

Imagination and Play in Children's Reflections on Cultural Life: Implications for Cultural Continuity and Educational Practice

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Hallisches Nachdenken—The Objectification of Culture

One hundred and sixty years ago, here in Halle, radical publisher and author, Arnold Ruge, and fellow Young Hegelian Theodor Echtermeyer combined forces to found the *Hallische Jahrbücher*, a journal that was to become a central forum for the heady political-philosophical discussions of the day. It was in this journal that Ludwig Feuerbach published his famous critique of Hegelian philosophy in 1839. His ideas, in turn, proved critical to Karl Marx in 1843–44 when he formulated his own critique of the reigning philosophy. As the young Hegelians wrestled with the unity of subject and object, the antinomies of subject and object and the relation of these contradictory notions to nature, human and otherwise, certain ideas, descended from earlier philosophical traditions, came to be unquestioned foundations of the neo-Hegelian philosophy. One of the most important of these was an understanding of the way in which social, cultural and historical phenomena, creations of human conscious activity, could become objects of contemplation, of feeling or desire, and of critique.

Ruge himself argued that true historical change took place by the bringing to bear of theory, in the form of critique, on the cultural order of the time.¹ He then went on to argue that art can play this critical role, as can comedy. By making manifestations of the cultural order into objects of thought, art and comedy create new perspectives on that which is shared, popular, traditional and enduring. These new perspectives could, in turn, eventually lead to changes in culture and society. Ruge's claim here is very close to the issue I will discuss in this paper. I want to examine how children express and manipulate conceptions of the cultural order and to discuss the implications of treating culture as an object of practical, artful or playful manipulation. The study of "bicultural" education in a sense continues discussions of the objectification of culture raised in the post-Hegelian debate. Educational practice,

a means by which a culture perpetuates itself within a group, can make aspects of cultural life into objects of educational effort. Bicultural education makes culture itself an object of study and of practical manipulation.

My own work on the relationship of the objectification of culture to children and educational practice emerged initially from a general interest in the processes that make possible the continuity of a particular way of life over time. Societies, and the cultures that give them meaning, have a necessarily temporal existence that manifests continuity both to its members and to observers. This ground of continuity is also the basis for the creation and perception of change. In focussing on the temporal qualities of culture and social life, I was interested in the question of how culture provides for cultural continuity. What features of daily life, symbolic practices, or other aspects of culture contribute to the way in which a particular culture is maintained over time? Bicultural education deals with these theoretical issues of cultural continuity practically. It exists as a counter measure to the hindrances to continuity that ideologies, practices and politics of one social group may pose against the culture of another. Policies that prohibited the use of native languages in schools and other public places are examples of conscious promotion of one cultural practice over another. In conducting research on these questions of cultural maintenance, I was interested in the effectiveness of social and institutional mechanisms of continuity and how they affect the way change takes place. For bicultural education it is essential to consider the social and political forces that lie behind institutions and cultural practices (see Bobaljik, this volume). It is also important, at the same time, to understand how children, engaged in these practices and participating in these institutions, apprehend and experience them. In this paper I will not begin to answer all of the questions that are associated with these vast problems. What I hope to do is to point out some implications from research with children. This research may help to remind us of how powerfully creative children can be and how we might tap or at least not dampen than creativity.

When I began research in Iceland over 15 years ago, I wanted to understand how Icelanders' own perceptions of the past figured in the maintenance of cultural tradition and potentials for cultural change. I studied Icelandic history, interviewed elders in various communities and did extensive, controlled work with school children. What I found was that in Iceland, as elsewhere, there are numerous features of social life that are marked as traditional, culturally precious or nationally significant. These included images of tradi-

tional farm life, ideas of Icelandic society as Christian and literary and ideas of the preservation of the ancient Icelandic language (see Hastrup 1990: 123–135, 184–200). In the adult world these are, for the most part, treated with solemnity and respect, especially in public institutions. In the study that I conducted, however, the children, particularly older children, sometimes mocked, played with and inverted their significance.

To understand these phenomena of inversion and play and their relation to the cultural foundations of education, I have drawn on the theory of Russian psychologist, Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, who attempted to ground his psychology in the neo-Hegelian aspects of Marxist theory (Lee 1985). The key concept for Vygotsky was “activity” (Davidov and Radzikhovskii 1985). By analogy to Marxist theory, which presented human history as taking shape through the practical activity of people, Vygotsky argued that children’s practical engagement with the world brings about psychological development. The process that takes place is one of internalization of the external practical activities. The most powerful example of this process is the internalization of egocentric speech. Vygotsky recognized, with Piaget, that children go through a stage of expressing in simple terms their relation to the world. Wants, desires, and fantasies all combine in children’s speech and activities. As they grow older, this speech goes inside, its forms, uninhibited by exacting grammatical and logical constructions found in adult speech, becomes the inner speech that is basis for primary thinking (Vygotsky 1962: 45–47, 51; Vygotsky 1978: 24–28).

Speech, in Vygotsky’s argument, corresponds to the practical activity of Marxian theory, and the words of language and the symbols of culture are the tools, the corresponding material means of production (Vygotsky 1978: 52). Children, in order to communicate in the world in which they are growing up, need to use words and form sentences, use symbols and signs, in ways that are consistent with their actions in the world and the understanding of those around them. By vocalizing as they act and occasionally eliciting responses from adults, they learn when their expressions fit with the understandings of others (Vygotsky 1962: 15–18, 130–135). The internalization process takes the use of words—or more generally, other signs—in conjunction with actions in the world and brings that conjunction inside as mental relation, thereby abstracting from the world. Vygotsky, thus, argued on the general ground of semiotics that symbols and signs, both linguistic and non-linguistic, played a role in the mental development of the child. All are the

expressive means by which the child's practical encounter with the world takes place and they become the internalized means for thinking.

Vygotsky's theory explains how the world experienced by the child, the world of objective culture, becomes the tool kit employed by the mind in thought. This process of internalization is, of course, critical for understanding how the cultural world comes to be taken up and provide a common ground on which to communicate and interact. It also, by the same token, constitutes a mechanism by which consistency over time, cultural continuity, can be maintained. These ideas are important for bicultural education, which seeks to promote and maintain culture with the use of large-scale, public institutions such as schools. Whether we are attempting to transmit language, traditional practices or even cultural values, when we make them the object of our manipulation in order to transmit them in an institution, we are providing children with the opportunity to express concepts and ideas that may become internally held ways of thought. I want to show also, however, that children's explorations with institutionalized tasks can take the form of playful mocking, resistance to authority and irreverence that may seem at first to run counter to aims to instill values and maintain cultural tradition.

“When Grandmother/father was a Child”—a Survey

With the aim of studying children's understandings of cultural traditions, local and national historical identity in Iceland, I conducted a survey, of sorts, from the fall of 1985 to the spring of 1986. I sent out schematically organized child writing assignments to thirteen schools across the country. In this survey, I asked that each child write an essay on one of about 40 topics. The topics were composed with the intention of eliciting their thoughts about the past. This research followed the example of a study by Virtanen in which she asked Finnish children to write freely about cultural tradition (1978). Each Icelandic student was given a sheet of paper, blank except for the topic title that headed the page and a set of instructions at the bottom which explained to the student the writing task. They were then given 25–35 minutes to write something related to the title. No restrictions were placed on the students in regard to talking among themselves and sharing ideas, but the actual amount they could work together was attenuated by the fact that they were, for the most part, working on different topics.

To construct the set of titles a rough assessment was made of national, regional, local, familial, and personal historical symbols and images that appear in an Icelandic child's environment. The sources of these images included textbooks, museums, monuments, games, broadcast programming, magazines, newspapers and children's books. From these were culled nationally significant traditions and symbols of the past that children would be expected to recognize and write about. Also included in formulation of the titles were preliminary results of related fieldwork projects including: a survey among visitors to the National Museum, a discourse analysis of obituarial remembrances and memoirs (Koester 1995c), and a story-retelling experiment involving children 9 to 15 years old. All of this was done to develop a picture of the structure of significance of the Icelandic past as it confronts the child.

The topics were intended to suggest various kinds of contrasts: traditional practice versus traditionally organized event — “what we do at Christmas” as opposed to “what we did on Christmas Day.” This in turn contrasted with a non-festive traditional activity, “hay harvest.” There were several topics of personal historical significance: “Birthday” (“one I remember,” “mine,” “one I took part in”), “Confirmation,” “Confirmation day” and “my namesake.” For the purposes of this paper, I will concentrate on a subset of the entire collection: thirty-nine writings under the title “When grandmother was a kid” and “When grandfather was a kid” (*þegar ammalafi var krakki*). These were intended to reveal what children know about and think about the time when their grandparents were children, possibly elicit something about gender distinctions and perhaps reveal something of how stories and knowledge are passed down in families.

These topics represent widely shared positive values associated with the grandparental generation in the Icelandic context, as they would be in many other cultural contexts. In Iceland, in particular, at the time when the survey was conducted, the grandparental generation was still thought to have experienced in their youth a social world that was relatively close to that which existed centuries before. Thus, the grandparental past represented the national past on the traditional Icelandic farm (Koester 1996). Moreover, within this symbolic complex of the traditional farm, elder kinswomen, especially mothers and grandmothers, were particularly important symbols of traditional life (Koester 1995a).

When asked to write about “when grandmother/father was a child” many of the respondents described the difference between then and now in terms of material possessions, particularly playthings. For most of the children ages ten to fifteen, the time when their grandparents were children was a time when many things were lacking in Iceland. Younger children, more often than older, used toys to distinguish past from present. For older children, things lacking were more generally lacking in homes or in the community and represented technological developments: cars, televisions, and good roads. For the whole group, the things most commonly cited as lacking were as follows.

TABLE 1:

<u>Did not have</u>	<u>Had instead</u>
toys	shells and bones
radio	household readings
television	radio
cars	horses
(modern houses)	sod huts, sod-roofed farmhouse
discotheques	
video	<i>kvöldvökur</i> (evening reading sessions)

The lack used to express past Icelandic society is not a pure lack. For many of these writers there were things in the past that took the place of what now exists—e.g., bones for toys. Mention of shells and bones as playthings was strikingly widespread, especially among the youngest children. Many of the children used a widely known motif that grandparents had only bones and shells to play with in contrast to today’s specialized, mass-produced and high-tech playthings.² This “only bones and shells” motif is taught in schools and the use of bones and shells is marked as traditional (and was in fact a widespread practice, Jónas Jónasson 1961). Sometimes the children describe what their grandparents did have, often in implied opposition to what children in towns today do not have. Grandparents owned animals such as horses (AK4–5;SG4–16), dogs (AK4–5;BK7JA–12), and bought things such as bicycles, fishing gear (ÍS6M–11) and even a rifle (BG9–14).³

There was also a significant difference between age groups in the ways in which they described the past. Younger children tended to describe their

grandparents' past in terms of activities, particularly playing. Older children, much as they less frequently used material possessions to describe the past, so too relatively rarely used play or actions. Though the sample of seventh grade writing contains many more stories and correspondingly total words than the fourth grade sample referred to above, there was only an equal number of instances (7) of "to play" (*að leika*) in the seventh-grade sample (four instances of which occurred in one story). This compares with 61 instances of "to be," (*að vera*) (34 fourth grade) and nine uses of "to go" (*að fara*). Thus, "to play," (*að leika*) appeared much less frequently for thirteen-year old writers as a way of expressing ideas about when grandparents were children.

TABLE 2:

Table Comparing Frequency of Uses of "to play" vs. Other Verbs Appearing in the Sample "When grandmother (-father was a child)."

Verb	4th Grade 10 years old Number of times appearing	7th Grade 13 years old Number of times appearing	8th & 9th Grade 14 & 15 yrs old Number of times appearing
að vera "to be"	34	61	67
að leika "to play"	7 (.98%)	7 (.58%)	2 (.22%)
að fara "to go"	5	9	5
Total words	714	1,198	875

—Percentages given are percent of total words in the sample.

For eighth and ninth grades, "to play" (*að leika*) was almost entirely absent as a way to express grandparental childhood. In the ten writings collected from eighth and ninth graders, in which the verb "to go" (*að vera*) appeared 67 times and "to go" (*að fara*) 5 times, "to play" (*að leika*) appeared only once as an activity of a grandparent and once about people in general ("back then people could play and do what they wanted," "*þá gat fólk leikið sér og verið frjálst ferða sinna...*"⁴). Thus it is clear that ten-year old children in this sample used playing to express the past much more frequently than the older children.

The tendency for younger children to use “play” to tell about the past parallels a similar tendency observed by Evans (1985) for younger children to narrate by describing activities. In studying the “show and tell” descriptions of kindergarten and second-grade children and descriptions of how to play games among older children, Evans and Rubin found that younger children narrate by telling what people do or did (1983: 1565). Reviewing related studies of the narration of events, recalling of narratives, and the description of events, Evans writes:

With increasing age, children are more likely to describe the persons, place, time and behavioral situation of the central core of events they describe, and the emotions, reactions and evaluations of the characters, rather than simply relating the events as they unfold (Evans 1985: 141).

This summary describes well the difference in character seen in Icelandic children’s writings between older and younger children. Ten-year olds typically wrote in short, unadorned statement of someone doing something: “She was often outside playing” (AK4–5); “... she often played alone” (ÍS 4–7); “He milked and trained horses” (BG4–19). Older children described the perspective of the people they wrote about: “Grandmother told me that it was very difficult to live then but they had to reconcile themselves to it” (HL9–39). Older children use verbs of perception—“to hear,” “to listen,” “to see,” etc.—significantly more often than younger children.

Older children not only described more of the context of the past, but more commonly reacted to the writing task itself, sometimes making fun of the subject and familiar ways of writing about it. Of the six writings on this topic by ninth graders, four began playfully. One ninth grader framed the time when grandmother was a child by playing on the fact that she was not, after all, a grandmother when she was a child. She wrote: “When grandmother (this was what she was called) was a child...”⁵ This ninth grade student notices that using the term *amma*, ‘grandmother’, in the survey title, without the possessive pronoun, *my* grandmother, begins in a frame too familiar for the expected relationship with the reader. She then plays on this peculiarity, joking that her grandmother was called “grandmother” (*amma*). Another student began with a crude poem and then started his recounting with an icelandicized English beginning “*i ðe öld deis.*” He continued by telling the reader that he was not yet born when his grandmother was a child. The writer, by using a vulgar poem, addressed the adult-other status of the

reader and signalled that he would not treat this writing assignment as a standard school essay. He expressed an ironic attitude that says “How should I know, I wasn’t there?” Another student, a ninth grader from Reykjavík, wrote similarly about his grandfather, “I didn’t know him when he was a child,” (*Ég kynntist honum ekki sem krakki.*) (HL9–34). This “I wasn’t there” idea, as joking commentary to the reader, indicates the author’s refusal to follow the institutionally assigned task of the writing assignment. Both of these writers went on to write with either sarcastic or poetic effect with motifs similar to those found in the writings of younger children. The first, from a town in Iceland’s Westfjords region, wrote about “half the town travelling to some uncle Paul to listen to the children’s program on the radio” (*för hálfur bærinn til einhvers Palla frænda út í bæ að hlusta á barnatmann í útvarpinu*). Here by exaggerating the number of people, giving an empty identification—“some uncle Paul”—and ending in anticlimax (all those people going to hear a mere children’s program) he made fun of a recognized social difference, based on technological difference, between past and present. He continued the sarcasm by extending the detail of technological difference to nonessential household appliances: “There were neither computers nor (was there) video, no Soda-Stream and no electric blenders,” and concluded that “it would have been better to have been dead then” (ÍS21–9).

These passages present a kind of play that uses aspects of the relationship to the past and relationship to the reader to create the playful frame. Exaggerating or inverting standard motifs, and manipulating the writer-reader relation, they refused the framework of the writing as an expected outcome of the school-defined task.

Younger children did not, for the most part, exhibit this same kind of irreverent or resistant playfulness. In the sub-sample of fourth-grade texts in which they were asked specifically to write on their grandparents’ childhoods, none of the students wrote texts of this kind. Six of the eight texts give information in a straightforward sequence of action. The other two told stories in the genre of folk- or fairy tale, using the motif of people who come from stones, the so-called ‘hidden people’. The use of hidden people, like the discussion of bones and shells, is part of the standard repertoire of traditionally expected motifs in story-telling. Both writers also explicitly used the story-setting device, “one day” or “once” to mark the story as fairy-tale genre:

One beautiful summer's day in the sun room when I sat in the new chair grandfather had just arrived in Húsavík He told me a story.

Once she went down to the field and lay down on a stone which was in the field it was becoming dark and then the stone opened...⁷

In the middle years, between the reader-directed sarcasm of the older students and the action-oriented narratives of the younger, children age 12 wrote of trickster activities. In three of the seven writings on this topic by sixth graders (12 year olds) we find what resembles, the irreverent play that we observed among the older children. One begins:

Já þegar afi var krakki
var hann örugglega ekki
fullorðinn maður. Ég veit ekki
hvar hann átti heima, jæja segum bara
að hann hafi verið prakkari (HF6–8)

Yeah, when grandfather was a child
he certainly was not
an adult. I don't know
where he lived, let's just say
that he was a prankster ...

The boy framed his story sarcastically, using the tautology that when grandfather was a child he was not an adult. Similarly, when he goes on to say, “I don't know where he lived,” he recognizes the expectation of “home identification” as an informational motif (one that in fact shows up in many of the writings). This declaration is an overt refusal to employ an “expected” idea of an idealized grandfather. His statement, “well let's just say he was a prankster,” transforms the image of respected elder to a character who inverts an institutionally appropriate norm of the “good child” (*góður krakki*) (AK 4–31).⁸ The prankster motif showed up also in a village in northwest Iceland, in another sixth grade class. This student wrote: “My grandfather was born at Ingjaldssandur in 1912[;] he was a great prankster...”⁹ The prankster represents not only play with institutional norms but also an inversion of the hard-working, traditionally educated grandfather. To understand the significance of the prankster motif we need first to recall that the younger the children are, the more they tend to describe and narrate in terms of the actions of characters. These pranksters seem to appear as an intermediate mode between the more abstract conceptual play of fifteen-year olds and the simple descriptions of activities by ten year olds. These twelve-year-old children, intending “irreverence” similar to that of the older children, use descriptions of people doing things, in this case naughty things, to get a similar irreverent effect.

Such expressed resistance to norms can, however, be seen even among the youngest children. In contrast to the topic, “when grandmother/father was a child,” I also gave among the topics “The oldest woman I know” and “The oldest man I know.” (*Elsta[i] konan [maðurinn] sem ég þekki*). These were intended to focus the child’s attention on an old person with whom he or she was not necessarily related. As it turned out, most of the children focussed on the peculiar characteristics of the very old, especially decrepitation of hearing, sight and mobility. Seven of 27 fourth-grade texts on this topic presented the kind of irreverent, imaginative, playful inversion of expected cultural norms that we saw in texts by older children. In the first example, a boy presents not a grandfather prankster, but the ultimate extreme, a grandmother criminal.

The oldest woman I know is my grandmother. She is 99 years old married, divorced married and widowed. though she lost her first husband in the war it is considered certain that she had him killed. She has robbed two stores and has sat in prison for two years accused of drug smuggling. It turns out to be easy for the police to find her because she has a peg leg and a wig. Grandmother runs a hired-killer center in Reykjavík. I think she hired out Palmes’ murderer. She is bad at disguises she robbed a store disguised as a punker on a motorcycle. She writes a lot of poetry I don’t remember the whole verse but the end goes like this: the baby had her eightieth birthday, and out shells on the toilet (lit.), mom was a nun, punker in a bathing suit.¹⁰

Several themes here are recurrent in the texts from one class: extreme age, peculiar physical characteristics and artificial body parts, and criminal activity or encounter with policemen.

Another student (EG4–4) wrote of his grandmother: “Though she is only 105 years old she has a peg leg and artificial eye. ...Unfortunately she has no husband, she drowned him in her porridge pot.”¹¹ A third (EG4–5) wrote: “The oldest who woman I know [is] a woman who has a peg leg. She is 94. ...Once she rolled a new jeep that was only 102 years old then the police came...”¹² These two students were in the same class as the first and have clearly shared ideas.

Vygotsky wrote that through interaction and instruction some children can work at conceptual levels years beyond the level they display when they work on their own (1962:103). This span of capability from those of the individual child to those of that same child interacting in a group or with adults

Vygotsky dubbed the “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky 1978: 84–91). In his terms, children working toward greater levels of abstract thinking could use properly expressions characteristic of higher levels when interacting with those competent at the higher level. In other words, with other people to help circumscribe the context, children can express concepts that would ordinarily be beyond their independent individual grasp (Wertsch 1985: 75). It is clear in these latter cases of fourth-grade irreverent inversion that the ideas were shared.¹³ The students were able to see one another’s written versions, reflect on them, and imitate or embellish the ideas. The playful manipulation of concepts that older children perform individually, younger children can accomplish by working with the concepts interactively. Rather than reflecting the strain of producing word after word in a coherent original text, these writings reflect spoken interaction recorded on paper.¹⁴ Similar repetitions using different motifs appear also in the texts from a class in west Iceland. In the remaining classes not as many copies of the same topic were distributed and the spark to interaction was apparently never ignited.

Discussion and Implications

When valued cultural traditions, cultural artifacts and ideas are made objects of children’s attention within an institutional setting such as a school, we can expect that children’s imaginations will allow them to play with these objects of attention. Moreover, we have seen that they recognize the link between institutional authority and the values society attaches to these objects and may playfully resist that authority. This raises an important question, only incidentally touched on by Vygotsky, of how perceived values attached to cultural phenomena encountered by the developing child affect the internalization or learning process. More importantly for both the study of cultural continuity and of bicultural education is whether these values affect the future manner in which the concepts are treated in adulthood. The research referred to here cannot, of course, say anything about the fixity or future significance of the concepts that these children were in the process of learning to use. A more controlled long-term study that would compare childhood attitudes with views held in adulthood would be needed for that purpose.

I would like to suggest, however, that resistance in childhood to institutionalized authority does not necessarily indicate that institutions or the

practices they maintain will be rejected in adulthood. Two examples from Icelandic memoir literature will help to show that such irreverence was present also in the grandparental generation. As I mentioned above, confirmation, the primary rite of passage in the state Lutheran church, is a nationally practiced family event that has been and remains one of the most significant of life cycle rituals. Prerequisites for the rite included literacy and Christian training on the part of each initiate and it traditionally marked a youth's transition into adulthood, making possible work and eventually marriage. During this century, virtually all Icelanders went through with the ceremony as a matter of necessity or a matter of course. Yet, despite its importance, and the solemnity of its treatment within the church, some Icelanders remember that they resisted the authority behind the rite. In the memoirs of Steinþór á Hala, Steinþór recalled both how strict his father was about household religious practice and, in contrast, how little regard he had for the standard catechism textbook. His disdain for the educational practice leading to confirmation extended also to the procedure by which the parson questioned the would-be initiates. Steinþór recalled that by listening for hesitant answers on the part of his classmates, he could interrupt and finish their answers as if he knew them all along himself. This form of cheating, as he saw it, demonstrated his lack of respect for the preparation process (Stefán Jónsson 1970: 123). In another memoir, Ágúst Helgason recalled that his first teacher was his grandfather, Guðmundur Magnússon who knew and taught Ágúst the psalms. He remembered also, however, that the working woman who shared the room with him would interject irreverent bits of verse as the lessons were taking place, to the great annoyance of grandfather Guðmundur (Ágúst Helgason 1951: 70). In both of these cases, the solemn and institutionally important practice of confirmation training was treated impiously. In neither case was it indicated, however, that the adult writer came to treat confirmation as unimportant. In fact, the mere presentation of stories of confirmation, with accounts of individual resistance to authority, only serve to strengthen the matter-of-factness of the tradition and the secular importance it has retained to this day (Koester 1995b). The irreverence recounted in these adult memories, like the irreverence of the children's responses, indicates recognition of significance, but does not necessarily indicate rejection or signal a change in social values.

In the Icelandic children's writings I have presented, bones and shells, as traditional playthings, hidden people, as traditional folk characters, and

grandparents, as valued signs (and symbols) of national identity and cultural heritage, showed the children's recognition of the cultural values accorded these symbols. In Vygotskian terms, their expression of these values in inverted or playful form is part of the process of internalization, of testing the limits of recognizability and comprehension. As we consider the implications of Vygotsky's concepts for bicultural education, it is worthwhile to recall also the ideas about artful and comic play with objectified moments of culture that circulated in Halle 160 years ago. For Arnold Ruge, it was such play that made social life a dynamic historical process, it was the essence of the life of a culture. To fix culture permanently in an inflexible form would be equivalent to its death. Thus, when we make culture the object of children's attention, as in bicultural education, we may be surprised at the ways in which the children react to it, but we should recognize that their play can be both healthy and essential to the resilience and vitality of the cultural ideas and practices we hope to sustain.

These ideas suggest several concluding thoughts relevant to bicultural education:

- Merely by teaching language, concepts and practices we do not engender respect for them. We need to provide models by which children can also understand and feel the importance of the ideas and practices.
- We should not be surprised if children take school-assigned tasks to be the stuff of ironic, sarcastic or irreverent play.
- Children's capacity to play with concepts and practices treated with solemnity by adults does not necessarily mean that they will go on to disrespect them as they themselves become adults.
- The younger that children are when they are presented with traditionally held or culturally valued ideas in an institutional setting, the less likely they are to treat them sarcastically or critically.
- Encouraging children to work in groups can be very helpful in allowing them to develop ideas and values associated with cultural tradition. It may lead to their mocking or ridiculing of these ideas, but it should be remembered that in doing so they are at least showing their recognition of the significance of these ideas.
- Children are more able to grasp, interpret and use their imaginations in

relation to ideas of traditional value when they work in groups. The task of the educator is to provide the foundations for making their imaginings positive and hopeful.

- We need to provide children models for inversion and play other than those that are negative or destructive. We should consider that it is probably better for them to represent their mothers as punkers in bathing suits than their grandmothers as criminals and seek ways to encourage the imaginativeness of the former and discourage destructive and sensationalist allure of the latter by providing alternative routes for their imaginative efforts. One way that this is being done very well in schools in Russia today is to channel children's creative efforts into realms that will become public, such as public performances and exhibitions. We should be sure that our educational system allows children of today to ironize, reject, refuse because it shows that they understand the importance of the traditional values. The more they are allowed to make of them what they will, the more they will come to see them as their own values, to be held in their own ways. This will make them enduring.

Notes

- 1) What I have called the cultural order, here, Ruge referred to as “the historical essences of spirit” (Ruge 1983: 227).
- 2) I am grateful to Zinaida Pikunova (this volume) for pointing out to me that Evenk children also learn of their grandparents' use of bones (reindeer) as play-things.
- 3) The numbers given in parentheses are identification numbers for each of the texts. The third digit—following the two letters—indicates the student's year in school.
- 4) All Icelandic texts are printed following the spellings, punctuation and capitalization of the original texts.
- 5) “þegar amma (en svo var hún kölluð) var krakki...” (BG9–22).
- 6) Einn fagran sumardag í sólbaðstofuni þegar ég sat í nýja stólnum afi var ný komin til Húsavíkur Sagði hann mér sögu (AK4–21).
- 7) Eitt sinn fór hún niðrá tún og lagðist á stein sem var á túninu það var farið að dimma en þa opnaðist steinninn (IS4–7).

8) In fact, the prankster grandfather idea is a literary device with a complex history. Adult memoir writers in Iceland have also referred to elders who resisted local authority. Much research needs to be done to ascertain the influence of internal Icelandic story-telling traditions of pranksters and rebels and possibly of external literary or folk traditions (see, eg, Hobsbawn 1959).

9) Afi minn fæddist á Ingjaldssandi 1912 hann var mikil prakari ... (BK6–19).

10) Elsta konan ég þekki er amma mín. Er hún 99 ára gift, skilin gift og ekja. Þótt hún hafi mistfyrri manninn í stríðinu er talið alveg vist að hún hafði látið drepa hann. Hún hefur rænt tvær búðir og setið í fangelsi í tvö ár ásökluð um eiturfjasmígl. Auðvelt reinit lögreglunni að leita að henni því hún er með staur fót og með hár kollu. Amma rekur legumorðingjamiðstöð í Reykjavík. Eg held að hún hafi leigt út morðingja Palmes. Hún er léleg að dulbúað hún rændi búð dulbúin sem þönkari á mótorhjóli. Skáldar hún mikið ég man ekki alla vísuna en endin er svohjóðandi: pelabarnið átti átta tíu ára afmæli, og út skeljar á klósettinu, mamman var nunna, þönkari í sundskilu.

11) Þótt hún sé ekki nema 105 ára er hún með staurfót og gerfíauga. ... Því miður á hún engann mann, honum drekkti hún í grautarpottnum sínum.

12) Elsta kona sem ég þekki konu sem er með stór fót. Hún er 94. ... Eit sinn velti hún níja jepann sem var aðens 102 ára þá kom lögan ...

13) In administering the survey several times myself I noted the interest the students took in each other's topics and how their fellow students were writing about them.

14) Vygotsky suggested also that because of the abstraction, the distance from the reader, and the lack of immediate feedback, writing was an extremely difficult task for a child and displayed conceptual levels far behind those revealed in speech. Much of what is expressed in these texts can be observed in children's spoken interaction at a younger age.

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