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Diana Masny and David R. Cole, *Mapping Multiple Literacies: An Introduction to Deleuzian Literacy Studies*, Bloomsbury : London. New Delhi, New York, Sydney, 2012. 190 p. \$140 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-1-4411-4920-6.

Review by Anne-Marie Chartier, LARHRA/ENS-Lyon.

In her preface, Claire Colebrook states the reasons for a prevailing pessimism, reasons regularly raised by the media. Since the 80s, much effort has been dedicated to preventing school failure in the U.S. (No Child Left Behind, 2001). The same has been done around the world for illiterate children (UNESCO, *EFA Report 2007, Strong Foundations*, and 2008, *Youth and Skills*) and adults (*EFA Report 2006, Literacy for Life*). During the Dakar Conference in 2000, 164 countries pledged to eradicate illiteracy by 2015. Today, it's still an unkept promise. S. Greenfield, a neurologist cited by Colebrook, assumes that today, technological changes reshuffle the deck: "we are shifting from an era of deep attention to one of hyper attention" (p. viii) to the point that "a current atrophy of the reading brain is the beginning of the end of 'our' humanity" (p. vii). Another approach seems necessary to move away from this disaster in the making. The New Literacies Studies (NLS) proposed such an alternative. Masny and Cole, acknowledged figures of this current, use the Deleuzian "French Theory" in order to map the concept of "Multiple Literacies."

In France, Deleuze is a reference for creative and visual arts (cinema, fine arts, architecture) as well as for literary invention. Nevertheless, research on literacy, even that which is conducive to NLS, never uses his work.[1]. Masny and Cole have adopted Deleuze's way of overturning a debate: never mind solutions, be they good or bad. One should instead enquire about the questions: do they convey true or false problems? Is the antagonism literate/illiterate a false problem? Why did this literate/illiterate duo emerge in the 90s? In fact, the literacy/illiteracy antagonism views reading and writing skills as a single homogenous continuum that can be assessed through tests that set a threshold separating literate and illiterate persons. But the NLS case studies show that writing practices are strongly context-dependant no matter which groups or individuals are concerned, experts or beginners alike. Hence expressions such as "social literacies" or "situated literacies." [2] Masny and Cole point out that the literacy/illiteracy antagonism assumes that established knowledge is hierarchical whereas Deleuze compares it to the horizontal proliferation of the rhizome. The rhizome concept, elaborated in 1975, is successful because it "shows" the dynamic of coexisting heterogeneous practices, with no preconstructed hierarchy. The authors argue that it is a better representation of literate practices.

Though both authors claim Deleuze as a reference, nevertheless they develop two independent views. Based on previous research, Cole brings out the role of the affect, of power and of digital tools in building contemporary literacies (in "Mapping literacies with affect," "Mapping power and literacies," and "Mapping the literacy of digital futures," chapters three, six, and seven). Mapping is drawing a map of a territory in order to define variables, to set the boundaries of an investigation field and to interpret the data. Cole clarifies how he interprets and uses Deleuze to read his empirical data. On the other hand, Masny wants to demonstrate that the Deleuzian conceptual framework is relevant to address the complex issues of literacy, to redefine reading, and to analyse the discourse of multilingual students in apprenticeship (in "Cartography of Multiple Literacies," "What is reading? A cartography of reading," and

“Cartographies of talking groups,” chapters two, four, and five). Eventually, the cartography/mapping duo reflects two different concerns: Masny is on the more theoretical side whereas Cole is on the more pragmatic one (obviously in this book only and not in general).

We shall start with the theoretical aspect. Deleuze states, “A map has no beginning, no end. You enter a map in the middle. Moreover, a map has multiple entryways” (p.15). For conventional cartography a map assigns a specific object to a closed territory. Masny adds that “literacy” as an object has been assigned to the field of psychology, which “has overtaken the field of literacy research (...), and its emphasis on the role of phonological awareness in determining success in learning to read” (p. 18). International assessment policies do recognize other “situated” dimensions but consider them to be insignificant and wipe them out of the map, “omitting unnecessary detail” (p. 18). In this respect, territorialization doesn’t mean existing in a territory (real, variable, multiple). It means being assigned to a place thanks to the fixed and closed tracing of maps. These maps are stable products designed by experts so as to order and dominate reality. In return, Deleuze doesn’t reflect on static products but on dynamic processes. To understand a moving map is to perform a “de-territorialization” followed by a “re-territorialization” on an open, mobile, unpredictable map. “Tracings are arborescent, operate within a close system constituted by segmentary lines. Rhizomatics mapping with lines of flight, brings about different ways of thinking and reading” (p. 20). Thus, marginal, singular and unlikely phenomena can be recognized.

Masny uses numerous references to prove the theoretical rightfulness of the analysis that “takes into account cultural and linguistic diversity and multimodality” (p. 23): social literacy, numeracy, conflict resolution, peace building, activities as discussions, role-play, mapping, transect walks, interviews, seasonal calendars (p. 22) and the list is still growing. As the Deleuzian system is a “transcendental empirism,” an “ontology of difference,” data collection doesn’t follow any established protocol: “Rhizoanalysis is a non-method that is transgressive, involves immanence, assemblages and a decentred subject as part of the assemblage” (p. 32). This “non-method” is exemplified by “vignettes,” short quotes from dialogues between a researcher and a child, his/her mother and his/her teacher. This triad is conceived as an “assemblage” with significant interactions. Each member of the triad expresses his relationship to writing in a personal manner. The researcher has then to take into account these different points of view triggering as many new questions. When the researcher looks differently at this situation, he modifies de facto the reality built by the “mapping”: “this process [of de/reterritorialization] is desirable because it is only in this situation that change/transformation happens” (p. 39). Eventually, Deleuze is confirmed as being the guide along this theoretical path (“it is only”).

In chapters four and five, Masny addresses reading as a rhizome. There are three conventional approaches to reading: 1) psychology analyses reading as a cognitive process (phonological skills being at its very heart); 2) literary teaching that looks for the hidden meaning of texts; and 3) tests assessing functional reading as a skill. But for Deleuze (and Masny) reading is about a whole different issue. It’s all about experiencing a disruption: “NLS focuses on reading, reading the world and the self as texts” (p. 74). The same goes for “Cartographies of Talking Groups,” which takes up Deleuze’s criticism of Chomsky’s syntactic trees that presuppose a universal grammar. Building on this criticism, Masny denounces order-words imposed by the dominant social and educational order. Like Lebov, she mobilizes linguistics of plural enunciations and speech-acts. Based on the crucial role of enunciators interacting within institutional assemblages, the researcher can subvert the formalistic approach of programmed academic learning.

In “Mapping Literacies with affect,” Cole adopts the Deleuzian postulate of reading as a disruption. “Affect appears as a connective element in this argumentation that takes particular ideas and makes them open to reabsorption and usage in novel ways” (p.46): emotions enable us to understand texts, at least literary ones. Affect relates to teachers presenting texts. It also relates to students but varies in relation to their socio-cultural environments. “Deleuzian literacy studies incorporate the two roles of affect as a strategy to disrupt dualisms between teachers and students and separate and/or divided identities that are

produced in an educative context” (p. 45). Cole emphasises that he is using Deleuze on his own way: “I have constructed the two ways in which affect is approached in the writing of Deleuze in terms of a model to aid comprehension of the idea, though this does not represent a unified theory of affect” (p. 45).

Deleuze sees reading as a unique encounter whereas Cole addresses the mediation of the teacher as a reader: by sharing texts, the teacher communicates his affect to his students thus taking control of them. He has to “manipulate affect” and to accept the risks. “Using affect in literacy teaching and learning denotes an increase in power for the educator that includes all the affective becomings that are present in the social and cultural content in which they operate” (p. 56). This is what underpins the didactic choice of activities offered to teenagers (grades 9 to 11). These activities favour topics in line with young people’s sensitivity over style or form, and “the decisions of the teacher are also embedded in social and cultural values, as students must make connections between the teacher’s choices and their own lives” (p. 64). Excerpts from *Frankenstein* (The Monster, Horror, Passion) or *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Racism, Men and Women, Madness) are expected to trigger discussions mixing personal experiences and representations, private life and projections.

In chapters six and seven, Deleuze moves to the background and Cole focuses more on research in the education field. “Mapping Power and Literacies” describes a survey of Tasmanian literature teachers. Due to the 2002 reform, teachers are forced to discard the literary canon in favour of an integrated constructionist curriculum called “Essential Learning.” Students conducted interviews on the didactic implementation of the reform and on its personal resonance (adhesion, acceptance or rejection). The emotional investment rather than the age or gender explained the extensive range of reactions: “they [teachers] would feel disempowered if this emotional connection were broken” (p. 138). This survey acted as a genuine training experience. Thanks to this survey, the budding teachers realized that the technical aspects of teaching interfere with highly intimate aspects.

Last, Cole shows how digital tools widen the range of multiple literacies. He also stresses some technical aspects (how the micro level impacts the macro one) and some symbolic ones (feeding their SF imagination) as well as pedagogical ones. In the “Cam-capture literacy in middle school” experience, each student is filmed in the classroom thanks to his laptop camera. What do the teenagers learn while looking at the recorded images? This experiment has effects on three different levels: 1) Visual literacy, or the way “students engaged in thinking through visual aspects of their representation” (p. 160); 2) Information literacy, or “locating files and performing logical steps to enable them to make choices (...), learning how to perform critical analysis (...) about their videos” (p. 162); and 3) Personal literacy: “Students and teachers should view and discuss the cap-capture tapes together to come to decisions about their cultural identities and future textual choices” (p. 164). This experiment opens up new research venues. The same applies to a study about how young Muslim Sydneysiders use Facebook to resist the speech of dominant media stigmatizing the rise of Islam. They “use the social networks to seek out new ways to understand who they are and what position they occupy in society” (p. 169).

One can surely appreciate the wide range of venues opened up by this book, the density of empirical information and the ambition of its theoretical aims. The authors wanted to convey a maximum number of ideas in short texts, thus writing in an allusive style rendering the reading sometimes difficult. The reader looks for more information and a better understanding but stays frustrated or puzzled. For instance, how would a young researcher handle the Deleuzian “non-method”? Masny is a renowned researcher and can safely go down the Deleuzian theoretical path, as she was an anthropologist prior to reading a *Thousand Plateaus*.

Cole is much more helpful. His examples give both method and content (factsheets about literary reading, interviews of Tasmanian teachers conducted by beginners, etc.). Cole refutes territorial assignment, nevertheless impositions are inherent to common curriculum. Such difficulties may be resolved if the

authors addressed learning as a work whose duration varies depending on the learners. Deleuzian dynamics ignore the capital issue of the teachers' mediation, whose aim is "to get students to work."

From one chapter to another, the domain of literacy is ever expanding. It even refers to educational or social uses with absolutely no written material: activities as discussions, role-play, mapping, transect walks, interviews (Masny) or experience of cam-capture (Cole). As David Vincent wryly states (2003), we already have social literacy, affect literacy, computer literacy, so what about "literacy literacy"? This endless extension that changes every meaningful experience into a reading act (reading the world, reading the self) makes the NLS streams engulfed by the cultural studies river. Certainly, the NLS target the aspects neglected by the cognitive approach and thus link back to the great tradition of "docere et movere" (educating and moving), the cornerstones of rhetoric since Antiquity. But Quintilian assumed that beginners were comfortable with the letter of the text. The NLS ignored this "pure" reading whereas cognitive sciences have made this field their speciality focusing on the difficulties encountered by beginner readers. The Deleuzian disruption that transforms the subject "if it works" is a terrible path: what if it doesn't work? Are there any teachers who believe that they have the "power" to convey this disruption experience to all their students? The reading skills necessary to social and educational lives, that produce inequalities as measured by PISA, require efficient information processing but no such experience. Hence the reader's disappointment: standardized classifications are legitimately criticized but the methodological choices are not subsequently deconstructed. Yet numerous studies regarding emergent literacies have produced useful data to look at the cognitivist assumptions.[3] The criticism made by the NLS does not question public policies. The NLS remind us that reading isn't just about tests but looking differently at the world isn't enough to change it. The future does look bright for "control forces" and assessment protocols opposing literacy/illiteracy.

One last question, possibly typically French, regarding the absence of the historical dimension within the NLS. A historical overview of the implementation of psychology in education is necessary to understand its current domination and the power relations within institutions. The assumption of a continuum between the acquisition of natural language and literacy emerges at the beginning of the twentieth century. Binet thinks that differences between being able to speak and being able to read and write are matters of degree and not kind: of what can be measured by his "metric scale of intelligence." In Romance languages, the difference in nature is perpetuated thanks to the use of the word "*alphabetisation*," that is, specifically learning the written code. On the contrary, "literacy" refers to the textual knowledge imposed on all at a given time (religion or science, the Encyclopaedia or Wikipedia). This knowledge can be acquired by other means: oral speech, images, or experience. The NLS reject the opposition between literacy and illiteracy and asserts that "literacy should be seen as just one of a diverse range of techniques for communication." [4] A great deal is expected from the coming research of NLS regarding the deconstruction of such falsely self-evident conclusions that perpetuate ill-posed problems.

NOTES

[1] See, for example, issue 133 of *Langage et Société* (2010), which contains a dossier devoted to "New Literacy Studies, un courant majeur sur l'écrit."

[2] James Paul Gee, *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses* (London: Falmer Press, 1990); Brian V. Street, *Social literacies: Critical approaches to literacy in development, ethnography and education* (London: Longman, 1995); James Collins, Richard K. Blot, *Literacy and literacies. Texts, Power and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[3] Emilia Ferreiro y Ana Teberosky, *Los sistemas de escritura en el desarrollo del niño* (México: Siglo XXI, 1979); Madelon Saada-Robert *et al.*, *La littéracie émergente: un bilan de recherches de ces dix dernières années*, Colloque du Service de la Recherche en Education: scolariser la petite enfance? (Université de Genève,

Genève, 2003) ; Béatrice Fraenkel et Aïssatou Mbodj, dir., « New Literacy Studies : un courant majeur sur l'écrit », *Langage et Société*, 133, 2010/3, 152 p., Maison des Sciences de l'homme.

[4] David Vincent, « Literacy literacy », *Interchange*, Vol. 34, 2/3, 341-357, 2003, Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. 342.

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