable outcome - an objective reality so to speak - it is a reality apparently unapproachable except through the various subjective illusions held about their separate achievements by the parties concerned; said illusions having very little in common with each other.

Now finding an objective reality for what happens in education can hardly be said to be one of the achievements of the age. It is not for want of trying, of course. It was considered a major step when, after apparently exhausting all possibilities in measuring separately the illusions of teachers or of students about the process, people began to study their interactions. However, it is the consequences of these interactions, rather than the interactions themselves, that really call for objective measurement, and consequences are things unbelievably slippery to identify. We have all had to live with conclusions about education that are at best nebulous. However, just because all the elaborate things we do are supported only by subjective belief that they have any results, it does not follow that we should stop doing them. Let us not undervalue

illusions when they give us a purpose in life.

As this editor looks back on his record he has only his illusions to go on. When Margaret Gillett retired as founding editor of the Journal, an anthology of its best writing was selected and published by a committee of four, who of course, poor creatures, had therefore to read every single article that had appeared in those 11 years. Like any other kind of severe hardship, this experience must have had a toughening and indeed stimulating effect on their systems, for Donna Logsdon, Hermione Shantz, Mort Bain, and Martin O'Hara are yet vigorous, in full possession of their senses, and leading normal and indeed, beneficial lives. Unfortunately or otherwise, no such arrangement for a committee's judgment has been made this time. Our contemporary doctrine of numbers has it that when people share their illusions in groups, their illusions are then called values. The following therefore is an entirely illusory, and valueless, assessment of the 7 years that have passed since that Anthology appeared.

Getting good writing inside a journal's covers, by whatever means, is no doubt the chief demand made on an editor. This is not the place to go into how it may be done when there are no monetary rewards at his or her disposal; we must just bless all the writers who do take the very real pains involved when the most they can expect are certain intrinsic satisfactions. Needless to say I have had a partiality for every piece that has been laboured over and printed here, and hence I have a great unease - in mentioning the few that follow - about the arbitrariness with which I am about to leave the others unmentioned.

But I do know certain authors I have always welcomed particularly - Peter Coleman, Edgar Friedenberg, Norman Henchey, Abbott Conway, Lawrence Stott, Jeffrey Bulcock, Richard Townsend. Each of them happily is represented in these 7 years by at least two eminently readable articles of splendid originality. Let me add to this list at random a few favourite pieces by others: Martin Schiralli in 1978 on "The Fallacy of Perfect Obviousness"; Martin O'Hara's "Interview with Louis Belzile" in 1980; Tom Greenfield's "Against Group Mind" of 1982; Glenn Cartwright in 1983 on "The Symbiotic Mind"; and Goldie Morgentaler's delicious "Translating America" in 1984.

I could go on and on; one way to avoid that dreary eventuality is to point as well to those issues in which all the articles collectively added up to an exceptionally satisfying whole, perhaps greater than the sum of its parts. This is perhaps where an editor most feels he has done his peculiar thing, but again he has depended on authorship of consistently high quality. Among the special issues on topics of general significance, put together with the assistance of panels of expert colleagues, one might select the "English Studies" issue of Winter 1979, that on "Special Children" in the Fall of 1979, and the curriculum issue, called "Of Courses to be Run", brought out by Richard Butt as guest editor in the Fall of 1981,

which contained those outstanding articles by Henry Giroux, William Pinar, and Norman Henchey. But at once when I name these, I feel it invidious; many others - on Art, Adolescence, Other Languages, Closing Schools, the Egregious Computer - have given us much good reason for pride. The same could be said also for several unplanned issues, where the unsolicited articles that came to hand had achieved a kind of spontaneous homogeneity whether of theme or of quality. There was "The Abbots of McGill" issue of Fall 1978, full of rich matter, with its purple cover; and my personal favourite, also the most recent, "Paradigms Lost", which expressed in its prevailing tone of liveliness, wariness, horse sense, and good humour the necessary stance for the humane man or woman in the too often rather phoney world of academic education.

So now we are talking about a good deal more than individual writers, and getting into those illusions that editors have in their more romantic moments. Besides the relatively harmless - though often irritating - habits of such persons, of pencilling commas in on other people's manuscripts when they have nothing better to do, they dream of creating wholes out of parts, of building wordsmith's vessels that will stay afloat and behave with grace and perhaps eventually come to be valued as contributions to the culture. In the earlier issues of this period the journal was regularly illuminated by the sunlit poetry of Paddy Webb, full of natural delights, until the Editorial Board pulled some long faces and muttered about "relevance". (That did not altogether end her appearances, for what could be more relevant to education than such flowering of sense and sensibilities?) The same Board nevertheless has consistently and staunchly supported the Journal's steady progress toward the present "MJE", with its more spacious and relaxed format, its determination to be attractive as well as readable, its regular graphics or photographics (all presaged under Margaret Gillett's leadership but now integral with the journal's policy). And so the arts have inserted themselves tenaciously in that hostile academic environment of hard and rather heavy language massed in print.

There is a curiously unsinkable expectation in our society that academics, constituting as they do some sort of elite, are more likely to be benevolent to the fine arts than the rest of us. The repeated public failures of this fallacy to stand up afford the public constant surprise. Yet on reflection one must understand that these academics are people who make their claim for distinction from the rest of us on the basis of intellect, and who therefore view with the utmost distrust, and yes, suspicion, any rival claimants for distinction who in no way have experienced the peculiar rigours conventional to intellectual discipline, and therefore, they assume (wrongly), have subjected themselves to no discipline whatever. So academics often react to the appearance of "illustrations" among their earnest works with the same sort of horror which fundamentalist bible-thumpers have also attributed to graven images.

How often, however, has this journal been genuinely enlightened by its artists in recent years: Patricia Foixet-Studham's delicate and magical beings, Audry Benjamin's charming children, Gerry Tondino's tenderly observed students and Patrick Michel's adult adolescents, Clifford Papke's "stained-glass" designs, and the strongly evocative photographs of Claire Chaput, not to mention the student work - drawings by very young children, full of cheek and life, ingenious computer designs by teachers, and those grotesque collages of "Paradigms Lost". Clifford Papke, the assiduous member on the Board for art, has been chief agent in nearly all of these assemblages of graphic material; the excellent cover of the current series is his design, with its unique lettering of "MJE".

Such have been my illusions. They have been shared to some degree, and helped into realization, by numbers of people from whom the editor had no right to expect anything, personally, but who all had their reasons for supporting generously an enterprise of the Faculty to which they belonged. For this journal, far from being the somewhat personal scheme suggested above, is a project of the Faculty of Education of McGill. We have had excellent Chairmen of the Board - Richard Butt, Gary Anderson, Gerry Kelebay - who have carried many responsibilities for its survival with energy and enthusiasm. The Board members of these years deserve their Faculty's thanks for their patience throughout many lengthy meetings and with many messy manuscripts. Several have worked long hours to fulfill particular functions. Chief among these is always the Book Review Editor, the nearest job to editing itself, but without its recognition, providing with constant enterprise and shrewd judgment what is frequently the most interesting part of the issue. Nancy Carlman established the high standard of vigilance and productivity fully maintained by May Frith and Justine Harris, and by William Talley and Georges Terroux. William Talley over recent years conducted it with such scholarly thoroughness and competence that the Journal felt lucky to have him accept nomination as the next Editor.

The Journal has a neighbourly obligation to be French in some part, an obligation that has clearly been swung heavily about between the ideals and the actualities of publishing in the Province of Quebec. In keeping us right linguistically we remember André Provencher's invariable and courtly readiness to monitor manuscripts, and the lively vigilance of Magdelhayne Buteau which carried her in a time of crisis far beyond these duties. We nominated her *Rédactrice Associée* (or Associate Editor), and she energetically sought out those submissions from French colleagues that had then all but dried up in the heated atmosphere of nationalism, to bring out an issue almost entirely in French under her editorship in 1981.

The crisis we have named was also one of financing. The Journal faced extinction in 1980 when it declined to conform entirely to the role the Ministry of Education in Québec had in mind for it. Our energetic Managing Editors, particularly Barry

Lucas in the early days, and later Chris Milligan, have secured for it what might be called a reasonable precariousness, and a rational management of its tiny resources. Among such measures was the decision to switch to word-processing (a decision taken, prudently enough, during the absence of the editor on sabbatical), which created a prolonged crisis in formatting but certainly saved us a lot of money. Harpell's Cooperative Press, which had stood to earn that saved money with its entirely satisfactory type-setting services, nevertheless continued to be as fully cooperative as its name suggests under the friendly leadership of M. Hubert Lamarche. And the slenderly salaried part-time staff of the Journal rose wonderfully to the challenge.

To these people, in our dark box of an office, the Journal owes its sustained high standards of accuracy in print. The Editor depended heavily for meticulous yet intelligent copy preparation on Denise Morel, as his first Assistant Editor; it was on Ann Keenan and on Drew Ferguson, her successors, that the burden fell of translating all those processes into the intricacies of computer commands. It is little short of unbelievable how much elaborate patience must be expended in compensation for the dollars saved by this means; and without their persistence, ingenuity, and commitment - and of course it is Ann who as Secretary runs everything else in the office as well - the editor doesn't know where he would have been.

Well, where has the editor been? Not out there by himself, obviously. Of the support from colleagues that really matters the MJE has never been in want; with almost invariable and cheerful willingness they have agreed to read tedious papers, write reviews, serve on panels for special issues. He wishes they all knew how truly welcome their words of assent looked, or sounded, to him, scrawled upon the bottom of a memo of request, or spoken with warmth and without hesitation on the phone. Some therefore of his illusions about the worth of the Journal have been shared, then; they are thus entitled to be called values (see above). Whatever you call them, it would be difficult - it is going to be difficult - to find a point in going on without them.

**J.K.H.**