

"Look, Karen, I'm Running Like Jello": Imagination as a Question, a Topic, a Tool for Literacy Research and Learning

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Emily is sitting alone at a table with one of her ants in her hand. She is talking to the ant, asking it questions: "Do you have anything else to say?" She puts her head close to the ant and listens. Later she explains that the ant has been telling her that she's 10 years old, and her birthday is August 2nd, and it's a her. She shows me how she wrote that information on a piece of paper. (Field Notes: September 22, 1995)

Emily was the first child I taught who, at 6, had quite plainly begun her life work. Emily was a scientist, and it is quite possible she was born that way because she was the only 6-year-old I have known whose life revolved around a desire to immerse herself exclusively in the study of the natural world. In Emily's case, her chief fascination was with insects, most especially ants. During the year I taught her, in fine weather she spent all of her outdoor time pursuing insects, capturing them, and making containers to keep them in so that she could take them home with her for further observation. As a collector, she was never without plastic baggies, and any crawling thing was scooped up and put in her cubby for later study. She drew the insects and bugs she collected, wrote about them avidly, and offered a wealth of information about most of

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them to anyone who was interested. She was not, however, a child who ever chose to read a fiction book or listen to a fiction story. She did not involve herself in dramatic play unless I asked her to do so. She insisted at home on being read only nonfiction, although her parents made valiant attempts to read fiction with her. If left to herself, her interests in life were exclusively in natural science and/or things that were "real." I was surprised, therefore, to find out early in the school year that Emily believed she could talk to insects (and who am I to say she couldn't). Often at recess, and sometimes in the classroom, she could be seen walking around engaged in serious conversation with whatever poor creature she had happened upon.

At the time I taught Emily I was beginning my third year of inquiry into the subject of imagination and the role it plays in early literacy, and she provided a unique example of the workings of imagination as it interfaced with a specific discipline. Yet Emily was just one child among many who were playing out their imaginative lives in plain view of anyone who cared to watch. This chapter places the imaginative work of Emily and many other children into a framework that attempts to focus attention on the role of imagination in literacy learning. It will describe how my questions about imagination emerged, although it will not claim to have answered those questions.

I will propose three ways in which I believe imagination is linked to discourse acquisition and forms a cornerstone of the literacy process for students of all ages, presenting data that focus on the issues of identity, discourse appropriation, and what I call "authoring." In each of these areas the development of my theoretical structure will be laid out chronologically so that the reader can see the recursive way in which my process as a teacher researcher changed my practice, which in turn changed my theoretical framework, which again changed my process as a teacher researcher, and so on.

My purpose in pursuing this chronological process is to try to make tangible the role of imagination as I have seen it working in my primary classroom, and to open up for discussion the necessity, in fact what I believe to be the imperative, of studying more closely the imaginative work of literacy learners. It would, however, be the height of hubris for me to make the claim that by the end of this chapter the reader will have a coherent description of imagination. Rather, it is quite likely that for some of my readers I may only provoke the sort of disorientation and sense of intangibility that this research regularly has produced in me. To be quite honest, most of the time I can barely make out the image of what I am trying to understand and reach for. There are brief flashes of understanding and insight when I know for sure that my search is hitting home with children: My data show me that,

the children's achievements show me that, but then those fade into the background. In essence, most of the time my research questions are much too hard. Nonetheless, ever the optimist, my belief in the centrality of imagination to children's work pushes me to try to make this elusive process concrete, and at the same time to propose, as Binet (1911) puts it:

a theory of action, according to which mental life is not at all a rational life, but a chaos of shadow crossed by flashes, something strange and above all discontinuous, which has appeared continuous and rational only because after the event it has been described in a language which brings order and clarity everywhere; but it is a factitious order, a verbal illusion. (cited in Donaldson, 1963, p. 28)

I hope my readers will give this chapter an imaginative reading, one that suspends for a time traditional conceptualizations of what research ought to be about and ought to look like. Join me, instead, as I describe a theory of action based on imagination. Consider with me how such a reading, filled with ellipses and discontinuities, might alter our views of literacy learning, research, and teaching.

IMAGINATION AND EDUCATION

The idea that imagination is a critical part of the educational process is obviously not new. At different points in the twentieth century, educational theory has embraced the arts, creativity, play, children's questions, and the idea that human intelligence is multidimensional and human expression multimodal. In the same way, much of my work as a teacher and a researcher had been circling around the workings of imagination. Over the years, I have built a teaching philosophy that places the arts and creative expression in the center of the curriculum, believing that play is a critical part of the learning process, and wonder the fuel that feeds our desire to understand the world. These beliefs have shaped my teaching and directed my research.

The use of imagination is not new to the field of education, but it remains, with a few exceptions, a peripheral subject. (For a notable exception, see Cobb, 1993.) We describe the ways in which teachers can support children's imaginative work and use imagination as a teaching tool, but we do very little to describe the workings of the process itself as it relates to our goals as educators. Most often the subject of imagination is approached through discussions of creativity, but, while imagination remains something that we vaguely know is important

to many kinds of creative pursuits, it certainly is not considered a central part of basic literacy learning. While it is not possible in the context of this chapter to do an extensive analysis of the relationship between creativity and imagination, for the purpose of directing the reader's attention I would offer a simple distinction between creativity and imagination. Creativity most often is defined as a process of construction of the new, while imagination is a form of thought in which the new is brought to awareness. Both, therefore, have to do with generating the new, but creativity speaks to action in the world, and imagination speaks to action in the mind. I would propose, then, that in the context of this simple distinction imagination is both the precursor to the creative process and an integral part of it as it proceeds.

Although the subject of imagination has been a peripheral one in education, it has been widely explored by philosophers, artists, theologians, and scientists. Many artists have written explicitly about the development of their imaginative processes (for example, Coleridge, 1907; Grotowski, 1968; Lewis, 1956; Paz, 1990; Sartre, 1964; Stevens, 1960). Philosophers and theologians have considered the role of imagination in learning, in perception, and more broadly as a way to situate oneself in the world (for example, Bachelard, 1971; de Chardin, 1960; Greene, 1995; Sartre, 1961; Warnock, 1976). Scientists have spoken or written about the role of imagination in the development of their work (for example, Cobb, 1993; Fox-Keller, 1983; Holton, 1973; Medawar, 1982; Ochs, Jacoby, & Gonzales, 1996; Raymo, 1987; Root-Bernstein, 1989; Salk, 1983; Wolpert & Richards, 1997). Rarely, however, are their insights taken into account within the field of education and the life of the classroom. Only recently have a few scholars begun to direct their attention to the role of imagination in the process of becoming literate in a discipline (Warren, Ballenger, Ogonowski, Rosebery, & Hudicourt-Barnes, 2001), even though we have many firsthand accounts of the imaginative process at work in the lives of adults who have succeeded mightily in their respective fields. Those accounts are rich with descriptions of the role of imagination, and they speak to the issues of becoming an expert in a chosen field, of the processes at work in generating important theoretical and experimental breakthroughs, and of the connection between the inner world of perception, belief, and identity and the outer world of work and achievement.

Building an Inside-Out Theory of Literacy

As a teacher researcher seeking to find some form of guidance in making an elusive and seemingly illogical process logical, or at least

tangible, to myself and others, I have found those firsthand accounts to be most useful. In developing a "theory of action" that speaks directly to the role of imagination in literacy learning, I also have been drawn continually to conceptual positions that offer what I would call "inside-out" theories of literacy.

In her seminal work on the teaching of reading, Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1963) clearly described her discovery that to be successful with Maori children, she had to exploit what she called the "volcanic vent" of the child, the child's inner source of creativity and violence (p. 29). Ashton-Warner's conviction gave rise to what she called the organic reading method and the use of the key vocabulary for teaching reading and writing. For Ashton-Warner, literacy was achieved by tapping into the center of her students' inner life and using their hopes, fears, fantasies, and conflicts to make words and the act of reading essential. As she writes in *Teacher* (1963):

I see the mind of the five year old as a volcano with two vents: destructiveness and creativeness. . . . And it seems to me that since these words of the key vocabulary are no less than the captions of the dynamic life itself, they course out through the creative channel. . . . First words must mean something to a child. First words must have intense meaning for a child. They must be part of his being. . . . Pleasant words won't do. Respectable words won't do. They must be words organically tied, organically born from the dynamic life itself. (p. 30).

Ashton-Warner's identification of "the dynamic life" of the child moves me closer to defining the process I am seeking to understand. Note that she describes the creative process here as producing the words that are "the captions of the dynamic life"—but it is the center of the child's being that she is after, and her work goes on to describe a classroom where rich experiences were offered in all of the arts—with every experience intended to further what she called the alternating processes of "intake" and "out-put," or "breathe in" and "breathe out" (p. 89). In addition, over 40 years ago Ashton-Warner also identified the social as an integral part of literacy learning, complaining at one point, "From long sitting, watching, pondering (all so unprofessional) I have found the worst enemies to what we call teaching. . . . The first is the children's interest in each other. It plays the very devil with orthodox method. . . . In self-defense I've got to use the damn thing" (p. 103). Thus, the teaching of reading was tied both to the inner world of the child and to the outer world of the classroom where relationships powerfully influenced learning.

From a different tradition, James Gee (1990) has described literacy as a process that requires a student to essentially step into the shoes,

for example, of a mathematician: to walk, talk, eat, and breathe mathematics. Thus, true literacy is achieved when an individual lives in the body of a subject, identifying with it in a visceral way and translating that identification into action in the world. It requires both mastery of the subject itself, and a public presentation of self as expert. One must believe and know, and one also must convince others.

Madeline Grumet (1988), in proposing a theory of "bodyreading," unites the positions of Ashton-Warner as teacher and Gee as sociolinguist. Grumet looks deeply into the meaning of reading as a broad cultural practice embedded in the particularities of each individual's social, physical, and emotional life—a practice that she believes has been cut out of the process of schooling. In her conceptualization of the disjunct between the individual and the school, she locates the center of learning organically, as do Ashton-Warner and Gee.

In "bodyreading" I borrow this body-subject to run some errands, to bring what we know to where we live, to bring reading home again. To bring what we know to where we live has not always been the project of curriculum, for schooling . . . has functioned to repudiate the body, the place where it lives, and the people who care for it. (p. 129)

Here Grumet clarifies the importance of identity, drawing attention to the interaction between the "dynamic," inner life of the individual and the public world of school. She uses the image of reading as living in "the body" to convey the sense that reading is not a process that takes place above the neck, but is rather an all-encompassing, visceral activity.

These theories challenge me as a teacher and a researcher to find a way to peel back the layers of the literacy onion, as it were, from the outside in, and identify the natural, ontological processes of discourse acquisition at work. First I must consider what is organic and natural to the learner. Then I must figure out how to corral that for the purposes of deeper learning. In the process of responding to that challenge, I have identified the child's imaginative life as central to the process.

Why Imagination?

My desire to understand imagination began with a teaching problem. In 1994 I met Denzel, a second-grade, African-American child. Suffice it to say by way of summary that Denzel, a child who was healthy, happy, intelligent, and serious about school, but who had not been read to in his home, learned to read in second grade, but could

not be engaged in listening or responding to literature at read-aloud time. I spent one teaching year looking carefully at the meaning and function of storybook reading and exploring Denzel's, and my other students', perspectives on that very central part of early literacy teaching (Gallas, 1997). By June, I had concluded that Denzel did not have the ability to imaginatively project himself into the life of a read story; and I also had observed repeatedly that he could not deeply engage with many other kinds of classroom texts to advance his own learning.

At that point I began to view imagination as a critical component of literacy learning, and as a teacher I went on to focus more clearly on the kind of learning that I considered to be the goal of my work with children. Denzel helped me to see that what I wanted for my students was to take them beyond basic skills that "toe at the edges of literacy" (Gallas, 1997, p. 253), to move them toward a deeper understanding of the texts, talk, and semiotic tools that lie at the heart of each discipline (Lemke, 1990; Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1994). I felt I had failed Denzel because I had not been able to build an explicit bridge to that kind of involvement. However, it was precisely that sense of loss and inadequacy that pushed me into a deeper consideration of the topic of imagination.

Imagination as a Question

Below is an excerpt from my field notes written consecutively during the last week of school. It shows how, after 9 months of inquiry into storybook reading, I identified imagination as a focus for future inquiry.

I've been very distracted by Denzel and what I perceive to be some kind of failure on our part (his and mine) to crack this thing called school. I want to feel like he has entered the meta-discourse on thinking and learning that the other children move so freely through—the one that combines intellect and creativity, that uses imagination to enter new subjects, or books, or poems. I don't feel that I've gotten him to that point where he is developing a knowledge of higher-order thinking and how one accesses that. What is it that I want from him? It seems to be a particular kind of mindfulness. How to define it?

Tuesday: We have our summer—baby—birthday party. Parents bring in great food: sushi, cake and strawberries, cookies, cupcakes, juice, and jello. Ayako's mom made a raspberry jello that was just beautiful: layers of white and red gelatin.

Denzel had four servings. We went outside to play, and half the class started to make up a line game that sort of resembled Red Rover, but was a line that, like an ocean wave, chased, and then enclosed whomever it caught. They were chanting nonsense rhymes, laughing and falling. Denzel and Alex came out a little late and they watched for a few seconds. Then Denzel came over and asked me if he could go and play catch with his cousin, who was also out on the playground with his class. I said "no," that I wanted him to play with our class. The children went under a big pine tree that was shady, and conferred. Denzel stood on the edge of the group, listening. Then the children broke apart running in goofy ways, making nonsense sounds. Denzel watched them for a minute, then followed running in a jerky, wobbling manner past me, and he had a big smile on his face, and called out, "Look, Karen, I'm running like jello!" He continued running after the group, then reached them and ran on. I stood still, trying to grasp the words, and shocked at the metaphor that had just come out of his mouth. Had I ever heard him use a metaphor before? I don't think so.

Wednesday: At recess I watched Denzel playing soccer with a group of boys using the entire playing field, which is huge, for their game. At one point Denzel was skipping backwards, anticipating the arrival of the ball. He was really skipping backwards as fast as he could with no one in sight. Then he tripped, fell, rolled over once backwards, jumped up with a huge smile on his face, and continued skipping backwards.

Thursday, the last day of school: We usually have a private class recital. That means that anyone who wants to perform, can. Children dance, sing, play instruments, do impersonations. When I asked in the morning who wanted to perform, about half the class responded, including Denzel. My intern, Cindy, and I surveyed what the children would be doing. Denzel said he would be doing a dance. That afternoon we gathered in the auditorium, sitting in two levels of chairs around the piano. When Denzel's turn came, he got up, went to the center of the empty space, and announced, "I will do a dance from karate. And it's called 'The Lion.' But I won't do the song." He then performed a very beautiful series of movements beginning with a crouch, transitioning to back rolls and somersaults that propelled him around the edges of the audience in an arc. Then he sprang up onto all fours and crawled slowly across the center of the space growling in a low, even . . . Was it a purr? A lion's

purr? Our mouths dropped at this, and the children, who had been absolutely silent, bent forward imperceptibly to see him, wondering, I think, as I was, whether they were hearing things! Finally Denzel stopped, dropped lower to the floor, and then raised himself up on his knees with his hands resting on his lap. "Done," he said. We applauded, still somewhere between wonder and bewilderment. Then Denzel announced, "The Snake." He began a less choreographed version of the movement of the snake, including more rolls, half somersaults, a dance clearly emerging from the martial arts. But this one seemed different from the first. I could have sworn he was improvising. (Field Notes: June 16-23, 1994)

What I saw Denzel do in those last few days of school negated my judgments about his lack of imagination. Clearly imagination was there working for him on a very sophisticated, aesthetic, and intellectual level, but it was working outside of the "units" of words. For Denzel, movement was a way to imaginatively understand his world, but one that I had missed in spite of careful watching and talking for 9 months. I realized that I had made yet another chauvinistic assumption about the ways in which my experience of the world was naturally congruent with that of all of my students. I had done that many times before, always in the process of carrying out classroom research on early literacy, but this time the assumption had been around something that seemed even less tangible than linguistic or cultural differences. After this final observation, my questions emerged clearly. What does imagination look like in its different forms? How does it work for children who are different from myself? Where does it fit in the process of literacy learning and teaching? How does one pursue a study of something as permeable as imagination?

Everything man does that's worth doing is some kind of construction, and the imagination is the constructive power of the mind set free to work on pure construction for its own sake. The units don't have to be words; they can be numbers or tones or colors or bricks or pieces of marble. It is hardly possible to understand what the imagination is doing with words without seeing how it operates with some of these other units. (Frye, 1964, p. 119)

As Frye points out, in order to fully understand what imagination was doing with words, I needed to broaden my notion of the forms it took in everyday life.

RESEARCH METHOD

To consider imagination as a topic to be investigated, I realized that I had to start with my own life since I had never paid close attention to the ways in which imagination functioned for me. From July 1994 through the summer of 1995, a year in which I was not teaching, I kept a journal about my own experiences of imagination, using personal experience as a way to expand my view of the subject. I contemplated, for example, the problem of understanding pure movement as an imaginative form, recording what passed through my mind when I took my daily 2-hour walks, when I danced, when I swam. In early December, as I walked along a desolate stretch of Gloucester, Massachusetts, coastline, the following words popped into my head. They ran on for a while, repeating themselves and gradually expanding as new phrases were admitted until they finally came fully to consciousness. I stopped by the side of the road and wrote them down as fast as I could.

Once this coast was common land, covered only by spanses of wooly briars, old man's beard, bursting clouds of filament, wily oaks, and crackling bittersweet. They ran from the edge of the beaches, just behind the tufts of sea grass, straight across hills of granite and pine—forever. The only way in was from the rocky coast, and it offered no knowledge of how to pass through. There were no paths, only deer run and the low, damp tunnels of the ancient box turtles. In this land, I live, with little memory or imagination. My sight of that time is limited to night frights and small moments of delight in the objects cast off by the ocean.

That is only partly true. There is a quality of imagination that admits me to other worlds, that begins stories about things or people I see, and that lets me build their story around some random (or purposeful?) act, one I only happen upon. But those stories are only beginnings. They never end because, as I said, my imagination is a small one confined mostly to night frights, and flights of bizarre fancy. I begin these stories and then, because their endings would be either too filled with joy and resolution (something I have never understood) or too perverse (something I fear), I abandon them. And besides, they unfold only in my head. The texts are never more than vines of story, starting and stopping, then unwinding in quieter hours. This kind of text represents a part of what I was trying to bring to awareness. By studying my own experience of imagination, I felt I could begin to pull the phenomenon

apart and develop new categories within it. In fact, over the year I did begin to identify a number of different ways in which my imagination was functioning, recording examples over time of fantasies, delusions, wonder and questioning, play, dreams, songlines, movement patterns, fears, and more. I began also to discover the ways in which those functions had positive or negative effects on my daily life and on my own learning. For example, an excerpt I noted in my journal illustrates a case in which my imagination interfered with my learning. In this instance, I had been learning to scuba dive and was having my first class using scuba equipment in water. Although I had wanted to learn for a long time, every now and then a bit of panic would seize me as the thought of not breathing air naturally passed through my mind. What I was aware of was the lack of control in the endeavor. In other words, if everything went well, this new pastime was a snap; but if something went wrong . . . well, my imagination ran amuck with the possibilities. I was definitely in trouble, my imagination overrunning my logic. The whole thing had hints of mortality about it. I was fine until I went down, breathing as I'd been taught, but the quality of the breaths was alarming. There wasn't enough air, just as I'd imagined. I became claustrophobic and signaled that I had to surface. By the beginning of the next school year, through the process of bringing different parts of my own imaginative life to consciousness, my understanding of imagination was considerably broadened, and the vastness of its influence in every area of my life was apparent. I believed that the next step would be to begin watching children.

Data Collection in the Classroom

In the years since 1995 I have continued to inquire into the workings of imagination, focusing on the children in my primary classroom. I have collected data very widely using transcripts of audiotapes and interviews, and field notes from both structured classroom experiences such as sharing time and science, math, and reading lessons, and more unstructured expressive times when my students choose their own activities, with very little orchestration on my part, in areas such as dramatic play, music, art, and block building. In both structured and unstructured class time, I acted as a participant-observer, actively taking field notes on an Alpha Smart Pro and/or audiotaping our classroom interactions. During classroom events in which I was directly involved either as a teacher or as a co-actor, my field notes were taken later in the day when I was not teaching, from as little as 30 minutes to as long as 6 hours later. Often, if there were details of physical de-

scription or dialogue that I believed were significant and a tape recorder was not going as the event was unfolding, I would jot down snatches of conversation on Post-it notes to use as prompts for my later writing. Generally, my students knew that I regularly recorded in writing or on tape what they said and did.

The problem of researching something as intangible as imagination prompted me to begin watching in a different way what children were doing. Instead of identifying a specific question in thinking about literacy, I began simply to look for evidence of imaginative work whenever and whenever it occurred. One might characterize this as watching for what Anne Haas Dyson (1993) would term the "unofficial" work of children, except that I made new spaces for imagination to emerge in my classroom, thus bringing it into the official realm. I wanted to get a broad picture of imagination from the child's perspective and so I changed my practice to accommodate my research question. To accomplish this, I have had to create a classroom environment where my students have an unusual amount of room to flex their imaginative muscles, as it were, so that I have opportunities to observe and document their work. There are times when I join them in their exercises, participating in their dramatic play, painting with them at the easels, joining in their fantasy games, and at all times eavesdropping on their conversations and collecting what they leave behind. This is my research methodology at this point in time. I follow their trails, act as a participant-observer, and try to be aware of the range of what they are doing.

Participants and Setting

The children whose work will be cited in this study come from two different research settings. Denzel and two of the focal children, Emily and Sophia, were my students at a large, public elementary school in Brookline, Massachusetts, an urban community on the edge of Boston. That school is culturally and racially diverse and has more than 550 students in grades K-8. The remaining children cited in this study are students in a small, rural charter school on the central California coast. This school serves a relatively homogeneous Caucasian population and has approximately 150 students in grades K-8.

The physical design of my classroom in both settings reflects my long-standing belief that elementary classrooms should be richly provisioned and provide many different kinds of spaces for learning and teaching. Thus, my classrooms include active play spaces that adjoin one another and encourage children to eavesdrop and extend their

dramatic play and classwork into different areas and media, as well as quiet-work tables where children can work alone or in small groups. The materials in the classroom are displayed on open shelves where children can easily handle them, and include resource books, natural materials, the "tools" of the classroom and of study (for example, magnifying glasses, rulers, staples, scissors, hole punchers, tape, etc.), assorted papers and writing instruments, manipulatives, and a variety of art materials such as colored pencils, chalk, markers, paints, clays, stencils, and stamps.

Although my students do not have assigned desks, they each have several cubbies where different kinds of ongoing work are stored. The classroom also includes a large meeting area, usually bordered by a small couch or comfortable chair. In this space whole-class meetings, sharing and group discussions, and small- and large-group instruction take place. Group stories and poems are composed; students present their work; stories are read; and various kinds of manipulative games are played. Thus, the physical space of the classroom reflects my desire that my students and I be aware of everything that is going on in the classroom.

IMAGINATION AND IDENTITY

In the process of linking my questions about imagination with an inside-out theory of literacy, I seek to describe what entering a discourse through the imagination means and how that entry becomes public so that I, as a teacher, can see it happen and take it from one level to another. When imagination is being used in the service of developing an identity, for example, the identity of a scientist, how does it look? The problem with this kind of inquiry is that schools are not naturally places where we allow spaces for imagination to enter into the process of discourse acquisition, so that even I (who have been looking for it carefully and systematically) sometimes either just plain miss it, or squelch it for the purposes of maintaining order in the classroom. It is like searching for a moving target.

One of my guiding questions for the past 3 years has been this: How do children begin to walk in the shoes, for example, of a scientist? What does that look like? Typically, I come across a part of the answer in the following manner. During visits to the SciTechatorium, the hands-on science museum located on the campus of the charter school where I taught kindergarten, I observed two of my kindergarten boys spend three separate sessions, over a 3-week period, developing an elaborate fantasy around a large telescope that was part of an

astronomy exhibit. The exhibit itself included the telescope; models of the space shuttle; a tile from one of the shuttles; posters of planets, the different shuttles, the sun, and so on; and a timeline of space exploration, among other items. On one particular day, the two boys were starting to extend their fantasy to all parts of the museum, and were running around as if chasing aliens. I approached them to curb this behavior, based on my split-second conclusion that pretending is hazardous in a place full of precious exhibits. In the midst of my intervention with them I stopped, realizing the absurdity of what I was saying given my commitment to the place of wonder and imagination in the scientific process. I apologized for having interrupted and urged them to continue with their play, but to try to limit their movement around the museum. They happily agreed and continued on while I ran to get a pencil and paper, and began to take down their talk. After that incident I looked around and realized that every single child in my class was doing the same thing all over the museum. Some were more public about their fantasies, some were completely silent, but all were building imaginary worlds using the exhibits in the museum as the catalysts, and most, in an incipient way, were assuming the role of the scientist in their explorations of those worlds.

Here is a typical transcript from two children working in a fossil exhibit. They were using small brushes to uncover molds of fossil remains that were covered with sand. Around them were books on dinosaurs and fossils, posters, and many different kinds of fossils.

Clara: (displaying a page of a book to the others and speaking authoritatively) These are the animals we're looking for. I want you all to take a look.

Maura: (speaking with a British accent, and pointing to the fossil she is uncovering) Look, Clara, over here, it's completely flat.

Clara: I'm not sure what that is.

Maura: This is way too special for people to have. (She picks up a book and points to a picture.)

Clara: That is not the same as the picture.

Maura: Oh gosh! I think it's a T-Rex! We're going to be famous!

These kinds of observations helped me to more clearly define the kind of work I had seen Emily doing 2 years earlier in her conversations with, and pursuit of, insects. When I recorded the field notes that open this chapter, I did so because I knew Emily was working with her

imagination. However, my conceptualization of the work she was doing was limited to simply taking note of her actions. I did not at the time draw the relationship between her imaginative work and the scientific process. Clara and Maura, however, and the dramatic play of my other students helped me to make the connection between imagination and the development of the scientist's persona. Here, for example, Clara and Maura were working with identity on two levels. First, they were becoming archaeologists by orchestrating a performance about the work of archaeologists and taking on what they perceived to be the appropriate tone and posture for that work. Then, as part of that process they were relating to their material, that is, the props in the museum, in a scientific way. Note Clara as she compares the bones being uncovered with the drawing of the dinosaur in the book: "That [meaning what Maura was uncovering] is not the same as the picture." Clara used her analytic skills to propose that the skeletal remains of the mold could in no way be the same as the animal illustrated in the book. As 5-year-olds, these girls were beginning to play out a process that Medawar (1982) points to in his description of the actions of scientists.

Scientific reasoning is therefore at all levels an interaction between two episodes of thought—a dialogue between two voices, the one imaginative and the other critical; a dialogue . . . between the possible and the actual, between proposal and disposal, between what might be true and what is in fact the case. (p. 46)

In the same way, Emily became the scientist in her play with insects and also used many of the tools that scientists might employ as she worked with the insects, with me, and with her peers. She observed her insects and bugs meticulously, sketched them and recorded details about their development (as we have seen earlier in this chapter), constructed elaborate environments for them, and spoke authoritatively about their habits. And while an observer might have mistaken her understanding of the role of fantasy when she was talking to her ants and inferred that she was completely immersed in "pretending" (as I most certainly would have prior to this study), Emily was quite clear about what she was doing. When asked if the insects really "talked to her," she admitted that it wasn't really "talk like people do," but that they were "telling" her things. Note the following exchange I had with Emily one morning before school. The principal and I were sitting on a desk chatting as the children began to come into the room. Emily came up to us and told us that her praying mantis had died.

Teacher: Did she make an egg case before she died?

Emily: No, but I asked her if she had laid eggs. And she told me she laid them before I caught her.

What I had to conclude, after observing her for a school year, was that the "telling" came from Emily's close and continuous observation of insects. For example, the brief sharing-time excerpt that follows reveals how systematic and analytic her observations were.

Sharing-Time Field Notes

Emily shares some crickets that she keeps as pets, and as food for her now-dead praying mantis. Her knowledge about them is extensive. She speaks of the difficulty of telling them apart and points out that an injury "like if they have a lost wing or something, makes it more easy" to tell them apart. She hypothesizes that females are lighter color and have no wings.

Emily's work was very congruent with the descriptions we now have from scientists of their childhood experiences of the world. For those who are deeply involved in the study of the natural world, that study often begins at an early age and the relationship that develops is one of a close and organic identification with the creatures and the phenomena of that world (Cobb, 1993; Fox-Keller, 1983; Holton, 1973). More compelling, however, are descriptions of scientists working as adults in the laboratory using imagination to enter the physical world they are studying (Ochs, et al., 1996; Salk, 1983; Wolpert & Richards, 1997). In these accounts, the "I" of self moves into the body of the phenomenon under study. As Sir James Black, a Nobel Laureate, states: "You then try and pretend that you are the receptor. You imagine what it would be like if this molecule were coming out of space towards you. What would it look like, what would it do?" (Wolpert & Richards, 1997, p. 126).

IMAGINATION AND DISCOURSE APPROPRIATION

As I have expanded my observations of children's imaginative work, I see that imagination is a process through which children take control of their experience so that the events, texts, and tools they encounter in school become part of their bodies and are re-expressed through the force of their actions. If given the opportunity to place

the world of school into an imaginative context, young children begin to appropriate the words, symbols, and tools of the different subject areas for their own purposes, very much in the sense Bakhtin (1981) has proposed when he writes of how a speaker must "populate the word . . . with his own intention, his own accent . . . adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (p. 294). That process of appropriation, however, depends on the teacher's ability to provide a wide variety of props specific to the subject under study, as well as an exposure to "cultural tools" (Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1994) that further the student's inquiries. Those tools assist students in building the bridge between their experiences of the "now" of classroom texts with which they come in contact through the process of instruction, and the future of new texts that they themselves create.

I would propose that the process of discourse appropriation occurs when students are enabled to use an array of cultural tools to "access" their imaginative worlds and take control of the texts and the ideas they encounter. That kind of process requires that different kinds of expressive and temporal spaces be created within classrooms. For example, in October 1998 I observed an interesting phenomenon in my kindergarten classroom. One morning, a small group of girls noticed a large box of maps that had been placed prominently on a bookshelf since September, and they decided to go on a "trip." They set up a row of chairs as if they were airplane seats, unfolded the maps, and spent about 30 minutes "going to California." About 2 weeks later the maps came out again, but this time about 14 children joined in the travel fantasy in groups of five and six, segregated by sex. As with the first time, they lined up chairs and spent a great deal of time scrutinizing the maps. This time, however, they also began to make their own maps, drawing on their laps while they traveled, as if recording their itinerary.

I talked to all of them quite extensively about what they were doing, and they were able to describe what part of the journey they were on as well the status of the other trips going on in the other groups. But essentially my moves as a teacher, beyond the initial strategic placement of the maps as props in the room, consisted of talking with the children about their intentions as they worked, and then prompting them to share their new maps at the end of each day. The map work continued for about 5 days, and the children produced piles of maps on their own, sharing them at the end of each morning. Throughout the year, they returned to the maps intermittently, always using them with three components: imaginary trips, the handling and "reading" of real maps, and the invention of new maps of their own. In March, during their last round of map work, two girls invented new kinds of

maps of which they made copies for me when they saw my evident interest in trying to understand what they were doing. Here is how they described their new maps and their purposes in designing them.

First we found the maps and then we wanted to make our own maps. So we copied from the maps how to draw. Then we started to go on a trip, and then we made calculators on our maps! The calculators reminded us of the telephone and then we put on a TV. If we don't have a telephone, we couldn't call, and we needed to count stuff on the calculator. If we say something on it [keypad], like . . . , "Is someone having a birthday party here?" . . . it will say "no," or "yes," and where it [the party] is. We also made a key for the whole world to unlock wherever you go, and to lock it back up whenever you go away.

The girls also added a real writing pad for notes. All of these, including the keypad, calculator, telephone, and TV screen, were drawn or built onto the maps, resulting in a three-dimensional effect. Through this process, which continued over a 6-month period, these 5-year-olds imagined themselves into the world of geography using the props I had supplied for them and the tools of drama and art to build a new conception of what a map might be in the world they would grow into. In looking closely at the ways in which their maps evolved, I could see that they were imaginatively taking control of the map as both a text and a tool, and reconfiguring both the design and the future of maps in their lives. This work was about imagination, and it was also about power and control.

AUTHORING

There is also a part of the process of discourse acquisition that is fundamentally social. The work I have observed in my classrooms would not continue to recur without the rich social interactions that surround it. When the children's work with texts, props, and cultural tools becomes public and is created with full knowledge that it will have a public viewing, it moves into the realm of "authoring." Over the past few months I have come to define authoring as the process of metaphorically "writing" the world in a way that gives that interpretation of the world weight, voice, and agency, a way that has the ability to influence the thinking, feelings, and actions of others.

One thing that distinguishes authoring from the pure exercise of imagination in an introverted, egocentric sense, is that it is an event in which an individual creates a new text and intentionally attempts to influence an audience. The text can be oral or written, a painting, a dance, or a song; it can be an explanation of the solution to an equation, or a theory about the world. What distinguishes the text is that the author presents it to an audience in a public way, essentially for some kind of validation. To me, authoring represents a movement toward the core of discourse acquisition. It is the point at which imaginative identity merges with discourse appropriation: One must believe and know, and one must convince others. In other words, literacy encompasses a private and a public identity. It requires that a person be able to create public texts that influence others, and it is most clearly social work in which the student learns about presentation of self and the importance of "reading" an audience and influencing the thinking and feelings of that audience. As Bauman (1977) points out in his description of performance,

Performance involves on the part of the performer an assumption of accountability to an audience. . . . From the point of view of the audience, the act of expression on the part of the performer is thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display of competence. (p. 11)

Yet authoring also arises directly from the imaginative process itself and in this way represents the physical incarnation of imagination as it comes in contact with the world. Every painting, sculpture, performance, poem, and story that is presented to an audience begins with an imaginative response to the world, but the desire to communicate that response involves its own kind of "suspension of disbelief." Essentially, the author must imaginatively take on a public persona (Gallas, 1998) and risk failure and public humiliation for the purposes of expression and communication. As any performer, public speaker, or educator knows, that kind of risk taking requires a giant leap of faith and a powerful sense of the role being played.

When I first began researching imagination in my classroom, I was fortunate to have a class of wildly creative first graders. Within that class a 6-year-old Italian-American girl named Sophia became a focal child for me as I tried to document how children used the imaginative process in different areas of the curriculum. Sophia was a most remarkable child whose work in every expressive domain was tremendously

compelling to others; she had a great ability to capture an audience's attention through performance and hold it. For example, the following sharing-time story offers a look into the ways Sophia used an improvised story as a vehicle for performance and social control.

Sharing Time: March 14, 1996

(Sophia begins by rubbing her hands together, as she smiles mischievously and slowly surveys the audience.)

Sophia: Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Sophia, and she called all of her friends. She called (names every girl in the audience).

Ayasha: No boys!

Sophia: And then I called all of the little boys to come and play with me. (The boys cheer.) I called (names all of the boys in the class). All the little boys were there, and Johnny went swimming. We were going to meet him there. Then we had a little party and we ran into the middle of the street. And the cars were going "Vroom, Vroom, Vroom!" and then I went out and put a little stop sign so the children could cross the street. We went to the beach and I jumped into the water, and it was so hot! And I got Brenden a sea star. . . . There was a little man there, who started walking down the beach. And all of the sudden the little man fell! He was so teeny, that teeny little man, that he fell into the sand and drowned! In the sand! And then I stepped on him. Then I picked him up by the foot, and threw him in the water. He said, "Help!" Then Ruth picked him up. She found a clam that was closed. She opened it up, and there wasn't anything inside, so she put the little man in, and threw him out to sea. Then the little man's wife and family came. And there were 13 of them! So we found 13 clams, and guess what we did then?

All: What?

Sophia: We put all of 'em in a shell, and threw them out to sea with the little man!

Like all of her stories, this story was socially inclusive, but Sophia remained clearly in charge of the story and her performance. (Note, for example, her response to Ayasha's bid for control.) Here, Sophia took an everyday experience that all the children enjoyed and added an element of danger that she, as the narrator, heroically anticipated, and

resolved. The story also includes violence, something Sophia, who was a diminutive, feminine girl, specialized in, a fact that constantly delighted and horrified the boys in her audience.

At the time I began to watch Sophia, I also was completing a study of the dynamics of power and gender in the classroom, and had been working with the notion of performance and persona as a way to understand the dynamic social life of children in school (Gallas, 1998). As I watched Sophia at work, she was soon joined by two other powerful and imaginative girls who also began to use improvised storytelling to gain powerful positions in the class. These girls solidified my belief that performance was an integral part of children's social interactions, but they also caused me to think more deeply about the concept of audience. In my work on gender and power, I had seen clearly that most children in my first- and second-grade classes were acutely aware of the reactions of their audiences to their social maneuvering. Some even knew how to control or manipulate their audience. Yet as first graders, Sophia and her two classmates had an understanding of audience that was more fluid. They intimidated, cajoled, charmed, and repudiated their audiences, depending on their aesthetic and social purposes. Their understanding of the relationship between audience and performer stood out for me, but at that time those understandings seemed to be unrelated to my inquiry into the imaginative process.

In 1998, I moved to California and found myself teaching kindergarten in a small, rural charter school on the central California coast. My interest in exploring the manifestations of imagination continued in this new setting, and I was able to expand my data collection to include 5-year-olds. Of my 20 students, all but four had attended preschool for at least 2 years. The four children who had not attended preschool, Sabrina, George, Joe, and Margie, represented families with very limited incomes. Otherwise my students were middle class and upper middle class. I identify these children because, as the reader will see, their work in kindergarten, especially when considered in the context of this chapter and of my evolving questions about imagination and literacy, provided a significant contrast to that of their peers.

At the beginning of the school year, I set out to tape sharing time, as I had since 1989. I sat and waited for the children's stories to emerge in my kindergarten and offered many different kinds of opportunities for storytelling and dramatic performances. Nothing happened. My students were active in drama and blocks—they were making up stories in the contexts of their play in those areas—but when faced with an audience of their peers, they did not naturally tell a story about

anything. In fact, they had very little to say at all. There were, however, a few notable exceptions: Sabrina, Margie, George, and Joe.

The second week of school, Sabrina, Margie, and George began to use the last period of our morning—the part labeled “stories and songs”—for performances. These began one day in response to my query as to whether anyone had a song to sing for the class. I said it could be a song they had already learned, or one they just made up. In response, Sabrina immediately stood up and asked if she could sing “a song about love.” She began to sing and directed me to play my guitar as she sang. As I changed chords, she very naturally changed her songlines to accompany me, completely improvising lyrics and melody. The other children were quite surprised and clapped when she was done. I then asked for another song, and Margie got up and sang a song about the sky and the clouds. When she was done, the children clapped and I asked Margie if she had made up the song or been taught it, and she said she had made it up. At that point George, who had said pointedly he did not like songs and had climbed up in the loft while the girls were singing, came down and signaled that he, too, had a song. He came over to me and directed me to play, and as I started he began to do a very beautiful martial arts dance. The children were completely taken aback and thought he was being funny, and some began to laugh. George stopped dancing and began to cry. When I explained to George that the children were just surprised by his dance, he dried his tears and said he’d try again. He had not drawn a distinction between the words “song” and “dance,” and had interpreted as congruent the girls’ songs and his own desire to move to my guitar chords. He then performed another dance, which the other children were able to watch and appreciate.

This event began to recur regularly with the same three children as regular performers. The rest of the class continued to watch, but were unable to create these kinds of spontaneous texts for others. However, the efforts of Sabrina, Margie, and George now represent to me a first move into the authoring cycle. Sharing time, though, continued as it had been. Most of the children took a very passive stance, presenting an object to the class with a few short sentences, for example, “This is my rock. I got it at the beach,” and then waiting for the class to respond. The children continued to be active in drama, blocks, painting, and unstructured dramatic play, but virtually all of their work in these areas was private work. Each time I attempted to pull the private dramas into the public space, they could not make the transition.

The following text marked the beginning of a kind of interactive storytelling style that occurred in different forms, always through the agency of these four children.

Sharing Time: November 11, 1998

- George:* (sharing a toy bat) This is my bat, and this its tail. I got this at Burger King. Questions or comments.
- Dan:* Which Burger King? The one that has a lot of hamburgers?
- George:* The one with chicken.
- Sabrina:* What movie is he [the bat] from?
- George:* Anastasia.
- Dan:* Once there was a bat and he lived in the rainforest.
- Margie:* And a dinosaur came and almost ate him and he flew so fast he couldn’t eat him.
- Sabrina:* One time there was Anastasia in the movie and the guy had a hat like that.
- Joe:* There was some long teeth sticking out of the tree, and it was a T-Rex. (George had been trying to speak but the speakers were coming in too fast for him to intervene.)
- Teacher:* George, would you like to try one?
- George:* Yes. There was a dog named Ruby [the name of my basset hound], and a dog named Ruby found a bat. This bat. This one I have in my hand. (Smiles broadly, and the children laugh out loud.)

During this same time period, Joe, who is a gifted artist, began to use the sharing chair as a vehicle to feature his art and tell long stories, which held the children enthralled. Following is an example of the kind of text he would create:

Sharing Time: November 19, 1998

- (Joe is sharing a book he has illustrated at home. It is quite long, including about 20 pages of drawings.)
- Joe:* This is a Utahraptor book. The kind like in Jurassic Park. This raptor isn’t real. He’s a robot. (Children begin to comment and talk about the first picture.)
- Mark:* Can everybody hold their comments!
- Joe:* (pointing to page 1) Does he look happy? He ate a dinosaur. (page 2) He’s dunking down, so nobody can see him. When people come by, he’s jumping out. (page 3) You think that’s how big a T-Rex is to a person? (page 4) Lookit what I got in there. Lookit what the man threw in there! Threw a bomb. Do you think it’s going to blow up a robot? (page 5) Lookit! The toy robot. That’s the thing his toy robot does. Lookit

what's coming up ahead! A raptor shadow. (The class' comments are getting quite rowdy, with action noises going on and lots of talk about the art.) I'm not going on until everyone is quiet. (The group immediately quiets.) (page 6) Do you think that thing is gonna kill . . . ? (Suddenly looks up at his audience, wide-eyed, making a funny face.) Whoops! I forgot to draw his head! (lots of laughter from the audience) (page 7) See, see him up in the tree? (page 8) Do you think he looks hungry? (page 9) Lookit what the raptor threw on his arm. The raptor is up in the ceiling. There was this big rock on the ceiling and it fell on him. Some of his robot is crushed.

Joe's performances began to resemble the work that I had seen Sophia and her friends doing 2 years earlier in my first-grade class. Although Joe lacked Sophia's fluency and skill as a storyteller, his intentions in influencing and controlling the audience through his art were well defined. In this case he used the turning of the pages to control the pace of his narrative and the amount of time he had as the presenter. Later, he stopped the momentum he had created to restore order so that the audience once again could focus on his drawings. As an artist, he had learned through previous sharing experiences that his illustrations anchored his audience's attention and gave him status in the class.

Still, in spite of the storytelling performances of these few children, the rest of the class did not begin to make a similar shift toward creating public stories. However, a few things began to develop in the first week in December. Three girls, Clara, Molly, and Leila, found the materials in the writing center that had been there for months and began to use them, writing letters to one another and to their moms, stuffing shipping labels (which they called "checks") in the envelopes, and sealing them. The same day, Leila and Bobbie were in the house-keeping corner with Sabrina, and I overheard them talking about their "hotel" and restaurant. They were lying on the floor staring at themselves in the mirror, dressed in bouffant skirts, hats, and high heels. I casually walked over and asked them if they needed a business manager to help them make a menu for their restaurant. They were unanimously in favor of that, and I sat down with them and took their dictation, writing up a menu with prices. They then took an order from me and I was served tea and muffins.

The next day at our reading meeting, I showed the menu and asked the girls to describe their restaurant. I also asked the letter writers to

describe their activities. At choice time that day, things began to develop. Robert and Troy, who had never before shown an interest in the drama corner, went right to it, set the table for the restaurant, got me to tie carpenter aprons around their waists, went to the writing center and picked up some checks, wrote their names on the checks, and pasted them to the front of their shirts. Several other children went to the writing center and began to compose "letters," mostly pictures for their mothers, using copious amounts of envelopes and stickers for stamps. Again I visited the restaurant and asked for a table. The boys were quite surprised and asked me why I was there. I said I was there to eat and was waiting for a friend to join me. Robert escorted me to a table, gave me the menu, and waited for my order. I noted that he didn't have a pad to take my order on, and went and got him a thick, short pad of paper. As I ordered from the menu, he carefully copied the words and prices from the menu, then tore the paper off the pad and passed it to Troy, who cooked the meal. By that time they were joined by Dan, who served me my meal. Before I ate, I asked for a telephone, saying I needed to make a call. Once again they were quite surprised, but they handed me the phone. Here is my text:

Hello. Yes, this is Karen. Well, where are you? I've been waiting a long time, and I'm hungry. I don't care if you're stuck in traffic, we had a date and you're very late. Well, I'm just going to go ahead and order. Bye.

The boys had listened to the whole conversation. Dan served my "shrimp" and then went over to the phone, picked it up, dialed a number, and proceeded to have the following conversation:

Are you bringing that stuff we need? When will it get here? Tell me when you're here and I'll come and unload the truck.

A short time after, Sabrina asked for the phone, dialed, and began a conversation as her meal was served. At the time, I was only slightly conscious of the relationship between my decision to join in the drama with the children and my desire for them to bring their private dramas into the public domain. Later, in looking at the outcome of these series of events and in further defining what authoring meant to me, I realized that the teacher and the teacher researcher were acting in concert. I had joined in their dramas for the purpose of bringing them into the public, or official, world of the classroom. What I saw was that my performance enabled many children to expand their own per-

formances, and further that my request that the products or texts of their dramatic work be shared, had a snowball effect. In essence, these 5-year-olds began to widen their lens and take notice of what was around them; they began to see what Margie, George, Joe, and Sabrina already knew, that there were personal and public benefits to working with an audience. (Or perhaps I might propose that the other children began to remember what they had once known but had forgotten, or unlearned, in preschool.)

The following week, sharing time began to change. What changed, however, was not that the children began to tell stories, as I had expected, but rather that performances were co-constructed using the object or picture that the sharing child presented. This change initially was orchestrated by Margie. In most cases, what was developing was a sort of comedic series of exchanges in which the sharing child played the fool while also explaining her picture or adding detail to her description of the object. The following example was orchestrated by Margie with the help of her audience:

Sharing Time: December 10, 1998

Margie: (sharing her art journal) This is me. This is my dog with a tree. These are the flowers and the little birdies. Questions or comments.

Sabrina: Where's the sun? (Margie looks and points to the corner of the picture.)

Mark: (claps)

George: Well, I used to have a dog but it's old.

Thomas: Um, why is your head so tall? (Margie turns the book around, stares carefully at the picture, looks up and laughs as she shrugs.)

Leila: Um. Um. Where's your body? I see just your hair, but (Margie points to the body, which is hard to see from the audience.)

Justin: It looks like you're gone cause the sun, it's so bright!

Joe: You're disappearing!

Margie: (turns the book around, stares at it for several seconds, looks up as if surprised) Ahhh! (The class laughs out loud.)

Sabrina: It looks like you're all yellow!

Margie: (turns the book around, stares, looks up with the same look of surprise) Ahhh! (The class laughs, this time louder.)

Brian: I can't see your eyes and your mouth.

Margie: That's because they're too light.

"Look, Karen, I'm Running Like Jello"

Sabrina: Are you throwing a ball for your dog?
Margie: Yeah.

Sabrina: I don't see the ball!

Margie: (looks at the book, then up at her audience) Ahhh! (The crowd laughs again.)

Joe: Where's your nose?

Margie: (same routine) Ahhh!

Dan: That's a good tree. But why didn't you draw the branches?

Margie: (turns the book, stares harder, looks up, eyes wider)

Ahhh! (The class breaks up. Boys are rolling on top of each other. Girls are hugging each other with excitement.)

In the days that followed, Margie's "Ahhh!" routine was adopted and adapted by a few other children for their own purposes. The children introduced extensive word play and verbal jousting around the definitions of what their objects or pictures did or didn't mean. Sessions like this soon expanded to include all of the children in the class as both initiators and interactive audience members. By May, many children who had been silent and self-conscious during more improvisational performances were improvising songs and orchestrating dance and musical events. That signaled to me that the children had made a movement toward understanding their roles as co-performers, as well as the potential social benefits of the authoring process. Both audience members and the sharing child created texts as they went along, becoming mutually aware of both the pace of the exchanges and the uses of hyperbole, understatement, humor, and audience response.

Often these sessions ended with a breakdown of order and general hilarity, which I could not control. My response to that loss of control was not teacherly in that I didn't try to wrest it back. Because I wanted these children to be more active in the development of the public discourse of the classroom during sharing time and our "stories and songs" meetings, I knew that using my authority to control the social outcome of the authoring process would derail their efforts. And to be quite honest, a part of me liked the loss of control: It was funny and spontaneous, and the end result was a kind of joyfulness that deepened the links in our community and expanded the children's expressive repertoire.

Of course, readers of Bakhtin (1984) will recognize the elements of "carnival" in this description, and although my students were creating a carnival atmosphere in the style of kindergarten, the issues that surround carnival as a public event were obviously present in their work. In creating space for the idea of authoring, I also created what some

researchers have characterized as a potentially dangerous textual space where children's meanings and intentions as authors are left unexamined (Lansdale, 1994, 1997; Swain, 1998). Certainly, as control of the public discourse continually shifted from child to child through the authoring process, the established authority in the classroom, in this case that of the teacher, was purposefully undermined, making the dynamic both exciting and risky. And while this particular class of children did not use these occasions to manipulate or attack others, I have observed classes that did (Gallas, 1998). What I learned from those occasions, and what I have observed in this research, is that dynamic dialogic communities cannot be created unless I, as teacher, embrace the authoring process and all its risks. That process of creating a public text serves as a gateway to the development of my students' public identities as individuals who influence the thinking, feeling, and imaginative worlds of their peers. As control over the public discourse moves from child to child to teacher to child, and back again, every member of the community participates in constructing, critiquing, and reflecting on the texts being created. In this kind of framework for learning and instruction, scripted pedagogical practices must give way when they encounter the action of children's imaginative responses.

"LOOK, KAREN, I'M RUNNING LIKE JELLO!"

For literacy to become an inside-out process that is driven by imagination, it must be "organically born from the dynamic life" of students (Ashton-Warner, 1963, p. 30) and allow them to bring what they know to where they live (Grumet, 1988). When Denzel ran past me and announced that he was "running like jello," he was showing me where he lived, and that event occurred because I was ready to see it. In the same way, Emily, Sophia, Sabrina, George, Margie, and Joe brought their dynamic inner lives into the classroom and made them public because a discourse space had been created for them to carry out their own purposes as learners. At every point in this research, children have offered public demonstrations of imagination at work in the service of their learning. Their actions compel me, on a daily basis, to shape the conditions of public discourse and my textual expectations with them as co-authors.

This is a caveat that I believe all literacy teachers, who in my mind include teachers of all subjects at all grade levels, pre-K to graduate, must take up. Writing as I am from the state of California, where curriculum is conceived and then legislated by policy makers in coopera-

tion (collusion?) with textbook publishers, a state where schools may buy instructional materials only from approved lists, and where literacy learning is expected to be programmed according to the tick of the clock, the notion of viewing literacy curricula as beginning with the imaginative life of the student moves from one that stands on the fringes of educational practice to a point of heresy. However, if language and literacy teachers do not rise up and begin to stand on the heretical edges of their profession, students like Denzel, rather than being pulled, body and soul, into the life of the classroom, will remain forever marginalized, living a vivid and dynamic imaginative life but never finding the bridge that connects that life to the world of school.