Book review

Masny, D. & Cole, D. R. (Eds). (2009). *Multiple literacies theory. A Deleuzian perspective.*
  Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Diana Masny (University of Ottawa, Canada) and David R. Cole (University of Technology, Sydney) have assembled a rich collection of work in this volume, exploring and expanding Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT). The research presented employs MLT across a broad range of educational issues, including writing acquisition, affect and emotion in literacy practices, English as a second language (ESL), and the transformative capacity of education. The depth and originality of the application of MLT by the contributing authors makes this a significant addition to the discourse of literacy education.

Masny developed Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT) about a decade ago, and it has evolved more recently to become largely informed by the philosophical ideas of Gilles Deleuze, and the social theory Deleuze generated in collaboration with Felix Guattari. This poststructural, Deleuzian approach of MLT is a new direction in literacy theorising, offering an alternative to other pluralised conceptions of literacy such as Multiliteracies and New Literacies Studies. MLT is a project committed to the reconceptualisation of literacy, and is presented by the editors of this volume as a framework that enables an improved understanding of contemporary literate behaviour.

There are thirteen chapters by a diverse group of researchers from Australia, Canada and the United States. The first chapter, written by the editors, introduces the Deleuzian perspective of MLT, emphasising the role of multiplicity in literacy. Multiplicity is described as a principle on which literate communication operates, and is viewed not only quantitatively but also qualitatively, therefore, creating a space for difference within literacy practices. Masny and Cole make the connection between multiplicities and the processes of change found in systems generally, in which self-maintaining processes interact with adaptive processes, allowing systems to continue to function but also change over time, as they are always open to new possibilities. In this way MLT has both a capacity for transformation, and is an ongoing concern. This introductory chapter also includes a helpful elucidation of some differences between MLT and Multiliteracies and the new literacies movement.

The following eleven chapters all demonstrate the use of Deleuzian MLT as a lens for understanding the processes in which literacies intersect to produce literate beings. The focus in these chapters is on the research of literacy processes, and the use of MLT as an analytic framework for understanding empirical evidence of these processes. There are a number of case studies capturing the literacy processes of early childhood right through to literacy processes found in adult education, and data such as children's drawings, writing samples and vignettes are included to assist the reader to make sense of the analysis. As well, there are the more theoretical explorations of literacy processes, such as Inna Semetsky's chapter entitled Deleuze Pure and Applied: Becoming-Ethical. Traversing

Towards Ecoliteracy. In this chapter there is a most useful explanation of the key Deleuzian concept of 'becoming': "Becoming by definition is an experiment with what is new, that is, coming into being, be-coming" (p. 97). This chapter also contains some very challenging sections that clearly demonstrate the author's scholarship in Deleuzian philosophy but minimise the accessibility of readers new to Deleuze to instances of conceptual insight. Although there are a number of sections dealing with complex concepts in the research presented in chapters two to twelve, which readers unfamiliar with the work of Deleuze and Guattari may find particularly challenging at first, this can be overcome, for the most part, through re-reading and perseverance.

Chapter thirteen concludes with a series of brief explanations, one for each of the central concepts of MLT, forming a much-needed reference section for conceptual understanding. The point is made here that this chapter is not about defining MLT so that its meaning becomes fixed. The central and guiding concepts of MLT need to remain open and fluid, it is asserted, in order to respond to the issues to which they are applied, and their value will derive from their ability to generate knowledge. Care must be taken, though, as Masny states these explanations of the central concepts of MLT may not reflect the conceptualisations conceived by the book's contributing authors.

The specialised language found in parts of this text may discourage some readers, and seems likely to limit readership to specific academic disciplines. In particular, some of the vocabulary used to articulate the Deleuzian and Guattarian concepts in relation to MLT may challenge readers' patience. The use of familiar sites and settings to educational researchers, and the inclusion of visual schemata in the research chapters does go some way to mediate such linguistic complexity.

This volume does not seek to simplify and clarify MLT. Rather, it demonstrates the explosive potential of MLT to destabilise and reconfigure our understandings of the phenomenon of contemporary literacy.

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